



Grab it and **GO**

Look in the Go Guide every Thursday.  
**13 weeks of fantastic giveaways!**  
THE MORNING CALL

[http://www.mcall.com/news/local/all-b3\\_1damjul07,0,2631763.story?coll=all-newslocal-hed](http://www.mcall.com/news/local/all-b3_1damjul07,0,2631763.story?coll=all-newslocal-hed)

From The Morning Call

# Officials tout dam project, but dry spell could cancel Lehigh River releases

## Rain needed to replenish reservoir to keep rapids schedule.

By Matt Birkbeck  
Of The Morning Call

July 7, 2005

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers did its job. Now it's up to Mother Nature to do hers.

Officials gathered Wednesday to celebrate the opening of a new connector road atop the Francis E. Walter Dam near White Haven that will allow for three times as many water releases down the Lehigh River, generating an estimated

\$30 million more in economic activity from rafting, boating and fishing.

But unless it rains, the release schedule for July 23-24 could be canceled or postponed because a dry spell in spring and early summer has left reservoir levels lower than officials would like.

"We're having a struggle with Mother Nature not presenting us with too much rain," said Roy Denmark of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which coordinated with the state Fish and Boat Commission on the two-year construction schedule for the road.

The new road, off Route 940, sits roughly 150 feet above the reservoir and offers spectacular views of the surrounding mountain terrain and, more importantly, replaces the old road at the bottom of the dam in Kidder Township.

"This will be a fantastic stimulus for water recreation and aid in assisting fishermen," said U.S. Rep. Paul Kanjorski, D-11th District, who helped secure \$2.8 million in federal funding for the project.

That old road built with the dam in 1960 flooded whenever the reservoir level surpassed the mark of 1,310 feet above sea level, forcing emergency vehicles and tourists to take alternate routes around the dam and allowing for only seven water releases each year.

Each release increases the flow and depth of the Lehigh River running south through Carbon County, offering faster waters and, in certain spots, rapids for rafting and kayaking businesses.

"Outdoorsmen will be excited since this opens new opportunities," said William O'Gurek, Carbon County commissioner chairman.

The additional depth will improve fishing, officials said, because the more water that goes down the river, the cooler the water temperature, making for healthier trout and other fish.

With more than 6,000 people daily enjoying the river and other businesses such as hotels and restaurants, each release is estimated to bring in \$2 million in economic activity.

The new road will allow for an additional 15 releases each year, bringing the total releases to 22.

"This is going to be awesome," said Ken Powley, president of the Lehigh River Outfitters Association. "This will translate to thousands of tourists going home with a good experience."

The reservoir is generally maintained at less than 1,310 feet above sea level, and the new road is expected to allow that level to be raised to 1,335.

But Powley warned that recent rains were immediately absorbed by the dry ground and the dry spell could lead to release cancellations.

The next scheduled releases are July 23-24; Aug. 6-7 and 20-21; Sept. 3-4 and 17-18; and Oct. 1-2.

Copyright © 2005, [The Morning Call](#)