

Print Page

Sunday NOVEMBER 1, 2009 Last modified: Friday, October 23, 2009 11:40 PM EDT

Officials: Que pipeline fulfilling its promise

By JUDY D.J. ELLICH
Daily American Staff Writer

Officials say the Quemahoning pipeline is doing its job in Somerset County.

One of the main reasons for the \$23.4 million water project was to provide drought relief to municipalities along the 22-mile pipeline. To date there are five: Conemaugh, Lincoln and Somerset townships and Somerset and Boswell boroughs have been receiving reservoir water since early spring.

Lincoln Township is a good gauge of what Que water can do to alleviate drought-like conditions in a community, said Jon Wahl, project engineer for Somerset Planning & Engineering Services, which did the engineering and planning of the pipeline. Wahl said the township had a "pretty fragile" water supply before tapping into the pipeline this spring.

A small stream near Roytown called Horner Run is the municipality's primary water supply. There is also a small well available as a backup.

"We've been in really severe drought conditions," said Bruce Hottle, chairman of the Lincoln Township Municipal Authority. "Our flow in the stream is minimal right now."

The well can only handle about half of the daily water supply needed in the township. Without the Que water, township residents would probably be rationing their water right now, Hottle said.

"Our agreement with the Somerset (County General Authority) was to buy 50,000 gallons of water a day. Just about every day since we have been connected to the Que system, we have exceeded" that amount, Hottle said.

Residents of Somerset Borough, the largest water user with an agreement to buy 900,000 gallons a day, have not had "the concerns we had in the past," said borough Manager Benedict G. Vinzani Jr. "It is giving us an additional source of water to make it easier to meet the demand issues."

The borough's use of reservoir water has enabled more ground water to flow into Laurel Hill Creek, which was ranked No. 7 on the America's Most Endangered Rivers list. Laurel Hill made the list because of excessive water draws. (To learn more about another request to draw water from Laurel Hill Creek, read Sunday's edition of the Daily American.)

"Any time we can put water back into that stream, it is a big plus for that watershed," said Dave Kemp, groundwater specialist with the Somerset Conservation District.

Wahl agreed.

“Every drop coming from the Que is a drop not coming from Laurel Hill Creek,” he said.

Another goal of the water project is to provide the water needed for economic development.

The pipeline allowed Lincoln Township to lift a tap-in ban and open the municipality to new development. Fifteen families who were on a waiting list were connected in September.

Lincoln Township also provided more than 1 million gallons of water for a company working on a Marcellus Shale project last month, generating about \$3,000 in revenue for the township, he said.

Patrick Mulcahy, manager of the Conemaugh Township Municipal Authority, said at a drought task force meeting last week that the authority did not have to use its wells as a backup for the reservoir this year because of the amount of water purchased from the Quemahoning pipeline. Conemaugh purchases 100,000 gallons a day.

(Judy D.J. Ellich can be contacted at judy@daillyamerican.com. Comment on the online story at daillyamerican.com.)

[Contact Us](#)

Copyright © 2003-2009

814.444.5900