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News Release

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Water Levels Low in Northern Maryland

Streamflow and ground-water levels were approaching record lows in northern Maryland at the end of September according to hydrologists at the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) in Baltimore, Maryland. Streamflow was below normal at Deer Creek (57% below average), Little Falls, Conococheague Creek, Monocacy River, Antietam Creek, Savage River, Wills Creek, and Casselman River (see real-time graphs http://md.water.usgs.gov/realtime/). Record low ground-water levels were set in observation wells in Carroll and Washington Counties and wells in Harford and Baltimore Counties continue to be below normal.

While these low streamflow and ground-water levels may not yet be a serious problem, continued lack of precipitation in northern Maryland could aggravate the situation as fall progresses.

Streamflow entering the Chesapeake Bay in September averaged 57 bgd (billion gallons per day), which is 43 percent below the long-term average (see graphs at http://md.water.usgs.gov/monthly/bay.html). For the 2001 water year (October 2000 through September 2001), the total inflow to the Chesapeake Bay was 403 bgd (billion gallons per day), which is 25 percent less than the 2000 water year (535 bgd). The water year begins October 1 each year and is used by hydrologists because it is the time when streamflows are generally lowest across the nation. Ground-water levels and soil moisture levels are also low at this time because the replenishing rains of autumn usually have not begun.

Streamflow at the Potomac River near Washington, D.C., was 21 percent below normal for September. Storage in the Baltimore Reservoir system decreased to 81 percent of capacity in September.

Ground-water levels on the Eastern Shore and in Delaware were normal to above normal, and in the rest of Maryland and Delaware ground-water levels decreased but remained in the normal range (see graphs at http://md.water.usgs.gov/groundwater/).

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