

INTERSTATE COMMISSION ON THE POTOMAC RIVER BASIN



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Potomac Basin News Release

October 12, 2007
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Potomac Water Releases Hone Water Supply Operations

Scientists at the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB), working with the Washington metropolitan area water suppliers, are conducting a study to determine how to make the best use of water stored in upstream reservoirs when it is needed in times of drought.

To gather information about the amount of time needed for water stored in upstream reservoirs to travel some 200 miles downstream to metropolitan water supply intakes, ICPRB has asked the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to release a small quantity of the water stored in the Jennings Randolph and Savage reservoirs on October 16 and again on October 18, 2007. Each release will last for 24 hours. The volume of upcoming releases will be less than the releases made October 7-9.

These releases represent a fraction of the 14-billion gallons currently in storage and will be very useful to help water supply managers to increase efficiency in operating the reservoir system. The natural flow of the Potomac River is sufficient to meet all water supply demands through this fall and these releases will not adversely affect future water needs.

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(*)--Executive Committee
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The ICPRB is an interstate compact commission established by Congress in 1940. Its mission is the enhancement, protection, and conservation of the water resources of the Potomac River and its tributaries through regional and interstate cooperation. Represented by appointed commissioners, the ICPRB includes the District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia, and the federal government.

POTOMAC WATER RELEASES-2

The Potomac River is the primary source of drinking water for 4.1-million metropolitan-area residents, and under almost all circumstances the river readily supplies all the water needed. During extreme low flows, however, water stored at Jennings Randolph Reservoir, about 200 miles upstream on the North Branch Potomac, can be released to boost river flows allowing suppliers to meet demands while ensuring a flow that supports the river's ecology. Water supply releases occurred in 2002 and 1999.

The current low flows in the Potomac River are an indication of the problems the region is seeing with agriculture and in some small water systems. The major metropolitan area water suppliers, however, have ample reservoir storage to meet demands, and the use of that stored water is unlikely. Current Potomac flow is almost twice the regional water withdrawals. This unusual situation provides a rare, but safe, opportunity to allow water managers to test the timing of the release system under real low-flow conditions.

"From our experience in 1999 and 2002 we found it took about nine days for the water to travel down river to the intakes of the water treatment plants that serve the metropolitan area," said Erik Hagen, director of operations for the ICPRB Section for Cooperative Water Supply Operations on the Potomac (CO-OP), which helps manage drought operations for the water suppliers.

"It will be helpful to know this travel time with more precision, and it will be very valuable to be able to calculate the time required for released water to travel to the intakes under varying flow regimes. That way when we need to release water we will be able to time the releases and control the amounts in a way to give the region's water suppliers just what they need," Hagen said.

Hagen added that given the weather forecast, this week is a perfect time for a trial. Potomac River flows are low and continuing to slowly decrease. There are no storms predicted that could complicate tracking the releases as they flow downstream. Travel time of released water will be slower at lower natural river levels, so testing the system at different flows and release volumes will provide valuable information. Currently, water supply storage at Jennings Randolph Reservoir is nearly full (96 percent), and the two one-day tests will have only a negligible effect on storage, which will be replenished over the winter.

The October 16 release is scheduled to increase the cubic foot per second flow from 180 to approximately 450 cubic feet per second (cfs) at Jennings Randolph and from 55 cfs to 100 cfs at Savage River Dam. The October 18 release is scheduled to increase the cubic foot per second flow from 180 to approximately

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POTOMAC WATER RELEASES-3

305 cfs at Jennings Randolph and from 55 cfs to 85 cfs at Savage River Dam.

Water supply storage in the reservoir is shared by the metropolitan area's major water suppliers, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Fairfax Water, and the Washington Aqueduct.

For more information on Washington's water supply system, visit

www.potomacriver.org/water_supply/water_supply.htm.

For more information on the releases, call (301) 984-1908 X 116

or (240) 401-6730 (weekend)

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