Watershed MANAGEMENT 

Drought Information Center

February 8, 2002

On December 5, Secretary David E. Hess announced the upgrading of 22 drought watch counties to drought warning. Also, 7 additional counties were designated in drought watch. There are now 31 counties in drought watch and 31 counties in drought warning. These counties are indicated on the drought status map and in the news release at http://www.dep.state.pa.us/dep/subject/hotopics/drought.

For the month of January 2002, 63 of 67 Pennsylvania counties had below normal precipitation. Departures from normal precipitation range from –1.8 inches (Northampton County) to 0.1 inches (Sullivan County). The January average departure from normal precipitation for the state as a whole is –0.57 inches. For the last 4 months, 64 of 67 counties had below normal precipitation. Departures for the last 4 months range from –8.10 inches (Northampton County) to 0.5 inches (Butler County) with 29 of 67 counties having departures greater than or equal to –5.0 inches. For the first 7 days of February 58 of 67 counties have below normal precipitation, with average rainfall for the period being approximately 0.4 inches. Normal for the first 7 days of February is approximately 0.7 inches.

Compared to January 7, in the Delaware Basin, the main-stem of the Delaware River is up from 3,280 to 6,310 cfs at Trenton. The Lackawaxen River is up from 92 to 266 cfs at Hawley. The Lehigh River is up from 944 to 1,390 cfs at Bethlehem. The Schuylkill River is down from 1,280 to 1,240 cfs at Philadelphia and the Brandywine Creek is down from 251 to 135 cfs at Chadds Ford. The New York City Delaware River Basin storage (February 8) is 57.8 %(124.8 billion gallons) below normal. The NYC Delaware River Basin storage levels declined to drought levels on November 26.

Over the past four weeks in the Susquehanna Basin, the main stem Susquehanna River is up from 3,000 to 11,900 cfs at Towanda, up from 4,290 to 14,800 cfs at Wilkes-Barre, and up from 14,700 to 33,000 cfs at Harrisburg. The West Branch Susquehanna River is up from 1,970 to 5,310 cfs at Lock Haven, up from 3,990 to 9,410 cfs at Williamsport, and up from 3,860 to 10,600 cfs at Lewisburg. The Juniata River is up from 967 to 1,440 cfs at Newport. The Yellow Breeches Creek near Camp Hill was at 99 cfs, the same as last months reading.

For the Ohio Basin, the Allegheny River is up from 9,040 to 32,900 cfs at Natrona. The main-stem Ohio River is up from 10,400 to 44,100 cfs at Sewickley. The Kiskiminetas River is down from 1,640 to 1,510 cfs at Vandergrift. The Monongahela River is down from 13,700 to 7,320 cfs at Braddock and the Beaver River is up from 1,510 to 3,420 cfs at Beaver Falls.

Instantaneous streamflow readings for February 8 at 1:45 a.m., indicate that there were 35 (out of 160 reporting) stream gages registering flows below the 25th percentile, 21 less than the 10th percentile and 3 at record lows. These statistics reflect modest recovery in streamflows. Streamflows still remain below normal in the Delaware and Lower Susquehanna River Basins as well as in the Kiskiminetas and Monongahela River Basins in the Ohio River Basin.

USGS December 2001 end-of-month summary figures showing percent of wells where water level is above average decreased in all three river basins. The percent of wells where water level was above average was about 0%, 17% and 38% for the Delaware, Susquehanna and Ohio River basins, respectively. Groundwater levels are increasing slightly, however they remain significantly below normal during the normal recharge period. This is most evident in the Lower Susquehanna and Delaware River Basins.

For the period February 8th through February 12th, approximately 1.0 to a potential maximum of 1.5 inches of rain is projected to fall across the state.