

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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**CONGRESSMAN HOLDEN SECURES \$1 MILLION FOR SRBC
TO ENHANCE FLOOD MITIGATION, PROTECT WATER SUPPLIES
AND MANAGE LOW RIVER FLOWS**

HARRISBURG, PA – Congressman Tim Holden (D-PA Dist. 17) and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) today announced the restoration of SRBC’s federal funding through the FY-09 Omnibus spending bill that was passed by Congress and signed by President Obama last week. The \$1 million appropriation will help SRBC enhance its efforts to mitigate floods, protect water supplies, manage low flows, coordinate droughts and help restore migratory fish to the Susquehanna River and tributaries.

Federal funding for SRBC, as well as for the other Mid-Atlantic river basin commissions on the Delaware and Potomac, was eliminated back in 1998 following misinformation issued by a partisan, Washington-based think tank that characterized the basin commissions as having no benefit to federal interests. Prior to that year, SRBC had received an annual federal appropriation dating back to 1971.

“SRBC is so important to my district, and I’m pleased I could play a role in supporting it,” said Congressman Tim Holden. “I appreciate having worked with SRBC for many years, helping to safeguard the residents of the Susquehanna River Basin, and protect the river itself.”

“This is truly a momentous event and the credit goes to Congressman Holden,” said SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz. “While many others supported the action, Congressman Holden was the champion who paved the way, and now the federal government is providing its equitable share to the Commission once again.”

Swartz said, “There are numerous, pressing water resource management challenges that need to be addressed, ranging from flood mitigation, water supply protection and low flow management.”

Flood Mitigation

The Susquehanna River Basin is one of the most flood-prone areas in the nation, experiencing on average \$150 million in damages annually. Many communities along the Susquehanna River and tributaries rely on the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System. SRBC is working with others to secure a more permanent solution so critical rain and stream gages like the one at Harrisburg won’t be put back on the threatened list. These gages generate the data needed by the National Weather Service to issue accurate and timely flood warnings to save lives and reduce damages during floods.

Swartz noted this is National Flood Safety Awareness Week as sponsored by NOAA's National Weather Service. While flooding is an ever-present threat in the Susquehanna basin, spring time is when the risk can be the highest. Information on flood awareness week (March 16-20) is available from SRBC's web site at www.srbc.net.

Water Supply Protection

SRBC is working with several public water suppliers, including United Water in Harrisburg, that have intakes in the Susquehanna River and other major tributaries to help them monitor water quality to minimize the impact from contaminant spills. SRBC also will be developing source water protection plans for Harrisburg and other communities in Dauphin County. The restored federal funding will help SRBC enhance its efforts on these initiatives.

Low Flow Management

The demand for water is ever increasing, including for projects needed to secure this nation's energy independence, as well as for public water supplies and other purposes that are important for the basin's economy. Along with the increasing water demands come stresses on the aquatic ecosystem that impact the region's environment and water-based recreation and sporting activities. SRBC is also mandated to help maintain adequate flows of water to the Chesapeake Bay.

Swartz said, "The restoration of federal funding will help us better meet the Commission's water management mandates. In my opinion, federal funding for basic government functions that protect public health, safety and welfare is absolutely the right thing to do."

SRBC – headquartered in Harrisburg, Pa. – is the governing agency established under a 100-year compact signed on December 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. SRBC web site: www.srbc.net.

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