

SKI RESORT WATER USE IN THE SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN

"No projects affecting the water resources of the basin, except those not requiring review and approval by the commission under paragraph 3 following, shall be undertaken by any person, governmental authority or other entity prior to submission to and approval by the commission or appropriate agencies of the signatory parties for review."

-- Section 3.10 of the Susquehanna River Basin Compact, P.L. 91-575; 84 Stat. 1509 et seq.

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) is a federal-interstate compact commission established by the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland. SRBC is responsible for guiding the construction, development and administration of the water resources of the basin and coordinating the water resource management activities of the three states and federal agencies. The Susquehanna basin covers a 27,510-square-mile area that drains into the Chesapeake Bay.

What does SRBC regulate?

SRBC regulates large consumptive water uses, ground-water withdrawals and surface-water withdrawals.

All regulated uses require SRBC review and approval prior to project construction and operation. SRBC regulations are published in the Code of Federal Regulation (18 CFR Parts 803, 804 and 805) and are available on SRBC's website www.srbc.net or www.access.gpo.gov/nara/cfr.

SRBC recognizes documented water use prior to the effective dates of each regulation as being "grandfathered" or exempt from regulation. However, increases greater than the threshold quantities over any "grandfathered" amounts are subject to SRBC regulations.

What is consumptive water use?

Consumptive water use is water that is withdrawn from either wells, surface water bodies, or public water supplies and is used in such a way that it is not returned to the basin because it:

- evaporates;
- transpires;
- is incorporated into products; or
- is diverted out of the basin.

SRBC's consumptive water use regulation is designed to maintain streamflows to protect water supplies, instream uses such as fish and aquatic life, and recreation during periods of low streamflow.

For ski resorts, 22 percent of all water withdrawn for snowmaking is considered to be consumptively used. In addition, all evaporation from on-site storage ponds and treatment lagoons, all makeup water for water slides, and all irrigation of grass and ornamental plantings is used consumptively.

What is SRBC's consumptive water use regulation?

Regulation §803.42—Consumptive Use of Water.

- Effective Date: January 23, 1971
- Regulated Quantity: consecutive 30-day average of more than 20,000 gallons per day (gpd) from all sources, including users on public water supply systems

- “Grandfathered” Quantity: amount consumed prior to January 1971 (increases in excess of 20,000 gpd after January 23, 1971 are regulated)

What are SRBC’s water withdrawal regulations?

Regulation §803.43—Ground-Water Withdrawal

- Effective Date: July 13, 1978
- Regulated Quantity: consecutive 30-day average of more than 100,000 gpd from wells
- “Grandfathered” Quantity: amount withdrawn from wells prior to July 13, 1978 (increases in excess of 100,000 gpd or more as of July 13, 1978 are regulated)

Regulation §803.44—Surface-Water Withdrawal

- Effective Date: November 11, 1995
- Regulated Quantity: consecutive 30-day average of more than 100,000 gpd from surface sources
- “Grandfathered” Quantity: amount withdrawn from surface water sources prior to November 11, 1995 (increases in excess of 100,000 gpd or more as of November 11, 1995, are regulated)

For ski resorts, how much is 20,000 gpd, averaged over 30-days, of consumptive water use?

The following are some examples of regulated consumptive water uses and the quantities for any 30-day period:

- The sublimation from snowmaking on 9 acres of slopes/trails generally exceeds 20,000 gpd, based on a 30-day average. Typically, the addition, after January 1971, of snowmaking on two ski trails will trigger the need for SRBC review and approval.

- Peak monthly evapo-transpiration from the irrigation of 5 acres of grass.
- Make-up water for water slides in excess of 20,000 gpd.
- Peak monthly evaporation from 4 acres of water storage ponds or wastewater treatment lagoons. If after January 1971, ponds/lagoons totaling 4 acres were constructed or existing ponds/lagoons were enlarged by 4 acres, review and approval of the consumptive water use is required.
- Any incremental combination of the above uses initiated after January 1971 that totals more than 20,000 gpd.

How do ski resorts apply for SRBC review and approval?

The facility manager, or facility’s consultant engineer, should contact Ms. Paula Ballaron, SRBC’s Project Review Coordinator, by telephone at (717) 238-0425, by FAX at (717) 238-2436 or by electronic mail at pballaron@srbc.net.

SRBC application forms and instructions are posted on the website at www.srbc.net and also are available upon request. SRBC applications have an associated fee that is based on a sliding scale related to the requested amount of water withdrawn or consumptively used. The appropriate fees can be determined from the fee schedule, which also is posted on SRBC’s website.