



FLOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
March 15, 2001  
MEETING SUMMARY

The third meeting of the Delaware River Basin Commission Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) was held at the Commission's offices on Thursday, March 15, 2001, at 10 a.m. with Vice-Chairman Clark Gilman chairing the meeting in the absence of Chairman Solomon Summer.

Mr. Gilman opened the meeting and asked for introductions by the attendees. [A list of meeting attendees is attached \(Attachment 1\).](#)

**REVIEW OF DRAFT MINUTES FROM THE DECEMBER 5, 2000 MEETING**

Mr. Gilman asked for review, comments or corrections of the Minutes of the last meeting of December 5, 2000.

It was noted there were two minor spelling corrections on page 4, the second paragraph the word "Mannville" should read "Manville" and the fourth paragraph the word "Branchberg" should read "Branchburg." There being no other corrections, the Minutes were approved.

It was agreed by the committee members present that all future Minutes would be condensed to a summary of the discussion items and action items that emanate from the meetings. All meetings are tape recorded for future reference.

**REVIEW OF DRAFT MISSION STATEMENT AND GOALS FOR THE FLOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Copies of the revised Mission Statement were distributed. Mr. Fromuth noted Sol Summer was the only person who had comments on the original sent out in January and his comments are included in this statement. He further noted the Mission Statement is very general and incorporates what was in the enabling Resolution.

There being no addition comments, the committee adopted the Mission Statement by a unanimous vote of the members present.

**REVIEW OF CHANGES IN DRBC COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING EFFORT AND POTENTIAL FOR A COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE**

Mr. Gilman noted this topic was mentioned at the last meeting but discussions were deferred as the FAC was just being formed.

Mr. Fromuth provided a brief summary. He spoke about the two-page report by Sol Summer to the Commissioners on January 9, 2001. The report provides guidance on the committee's priorities. The report focused on the Comprehensive Plan, the committee's mission, inventory work, outreach, and the flood warning proposal.

He further noted the comprehensive planning will be being a four phase, three year process with the design and issues phases being slated for this year. The entire process will be under the direction of the Watershed Advisory Council (WAC) comprised of members representing different water resource organizations in the basin.

Mike Personett, the planning consultant, with DRBC staff assistance will prepare a Convening Paper which describes initial inputs from the various advisory committees. It will be reviewed by the WAC and the DRBC Commissioners in April and May . The WAC will then recommend to the Commissioners the assignment of issues to the advisory committees. At the DRBC Commission meeting of June 6th issues will be assigned to advisory committees. The advisory committees will develop an Issues Paper to describe the issues in detail and will design detailed planning processes to deal with each issue.

Each advisory committee will designate a non-DRBC staff liaison to attend both the WAC meetings and the two-day workshop at Shawnee on the Delaware on May 14th and 15th. This process will improve FAC representation and inputs in the planning design and deliberations of the WAC.

It was noted that at the two previous FAC meetings the initial focus was on the flood warning system, which is only one part of flood loss reduction, but there are other issues - outreach, multiple uses of the flood plains, flood mitigation or property acquisition. The job of the liaison would be to represent any of the FAC issues to the WAC in a general view for the Comprehensive Plan for the basin. The sub-committee would focus on the planning issues once they are assigned to the FAC by the Commissioners.

Mr. Fromuth believed the amount of work involved for individuals interested in this position would take up approximately three weeks time over the course of one year between the workshop, meetings and any written products required.

Clark Gilman offered to sit on the sub-committee. Dave Thomas stated FEMA would also like to have a seat on the sub-committee. It was noted that perhaps some of the people not in attendance at today's meeting will also offer to be part of the sub-committee.

There was some discussion about the potential for better consistency among federal programs and agencies for flood loss reduction. Congress' Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000 requires coordination of mitigation efforts by federal agencies under the leadership of FEMA.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH - SUPPORT FROM DRBC PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

Mr. Fromuth stated that although one of the committee members was to be a media representative, there are difficulties in selecting one person from the competitive news networks. As an alternative, he suggested DRBC Public Information Specialists act as the media representative as they are experienced in environmental education and prepared to handle press releases and conferences if needed.

There was discussion concerning the need for a media member at this time. It was noted that currently, the FAC is working on improving the flood warning system and public outreach will be required as the system is developed to promote the benefits of the system to local governments.

It is believed that cost sharing may be needed to complete some of the recommendations.

The committee agreed to use the DRBC's Public Information Office to fulfill the position of media representative.

## **DRAFT FLOOD WARNING IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSAL**

Mr. Fromuth gave an overview of the proposal by stating it was a compilation of inputs from the last two

meetings concerning FAC recommendations on monitoring needs and the modernization of forecasting products by the National Weather Service (NWS). It deals strictly with the element of flood warning and flood mapping.

He indicated preliminary cost estimates have been removed from the proposal until there is some consensus as to the direction of the proposal. The proposal is expected to go before the Commission at their April 19th meeting.

Once the proposal is agreed upon, Mr. Fromuth stated the DRBC staff would submit it to the Northeast Midwest Institute which is a link between basin interests and congressional representation.

Jeffrey Featherstone, Deputy Executive Director of DRBC described a support letter to the Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, State and Judiciary regarding the proposal. The Delaware River Basin Congressional Task Force would like to send such a letter out as soon as possible.

Concern was raised as to whether the FAC should be writing the letter, or the DRBC staff, as the letter appears it is advancing NWS improvements by having the FAC making recommendations to the Commission to pursue funding that funds members of the FAC. It was noted the letter would be to support and improve equipment and flood warning, not to get funding in any particular way and it could be re-worded as such.

The Susquehanna River flood warning project was used as an example of how funding can work. It was noted that the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) promotes the funding of the project and the NWS is the vehicle for distribution of the money.

There were comments concerning potential conflict in some of the text concerning information and analysis provided by technical experts versus endorsement of the overall technical approach.

Bob Hainly asked if the proposal was written for the Commission to obtain funding from Congress or written to provide a work plan for agencies in the basin to implement the flood warning system.

Mr. Fromuth stated the only part of the proposal that would be a work plan would be the specific list of immediate deficiencies as they have been identified as immediate weaknesses. He explained that the proposal is to show that there has been progress made by the FAC in assessing existing equipment related deficiencies, as well as other general deficiencies that need more work.

Dave Thomas stressed the need for evaluating gages from the perspective of their multiple uses, not only flood warning uses. It is his hope that gages be placed in a way that fosters better base data for multiple use analysis. He noted that Congress is sensitive to risk analysis, not just the flood forecasting issue.

He suggested some of the recommendations could be more inventory specific to add in how the FAC arrived at this point. Overall, he believes the proposal was well written as it provides a talking paper to start a discussion that can be modified and provides good oversight to the process involved.

Mr. Fromuth suggested the proposal be reorganized listing the deficiency, the solution and the cost as it brings things together and adds whatever justification is available. The recommendations were meant to address each listed deficiency but due to the current format of the proposal, it is not that easy to tie them together.

A discussion about the Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services (AHPS) occurred noting the system brings together the use of doppler radar, flood stage forecast mapping, real time probabilistic forecasting and can be applied to the real time gage equipment that is already in place.

Mr. Gilman stated that if no one present was sensitive to any information provided in the proposal he would like the FAC to act on the proposal today and allow it to proceed with a proviso that the FAC would review it

again once the costs were inserted into the document prior to it going before the Commission.. The members present were in agreement with this approach.

It was noted that the extended cost of maintaining the system is not included in the proposal. It was agreed the O & M costs are needed but until there is an agreement on what the proposal is to encompass, the O & M costs were removed.

There was some discussion concerning annual appropriations and cost sharing of the operations and maintenance of gages. Again, SRBC was used as an example in which the gages installed as a result of the program are not cost shared but are covered by an annual appropriation.

Mr. Fromuth indicated that any existing gages could be cost shared. Mr. Thomas noted that the more you introduce the concept of cost sharing and shared obligations to maintain systems at different levels of government, the more successful you are at getting the attention of Congress, etc. who may want to fund these types of projects.

Discussions ensued about the possibility of having the private sector, such as businesses that rely on operating gages for their productivity, being approached for a partnership in this endeavor.

Cost to automate an existing stream gage was indicated to be approximately \$10,000 - \$12,000 with an annual operations and maintenance cost of \$2,000 - \$3,000.

Mr. Gilman requested that the list of improvements be prioritized. But it was noted that perhaps this task should wait until the size of the appropriation is known. There are changes occurring constantly regarding what gages are being funded by other programs.

A concern was raised that if this proposal was going to reach the hands of Congressional representatives, perhaps additional support from other committees that would benefit from some of the stream gages and telemetry should be considered for a more global type of document addressing all the values associated with particular gages for multiple benefits such as low flow management, water quality and TMDL's. Mr. Fromuth agreed that the current document is limited to general wording about multiple benefits of gages.

He noted that this proposal is intended to go before the WAC and be reviewed as part of the comprehensive planning but he does not believe it will be reviewed or approved by any other committee (i.e. Water Quality Advisory Committee or Flow Management Advisory Committee) in any short time frame.

It was agreed the proposal should focus more attention on the multiple uses of stream gages.

Mr. Sauls asked how the program's annual funding requirement would be accomplished. Mr. Fromuth stated the intent was to do something similar to what the SRBC is doing and put the proposal in front of an entity to fund both the one time and O & M costs.

Other comments concerning the proposal wording included:

- Item 3 on page 14 under "Specific Deficiencies" should be brought to the attention of the NWS prior to this statement going out to the public as they may prefer a different approach. It was also noted that the operating company for the Mongaup hydroelectric power reservoirs has changed from Southern Company to Mirant.
- Item 5 on page 14 should indicate the lake level gage at Lake Wallenpaupack can be read on a real time basis by Pennsylvania Power & Light (PPL), but not by the National Weather Service (NSW).
- It was noted that PPL is considering replacing this level gage and would consider doing so in

cooperation with the NWS to include telemetry.

- There was discussion of precipitation gages mentioned on page 18 and the need to identify the sources of the precipitation data.

Completing the review of the proposal, the committee requested the noted changes be made and a revised proposal be available to the committee. Mr. Fromuth agreed. He noted that the Northeast Midwest Institute would receive the revised proposal after review by the FAC.

Mr. Hainly asked if the USGS districts involved should begin to act on the estimates of deficiencies. Mr. Fromuth agreed and stated he would also start to work with Sol Summer to obtain estimates on what AHPS / Flash Flood Warning improvements would cost.

Mr. Gilman asked if there was anyone present who had a problem with the proposal. Mr. Sauls of the Corps stated that without being aware of the benefits or the costs of the proposal he does not feel comfortable with going forward with it at this time. With the exception of Mr. Sauls, the committee agreed that the commission staff should move forward with the proposal for the purpose of seeking funding.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Flood Advisory Committee (FAC) will be held at the DRBC office on **Thursday, June 14, 2001**, at 10 a.m.

*(Please note: this meeting was later moved to July 10, 2001)*

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## **Attachment 1**

### **FLOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE Thursday, March 15, 2001**

#### **ATTENDANCE**

<b>NAME</b>	<b>AGENCY</b>
Burd, David K.	Merrill Creek Reservoir
Fromuth, Richard	DRBC Staff
Gilman, Clark D.	New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection - Flood Plain Management
Hainly, Robert	U.S. Geological Survey - Lemoyne, Pa.
Lear, Kathy	New Jersey Office of Emergency Management
Nickelsberg, Walt	National Weather Service, Mount Holly, N.J.
North, A.J.	National Park Service
Petrewski, Gary	PPL Generation LLC
Reuber, Michael	National Park Service
Rush, Paul	New York City Department of Environmental Protection, Grahamsville, N.Y.

Sauls, George      U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
Schopp, Robert    U.S. Geological Survey - West Trenton, N.J.  
Steigerwald, Scott   Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Harrisburg, Pa.  
Thomas, David      Federal Emergency Management Agency, Region 3

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