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**Legislators urge stakeholders to act swiftly  
on Delaware River flow management plan**

Sullivan County, NY – The Sullivan County Legislature and the Sullivan County Visitors Association (SCVA) ask the involved authorities to quickly resolve an ongoing and potentially catastrophic crisis with the rules which govern releases of water from New York City reservoirs into the Delaware River.

For the past decade, a Flexible Flow Management Plan (FFMP) has guided the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) in releasing water from the Neversink, Pepacton and Cannonsville reservoirs into the Delaware. Designed to supersede a 1983 agreement known as Revision 1, the FFMP was the result of years of intense negotiations amongst the City and the states of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Delaware.

Using the latest science and data, the FFMP significantly increased the amount of water the City was required to pour into the river – to a level all parties agreed would be far healthier for the ecosystem and for the tourism industry, which locally is heavily dependent on adequate flow rates in the Delaware. However, New Jersey did not renew the FFMP agreement earlier this year, and thus it expired on June 1.

Thankfully, the DEP stepped in and voluntarily agreed to maintain FFMP-level releases, rather than reverting to Revision 1, which would cut reservoir releases to comparably miniscule rates. But on August 23, the DEP announced it would gradually end those voluntary releases, steadily dropping the amounts to Revision 1 levels by October 10. The FFMP's flood mitigation initiative, which seasonally required 10-percent voids in the three reservoirs, is also disappearing.

Meanwhile, negotiations over the FFMP continue amongst the City and states, but there is no timetable for when they might be concluded – and no guarantee they will successfully result in a new FFMP

agreement. Likewise, there is no guarantee from the City that, in the continued absence of an FFMP, reservoir release rates will be raised above Revision 1-mandated levels at the start of next year's tourism, fishing and spawning seasons on the Delaware.

"If the involved parties cannot come to an agreement, Sullivan County and other Delaware-connected municipalities could suffer devastating blows to both the environment and tourism-dependent business," Legislature Chair Luis Alvarez stated. "Having worked much of my career in the river valley, I deeply understand the integral role the Delaware plays in dozens of communities within and far beyond Sullivan's borders."

"While the City's constituents and customers will continue to receive their drinking water without interruption, our constituents and visitors may have to deal with drastically reduced flows in the Delaware and the accompanying drastic hit on recreational usage of the river," noted Legislature Vice Chair Nadia Rajsz, whose District 2 includes a portion of the Delaware. "I understand the City's good faith push to more quickly secure a new FFMP – and we want that plan in place, too – but that cannot and should not come at our expense."

"Communities like Narrowsburg have long been a draw because of the Delaware River flowing past their homes and businesses. To reduce that flow is to siphon away the very lifeblood of these towns and hamlets," said Legislator Scott Samuelson, whose District 1 encompasses a substantial portion of the rivershed. "The impact could be catastrophic, harming both the ecology and economy of this gorgeously pristine destination."

"The Delaware is such an incredibly valuable resource that Congress named it a Scenic and Recreational River nearly 40 years ago, and the National Park Service manages it to this day," explained SCVA President/CEO Roberta Byron-Lockwood. "Upwards of 200,000 people visit it annually just in Sullivan County's Catskills, and our liveries, restaurants, shops and conservation organizations confirm it is the #1 draw to our riverside communities."

"I live in one of those communities – Callicoon – and I've cherished the Delaware all my life," affirmed Legislator Terri Ward, whose District 5 includes the river's northernmost reach in Sullivan County. "I'm told the City and the involved states also deeply value this shining ribbon of water. If so, it's time for all of them to stop gambling with our futures, with our livelihoods, and speedily agree to a new, fair and healthy flow plan."

"Be assured that Sullivan County is committed to the sustainability of the Delaware and those who rely upon it for personal and professional benefit," stated Sullivan County Manager Josh Potosek. "As I said earlier this year, Sullivan County will be reviewing its legal alternatives in the event that an agreement is not worked out amongst the negotiating parties."