

SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SRBC CONVENES INTERAGENCY FLOOD FORECAST AND WARNING SYSTEM
COMMITTEE FOR THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN**
River Ice Remains a Concern for the Weekend

HARRISBURG (Feb. 21) – The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) today convened the members of the Interagency Committee on the Susquehanna River Basin Flood Forecast and Warning System to discuss this weekend’s weather outlook and to establish a consolidated message for the Susquehanna River Basin in terms of any potential ice jams and flooding. SRBC serves as the coordinating agency for this interagency committee, which is comprised of the following federal, state and regional agencies that maintain and operate the basin-wide flood warning system and disseminate forecasts and warnings: SRBC; National Weather Service; U.S. Geological Survey; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Baltimore District); emergency management and environmental protection agencies for the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland; and the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development.

SRBC’s Chief of Water Resources Management Glen DeWillie stated that the current path of this weekend’s storm points to the potential for some ice jams on the Susquehanna River and smaller tributaries, but not flooding, unless the storm’s path were to shift over the weekend. Ice jams are most likely to occur at bridges and at points where the waterways narrow or take turns.

“It is difficult to pin-point the exact path the storm will take this weekend, and the National Weather Service has taken the appropriate and cautionary step of issuing a flood watch for Pennsylvania,” said DeWillie. “While this system may produce less rain in the central and northern portions of the Susquehanna basin, we don’t want to under estimate what could happen if the storm were to take a different path.”

“This week’s warm weather did weaken the ice on the Susquehanna River and so it is now more susceptible to breaking and moving,” said DeWillie. “According to the members of the Interagency Committee, this potential for ice jams, and associated flooding, are the primary areas of concern for the weekend.”

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Should the weekend's storm take a different path and bring higher rainfall amounts, the impact of the rainfall on the significant snow pack and river ice would present a greater risk for flooding. According to the National Weather Service, some rivers and streams may reach cautionary levels and fill to the banks, but are not likely to overtop and flood. For the most current river forecasts, check the National Weather Service web site at <http://www.erh.noaa.gov/marfc/>.

DeWillie offered the following guidance and tips for people to follow in preparation for any potential flooding this weekend or at any time of the year.

General Guidance and Tips

- Clear gutters, down spouts, blocked storm drains to help drain away water.
- Never enter a flooded basement. Many electrical systems originate in the basement.
- Make sure sump pumps are operating properly.
- Stay tuned to local television and radio news broadcasts and monitor on-line information sources (see list below).
- Monitor the NOAA weather radio for flood forecast information.
- Have a plan ready for moving personal property, pets and people if a flood warning is issued.
- Never attempt to drive through flooded roads. More than 50 percent of all deaths occurring during floods are the result of people attempting to drive through flooded roadways. If your vehicle enters the water and begins to move downstream, abandon your vehicle.
- Have two planned evacuation routes in the event one road becomes flooded.
- As necessary, carefully remove snow from roofs (snow, ice and cold shingles are very slick and hazardous, so use extreme caution). The weight of snow, combined with rain can be extremely heavy on roofs, and older, poorly built structures are susceptible to collapse.
- Prepare a winter survival kit, particularly in the event of power outages. The kit should include bottled water, canned food with a manual can opener, a first aid kit, ample supply of medications, fuel for alternate heat sources, food and shelter for pets and animals, a radio with fresh batteries, spare batteries, a flashlight and candles with matches, and other pertinent items.

According to DeWillie, the Pa. Department of Environmental Protection—a member of the Interagency Committee—recommends that for communities with flood protection projects, they should inspect their projects to ensure they are operational in the event flood flows occur. This includes:

- Checking all flap gates before the water rises to be certain they function properly and are not held open by ice or debris.
- Being prepared to close sluice gates in the event the automatic gates fail.
- Ensuring that all manpower, tools and materials are available to erect closure structures and perform flood fighting functions if required.
- Inspecting storm water pumping stations and making them ready to operate as needed.
- Monitoring the rate of rise of the water, especially in ice jam situations, and being prepared to act accordingly.

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The following is a list of the many resources available to get the latest flood forecast information.

Weather and Flood Warning Resources, including On-Line Information

- NOAA Weather Radio
- Television and radio news broadcasts
- **Weather Forecast Guidance**
http://www.nws.noaa.gov/outlook_tab.html
- **Watches and Warnings**
<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/er/hq/>
- **Weather sites**
<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/bgm/> (WFO Binghamton, NY Weather Forecasts and Warnings)
<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/ctp/> (WFO State College, PA Weather Forecasts and Warnings)
<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/phi/> (WFO State College, PA Weather Forecasts and Warnings)
<http://www.weather.gov> (Select your state of interest)
- **Hydrologic sites**
<http://www.erh.noaa.gov/marfc/> (Middle Atlantic River Forecast Center general information)
<http://ahps.erh.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ahps.cgi?bgm> (WFO Binghamton, NY Hydrologic Forecasts and Warnings)
<http://ahps.erh.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ahps.cgi?ctp> (WFO State College, PA Hydrologic Forecasts and Warnings)
<http://ahps.erh.noaa.gov/cgi-bin/ahps.cgi?phi> (WFO Mount Holly, NJ Hydrologic Forecasts and Warnings)

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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