
Letter from the Executive Director



Delaware River Basin Commission

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Carol R. Collier
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Dear Friends:

As only the third person to serve as the commission's executive director, I am very proud of the accomplishments that have been achieved by our commissioners and dedicated staff over the agency's 43-year history. Many of these successes would not have been possible without the valuable assistance of our public and private partners too numerous to mention. Our projects and activities are truly "team" efforts. The title of one of the commission's publications, "A River Bounces Back," is a theme we can all celebrate together.

However, I must tell you that the commission's ability to meet the many challenges that lie ahead for the Delaware River Basin and the nearly 15 million people it serves in Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania is in serious jeopardy.

In the 100-year compact that created the DRBC, our five signatory parties (the four basin states and the federal government) agreed to support the commission's annual budget. The federal government adhered to this obligation for 35 years, paying its 20 percent share of the DRBC's annual operating budget. Then in 1996 (and continuing to the present), the U.S. Congress ended its support of the DRBC's budget while the federal government remained an active voting commission member possessing the same powers and authority as the other signatory parties, including the opportunity to chair the agency.

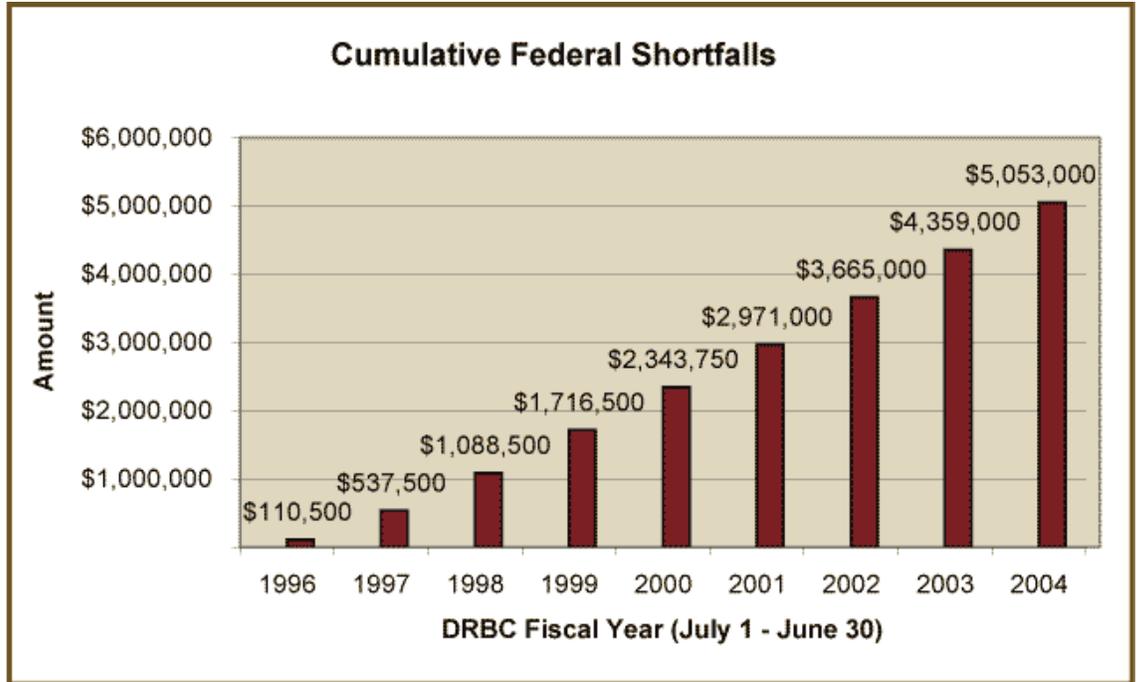
Since October 1, 1996, the commission has continued, and in some cases even expanded, its many important duties relating to interstate flow and drought management, pollution control, watershed planning, flood protection, permitting, and education/outreach without federal support of its annual operating budget. In some cases, we were able to obtain grant funding. We also realized some savings due to staff turnover (including retirements of long-time employees) and by not filling some authorized positions. For the most part, however, we dipped into our "rainy day" reserves. The cumulative federal shortfall has reached \$5 million, about the size of the commission's fiscal year 2005 budget, and the reserves are nearly gone.

Unless the federal government again honors the commitment made by President Kennedy and the 87th Congress in 1961 to support the DRBC's annual operating budget, the commission faces cutbacks to vital programs that have helped preserve and protect a major regional water supply for the past 43 years . . . programs that now address homeland security and other issues that are vital to the economic health and safety of our watershed. Additional information about the areas facing budget cuts can be found on the DRBC web site at <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/budget.htm>.

U.S. Senator Arlen Specter from Pennsylvania is leading the charge to restore federal funding, and his efforts in the fall of 2003 came close to being successful. He has pledged to try again this year and we are very grateful to him, U.S. Senator Tom Carper from Delaware (a former DRBC commissioner), U.S. Representative Jim Gerlach from Pennsylvania, and the other members of the U.S. Senate and House who support federal funding restoration. But time is running out before we are faced with painful decisions.

The passage of the compact creating the DRBC was a bold, new idea: the first time in our nation's history that the federal government and a group of states joined together as equal partners in a river basin planning, development, and regulatory agency. In a March 2003 *New York Times* article, "A New Frontier in Water Wars Emerges in East," the DRBC was described as "What is widely viewed as the most successful model of a cooperative effort" in interstate watershed management.

The commission's compact has been used as a model in the creation of other federal/interstate commissions in the United States. And our work has caught the eye of other river managers around the world. Delegations from Sri Lanka, Uganda, China, and South Korea traveled to West Trenton in 2002 and 2003 to meet with us. We do not seek them out, but they somehow find out about the DRBC and ask to meet with our staff to learn from us. I have been



asked to be a U.S. representative on an international team tasked with providing river basin management strategies to the People's Republic of China. This effort is fully funded by the Japanese. It is ironic to me that other nations seem to admire our approach to water resources management more than some officials in our own country.

If you believe the DRBC should continue its efforts in projects such as reducing the amount of PCBs and other toxics in the Delaware River, flood loss reduction, river flow management and fisheries protection, possible expansion of the Special Protection Waters regulations into the Lower Delaware region, water quality monitoring/analysis, interstate watershed partnerships, timely reviews of project applications, and public education/outreach – *and I hope you do* – it is time for your U.S. representative and senators to hear from you in support of restoring the DRBC's federal funding. We will continue our efforts with the basin's congressional delegation, but they need to hear directly from you, their constituents. Since the September 11 attacks and subsequent anthrax incidents, the U.S. mail is still very slow to arrive on Capitol Hill because of necessary precautions, so it is best to contact your legislators by e-mail, phone or fax. If you are unsure who represents you or how to get in touch with them, please visit the DRBC web site at <http://www.nj.gov/drbc/USReps.htm>.

I know that our efforts will have a greater chance for success if we work together.

Our basin state governors and their alternates on the commission have been very supportive and I thank them for their ongoing efforts. I also am grateful to the many individuals and organizations who have already contacted their federal legislators in support of DRBC funding.

This report is covering two years in an effort to reduce costs due to our budget crisis. I encourage you to regularly visit our web site at <http://www.drbc.net> throughout the year for useful and timely information, as well as use the many web links appearing in this report. I hope you enjoy reading it.

Sincerely,

Carol R. Collier

Carol R. Collier
Executive Director