

**SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
1721 North Front Street • Harrisburg, PA 17102-2391 • www.srbc.net

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

July 18, 2006

**CONTACT:** Susan Obleski

Director of Communications

sobleski@srbc.net

Office: (717) 238-0423, x316

Cell: (717) 215-7278

**BARNES AND TUCKER MINE WATER TREATMENT PROJECT  
WILL IMPROVE ENVIRONMENT AND SUPPORT FARMERS**

**Project is major step toward relieving PA farmers of consumptive water use requirements**

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) today announced it would use a \$6.1 million grant provided by the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Gov. Ed Rendell to improve water quality in 25 miles of the polluted West Branch Susquehanna River and support Pennsylvania’s farmers.

Two projects will be conducted under the grant to secure a total of 15.7 million gallons per day (MGD) of water to replace the amount used by farmers. The one project would treat some 10 MGD of water polluted by abandoned mine drainage (AMD) and release it into the West Branch. The AMD is harmful to aquatic life and limits some recreational uses. The remainder of the grant is earmarked for additional cleanup and flow enhancement projects by SRBC aimed at increasing water reserves by another 5.7 MGD.

SRBC Chairman Maj. Gen. William Grisoli (Commander, North Atlantic Division, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers) said, “The Commission is grateful to the Commonwealth not only for understanding the need to secure water for times when the state’s streams are stressed, but also for appreciating the multiple benefits its investment will reap for the environment and for the agricultural community.”

The new funds were contained in the state budget that was approved on July 1. Of the \$6.1 million, SRBC will spend \$3.9 million toward the long-term operation and maintenance of the Commonwealth’s planned Barnes and Tucker abandoned mine remediation project in Cambria County. For the past 30 years, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has diverted and treated water from the abandoned Barnes and Tucker mines into the Ohio River watershed. The new project will return the mine’s treated drainage back to the Susquehanna basin.

The treatment project, sponsored by DEP, is currently in the design phase with construction estimated for spring 2008 through spring 2009. The treatment plant is expected to operate for 75 years and result in the treatment and release of up to 10 MGD into the West Branch Susquehanna River – resulting in the restoration of 25 miles of the river.

DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty said, “Pennsylvania has the largest abandoned mine lands problem in the country with more than 180,000 acres of abandoned mine sites and hundreds of discharges that pollute our rivers and streams. The Barnes and Tucker project is an excellent example of how innovative thinking, and cooperation among state agencies and local watershed groups can repair the

damage caused by the unregulated mining practices of the past, and ensure that the Susquehanna River will remain a dependable source of water for Pennsylvania's farmers. The resulting improvements to the water quality in the West Branch bring us one step closer to restoring the health of the river and improving the quality of life for residents throughout the region."

Concurrent with the Barnes and Tucker project, SRBC will spend the \$2.2 million balance to develop other alternative water sources to secure the remaining water needed toward the total 15.7 MGD of fresh water daily to increase stream flow and enable farmers to continue using water for their operations. The increased clean water flow into the West Branch is earmarked to replace the amount used by farmers during times of low flow (SRBC regulations require consumptive water users to compensate for their use). Until these projects are completed, SRBC intends to continue a temporary suspension of its consumptive water use requirements for agricultural water users.

State Senator Noah Wenger (Dist. 36, Lancaster), who spearheaded the initiative in the General Assembly, said, "Ensuring that our state's agricultural industry remains healthy and viable for the future is absolutely in everyone's interest. The Barnes and Tucker project is the major step toward permanently removing the burden of individual farmers to comply with SRBC's requirements. It's a win for our farmers, the environment and for the people of Pennsylvania."

Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff added that "Perhaps more than any other sector, farmers understand the importance of protecting our water resources. Their livelihood depends on it. We thank the farmers for supporting the Barnes and Tucker project and in return the project will help ensure the long term viability of their operations."

## **History of the Barnes and Tucker Acid Mine Discharge**

**1970:** The Barnes and Tucker mine operation in Cambria County begins discharging AMD-impaired water into the Blacklick Creek (Ohio Basin) and the West Branch Susquehanna River.

**1973:** Mine operators are ordered to remediate the pollution. They establish a pump-and-treat operation that diverts impaired water to the Duman facility in the Ohio basin (about 6,500 gallons per minute are treated at Duman and discharged into the Blacklick Creek).

**2001 – 2006:** The Barnes and Tucker's treatment fund is exhausted in 2001 and the company declares bankruptcy. The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) assumes responsibility for the treatment in 2001 and has continued to maintain the system ever since. DEP is also assisting with the ongoing restoration of the Blacklick Creek Watershed, and is working to mitigate the impacts of removal of the treated, alkaline water from the Duman facility into Blacklick Creek.

###