



INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN

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Communications and Outreach

An informed, educated, and organized public is a critical element in the process of protecting and restoring the Potomac and its resources. As mandated in its compact, the Commission provides information and other tools to assist the basin jurisdictions, organizations, and individuals in playing a greater role in the health of their local watersheds. The Commission also exchanges information with organizations from other watersheds and countries, allowing new research and ideas to benefit all.

The communication and outreach staff use a number of tools to strengthen knowledge and ties between public and government organizations.

The Commission newsletter, the *Potomac Basin Reporter*, reaches more than 17,000 people with news and information about water quality, restoration work, and related events in the basin. Commission staff respond to more than 1,500 requests for information each year on a wide range of Potomac subjects.

Staff created and maintain the Commission's website, which brings our newsletter and a wealth of Commission and Potomac information to a growing number of individuals. The website has proven a critical tool in providing information on the water supply status of the metropolitan area during drought conditions. Daily updates during droughts have provided the media, public and government officials the information needed to understand the region's complex water supply system. In the future, the site will become a source of data and other research that will allow scientists and decision makers to more effectively share information about the basin's natural resources.



ICPRB helps to sponsor citizen cleanups and other educational and stewardship opportunities.

The Commission also reaches residents and water users through a summertime series of public service announcements carried weekly on more than a dozen commercial radio stations. The announcements highlight fishing conditions, events, and river safety.

The ICPRB also maintains a library of more than 5,000 volumes that is open to the public. The

holdings include reports, maps, and other books about many aspects of the Potomac basin.

During the 1999 and 2002 droughts, communications staff worked in concert with the water resources unit to daily inform a long list of media and government officials on the effects of low river flow on water supply operations for the Washington metropolitan area. These efforts, which complemented website updates, helped to allay concerns by highlighting the years of planning that resulted in a strong plan for supplying needed water resources during low-flow periods and promoted the need to continue plans for the supply of a growing metropolitan area.

The Commission's watershed coordinator works closely with citizen groups, providing information and tools to assist at the grassroots volunteer level, where important gains to stream health are made. In addition, educational materials for schools and businesses are giving more people the opportunity to make a difference in their everyday actions. Links between watershed organizations, schools, and businesses bring a community atmosphere to the Potomac's recovery efforts.

Created with an interstate compact by an Act of Congress in 1940, the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) is composed of commissioners representing the federal government, the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The ICPRB mission is to enhance, protect, and conserve the water and associated land resources of the Potomac River basin and its tributaries through regional and interstate cooperation.

ICPRB accomplishes this mission through a variety of actions to conduct, coordinate, and cooperate in studies and programs in the areas of water quality, water supply, living resources, and land resources. The Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac River (CO-OP), a special section of the Commission, was created as a technical operations center for management and coordination among the regional water utilities to avoid water supply shortages in Metropolitan Washington during droughts.

For additional information contact the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin at 301-984-1908, or visit our website at <http://www.potomacriver.org>