

Shallcross, Amy

From: Joe Demalderis/Cross Current Guide Service <crosscurrent@optonline.net>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2019 3:53 PM
To: Shallcross, Amy
Subject: [EXTERNAL] FFMP 2017 General Study Work Plan

To: Amy Shallcross, Delaware River Basin Commission

Re: Trout Unlimited, Shehawken Chapter comments on the Decree Party/DRBC "FFMP 2017 General Study Work Plan" and "Draft Salinity Study Statement"

Dear Ms. Shallcross,

The Trout Unlimited Shehawken Chapter, based in northeast Pennsylvania on the Upper Delaware River, submits the following comments on the FFMP 2017 General Study Work Plan and the Draft Salinity Study Statement.

FFMP 2017 General Study Work Plan

We are strongly supportive of the Decree Parties and the Delaware River Basin Commission's (DRBC) interest and role in the studies to be undertaken over the next ten years as prescribed in the 2017FFMP. We believe each of the issues to be studied carry great weight and we look forward to working collaboratively with you to identify solutions to these complicated challenges in our mutual efforts to protect the Upper Delaware River and its world class wild trout fishery.

Our concern is the order in which the studies are scheduled, particularly the Excess Release Quantity (ERQ) recalculation which is last on the list to be finalized in 2029. We believe that an accurate recalculation of the ERQ would likely reveal a significant amount of additional water available to the river below the New York City Delaware basin reservoirs. As such, the ERQ recalculation should be the first issue to be studied because it directly effects most of the other issues (and related topics of consideration) on the study list. Why not first determine how much water is actually available for downstream needs before launching into the other study areas where available water quantity is a parameter of paramount importance?

A larger ERQ might ease some of the pressure that members of the RFAC Subcommittee on Ecological Flows (SEF) are currently experiencing by working with an extremely small Thermal Mitigation Bank (TMB) of 2500 CFS. It is our understanding that almost every SEF member is now convinced that 2500 CFS will not be sufficient to protect the Upper Delaware River during warm summers. A larger ERQ could increase the size of the TMB to ensure that Upper Delaware River water temperatures are maintained in a way that supports a thriving wild trout population. A larger ERQ might also make it possible to adopt modest increases in baseline FFMP releases which could provide tremendous improvements to the Upper Delaware River coldwater fishery without threatening the availability of NYC water supply.

Draft Salinity Study Statement

While we recognize that the use of the NYC Delaware basin reservoirs to repel the northward migration of the salt line from the Delaware Bay may not be the most efficient method to address the sweeping impacts of climate change and rising sea levels in the Delaware basin, it does provide some assurances of increased water releases at certain times for the Upper Delaware River. We would prefer that modest increases in baseline FFMP releases be incorporated into the FFMP as a long-term solution to the needs of the upper river. However, in the absence of improved baseline releases, upper river fishery advocates are forced to take every opportunity that provides additional water to the river, including

directed releases to meet the Trenton flow target and repel the advancing salt front during hot summers. If the Salinity Study begins to energize a policy shift in a direction that removes the legal requirement for New York City to use its reservoirs to repel the salt front, we believe there must be ironclad, written agreements that compensating water releases to the upper river be made to mitigate the impacts of fewer directed releases. Again, the best way to accomplish that would be to upwardly adjust the baseline FFMP releases but if that proves to be too difficult, then some other policy option must be instituted to ensure the upper river does not suffer if NYC is relieved of their responsibility to make releases to repel the salt front.

Thank you,

Joe Demalderis

President

Trout Unlimited, Shehawken Chapter