



News for Immediate Release

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DEP Releases 2012 Susquehanna River Sampling Report

Agency Will Discuss Results in Webinar on May 9

Harrisburg – The Department of Environmental Protection today released the 2012 Susquehanna River Sampling Report, explaining the latest results from an aggressive sampling effort across the Susquehanna River. Work is continuing across the watershed this spring and summer as the scope of the study broadens to include more tributaries of the three main sections of the Susquehanna watershed: the Juniata River, Main Stem and West Branch of the Susquehanna.

“The results of the 2012 report speak to the complexity of this issue and the need to continue to keep pushing forward with our partners at the Fish and Boat Commission, the Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the U.S. Geologic Survey,” DEP Acting Secretary Chris Abruzzo said.

“We’re not at a place yet where data supports one theory over another as it relates to the conditions experienced by the smallmouth bass, but we’re leaving no stone unturned as we continue to search for answers,” Abruzzo said. “Water quality data does not at this time support an impairment designation of the lower Susquehanna, and such a designation does not come with any guarantee of federal funding or resources.”

DEP will hold a webinar to discuss the results on Thursday, May 9, from 2 to 3 p.m.

The 2012 report, available online, discusses what data DEP biologists collected at eight sites in the Susquehanna basin, two of which were along the Juniata River, and at one control site in the Delaware River. DEP staff spent 187 days on the river last year collecting hundreds of samples.

All dissolved oxygen levels across the eight sites were acceptable compared with the current dissolved oxygen criteria. Phosphorus, nitrogen and nitrate levels were higher at the Delaware River control site than at any site in the Susquehanna River. Within the Susquehanna River basin, sample results for these pollutants were higher at the Juniata River sites.

DEP biologists also applied an established water quality index method that uses the number and diversity of aquatic insects as a barometer. The results indicate the Susquehanna River north of Harrisburg water quality is between fair and good, according to the index, with greater richness of aquatic life than the Delaware River site. DEP recognizes this sampling method and results are only a starting point, as

many more sites need to be sampled and the fish community as a whole needs to be evaluated throughout the river.

Samples taken near Harrisburg show that water quality can vary greatly across one cross-section of the river, representative of the three large waterways that make up the Susquehanna watershed: the Juniata River, Main Stem and West Branch.

DEP recently announced its work plan for 2013, broadening the scope of the study and the 2012 sampling. The 2013 work plan includes greater study of the Juniata and additional sampling across the tributaries of the three major waterways. DEP is providing regular updates on its website about it and PFBC's ongoing efforts, which include analysis of water quality, water flow, sediment, pesticides, hormones, invertebrates, fish tissue and other areas of study. Portions of the study focus on areas of the river or its tributaries where smallmouth bass reproduce.

DEP continues to wait for final approval from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency of its final 2012 Integrated Waters report, a biannual assessment of the state's rivers and streams that the federal Clean Water Act requires. The report describes the health of various waterways in the state and, where appropriate and based on sound science, DEP proposes listing waterways as impaired.

For more information, to view DEP's 2012 River Sampling Report and to register for the webinar, visit www.dep.state.pa.us and click the "Susquehanna River Study Update" button.

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