Executive Director's Message

By Carol R. Collier

As I look back on the two years covered in this publication, several very important accomplishments rise to the top of the long list of activities and projects carried out by the Delaware River Basin Commission:

- The September 2004 signing ceremony in Wilmington, Del. marking the completion of the four-year process to develop the "Water Resources Plan for the Delaware River Basin," a 30-year, goal-based framework that will serve as a guide for all governmental and non-governmental stakeholders whose actions affect water resources in the basin.

- In a collaborative effort to protect the tailwater fisheries below New York City's Delaware River Basin reservoirs, and after years of intensive negotiations, a three-year interim program to provide additional water for fisheries protection was approved by the DRBC in April 2004.

- Based on water quality data collected from 2000 through 2004, the DRBC in 2005 temporarily classified the 76-mile stretch of the non-tidal lower Delaware River between the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area to the head of tide at Trenton, N.J. as Special Protection Waters (SPW). The entire 197-mile non-tidal Delaware River is now covered by the DRBC's SPW anti-degradation regulations intended to "keeping the clean water clean."

- The DRBC unanimously adopted a rule in May 2005 to establish "pollutant minimization plans" for point and non-point discharges of PCBs in the Delaware Estuary. The commissioners also set a goal of reducing PCB loadings by 50% in five years.

Over this two-year period, the Delaware River Watershed also witnessed firsthand the effects of natural and man-made events that triggered intensive responses from federal, state, and local government agencies, including the DRBC, and continue to require our collective attention in seeking better ways to protect the public and our water resources. During September 2004 and April 2005, the main stem Delaware experienced the worst flooding since the historic high water levels witnessed fifty years ago during August 1955. Two significant pollution incidents – the November 2004 *Athos I* oil spill and the August 2005 PPL fly ash incident – reminded us that our river has many users existing side-by-side, and that we must be ever vigilant to protect it for the benefit of all.

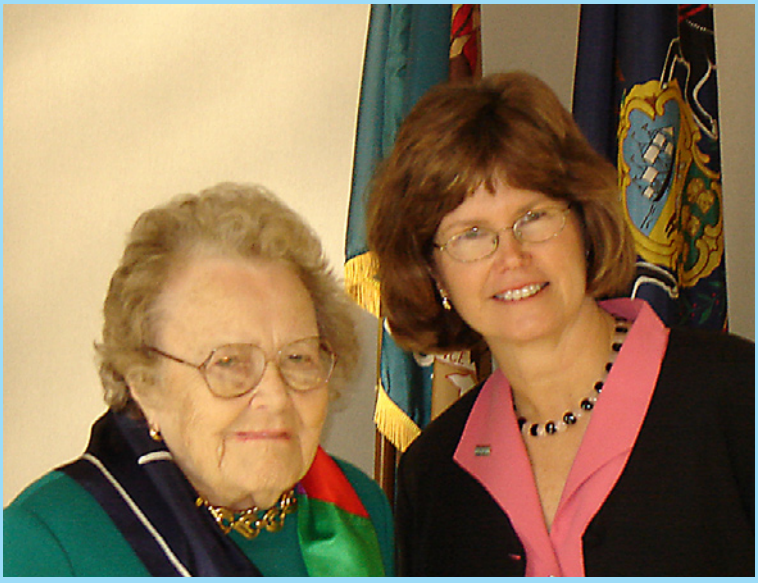
Unfortunately, our continued efforts over 2004 and 2005 to educate the U.S. Congress about the unique, vital role played by the DRBC and the need to restore the federal government's 20 percent contribution towards the commission's annual operating budget proved unsuccessful. With no federal contribution in sight during the DRBC fiscal year that began on July 1, 2005, the cumulative federal shortfall is expected to grow to $6.4 million, more than the size of the commission's annual operating budget. We are grateful to the members of the basin's congressional delegation who have tried to restore federal funding. We also thank the many individuals and organizations who have contacted their federal legislators on our behalf. DRBC staff accomplished much during 2004 and 2005, as will be

explained in this report, but we would have been able to do more if federal funding had been restored.

As we work together to achieve the goals and objectives contained in the 30-year basin plan – thereby protecting our water resources and enhancing our quality of life throughout the basin – let us follow a few basic truths which, borrowing from Thomas Jefferson, water managers hold to be self evident:

- Water does not respect political boundaries.
- Water should be managed on a watershed basis. What happens on the land affects streams and rivers. One cannot manage water without managing the land.
- Water management is not unilateral; it is a collaborative process. We need to engage all levels of government, especially municipal government.
- Downstream water suppliers are dependent on the actions of other upstream users.
- There is not enough water in the Delaware River Basin to support all uses during another drought of record.
- Floods will occur. We cannot stop the flood waters, but we can reduce the losses and damages from flooding. A flood plain is a natural extension of a river and it will flood. We need to keep people out of harm's way as we search for solutions.
- The Delaware River system is sensitive and can change quickly. We need to base our decisions on the range of conditions, not averages.
- We do not know all the answers. A strong base of science is needed to support good decision making. Any river management plan must be flexible, so the parties can adapt as new scientific information and management alternatives become available.

Once again, due to staffing constraints caused by the loss of full signatory funding support of the DRBC's operating budget, this report is covering a two-year period. We hope to return to a single year publication when we publish the 2006 annual report. I encourage you to regularly visit our web site at www.drbc.net for useful and timely information, as well as use the many web links appearing in this report.



Dr. Ruth Patrick and Carol R. Collier at the December 2005 announcement. (Photo by Clarke Rupert)

DRBC Honors Pioneering Ecologist

The DRBC in December 2005 named its to-be-developed office building courtyard the "Ruth Patrick River Garden" in honor of the world-renowned environmental scientist and Philadelphia resident.

"Dr. Ruth Patrick's outstanding career with The Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia has spanned seven decades and her work has set the standard for how the environmental health of rivers and streams is evaluated," DRBC Chairman Kevin C. Donnelly said at the ceremony attended by Dr. Patrick.

Additional information can be found at http://www.nj.gov/drbc/RiverGarden.htm.