For Release: :IMMEDIATE **Contact:** Lori O'Connell
Wednesday, July 16, 2008 (518) 402-8000

AGREEMENT REACHED: DELAWARE RIVER BASIN COMMISSION STATES JOIN IN EMERGENCY THERMAL RELEASE PROGRAM FOR FISHERY PROTECTION

In response to the potential of unseasonably high air temperatures in the upper Delaware River Basin this summer and the effects of rising water temperatures on the river's renowned fishery, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Pete Grannis today announced that New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey and the City of New York, the "decree parties" that share management responsibility of the New York City Delaware River reservoirs and their tailwaters, unanimously approved a temporary program to protect this vital recreational fishing resource.

Under the agreement, known as the "Interim Excess Release Quantity Extraordinary Needs Bank for an Emergency Thermal Releases Program for Fishery Protection," DEC is authorized to make emergency releases from a bank of nearly one billion gallons of water in the Cannonsville Reservoir to moderate temperature spikes until September 15, 2008. It is anticipated that this bank of water should be sufficient to address thermal needs of the upper main stem of the Delaware River under extreme conditions. Releases will occur when the three-day average of forecasted daily maximum air temperatures for the Hancock, NY vicinity exceeds 90 degrees F and the minimum exceeds 65 degrees F. Air temperature forecasts will come from DEC's meteorological staff working in conjunction with the National Weather Service.

"Water-release management is complex and requires an appropriate balance among issues involving drinking water supply, aquatic habitat, flood risks, recreation, and even hydropower production," Commissioner Grannis said. "New York State is committed to continued and cooperative efforts to optimize the management of these critically important water resources to the benefit of all stakeholders."

During periods of low flow and relatively high water temperatures, DEC recommends that anglers consider delaying their trout fishing outings until the river conditions become less stressful for fish and that fishing trips occur early in the morning when water temperatures are at their lowest point in the day.

"While we are doing our best to manage the trout resources of the Delaware tailwaters, anglers can help by minimizing their interactions with fish when conditions are most severe," added Grannis.

(MORE)

While the Flexible Flow Management Program (FFMP) should primarily provide habitat and temperatures suitable for trout on the West Branch of the Delaware and the upper sections of the East Branch and Neversink River, use of the emergency bank will help abate extremely high water temperature events in the upper reaches of the Delaware's main stem. The bank will enable DEC to provide a plume of cold water below the confluence with the East Branch to the extent possible and increase flows so that trout will be able to move to thermal refuge areas.

The main stem is vulnerable during periods of high temperature when large volumes of warm water from the East Branch enter the main stem at Hancock and there are no directed releases from the Cannonsville Reservoir to counter this inflow.

The DEC will continue to work with the decree parties to further improve upon the reservoir water release schedule specified in the current FFMP and provide improved thermal habitat on the main stem Delaware River to the extent feasible given other pressing considerations.

###

08-145