

**SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
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**SRBC ISSUES CONSUMPTIVE WATER USE MITIGATION PLAN**  
**Water Use Demands Projected to Exceed 1.2 Billion Gallons a Day by 2025;**  
**Power Production and Public Water Supply Remain Largest Uses**

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) recently issued its *Consumptive Use Mitigation Plan* that documents current and projected quantities of consumptive water uses in the Susquehanna watershed and outlines a strategy for addressing impacts from increased uses. Peak consumptive uses in 2000 were 500 million gallons per day (gpd). SRBC projects an increase to more than 1.2 billion gpd by 2025. Water for power production and domestic uses will remain the top consumptive uses, with the largest increases being from power production. The plan is available on SRBC’s website at [www.srbc.net/planning](http://www.srbc.net/planning).

Consumptive use is defined by SRBC as water that is used in a way it is not returned to the basin, including through evaporation, irrigation, use in products and diversions out of the Susquehanna watershed. SRBC regulates consumptive water uses of 20,000 or more gpd to help ensure adequate supplies for public water, industries, agriculture and recreation, and to protect the environment during times of designated, critical low flows (generally occurring during severe droughts). SRBC requires consumptive users to mitigate or compensate for their use during those critical flow periods.

“Mitigation can be achieved in a number of ways, including on-site storage and release of water, discontinuance of use, or payment of a mitigation fee,” said SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz. “SRBC prefers project sponsors to select the on-site or discontinuance options because they provide the most direct and verifiable mitigation. However, the vast majority opt to pay the mitigation fee either because it may be the most viable option, or in many cases, it is the easiest.”

Of the total projected 1.2+ billion gpd of consumptive use in 2025, SRBC estimates 390.3 million gpd will require mitigation – as compared to today’s 116.3 million gpd requiring mitigation. In developing the *Consumptive Use Mitigation Plan*, SRBC identified and assessed numerous alternatives it could consider implementing to address the increasing consumptive uses. The recommendations include:

- Reevaluating operation of the Conowingo Pond – an interstate reservoir on the lower Susquehanna River – and other major water users in the lower Susquehanna region to consider the effects of increased mitigation flows from upstream sources;
- Reevaluating SRBC-owned water storage at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers’ Cowanesque and Curwensville reservoirs in Tioga and Clearfield Counties, Pennsylvania, respectively, to determine if larger and more frequent releases can be made from the reservoirs to enhance downstream flows during low flow periods;
- Evaluating underground mines as a source for mitigation water;
- Evaluating potential modifications and/or operational changes at select impoundments (dams);
- Assessing streamflow needs to prioritize areas needing consumptive use mitigation and determine where consumptive use should be limited; and
- Increasing SRBC’s consumptive water use mitigation fee and revising the structure of that fee to maintain the viability of the restricted water management fund.

Swartz said, “It will, undoubtedly, take a combination of several, if not most, of the recommendations for SRBC to secure enough water storage to meet projected demands. Frankly, we are challenged to even meet today’s needs. SRBC will move forward very deliberately to implement the most appropriate recommendations to safeguard the basin’s water supplies that support economic development while protecting the environment.”

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, New York, and flows 444 miles to Havre de Grace, Maryland, where the river meets the Chesapeake Bay.

SRBC’s regulatory program: [www.srbc.net/programs/projreview.htm](http://www.srbc.net/programs/projreview.htm)  
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