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News Release

Release No. 01-22

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For Release: August 23, 2001

Corps of Engineers looks at Poorhouse Run

Baltimore – Preliminary findings of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Baltimore District, site assessment of Poorhouse Run, York, Pa., indicate that the Corps was not involved in the construction or permitting of the projects there. A Corps structural engineer visited the site last week to collect information and document the safety concerns of local officials following a request by York Councilwoman Toni Smith for assistance in determining federal involvement.

“We saw no obvious structural or functional deficiencies during our inspection,” said Andrea Bias-Streat of the Baltimore District Emergency Management Branch. “It appears that the concerns are for safety and have to do with public access, but there are no existing authorities under which we can provide design or construction of public access barriers in such situations.”

Poorhouse Run is a naturally occurring stream that has been modified over the years to accommodate development and increased runoff from the city of York. In the 1930s, the sides of the channel were armored with stone. Between 1970 and 1972, the portion of the stream from Hannah Penn Middle School to just upstream of Alexander D. Goode Elementary School was changed to an underground system, using concrete box culverts that receive inflow from city stormwater pipes.

The preliminary assessment indicates that the culvert that runs about 3/4 of a mile through the city from Hannah Penn Middle School to Goode Elementary contributes to the hazard at the elementary school by rapidly collecting storm water and sending it to the downstream channel. This causes sudden rises in stream depth and velocity.

The Corps’ research to date shows no Corps involvement in either the 1930s-era stream stabilization or in the box culvert and intake structure completed in 1972. Because the Corps did not have regulatory authority for this type of local project until 1977, it would not have been involved in permitting of this work.