

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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**IMPACTS OF TROPICAL STORM IVAN ON THE LOWER
SUSQUEHANNA REGION REVIEWED**

**Senator Jacobs and Delegate Rudolph co-hosted Port Deposit meeting, which focused on
impacts of flooding, debris flow and sediment transport**

PORT DEPOSIT, Md. – In cooperation with Senator Nancy Jacobs (R-District 34) and Delegate David Rudolph (D-District 34B), the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) conducted a public meeting at the Port Deposit Town Hall to review the impacts of Tropical Storm Ivan on the lower Susquehanna region. The topics included the impacts from flood waters and the debris and sediment transported during the flooding. SRBC also highlighted the effectiveness of the Susquehanna River Flood Forecasting and Warning System.

During the weekend of September 19, Tropical Storm Ivan dumped anywhere from 1.5 to 9.5 inches of rain on the Susquehanna River Basin over a brief period. SRBC representatives noted that the Susquehanna basin had not experienced flooding of this magnitude since the January 1996 ice jams flood. River flows at the Conowingo Dam in Maryland resulting from Ivan were the fourth highest since the stream gage at the dam was established in 1968.

Paul Swartz, SRBC executive director said, “Any time there is large-scale flooding, it is usually the downstream communities in southern Pennsylvania and northern Maryland that experience the cumulative impact. Port Deposit, alone, sustained more than \$1 million in damages from Tropical Storm Ivan.”

The purpose of the public meeting was to present the facts about the flood and to discuss the issues concerning citizens from the lower Susquehanna region. The meeting participants included SRBC and Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) officials, the operators of the Conowingo and Safe Harbor dams, Port Deposit Mayor Rob Flayhart, and representatives of the Cecil County Emergency Management Agency and U.S. Geological Survey (USGS).

“People living in the flood-impacted communities, understandably, want to know if more can be done to address the flood impacts,” said MDE Secretary and SRBC Chairman Kendl Philbrick. “The lower Susquehanna has a unique set of issues during floods not only because of the location, but also because of the large hydroelectric dams whose operators have to carry out certain protocols during extreme flood events.”

SRBC reported on the damage estimates throughout the Susquehanna basin from Tropical Storm Ivan and the near-perfect flood predictions and warnings the National Weather Service was able to issue because of the Susquehanna River Flood Forecasting and Warning System. Early flood warnings help save lives and reduce annual average flood damages by \$32 million in the

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Susquehanna basin. The enhanced Susquehanna System was initiated by SRBC in 1985 because the Susquehanna basin is one of the most flood-prone areas in the country.

Delegate David Rudolph said, “In the Susquehanna basin, it’s not a matter of ‘if’ but ‘when’ the next flood will occur. For that reason, it’s good public policy to have open forums like this where people can learn the facts about flooding and have opportunities to share their concerns. On-going communication, coordination and cooperation are vital to our flood-prone communities in Cecil County.”

SRBC also reported on its streamside cleanup program that uses a combination of hands-on cleanup events and training to educate upstream residents on the impact their litter is having on downstream communities and the Chesapeake Bay. According to SRBC, there are at least 255 existing cleanup projects in the Susquehanna basin, involving more than 6,100 volunteers, who have removed more than 1,000 tons of litter to date. Of the 255 events, SRBC has provided direct support to 68 through mini-grants totaling \$113,000.

“The partnership efforts underway to educate upstream residents and make them better stewards are commendable,” said Senator Jacobs. “For every ton of litter that is removed, that’s less that won’t end up on Maryland’s shorelines. We need to continue building on these existing outreach and education efforts.”

The USGS reported on the amount of sediment that was transported from the Susquehanna River to the Chesapeake Bay during Tropical Storm Ivan. According to the USGS, preliminary data show that 10 million tons of sediment went into the bay during the flood, which includes at least 3 million tons of sediment that was trapped behind the hydroelectric dams. The Susquehanna River transports an average of 3.1 million tons of sediment each year. Of that total, about 1.3 million tons enter the Chesapeake Bay, with the remaining 1.8 million tons – or 60 percent – being trapped behind the dams.

For more information on the Susquehanna Flood Forecasting and Warning System, and for photos and news articles on Tropical Storm Ivan, go to SRBC’s web site at <http://www.susquehannafloodforecasting.org/>. Information on SRBC’s Susquehanna River Basin Streamside Cleanup Training Academy and Assistance Program is at <http://www.srbc.net/sc-training.htm>.

SRBC 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.

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