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Delaware River Basin Commission,

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Statement of Functions and Responsibilities

W. State Street
Trenton, N. J.

The Delaware River Basin Commission is responsible for the comprehensive development of the water resources of the 12,575 square mile area drained by the Delaware and its tributaries. About 15 million people now depend in some degree upon these water resources.

Because so many different units of government -- federal, state and local -- and major private enterprises carry on activities that substantially affect the river system, the Commission's most important function will be to coordinate these activities so that the maximum beneficial development of the Basin's resources may be achieved. To insure coordination the Commission must prepare and maintain a comprehensive, multi-purpose plan for the immediate and long-range development and use of the waters of the Basin. This plan will be the controlling instrument, and no public or private project substantially affecting the waters of the Basin may be undertaken if it is in conflict with the comprehensive plan. As a short-range, more detailed embodiment of the comprehensive plan, the Commission must each year adopt a water resources program projecting the water needs of the Basin for the next six years, and the public and private projects authorized to meet those needs.

The Commission is directed by the compact to use existing agencies of the five signatory parties whenever feasible, but it has the legal power to act itself if need be. The Commission will be deeply involved in furthering such vital programs as flood damage reduction; water quality improvement; municipal, industrial and agricultural water supply; recreation, and fish and wildlife improvement; hydroelectric power generation; soil conservation, forestation and watershed management. The recently completed Survey of the Basin, prepared under the direction of the Corps of Engineers, U. S. Army, has provided the Commission with a valuable starting point for action in many of these fields. The Corps of Engineers' proposals for the Delaware call for the immediate authorization of eight reservoirs needed in the next 30 years and estimated to cost \$224 million. The Corp offers a total plan of 58 reservoirs over the next fifty years at a final cost of close to \$600 million. Many non-structural measures and programs are also recommended. The Commission will have a unique opportunity to speed this program into reality by initiating the many intergovernmental negotiations that must precede major public works projects, and by developing financing plans mutually agreeable to benefitting parties. A most important early job for the Commission will be the adopting of a comprehensive plan that will clear the way for action on those projects recommended by the Corps of Engineers for immediate construction.

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One basic responsibility of the Commission will be the allocation of water among the four states and their political subdivisions. The Delaware has been subject to 35 years of interstate dispute over the diversion of water to areas outside the Basin. Twice adjudicated by the U. S. Supreme Court, this issue has, hopefully, been put to rest for the life of the compact by virtue of the agreements in the compact. Through its power to make future allocations of Basin waters the Commission has the opportunity to promote interstate comity and to settle differences at the early stages before they grow into major disputes that disrupt timely progress.

The Commission will be confronted with a wide range of possible action and research programs for the early years. If valuable reservoir sites are not to be lost through commercial or residential development, a way must be found to reserve them until the time that they are actually needed for water storage. The extension of flood warning systems, and the commencement of flood plain zoning programs have a current urgency. The completion of a region-wide pollution control program, featuring automatic monitoring devices, also appears to warrant early Commission attention.

Numerous voids in basic knowledge about water will need to be filled at an early date through careful research: research on the means for developing ground water resources; on the control of new pollutants that were unknown just a few years ago; on effects on amount of water use caused by changes in cost of water; and on possibilities for the conversion of estuarine water to fresh water.