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*From The Morning Call*

## Residents mull how to stop floods

### Reservoirs cited as key: Better management, creating more are their suggestions at meeting.

By Arlene Martínez  
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Better reservoir management — or maybe creating more of them — was a popular suggestion Tuesday during a panel discussion to look at long-term solutions to Delaware River flooding.

More than 100 residents attended the forum, sponsored by U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent, R-15th District, and held at Lafayette College's Oeschle Hall.

The Delaware is the largest undammed river east of the Mississippi, said National Weather Service's Gary Szatkowski during a presentation explaining how the flooding happened. The river begins in the Catskill Mountains in New York and travels 330 miles down to the state of Delaware and the ocean.

There are eight reservoirs in New York and Pennsylvania along the river. Three in New York hold 271 billion gallons worth of storage. However, explained Rick Fromuth, branch head of operations at the Delaware River Basin Commission, those are designated solely for water supply.

Five reservoirs in Pennsylvania hold a combined 72 billion gallons of flood storage.

"Management of systems is something people look to as a way to help" potential flooding, said Fromuth, who said the topic often comes up. But, he added, "People can only rely on flood storage that has been paid for and allocated."

Just 7.5 percent of the state's population is at risk for flooding, said Alan Tamm, a hazard mitigation planner at the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency.

Residents and experts offered the following solutions throughout the night: better warning systems, better management of water resources, elevating a home to be out of harm's way and implementing stronger regulations for construction in a flood plain.

"These are your choices but they take money," Tamm said.

Tamm urged residents to write down what they would like to see happen and push local, county, state and federal officials to listen. "They hold the purse strings to making you safer," he said.

Though the forum was designed to discuss solutions to flooding, residents took the opportunity to express frustrations. Several questioned why better notice was not given of the pending flooding in September and April.

Others wanted to know why reservoirs were not partially emptied days in advance, with flooding expected.

Szatkowski explained it was a combination of factors, not the least of which was what he referred to as a one-two punch. By the time meteorologists realized rain would fall April 2-3, heavy rain that fell March 28-29 was already here. Meteorologists are able to predict storm systems within five days, Szatkowski said.

Officials must make sure if they release water, they do not inadvertently cause more flooding, Szatkowski said.

"It will flood again along the Delaware River. The question is will we be any smarter? Will we be able to do anything different than what we've done the last couple of floods?" Szatkowski asked.

Said William Mueller, strategic planner for the Army Corps of Engineers: "There's not one solution [that's going to] fix every problem. It's going to take a lot of small fixes."

