

## Drought Contingency Plan Modifications April 2011

### Introduction

WVIC prepared a Drought Contingency Plan in 1997. A copy of the existing 1997 plan is attached. The plan outlined steps to be taken during droughts to address two concerns:

- Wisconsin River flow goals not protecting Wisconsin River water quality.
- Minimum flow releases at WVIC reservoirs causing reservoir water levels to fall below minimum values.

At the time the plan was written, the Wisconsin River Basin had experienced an extreme one-year drought in 1976 and an extreme three-year drought in 1987-1989. Since that time, the basin has now experienced an extreme 7-year drought in 2003 through 2009. During the 7-year drought, the cumulative precipitation deficit averaged 25 inches over the basin and was as much as 35-40 inches in the far northern basin. The trigger points in the current plan for initiating consultation with the resource agencies are not adequate for droughts of this magnitude. Based on an analysis of the historic precipitation records, WVIC proposes to add the following consultation triggers:

#### Section 3.1.3 – Trigger for Consultation on Protecting Wisconsin River Water Quality

Add the following:

“WVIC will track the cumulative precipitation departure from normal. If the cumulative precipitation deficit reaches 15 inches, WVIC will consult with WDNR and USFWS to consider reducing flow goals to Q(7,10) earlier than specified. During this consultation process, WVIC and the resource agencies will also consider limiting winter drawdowns in all WVIC reservoirs to facilitate a more complete spring refill. Any changes in flow goals or reservoir drawdowns will remain in effect until all parties agree they can be lifted.”

#### Section 3.2.4 – Trigger for Consultation on Minimum Flow Releases

Add the following:

“WVIC will track the cumulative precipitation departure from normal. If the cumulative precipitation deficit reaches 15 inches, WVIC will consult with WDNR and USFWS to consider reducing minimum flow releases from WVIC reservoirs below those specified in Article 404. During this consultation process, WVIC and the resource agencies will also consider limiting winter drawdowns in all WVIC reservoirs to facilitate a more complete spring refill. Any changes in minimum flows or reservoir drawdowns will remain in effect until all parties agree they can be lifted.”

It is estimated that such consultation will need to occur approximately once every 25 years.