

December 3, 2006

Lehigh Valley Canoe Club

Comments for the 2007 Lehigh Gorge Whitewater Planning Session

The Lehigh Valley Canoe Club (LVCC) is thankful for a very successful 2006 Lehigh River Whitewater Season. For 2007 we would like to see the Army Corp of Engineers (ACE) and their partners continue to balance the various demands on the Lehigh River as well as they did in 2006 and work toward future plans for success in low rainfall years.

The Lehigh River Rafting Outfitters report that the increase in their business was greater than expected. Private whitewater boater numbers were also up in 2006. Many believed that it would take several seasons to bring the tourists and private boaters back to the Lehigh Gorge, but they turned out well in 2006 and have a great potential for 2007.

To fulfill the potential for 2007:

1. Minimum release flows of at least 750-cfs.
 - Dragging your boat over rocks at low flow does not persuade you to come back next year.
2. High flow releases when possible.
 - In 2006 the ACE had the opportunity to provide a high flow release while drawing the storage down in October. The schedule did not provide for high flow releases, therefore the ACE provided a 1200-cfs release during the weekend while they had plenty of water for higher flows during the week. The LVCC supports high flow releases on weekends whenever these opportunities occur in the future.
3. Guaranteed release dates.
 - Tourists and boaters traveling to the Lehigh Gorge need advanced schedules to ensure their trip is not wasted.
 - The LVCC understands that releases can not be guaranteed due to the dependence on weather. We believe that some plans have a greater chance of success and we will support a plan that offers a reasonable chance of success in a season of slightly below normal precipitation.

Naturally the LVCC is an advocate for whitewater boating, but the LVCC has a diverse membership with many types of interests in the Lehigh River watershed. The LVCC supports a balanced plan for all stakeholders.

The LVCC believes that the Lehigh River is a tremendous resource and it can provide for balanced management and excellent whitewater boating opportunities.

The LVCC is grateful for the opportunity to provide input to the 2007 plan, and looks forward to working with the ACE, it's partners, and all Lehigh River stakeholders in the future.