

INTRODUCTORY BRIEFING

Carroll County is at a critical point in reference to water supply. Groundwater and several surface supplies have served the County and its municipalities well for many years. However, many of the providers of municipal water struggle to keep pace with demand generated by growth and development as well as changes in State policy and guidance regarding water appropriations.

The Town of Mt. Airy and the City of Taneytown have signed consent agreements with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) because they were found to have a water deficit. They cannot meet average day demands under drought conditions. A draft consent agreement between MDE and the City of Westminster is pending. These agreements specify the steps the city/town will take to correct the water deficit and assure that an adequate water supply is in place to meet the needs of future development.

Carroll County has signed an agreement with the Town of Mt. Airy to allow the town to develop wells and/or a surface water intake on Gillis Falls to be used on an interim basis until the Gillis Falls Reservoir is constructed. A similar agreement with the City of Westminster is being developed for wells and/or a surface water intake from Big Pipe Creek in the Union Mills area to be used on an interim basis until the Union Mills Reservoir is constructed.

Recent legislation requires that the County and the municipalities have a Water Resources Element in their Comprehensive Plan by October 1, 2009. This element will identify water resources adequate for the needs of existing and future development proposed in the land use element of the plan. This element is also expected to address water resource protection-areas, groundwater resources, water quality standards, and Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs). Carroll County is partnering with MDE in a pilot program to develop the Water Resources Element for Carroll County.

On February 3, 2007, the Carroll County Commissioners hosted a Water Summit for county and municipal leaders. At the summit local officials had the opportunity to discuss evolving state policies regarding water capacity. Speakers addressed the changing nature of water rights in Maryland and the prospects for water supply development in central Maryland. A countywide steering group is being formed along with subcommittees to explore specific issues relating to water supply. Topics to be explored may include capacity management plans, water conservation measures, support for the long-term use of planned reservoirs, ground water availability under drought conditions, and protection of ground water and surface resources. This water management partnership will be a joint, cooperative effort of all the local governments in Carroll County.

Carroll County is committed to the development of a multi-source public water supply system utilizing both ground and surface waters. Sites on Piney Run, Gillis Falls, and Big Pipe Creek were identified as future reservoir sites in the 1960s. The Piney Run Reservoir was completed in 1975. Land is committed to protect the areas around the Union Mills and Gillis Falls Reservoir sites to provide for long-range water supplies.