

Vic E.
Pisani/BWSP/DEHP/CEH/OP
H/DOH

09/21/2007 12:37 PM

To: Richard W. Svenson/DEP/CEH/OPH/DOH@NYSDOH

cc: Ron Heerkens, John Strepelis/Syracuse/DOH@NYSDOH,
Joseph P. Trapp/Capital District/DOH@NYSDOH, Timothy
E. Vickerson/Capital District/DOH@NYSDOH,

bcc:

Subject: Fw: MVWA status

We've been in contact with the Mohawk Valley Water Authority, the Oneida Co. HD, NYPA and the Canal Corp. There seems to be a difference of opinion on the severity of the issue and when/what action must be taken. The NYPA indicates that the current level of Hinkley Reservoir is 1191 and is dropping at .4 to .5 feet per day. Oneida Co. HD indicates the emergency plan begins to kick in at 1185. Some information we're being supplied indicates that they can operate the MVWA down to a level of 1170. The Oneida Health Dept. disagrees. We are going to be contacting the MVWA again to confirm the elevation of their intake. The NYPA indicates the current flow out of Hinkley is 370 CFS for stream and canal maintenance. MVWA is taking 30 CFS to maintain its water system, which represents only 7.5% of the flow, so although they have conservation measures built into their emergency plan, it is expected that they would be ineffective. The DEC mandates a minimum flow of 160 CFS for stream maintenance and since the NYPA has discontinued power production, the remaining flow is being utilized by the canal corp. Jack described his contact with the canal corp as somewhat contentious. They seem to feel that they have no need to deviate from their planned flows and don't intend to do so. (Some say the canal appears at a high level and is overflowing dams, so whether they really need to draw the amount of water they are currently drawing to maintain navigation is uncertain.) The Oneida Co. HD estimates that only 20 days of storage remain in the reservoir and is asking that NYSDOH take action to protect the MVWA source. We are in the process of collecting additional information and referencing the emergency response plan for MVWA.

Vic

----- Forwarded by Vic E. Pisani/BWSP/DEHP/CEH/OPH/DOH on 09/21/2007 12:08 PM -----



"DeRosa, Nicholas"
<nderosa@ocgov.net>

09/20/2007 04:20 PM

To: <vep01@health.state.ny.us>

cc:

Subject: FW: MVWA status

From: Clive, Sean

Sent: Tuesday, September 18, 2007 4:40 PM

To: Gilmore, Daniel; DeRosa, Nicholas; 'John Strepelis - NYSDOH'; 'Erin Spier - NYSDOH'; 'NYSDOH - Kevin Kenyon'; Eric Lemieux; Joseph Patterson; Joseph Robertaccio; Pat D'Angelo; Sean Clive

Subject: MVWA status

A recent article in the Utica Observer-Dispatch (<http://www.uticaod.com/homepage/x1681066971>) caught my eye and made me very wary of the current conditions at the Hinckley Reservoir. The reservoir serves as the sole source of water for the Mohawk Valley Water Authority (~130,000 customers in Oneida and Herkimer Counties). Recent actions involving the NYS Canal Corporation, MVWA and NYSDEC have

resulted in a complicated mess of legal issues that have limited expansion of the water system to serve areas with poor water quality and quantity.

My concern is the current water levels in the reservoir (see Hinckley Reservoir Levels - from NOAA - <http://newweb.erh.noaa.gov/ahps2/hydrograph.php?wfo=aly&gage=hikn6&view=1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1&toggles=10,7,8,2,9,15,6>). Discharge patterns are available at the USGS site (http://waterdata.usgs.gov/ny/nwis/current/?type=intro&group_key=county_cd). Currently, the water level is approximately 1192 feet. At current water use (~17MGD for public water supply - and limited restriction if any on power generation and canal recharge flows) with estimated drop of ~1/2 foot per day and NO recharge from precipitation, the MVWA has ~20 days of storage remaining in the reservoir.

I am concerned that the recent article (and news release from Canal Corp - <http://www.nyscanals.gov/news/pressrel/2007/2007-09-17-conserve.html>) describing the "proactive measures" being taken by the Canal Corporation are not nearly enough and are definitely too late in the game to have a significant effect on the availability of the water supply for the people served by MVWA.

I found out that the power authority (NYSPA? or leasing agent) contacted MVWA within the last few weeks to ask if MVWA would like to reduce the flows through the power flow system (thereby allowing more water to remain behind the dam, available for drinking water supply) - a system that has been in place for years and has been used appropriately many times. MVWA requested the reduction. And reportedly, the Canal Corporation denied the reduction request by the power authority. It is unknown why this occurred as normal operations at low water levels typically result in lower power generation flows.

Reportedly, the following issues exist:

- Normal flow for power generation is 400+cf/s
- Current flow has been >500cf/s
- Canals are at peak levels (see pictures <<MVWA Hinckley Reservoir pictures.pdf>>) and are overflowing weirs while the water behind the dam is nearly as low as it has ever been
- Canal will reportedly close in November (45 days away?)
- MVWA has up to 20 days of reserve at this time
- Water levels in Hinckley Reservoir have been this low following severe droughts or to repair the dam, but the current drought status is not nearly as bad as several years ago when so many systems were on drought warnings before this time.
- However, since the drought conditions are not as they have been in the past, the extremely low levels of the water in the reservoir are not naturally created.

I would ask that NYSDOH look into this matter and request action to protect the water source for the MVWA.

There are likely many other issues to discuss and possibly matters to discuss that we should involve MVWA in a conference call or meeting so that accurate numbers and data may be obtained. I do believe this should be a priority, especially if this is occurring to manipulate public opinion in regard to the water rights and use of water by the MVWA and the current lawsuits that are pending - if that is the case, the risk to public health and safety that these actions are taking are unfair and could be long-lasting. We cross our fingers for no emergency conditions (e.g. main breaks, earthquakes, etc...) that would jeopardize the entire system without much reserve capacity.

Sean Clive

Sean Clive

Principal Public Health Sanitarian

Oneida County Health Department - Environmental Division