

Washington, D.C. - North Carolina Congressmen David Price (NC-04) and Brad Miller (NC-13) today joined Raleigh Mayor Charles Meeker to announce a decision that will significantly extend Raleigh's dwindling water supply.

The Army Corps of Engineers, which manages Falls Lake, approved Raleigh's request to reduce the outflow of water from the lake by nearly 50%. Beginning today, the amount of water released through Falls Dam will be reduced by 17 million gallons per day, and the lower flow level is authorized for up to a year. The reduced outflow will keep the lake level from falling as rapidly during the exceptional drought the state is experiencing.

Price and Miller have spent the past week pressing the Army Corps and the Fish and Wildlife Service to give priority consideration to the City of Raleigh in their efforts to conserve its water supply.

The following are Price's remarks from this morning's press conference.

Thank you, Mayor Meeker, for bringing us together this morning and for your leadership on this critical issue.

As the Mayor has indicated, late Friday afternoon, my office spoke with Colonel John Pulliam, head of the Army Corps of Engineers' Wilmington district, and learned that the Corps had just approved a deviation request for Falls Lake that will increase the City's supply of drinking water.

This bit of good news couldn't have come soon enough for Raleigh residents. Our region's water supply is being stretched to the brink by a drought of historic proportions.

When Mayor Meeker identified the option of reducing the outflow of water through Falls Dam, Brad [Miller] and I were anxious to help press for immediate consideration by the Army Corps.

As most of you in this room know, the federal bureaucracy does not always lend itself to quick action. In this case, the Corps had to assess the effects of reduced flows on numerous downstream users, on water quality, and on the environment. This required getting input and sign off from a variety of state and federal stakeholders, any one of whom could have derailed the process.

But thanks to Colonel Pulliam, that did not happen.

I met with Colonel Pulliam in Washington last week, and it was abundantly clear that he recognized the historic nature of the drought, the dire situation Raleigh is in, and the need for an expedited decision. We are indebted to him for being willing to hear us out and for making our request a top priority. And we are deeply grateful for the decision itself, which will extend Raleigh's dwindling drinking water supply.

For all of these things, we thank Col. Pulliam, and I also want to thank Terry Brown, who is the Army Corps' officer who oversees Falls Lake, for meeting with the Council and working so closely with our civic leaders.

There's a lesson to be learned from today's announcement.

We need all hands on deck to ensure that our communities' water needs are fulfilled – that includes everyone from federal regulators who control the release levels from Falls Dam, on down to the average citizen who must do his or her part to reduce consumption at home.

Today's announcement will help our immediate supply issues, but it will not make the drought go away. So I would remind everyone at home and in their businesses to help your community by choosing to conserve.

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