

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

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CONTACT: Susan Obleski
Director of Communications
(717) 238-0423, ext. 316 office
(717) 215-7278 mobile

**SRBC CALLS ON CONGRESS TO RESTORE FUNDING FOR
SUSQUEHANNA FLOOD FORECAST AND WARNING SYSTEM**
Minor to Major Flooding Expected This Weekend Along Susquehanna River

HARRISBURG, Pa. – Communities up and down the Susquehanna River are bracing for high flows this weekend as the National Weather Service (NWS) is predicting minor to major flooding in New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. Major flooding is expected in New York and northeastern Pennsylvania. Minor to moderate flooding is predicted for communities in southern Pennsylvania and Maryland.

This expected flooding comes the same week that the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) approved a resolution (No. 2005-02) calling on the U.S. Congress to restore funding for the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System (Susquehanna System). SRBC is supporting a \$2 million appropriation request for federal fiscal year 2006 (FY-06). These funds, if restored, would be allocated to NWS and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to maintain and operate the Susquehanna System.

“The Susquehanna System is a highly effective network for predicting flood levels, but it is an aging system and in need of maintenance and upgrades to ensure its continued performance,” said SRBC Chair Kendl Philbrick. “The \$2 million is needed to install new equipment in the stream gages before they become obsolete, and the rain gages need to be replaced before they wear out and fail.”

According to Philbrick, the federal budget has historically included funding specifically for the Susquehanna System. That direct funding was eliminated two years ago by Congress, and SRBC and others are urging Congress to restore it for FY-06, which begins on October 1, 2005. For the past two fiscal years – FY-04 and FY-05 – the Susquehanna System has operated on a minimal budget using funds provided by the NWS from other programs. The Susquehanna System has broad support from Susquehanna basin congressmen, including Senators Mikulski and Sarbanes and Congressmen Gilchrest and Ruppensberger.

The Susquehanna River Basin is one of the most flood-prone watersheds in the country. More than 80 percent of the 1,400 plus municipalities in the Susquehanna basin include areas that are flood-prone. Since 1986, the Susquehanna System, with its technological system that uses radar and a network of stream and rain gages, has provided data used by the NWS to issue accurate and timely flood watches and warnings. The Susquehanna System is extremely cost-effective, with a benefit-cost ratio of 20-to-1, thus reducing average annual flood damages by \$32 million. For every federal dollar invested in the Susquehanna System, \$20 is saved through reduced damages and reduced federal flood recovery payouts.

With early flood warnings, businesses and residents living in flood-prone areas have time to secure their property and get themselves to safer locations before flood waters strike. Community and

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emergency management officials rely on the Susquehanna System to make good flood preparedness decisions, including notifying their residents of expected flooding and what actions they should take to protect themselves, and whether emergency officials need to implement evacuation procedures.

The SRBC resolution calls for a direct \$2 million line-item appropriation to be restored for FY-06, which would include \$1.5 million for technological operations and maintenance, and \$500,000 for the needed system upgrades.

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission 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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