

MEMORANDUM

TO: Commissioners

FROM: Carol R. Collier

DATE: August 2005

RE: Basin Plan Implementation -- Report on Progress since September 2004

The *Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin* (Basin Plan) was officially recognized in September 2004 with a signing ceremony followed by a discussion of issues and agency commitment. During the past eleven months, DRBC staff and our partners have advanced the goals of the Plan through a number of activities. This memo briefly highlights some of the Plan-related achievements and works in progress and suggests steps for moving ahead. I'm sure there are many more relevant activities within your agencies, but these are activities with which DRBC had direct involvement.

Accomplishments and Works in Progress

1. Developed a strategy to assemble data sets relevant to environmental conditions for reporting on the State of the Basin in 2006. Project will be accomplished in cooperation with basin academic institutions, especially state Water Resource Research Institutes, as well as selected federal and state partners;
2. Participated in EPA region 3 watershed workshop to share approaches for coordinated watershed management;
3. Provided advice on the re-organization of DELEP, with an eye toward non-duplicative structures for oversight & coordination;
4. Participated in the two-part Estuary Science Conference – first in a decade – emphasizing the estuary as part of the larger Basin system and the need to connect scientific inquiry with management issues;
5. Made presentations to local and regional organizations promoting the goals of the Plan;
6. Re-printed the Basin poster for further distribution– it's a hit!
7. Began discussions with a number of existing regional organizations, such as Schuylkill Action Network, Upper Delaware Council, Lower Delaware Management Committee, etc., to manage regional aspects of Basin Plan implementation and reporting;
8. Instrumental in expanding geographic scope of NFWF grant program into non-tidal river corridor watersheds;
9. DRBC staff accepted an award from WRA-DRB for the Basin Plan. The WRA-DRB has highlighted three Plan implementation areas of particular interest to its members.

Following are points of specific progress within the five Key Result Areas:

Sustainable Use & Supply - Key Result Area 1

- Assisting PA in developing a water supply plan to comply with PA Act 220; which architecturally aligns with Basin Plan;
- Drafted a Water Supply/Demand Study for the Basin and reviewed USGS work on ground water availability and demonstration water budget analyses;
- Through the Subcommittee on Ecological Flows (SEF), significant progress made in defining flow-habitat and temperature-habitat relationships in the tail waters of the NYC Delaware Basin reservoirs;
- Research agenda being developed through SEF to investigate freshwater inflow-habitat relationships in the estuary;
- To promote implementation of the Delaware Estuary PCB TMDL, DRBC's TMDL IAC is finalizing recommendations for cleaning up PCBs in the tidal River;
- Existing water quality established for boundary control points in the Lower Delaware segment of the Scenic & Recreational river system; Special Protection Waters regulations being revised to ensure maintenance of water quality;
- Determining potential impacts to the Tri-State and Middle Delaware reaches in the SPW program via a water quality monitoring & modeling effort in order to revise SPW program for that area;
- Brokered aid from Exelon for restoration of Schuylkill River water quality impaired by AMD;
- Through WMAC, working with AWWA to test new water audit structure with purveyors in order to reduce water losses;
- WMAC has created a subcommittee to assess interbasin and watershed transfer review criteria;
- Staff has provided administrative and technical support to the Parties to the 1954 Supreme Court Decree in their negotiation of longterm interstate water allocation and reservoir releases program.

Waterway Corridors –Key Result Area 2

- Flood management & flood warning – Fielded queries from public and legislators on spring flood events including co-sponsorship of an informational meeting for public officials and technical staff at Lake Wallenpaupack;
- In cooperation with the Flood Advisory Committee, developed a set of 10 recommendations for long term flood loss reduction in the Delaware River Basin;
- Participated in public hearings on April flood event sponsored by PA State Representative David Steil in Yardley, PA and Congressman Charles Dent in Easton, PA, and met with federal legislative staff in Washington D.C.;
- Provided testimony on the April '05 flood event to the N.J. General Assembly Subcommittee on Federal Relations;
- Member of the NJ Governor's FLOOD Task Force and participate on Technical, Public Outreach and Funding subcommittees;
- Reservoir Spill Mitigation – a snowpack draw down initiative similar to that in place for the Pepacton Reservoir is being considered for the Neversink Reservoir;
- Recreation – updated water trail maps for the non-tidal Delaware River are nearly complete; applied for NFWF funding to print them;
- Working with EPA-ORD under RARE grant for interpretation of macroinvertebrate data and metrics for large river systems;

Linking Land & Water Resources – Key Result Area 3

- Tri-State Area (Pt. Jervis, NY-Milford, PA area) – working with NPS-DWA on assessment of potential threats to existing water quality;
- Grant project working with EPA-ORD on ground-surface water relationship and sustainable watershed management in the Pocono Creek watershed;
- Working with NPS and communities in the Lower Delaware (SPW) corridor to protect water resources thru multi-municipal planning;
- Partnering with NJ Municipal Land Use Center on NFWF grant application for multi-municipal planning in 6 Hunterdon County river corridor municipalities in Lower Delaware SPW;
- Cooperating with NPS Upper Delaware and county governments to assess regional growth scenarios and potential impacts on existing water quality in Upper and Middle Delaware;
- Working with USDA Forest Service and partners on the PA Highlands assessment; begun outreach to NJ Highlands Council to discuss common ground for water resource protection;

Coordination & Cooperation – Key Result Area 4

- Formalized 6-year Water Monitoring and Assessment Program (Ten Elements Plan);
- Basin Plan Implementation – Proposed organizational structure includes a steering committee and regional committees connected with local planning, protection and enhancement efforts (see Next Steps);
- Reviewing MOUs with state and federal agencies to eliminate duplication of effort for project reviews;
- Partnering in the Schuylkill Action Network to ensure protection and enhancement of the largest tributary of the Delaware;
- Participated in the NJ USGS review of its strategic plan for water resource research;
- Coordinating with SRBC to establish a consistent approach for water supply planning and data management;
- Water Trail – Continued cooperation with partners on trail development & mapping;
- Delaware Estuary – increased coordination with Partnership to strengthen linkage between science and management and to increase cooperative regional efforts for resource protection;
- Christina Watershed - coordination of federal, state and local participants in watershed protection and improvement activities;
- Working with NPS and communities to revitalize Lower Delaware Management Committee;
- Participating in the NJ Flood Task Force which is investigating mitigation options, and providing community outreach and public education;
- Frequent communication with other river basin commissions through ASIWPCA, ICWP and other initiatives.

Education & Stewardship – Key Result Area 5

- Continued public outreach activities at regional events, such as the Shad Festival in Lambertville NJ, Bay Day in Bivalve NJ, and Coast Day in Lewes DE, and the Schuylkill River Congress in PA;
- Hosted several international delegations at DRBC offices;
- Web host and planning support for Delaware River Sojourn;
- Presented information on water resource management to educators at PA Student Leadership Summit;

- Stormwater Retrofit Demonstration Project at DRBC headquarters - with funding provided by NJDEP, moved into the design phase of project, which will be a demonstration project for the new NJ state stormwater regulations; also submitted additional grant applications for implementation phase.
- The DRBC flood web site has been expanded to include all presentations from the May 25 public information session on the April flooding, the 10 recommendations for future flood loss reduction, and the 1984 Corps of Engineers report evaluating flood risk and potential solutions along the main stem Delaware River;
- Indicators are under development, with attention to public education & promotion of stewardship through the State of the Basin Report.

Next Steps

Basin Plan Regional Implementation – DRBC staff are finalizing plans to reconvene former members of the Watershed Advisory Council to serve on an at-large steering committee for coordinating Basin Plan implementation activity. Using the regions of the Basin - as delineated on the Basin Plan map – which share geologic or functional characteristics and concerns, we will develop an integrated structure for implementation & reporting, possibly through regional representation on the implementation steering committee. The first task will be to identify regional partners and a means of prioritizing issue areas. Emphasis will be on using existing organizations –such as the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, the Upper Delaware Council, and the Schuylkill Action Network – that are working to improve water resource management in their regions. Additionally, emphasis will be placed on increasing reliance on partnerships and electronic communication to minimize the need for meetings.

DRBC Priorities – Developing a Water Resources Program (6-year action plan) to plot out our work efforts in support of Basin Plan implementation.