

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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SRBC RELEASES FINDINGS FROM FOUR RIVER MONITORING PROGRAMS

HARRISBURG, Pa. – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) announces findings from four separate river monitoring programs providing biological and water quality data used to assess streams and rivers and identify changes in stream health over time. The technical reports focus on: (1) the Susquehanna River and other large rivers, (2) the watersheds surrounding Whitney Point Lake in Broome and Cortland counties in New York, (3) the Middle Susquehanna Subbasin, and (4) streams that cross the New York-Pennsylvania and Pennsylvania-Maryland state lines.

“With nearly 25 years of continuous monitoring experience, the Commission is a leader in monitoring and in the area of quality assurance and quality control of data,” said Paul Swartz, SRBC Executive Director. “Each monitoring program is unique and the data help in decision-making by SRBC, its member state and federal agencies, and other water resource managers.”

The four technical reports, which are available on SRBC’s web site at www.srbc.net/pubinfo/techdocs/Publications/techreports.htm or by hard copy, are as follows:

Susquehanna Large River Assessment Project (publication #265) is an assessment of the mainstem Susquehanna River and a portion of the West Branch Susquehanna River. Given the characteristics of large rivers, specific data collection methods devised two years ago are employed by SRBC. SRBC staff collected data at 17 stations between Great Bend, N.Y., and Marietta, Pa. For biological health, SRBC found nonimpaired conditions at two stations, slightly impaired conditions at ten stations, and moderately impaired conditions at five stations. For water quality conditions, only 6.9 percent of the values exceeded their respective limits, indicating fairly good water quality in the Susquehanna River.

Middle Susquehanna Subbasin: A Water Quality and Biological Assessment, June – October 2008 (publication #263) is an assessment of specific streams within the middle portion of the river basin, which includes 3,700 square miles in northeast Pennsylvania from Ulster to Sunbury, Pa. The report identifies stream impairments and makes comparisons with past surveys of the Middle Susquehanna Subbasin. The results of this report were similar to those found in the 2001 survey with the majority of streams (74 percent) having nonimpaired or slightly impaired conditions. Of the moderately and severely impaired stream sites, most were impacted by abandoned mine drainage or urban land uses.

Upper Susquehanna Subbasin Small Watershed Study: A Water Quality and Biological Assessment of the Watersheds Surrounding Whitney Point Lake, Broome and Cortland Counties, N.Y. (publication #264) is an overview of critical, baseline monitoring that was conducted to help evaluate the implementation of a large scale restoration project on Whitney Point Lake. The project involves water releases from the lake to augment low flow conditions downstream of the lake. The supplemental flows are expected to reduce stress on the river ecosystems, benefiting fish and macroinvertebrates. At least five years of additional project monitoring will be performed.

Assessment of Interstate Streams in the Susquehanna River Basin, July 1, 2007 – December 31, 2008

(publication #266) is a web-based report that includes interactive maps providing detailed water quality and biological data on streams that cross state lines. This interstate stream monitoring began in 1986 to collect data that were not available from monitoring programs in New York, Pennsylvania or Maryland. SRBC tracks 53 crossing points on 48 streams that cross state lines. In NY-PA streams, iron and aluminum most frequently exceeded water quality standards for the calendar year 2008 report. In PA-MD streams, nutrients continue to be the biggest concern. Biological and habitat health were also evaluated at 49 sites in 2008.

SRBC's monitoring programs and their associated annual reports are funded largely by grants from the U.S. Environmental Protection.

Swartz said, "Among the many benefits, the data generated through these four monitoring programs can be used to assess compliance with state and federal water quality standards, characterize stream quality and identify areas for restoration and protection."

The Susquehanna River Basin is the largest river basin on the East Coast of the United States, draining 27,510 square miles. SRBC (www.srbc.net) 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 the Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, Md.

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