

Watershed MANAGEMENT



Drought Information Center

February 28, 2000

On Friday, February 25, Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary James M. Seif, on behalf of Governor Tom Ridge, downgraded 28 counties from drought warning to drought watch status. The downgraded counties are Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Bedford, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Somerset, Venango, Warren, Washington and Westmoreland. Secretary Seif said "The series of storms this winter has helped the western part of the state recover enough for us to move it into a drought watch. However, we need significant precipitation this spring to fully recover from this devastating drought." The entire state is now under a drought watch. Drought watch status calls for a voluntary five percent reduction of non-essential water use. "It still is important for Pennsylvanians to remember the conservation habit." Secretary Seif said. "Although we are only asking residents to conserve by five percent, using water wisely all year is essential."

For the period February 21 to 27 there was light precipitation for most of Pennsylvania with the exception of the extreme southwest and the southeast quarter of the state. Total moisture equivalents ranged up to about four-tenths of an inch for this period, with an average of approximately just over one tenth-inch (moisture equivalent) for the affected area. During the past 24-hour period, although only preliminary data is currently available, there appears to have been an average of close to a half-inch or more of precipitation encompassing the entire state, with somewhat heavier amounts in central areas.

In the Delaware River Basin, flow enhancements are seen for all major streams since Tuesday of last week. The mainstem Delaware River is up from 13,800 (2/18) to 29,500 cfs. at Trenton. The Lackawaxen River is up from 316 to 4,570 cfs. at Hawley. The Lehigh River is up from 1,820 to 7,060 cfs. at Bethlehem. The Schuylkill River is up from 3,900 to 6,290 cfs. at Philadelphia and the Brandywine Creek is up from 559 to 1,020 cfs. at Chadds Ford. Almost all of the stream gauges in the Delaware River Basin are at above normal flow for February 28.

Since February 22, the Susquehanna River Basin also shows flow enhancement for all major streams. The mainstem Susquehanna River is up from 8,390 to 91,900 cfs. at Towanda, up from 17,700 to 94,200 cfs. at Wilkes-Barre, and up from 70,600 to 144,000 cfs. at Harrisburg. The West Branch Susquehanna River is up from 5,640 to 23,200 cfs. at Lock Haven, up from 8,320 to 45,100 cfs. at Williamsport, and up from 9,160 to 45,800 cfs. at Lewisburg. The Juniata River is up from 4,980 to 9,610 cfs. at Newport and the Conestoga River is up from 900 to 1,600 cfs. at Conestoga. All stream gauges in the Susquehanna River Basin are at above normal flow for this date.

The Ohio River Basin shows flow enhancement as a general trend over the past six days. The exceptions are the Monongahela River, Chartiers Creek, Crooked Creek, Pine Creek and Raccoon Creek basins. The Allegheny River is up from 23,900 to 57,500 cfs. at Natrona. The mainstem Ohio River is up from 69,500 to 84,800 cfs. at Sewickley. The Kiskiminetas River is down from 9,160 to 7,080 cfs. at Vandergrift. The Monongahela River is down from 46,200 to 22,500 cfs. at Braddock and the Beaver River is up from 3,820 to 6,100 cfs. at Beaver Falls. About 95% of the stream gauges in the Ohio River Basin are at above normal flow for today's date.

Since February 22, 27 counties with monitoring wells show water level rises for 26 counties and a drop for one. Increases range from 0.02 to 13.90 ft. (Potter County) with an average rise of 2.36 ft. The single decreasing reading of 0.01 ft. was for Chester County.

Between one-quarter and one inch of precipitation (moisture equivalent) is forecast for Pennsylvania over the next five days, with expected amounts increasing across the state from west to east. For the period March 4 to 9, between one-tenth and one-quarter inches of precipitation is expected for the western half of the state. Temperatures for the next ten days are expected to be above normal.