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New York State, New York City Sign Multi-State Water Management Agreement

New Agreement Improves Water Management for the Delaware River Basin

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Joe Martens and New York City Department of Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today endorsed a new water-management agreement for the Delaware River reservoirs that will further protect fisheries habitat in the Delaware River while preserving New York City's ability to provide safe water to its customers. The one-year agreement was signed by New York State, New York City, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware and improves upon the existing plan.

"This innovative plan will release larger volumes of cold water to improve trout habitat and will enhance flood mitigation efforts while assuring an adequate supply of drinking water for millions of New Yorkers," said Commissioner Martens. "I applaud New York City for its efforts to make use of available water in its reservoirs to meet the various needs of the Delaware River Basin."

"DEP's new technology, the Operations Support Tool, allows us improved ability to forecast and model water conditions, which gives us increased confidence in the operational decisions we make regarding the water supply," said Commissioner Holloway. "Releasing more water from our reservoirs to the East Branch of the Delaware River, West Branch of the Delaware River and Neversink River, will better protect downstream habitats, help enhance flood mitigation, increase the amount of water available to New Jersey during times of drought and to the lower basin states overall. We can do this while ensuring a reliable and high-quality water supply for nine million New Yorkers. Thanks to all of the decree parties, we can continue to use the shared resources of the Delaware River in a way that benefits everybody."

Since 1961, New York State and City, NJ, PA and DE have been working together to manage the water resources in the Delaware River Basin. They balance the river's ever-changing economic and environmental factors all within a

MORE INFORMATION

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legal framework set forth by the US Supreme Court. Since the 1970s, the parties have been working to address the issue of the amount of water flowing from New York City's three reservoirs into the Delaware River. They work to balance New York City's drinking water needs with the many other competing needs throughout the basin.

The newly announced plan is based on current and emerging technology. A mathematical computer model, called the Operational Support Tool, provides better information on when it is safe to release water without unnecessarily increasing risk to the public water supply. The model accounts for the different factors that managers must consider when making releases, such as actual and predicted rainfall, the amount of water flowing into the reservoirs, and the amount of water already stored in the reservoirs. Data is gathered continuously which allows managers to make better decisions on the rates of water releases. New York City has been developing the \$5.2 million tool since February 2010.

By using this model, New York City is able to allow more water to be released from their reservoirs into the Delaware River. The increased flow will support the fishery and other activities along the river. Fishery staff from both DEC and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission prepared a report that outlines recommended water release levels to support aquatic habitat in the River. These recommendations were used to develop the release tables in the new agreement.

Major highlights of the plan include:

- ▶ More water will be released to the West Branch of the Delaware River during normal and wet conditions. These higher flows will improve the aquatic environment due to increased habitat area and colder stream temperatures. The distribution of the increased releases is based on the New York/Pennsylvania fisheries report mentioned above.
- ▶ New York City has agreed to target lower reservoir storage levels during some seasons so that stormwater has a place to go during storm events. The intent is to enhance flood mitigation that the reservoirs already provide during extreme weather conditions.
- ▶ Better water supply protection for New Jersey during drought conditions.
- ▶ Increased protection for Philadelphia's water supply from salt water intrusion. The new agreement will increase the flow in the Delaware River which repels the salt front coming up the River from the Atlantic Ocean.

For more information on New York's role in the Delaware River Basin Commissioner (DRBC) visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/48454.html> on the DEC website.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than 1 billion gallons of water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. New York City's water is delivered from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and comprises 19 reservoirs, and three controlled lakes. For more information, visit www.nyc.gov/dep or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/nycwater.