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NEWS FROM THE PEQUANNOCK RIVER COALITION

NJDEP Puts Newark on Notice

January 8, 2012 - As most of our friends and supporters know, PRC has worked to protect wild trout, other coldwater species, and the ecosystem that relies upon them within the Pequannock River. The City of Newark controls summer temperatures in the section of the Pequannock below Oak Ridge Reservoir through releases of cool bottom water from valves at the Oak Ridge Reservoir dam. PRC pressed successfully for new permit conditions that required Newark to release the proper amount of water to keep this section of the river healthy. However, permit requirements don't mean much without compliance from the City. On several occasions last summer the City failed dismally in monitoring temperatures there, and only reacted to problems when pushed by the state, with near-disastrous results. Part of the problem is the lack of a formal monitoring and response protocol for the City to follow. PRC and our membership have been advocating for the NJDEP to take action on this issue. Now, for the good news!

PRC just received a letter from the NJDEP Division of Water Supply. First, it confirms the temperature problems we reported. Then it agrees that "...if Newark had taken a more proactive approach to reduce the Pequannock River temperature below Oak Ridge Reservoir, most if not all of these exceedances could have been avoided." That is exactly our position.

The letter then says "Therefore, in a December 2011 letter the Bureau directed Newark to establish a written monitoring and release protocol to take action prior to the river temperature reaching 74 degrees Fahrenheit. This written protocol shall be submitted to the Bureau before May 1 2012... ...if an acceptable protocol is not submitted by the May 1 2012 deadline, and/or if in the future Newark fails to properly implement the protocols which results in temperatures exceeding the limits in the permit, the Bureau will take a more aggressive action...".

The creation of a protocol and a commitment from the NJDEP to act on any future failures is exactly what the river needed. So, to all the folks that have submitted letters and emails to the state on this topic, you did make a difference. It's a great way to start the new year!

Thanks,
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