

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 15, 2009

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**SRBC URGES PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA AND CONGRESS TO FUND
\$2.4 MILLION FOR SUSQUEHANNA FLOOD WARNING SYSTEM
Damages from Flooding Would Increase if Stream and Rain Gages Are Not Funded**

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) called on President-elect Barack Obama, Appropriations Subcommittee Chairwoman U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulski (Maryland) and other members of Congress to provide \$2.4 million in Fiscal Year 2010 to fully fund the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System (Susquehanna System). The funds are to be allocated to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to direct to NOAA's National Weather Service (NWS) and the U.S. Geological Survey to maintain and operate the Susquehanna System.

The Susquehanna River Basin is one of the most flood-prone watersheds in the country, experiencing on average about \$150 million in flood damages annually. More than 80 percent of the 1,400 plus municipalities in the Susquehanna basin include areas that are flood-prone.

The Susquehanna System utilizes radar and a network of stream and rain gages to provide real-time data used by NWS to forecast river levels and issue more timely and accurate early flood warnings. These early warnings help reduce flood damages as businesses and residents have time to secure their property and get themselves to safer locations before flood waters strike. The Susquehanna System is extremely cost-effective, reducing average annual flood damages by \$32 million. For every federal dollar invested in the Susquehanna System, \$20 are saved through reduced damages and reduced federal flood recovery payouts.

The Susquehanna System is maintained and operated by an interagency committee coordinated by SRBC since 1986 and comprised of representatives from the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. In addition to the annual NOAA funds, several of the cooperating federal and state partners help fund many of the critical stream and rain gages.

“In fall 2008, the Susquehanna System was dealt a near blow when funding shortfalls at one of the cooperating agencies threatened to shut down 34 of the 100 plus stream and rain gages within the system network,” said SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz. “While we were successful in pooling the funds among the other cooperating partners to avoid the imminent shutdown of gages in fiscal year 2009, it was only a stop-gap measure.”

Swartz said, “In this time of severe budgetary problems, we know more funding shortfalls within the agencies are inevitable. So in an effort to head off the cycle of stop-gap measures, the Commission's request for NOAA to receive \$2.4 million includes \$400,000 to cover the critical gages that would otherwise be shut down when our cooperating partners are no longer able to pay for them.”

Community and emergency management officials rely on the Susquehanna System to make good flood preparedness decisions, including notifying their residents of expected flooding and what actions are needed to protect themselves, and deciding if evacuation procedures need to be implemented.

Swartz said, “Without adequate funding for the Susquehanna System, it will become extremely difficult to maintain the full network of stream and rain gages. As gages are lost, we lose the ability to generate the real-time data the National Weather Service uses to make the timely and accurate flood forecasts basin residents and businesses have come to rely on so heavily.”

SRBC made its support for the \$2.4 million funding known to President-elect Obama, Senator Mikulski and other members of Congress through SRBC Resolution No. 2008-11. The resolution also emphasizes other important uses of the real-time data generated by the stream and rain gages. Water managers also rely on the data for important drought monitoring, water quality monitoring and regulatory and recreational-use purposes.

The resolution is available on the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System web site at <http://www.susquehannafloodforecasting.org/index.asp>. The web site also includes information about the Susquehanna System and how it works, and lists the cooperating agencies at <http://www.susquehannafloodforecasting.org/ff-ws/index.asp>.

The Harrisburg-based Susquehanna River Basin Commission (www.srbc.net) is the governing agency established under a 100-year compact signed on Dec. 24, 1970 by the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland to protect and wisely manage the water resources of the Susquehanna River Basin. The Susquehanna River starts in Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles to Havre de Grace, Md., where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay.

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