



6/28/2006

DRN Statement: Flood of 2006

Contact:

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NOAA is reporting and predicting moderate to major flooding on the mainstem Delaware River as well as major tributaries. (See www.erh.noaa.gov/er/marfc/Forecasts/PHI_index.html) The greatest flooding is predicted for Thursday, June 29 with flood waters receding into Friday. Some flood predictions exceed the flood of April 2005 which caused major flood damages to communities along the Delaware River.

In response to this most recent catastrophic threat to communities along the Delaware River and major tributary streams, the Delaware Riverkeeper Maya K. van Rossum issues the following statement:

“In the days to come communities and decisionmakers will struggle with whether the floods were avoidable or preventable.

Flooding is not avoidable. It is a natural and needed part of every waterways life cycle – it is important for the health of the waterway as well as the critters and habitats it supports and supplies.

The lesson to be learned is not how to stop flooding but how to best protect people and the environment. When waterways flood they need access to their floodplain. Healthy functioning floodplains absorb floodwaters providing flood control benefits from downstream and adjacent communities as well as environmental and water quality benefits. Homes, businesses and parklands located in the floodplain are known to be harms way, in the way of a future flood.

Construction of structures such as dams or levees are not the solution. Flood control structures still leave people in harms way, only providing a level of protection under the right conditions/scenarios. In addition, flood control structures fail, and when they fail they can result in catastrophic loss of life and property. And flood control structures bring with them significant and unacceptable harms to the environment and the health, safety and quality of life of communities.

It is time to make the hard choices, we need to invest in removing structures from the floodplain (not simply flood proofing them but removing/moving them), restoring the floodplain to natural function, and relocating our homes and business to the dryer upland grounds.”

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