



News for Immediate Release

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DEP Secretary Krancer Provides Update on Susquehanna River, Waterways

Harrisburg – DEP Secretary Mike Krancer announced today that DEP has submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) its final 2012 Integrated Waters report, a biannual assessment of the state's rivers and streams required by the federal Clean Water Act. The report describes the health of various waterways in the state and, where needed, the state proposes listing waterways as impaired.

"Our final report is firmly grounded in sound science, and we expect that EPA will agree with it based on the science presented," DEP Secretary Mike Krancer said. "Based on the science and law, we do not believe that the main stem of Susquehanna River should be proposed as impaired under the Clean Water Act. While we recognize that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and others had requested that DEP propose to impair a 98-mile stretch of the Susquehanna River, as we have pointed out on many occasions before, that view is based on very limited, piecemeal data and is not supported by the existing data or the law. But DEP takes the concerns expressed about the Susquehanna very seriously and we are doing something about it. We will be taking, separately, a comprehensive and strategic approach to ensure that the Susquehanna River is protected.

"My staff will be working with the Fish and Boat Commission, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the U.S. Geological Survey to ensure water quality and aquatic life are being protected in the Susquehanna River. In particular, we recognize that there are issues facing smallmouth bass, such as what is called young-of-year die-offs; lesions on adult bass; and inter-sexing of the species," Krancer said. Inter-sexed fish are males with female characteristics, and young-of-year are recently hatched bass.

"The actual cause of these issues has not yet been determined or linked to any particular water quality issue, but DEP is dedicated to finding the answer through a disciplined scientific approach."

DEP's work in this area has been underway for some time. Last summer, agency staff spent 187 combined days on the river collecting hundreds of samples to characterize the water quality in the Susquehanna and its many tributaries. Samples collected included fish, macroinvertebrates, algae, chemistry and data on the river's dissolved oxygen, pH and temperature.

"Our scientists report that there does not appear to be any demonstrated cause and effect between water quality and the young-of-year die-offs, which, is contrary to what the Fish and Boat Commission has suggested is happening in tributaries outside of the Susquehanna, including the Delaware and Ohio river basins," Krancer said. "Within the Susquehanna River, this condition has appeared in a few tributaries and the impact is limited to smallmouth bass.

"Our scientists also tell me that no cause and effect can be established right now between water quality and the tumors and lesions found on adult bass. It is not at this point clear how prevalent the tumors and inter-sex conditions are throughout the river, nor if they are related to the young-of-year die-offs," Krancer said. "It is important to note that the Fish and Boat Commission has not reported any diseased young-of-year in the lower Susquehanna this past summer.

"We plan on keeping our efforts up," Krancer said. "We will continue sampling at 30 locations throughout the Susquehanna River basin to develop a very comprehensive set of data. We will continue to look at water quality issues facing the river, such as pesticide runoff; hormone-disrupting compounds and nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen."

The agency will also continue to consult with Dr. Hunter Carrick of Central Michigan University, a respected algal expert, and Dr. Vicki Blazer of the U.S. Geological Survey, a respected fish pathologist.

Secretary Krancer also announced a veteran DEP staff member will serve as Susquehanna River Coordinator to ensure the continuing efforts with the river happen efficiently and with scientific rigor.

"Should the data indicate that a proposed impairment listing is called for in the Susquehanna or any waterway, we would do so," Krancer said. "In addition to this, we continue to move forward with a very comprehensive federally mandated Chesapeake Bay Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL), which is in part responsible for improved water quality across the Chesapeake Bay watershed that includes the Susquehanna."

To view the 2012 Integrated Report and its accompanying comment and response document, visit www.dep.state.pa.us and click "Water," then "The Bureau of Point and Non-Point Source Management," then "Water Quality Standards" on the right-hand side, then "Integrated Water Quality Report - 2012."

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us. or call (717) 787-9637.

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