

Friends of the Upper Delaware River

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For Immediate Release

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Crisis Alert: On 1st Day of Summer, Delaware River Trout Are at Peril

As summer begins, the trout on the upper Delaware River are at peril due to deadly water temperatures caused by inadequate cold-water releases from the region's reservoirs.

In recent days, water temperatures between Hancock and Lordville, N.Y.—the heart of the river's wild trout fishery--were measured at 75 degrees during the day and 70 overnight. With the long-range weather forecast predicting air temperatures in the 80s and 90s by late June, water temperatures are expected to reach as high as 78 degrees.

Trout are subjected to potentially lethal stress when water temperatures rise above 68 degrees. The aquatic insects essential to keeping the trout healthy are at risk, as well.

Friends of the Upper Delaware River, a nonprofit advocacy group, is calling on government officials to respond to this emergency by ordering additional releases of cold water from the New York City reservoirs that feed the river system. With reservoirs nearly full, there is plenty of water for both the trout and human beings.

"The trout need our help," says Al Caucci, FUDR vice president, "and the solution lies with motivating the water bureaucracy to simply open the spigot to allow more life-sustaining cold water to flow from the reservoirs."

Caucci, a legendary flyfisherman, guide and author, has spent his life on the river. He has made a point of carefully monitoring water temperatures and flow rates, and FUDR will use his expertise by issuing a "Crisis Alert" when conditions warrant.

On this first day of summer, water temperatures have reached the crisis stage, and FUDR is compelled to issue its first Crisis Alert.

“We have decided to take the lead on this issue and will disseminate a ‘Crisis Alert’ to government officials, the public, the media and our supporters when our data indicates the need,” said Caucci.

The river system has already suffered through one crisis this year. During an early heat wave from May 21 to June 6, water temperatures soared as high as 78 degrees—deadly for trout. Anglers and guides reported seeing dead trout, almost certainly killed by the heat.

Authorities say that the Cannonsville, Pepacton and Neversink reservoirs are all at 95 percent capacity. The situation hearkens to the devastating flooding of June 2006, when torrential rainfall had nowhere to go in the full reservoirs.

The current water release level out of Cannonsville Reservoir is 420 cubic feet per second. Caucci says water temperatures in the upper main stem Delaware from Hancock downstream to Lordville will stay above 70 degrees unless the release level is increased to 600 cubic feet per second.

FUDR has been a longtime critic of yo-yo water releases from the New York City reservoirs, which often flow heavy when trout need it least and are throttled down to a trickle when the fish need it most. FUDR advocates a common-sense release plan that would benefit the wildlife as well as those who live on and visit the river for recreation.