

Friends of the Upper Delaware River

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Advocacy Group Endorses NY/PA ‘White Paper’ On Delaware River Tailwaters Ecosystem

A key stream advocacy group has endorsed an important new “white paper” by officials in New York and Pennsylvania that urges improvements in water releases from New York City’s three reservoirs into the Delaware River tailwaters.

The white paper analysis was done jointly by the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission in a report entitled, “*Recommended Improvements to the Flexible Flow Management Program for Coldwater Ecosystem Protection in the Delaware River Tailwaters.*”

The 36-page report gives a scientific analysis of benefits to the fisheries and ecosystem of the tailwaters and the Upper Main Stem of the Delaware River that could be realized by increased releases while still assuring adequate water is available to meet the drinking water needs of all of the communities that draw water from the river. Currently, releases from the three reservoirs are determined by an agreement called the Flexible Flow Management Program that was adopted three years ago by four basin states and New York City that are the parties bound by a 1954 Supreme Court decree.

“Flows in the tailwaters under the white paper release schedule will be substantially better than they have been under the FFMP,” said Dan Plummer, chairman

of FUDR. “We also anticipate that we will see significant gains in habitat in the Upper Main Stem under this new release program.” Plummer urged the decree parties to immediately adopt the proposed schedule of releases set forth in the white paper.

. Al Caucci, vice president of FUDR, said, “We know that there certainly is enough water to go beyond the white paper release levels while continuing to meet everyone’s needs. But this new release schedule moves us much closer to maintaining a robust trout fishery in the East and West Branch and well down the Main Stem from the beginning of April through the end of October.”

Friends of the Upper Delaware River is a not-for-profit organization that advocates on behalf of the river system, its residents, its businesses and its trout and other marine life. FUDR has been a leader in the battle to get in place a more sensible water-release plan from the area’s reservoirs, providing both safety from flooding and a sustainable world-class fishery.

“While we’re pleased to see this cooperative effort by the New York and Pennsylvania fisheries experts, we also are renewing the proposal FUDR, Trout Unlimited and other conservation groups made a year ago for a larger release program that goes beyond the white paper proposal,” said Lee Hartman, FUDR vice president and chairman of the Delaware River Committee for the Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited. He said the conservation groups’ renewed proposal would provide substantially larger releases to the tailwaters over a longer period of time than the FFMP while continuing to assure ample water for New York City.

“Obviously, we have more work to do to maximize this incredibly valuable fishery and ecosystem,” said Plummer. “We’re very pleased to see that the two state agencies view the white paper as a working document to provide release recommendations based on the most current information available.”

Plummer noted that even since the white paper was released, the media reported that New York City’s water consumption dropped another 12% during 2009, perhaps in response to increased water usage fees. This continuing trend toward lower consumption will further reduce predicted risk levels and support additional releases in the future.