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Delaware Riverkeeper Network Supports Natural Flows in New FFMP; Opposes Reservoir Use for Flood Control and Increased Diversions for New New Jersey During Drought Conditions

Easton, PA; In a statement delivered Wednesday night in Easton during the public hearing over the proposed Delaware River Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP), the Delaware Riverkeeper Network stated its support for the Plan's efforts to replicate natural flows, protect water quality, and protect key species but stated its opposition to using the New York City drinking water reservoirs and the FFMP for the false promise of flood protection and for increased diversions for New Jersey during drought conditions.

"It is important that New York City's reservoirs and the Delaware River's flows are managed in a way that protects clean water, drinking water supplies, fish enjoyed and relied upon by many, and critical species that are part of our special ecosystem which attracts visitors world wide – to the degree it accomplishes these goals the Delaware Riverkeeper Network supports it. But to try to use the FFMP for the false promise of flood control hurts those that depend upon the River for drinking water and for the recreational and economic benefits of fishing while failing to provide genuinely needed flood damage reduction in a sensible and realistic manner. And to allow New Jersey to take more water during drought conditions simply compounds problems during critical low flow periods," said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.**

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According to the statement delivered by the organization's **Deputy Director Tracy**

Carluccio:

- ✓ “We oppose the New Jersey Offset Bank arrangement that will allow New Jersey to take more water than previously due to water storage provided for offsetting the increased diversions by New Jersey during drought. ... This relieves New Jersey of having to employ extra conservation measures during these drought periods that they would otherwise have to follow. New Jersey should have to adhere to full drought restrictions when river flows are low due to drought and there is no compelling reason to relieve them of this obligation. Further, this will require more water to be kept “in reserve” by New York City in the reservoirs so that it is available as an offset contribution to river flows for New Jersey if drought conditions occur. This means that there will be less water available for conservation releases to benefit the habitats and stream life downstream of the reservoirs. “
- ✓ “The effort to maintain the Conditional Storage Objective with a goal of mitigating “... the effects of flooding immediately below the City Delaware Basin Reservoirs” is reasonable. Whether or not this will result in a 10% void depends on water supply and environmental conditions. DRN states for the record that we do not support any additional effort to add voids for flood flow storage to the reservoirs for flood control purposes in the downstream river. As the Decree Parties are aware, DRBC analyses of major Delaware River flood events between 2004-2006 show that voids in the reservoirs cannot provide meaningful flood protection benefits in the downstream Watershed. Attempting to provide flood control through the New York City reservoir system is not feasible, beneficial, or environmentally or economically sound... In fact, flood damages are best controlled by protecting floodplains and implementing policies and funding to remove structures from the path of floodwaters because, simply put, floodplains flood. DRN points out the most effective, preventive, and cost beneficial measures we can take is to reduce storm runoff by limiting land use changes; to employ effective stormwater recharge systems; to buffer riparian areas along all waterways to allow storm flows to be absorbed and slowed; and to avoid damages and catastrophic losses by keeping floodplains vegetated and people and structures out of harm’s way.”

- ✓ “The fact that headwater tributaries of the River are impounded as reservoirs that are allowed to remove up to 800 million gallons of Delaware River water per day out of the basin without return sets up a formidable challenge for the River and its ecosystems. The natural flows are indelibly disrupted by the dammed tributaries and for years “banks” were used to manage flows to address critical needs. The FFMP is a more flexible method to determine when and how releases and diversions should be made to provide flow augmentation for the benefit of habitat protection and water quality benefits.”
- ✓ “We agree that releases are to be made to protect the ecology in the stream reaches below the reservoirs based on the Habitat Protection Program (HPP). “

“We felt it was important to deliver these important messages during the public hearings,” said Carluccio.

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