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Cannonsville Reservoir - New York City Water Supply System



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DEP Announces Landmark Framework Agreement With Decree Parties on Management of the Delaware River Basin

Plan Calls for NYC to Adjust its Releases Help Fisheries, Enhance Flood Protection And to Repel Salt Movement

Environmental Protection Commissioner Cas Holloway today announced an agreement by New York City, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Delaware—the group that jointly manages drinking water in the Delaware River Basin —on a framework for a new interim flow program for the Delaware River. The plan allows for releasing more water from New York City's reservoirs to the East Branch of the Delaware River, West Branch of the Delaware River and Neversink River, which will improve protection of downstream habitats and help cushion local storm impacts, while still ensuring a reliable supply of high quality water for New Yorkers.

Water in the Delaware River Basin is jointly managed pursuant to a 1954 Supreme Court decree that governs water allocations for New York City and the states of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware (known as the "Decree Parties"). Under the new framework: DEP will adjust water releases from its Delaware reservoirs to push back the salt water front that moves up the Delaware River from the Atlantic Ocean; the City will create a higher potential to create a 10% void in its Delaware reservoirs; a subcommittee of the Decree Parties will be established of cold water fisheries staff from each state to ensure that water releases provide maximum ecological benefits downstream; and New Jersey will divert an average of 100 million gallons a day out of the basin via the Delaware & Raritan Canal, except in drought emergencies. The interim framework will lead to a more detailed plan and criteria in the coming months. The new plan, which will make better use of the shared water in the Delaware River Basin, will be in place for one year, and is made possible by New York City's Operations Support Tool, a cutting-edge monitoring and modeling system that enables DEP and all the Decree Parties to better manage the movement of water

MORE INFORMATION

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throughout the reservoir system and the entire basin.

"This landmark agreement protects New York City's water supply, and at the same time, increases the amount of water available to New Jersey, will better protect the river's ecology, and help reduce flooding throughout the basin," said Commissioner Holloway. "It's possible because of DEP's Operations Support Tool, new technology that dramatically improves our ability to forecast and model water conditions, and make decisions that enable us to use the shared resources of the Delaware River in a new and better way. I'd like to thank all of the decree parties for working together on this plan, and particularly New Jersey DEP Commissioner Bob Martin and his team for working with us to develop a program that best meets our common needs."

"This agreement is a perfect example of agencies working together and across state lines to reach a goal that is good for the entire region, one that is consistent with good water supply practices," said New Jersey DEP Commissioner Bob Martin. "I must commend New York City for working with us toward resolving our concerns with its operating plan for its reservoir system and recognizing that the way the city releases water from its reservoirs is felt many miles downstream."

New York City releases water from its Delaware Basin reservoirs as part of the Flexible Flow Management Plan, since it was approved by the Decree Parties in October 2007. The Flexible Flow Management Plan is intended to provide a more adaptive means for managing releases from the Cannonsville, Pepacton, and Neversink reservoirs by providing for releases based solely on the time of year and reservoir storage conditions. The new plan is an update to the Flexible Flow Management Plan on an interim basis.

The \$5.2 million Operations Support Tool, which DEP began to build in February 2010, allows better prediction of reservoir-specific water storage levels, quality, and inflows, which gives DEP a level of certainty that was not previously possible to help determine when it is safe to release water without unnecessarily depleting the water supply of nine million New Yorkers. By incorporating all of this data, this first-of-its-kind computer tool better predicts events that could affect water quality much earlier than is now possible, and uses the data and modeling to determine water flows from reservoirs. In February, DEP conducted a workshop with some of the nation's top water scientists, academics, engineers and water supply experts to solicit technical review of the Operations Support Tool. The workshop featured panel members who provided technical expertise to DEP to ensure that the science behind the Operations Support Tool is sound and to provide guidance for future use.

DEP manages the city's water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of water each day to more than nine million residents, including eight million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam and Westchester counties. Approximately 1,000 DEP employees live and work in the watershed communities as scientists, engineers, surveyors, and administrative professionals, and perform other critical responsibilities. 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.

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