



Hudson River - Black River Regulating District

Message from the Executive Director

Continued

For residents around and near the Great Sacandaga Lake, the latter translated to lower water levels than had been typical the last few years, reminding many of traditionally lower water levels in the fall which had been the norm for generations before a new agreement and FERC license in the early 2000s led to (normally) higher levels in the fall for recreational use. For many new to the area or to the Great Sacandaga Lake specifically, this afforded an opportunity to familiarize themselves with one of the key purposes for which the reservoir was created – namely, to continue downstream flow during abnormally dry periods when natural flows could otherwise decline to the point of ecological, economic, and public health impacts. On its face, this could be counterintuitive to people not familiar with the history of the reservoir or the mission of the Regulating District – to continue or even increase downstream releases when the elevation is below the target level. But what we saw in 2020 was simply the reservoir working as it was intended to do: “flatten” the curve in downstream flows.

Approaching the end of my first full year at the helm of the Regulating District, I can't help observing how fortunate the people and communities we serve are to have the leadership of Chairman Finkle and the entire HRBRRD Board, and the exceptional people who deliver on our promise of flood protection and flow augmentation day after day, year after year. Like nearly every other institution, we have been challenged for the better part of this year by the restrictions necessitated by COVID-19. Our team took these challenges in stride, and whether working from home or working different schedules to maintain social distancing and comply with other appropriate protocols, they never missed a beat.

When we started the year, we committed to finalizing a program for which the HRBRRD Board and our Great Sacandaga Lake stakeholders have long advocated – the implementation of an online permit transaction system which would allow permittees to conduct most permit transactions, including renewals, online. Throughout the year, work on this new customer service enhancement has continued, even after our personnel dealt with COVID-19 curveballs one after the other. And I am grateful to each and every one of these individuals, as well as Chairman Mark Finkle and Board Members Jeffrey Rosenthal and Ken De Witt who have helped us test the system, and our consultant Interactive Media Consulting for building what I think will be a user-friendly and efficient tool for permittees.

Finally, we are already working on a three-year spending plan which will responsibly balance our competing operational and infrastructure needs in a way that is sustainable and ensures we continue to deliver on our vitally important mission for generations to come. Like virtually every other institution, agency, or organization in New York State, we face significant fiscal challenges in the years ahead. But through the skill and ingenuity of the HRBRRD workforce, and the continued leadership and support of our Board and stakeholders alike, I am confident that we will navigate these challenging times and emerge smarter, stronger, more resilient, and even more prepared to “flatten the curves” in the Hudson and Black River Basins for years to come!

Thank you and be well!

John C. Callaghan
Executive Director