

114TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1772

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a nonregulatory program to build on and help coordinate funding for restoration and protection efforts of the 4-State Delaware River Basin region, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

APRIL 14, 2015

Mr. CARNEY (for himself, Mr. GIBSON, Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN, Mr. DENT, Mr. FATTAH, Mr. LOBIONDO, Mr. CARTWRIGHT, Mr. MEEHAN, Mr. NORCROSS, Mr. COSTELLO of Pennsylvania, Mr. FRELINGHUYSEN, Mr. SMITH of New Jersey, Mr. BRENDAN F. BOYLE of Pennsylvania, Mr. FITZPATRICK, Mr. BRADY of Pennsylvania, and Mr. MACARTHUR) introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Natural Resources, and in addition to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

A BILL

To direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a nonregulatory program to build on and help coordinate funding for restoration and protection efforts of the 4-State Delaware River Basin region, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

1 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

2 This Act may be cited as the “Delaware River Basin
3 Conservation Act of 2015”.

4 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

5 Congress finds that—

6 (1) the Delaware River Basin is a national
7 treasure of great cultural, environmental, ecological,
8 and economic importance;

9 (2) the Basin contains over 12,500 square miles
10 of land in the States of Delaware, New Jersey, New
11 York, and Pennsylvania, including nearly 800 square
12 miles of bay and more than 2,000 tributary rivers
13 and streams;

14 (3) the Basin is home to more than 8,000,000
15 people who depend on the Delaware River and the
16 Delaware Bay as an economic engine, a place of
17 recreation, and a vital habitat for fish and wildlife;

18 (4) the Basin provides clean drinking water to
19 more than 15,000,000 people, including New York
20 City, which relies on the Basin for approximately
21 half of the drinking water supply of the city, and
22 Philadelphia, whose most significant threat to the
23 drinking water supply of the city is loss of forests
24 and other natural cover in the Upper Basin, accord-
25 ing to a study conducted by the Philadelphia Water
26 Department;

1 (5) the Basin contributes \$25,000,000,000 an-
2 nually in economic activity, provides
3 \$21,000,000,000 in ecosystem goods and services
4 per year, and is directly or indirectly responsible for
5 600,000 jobs with \$10,000,000,000 in annual
6 wages;

7 (6) almost 180 species of fish and wildlife are
8 considered special status species in the Basin due to
9 habitat loss and degradation, particularly sturgeon,
10 eastern oyster, horseshoe crabs, and red knots,
11 which have been identified as unique species in need
12 of habitat improvement;

13 (7) the Basin provides habitat for over 200
14 resident and migrant fish species, includes signifi-
15 cant recreational fisheries, and is an important
16 source of eastern oyster, blue crab, and the largest
17 population of the American horseshoe crab;

18 (8) the annual dockside value of commercial
19 eastern oyster fishery landings for the Delaware Es-
20 tuary is nearly \$4,000,000, making it the fourth-
21 most lucrative fishery in the Delaware River Basin
22 watershed, and proven management strategies are
23 available to increase oyster habitat, abundance, and
24 harvest;

1 (9) the Delaware Bay has the second largest
2 concentration of shorebirds in North America and is
3 designated as 1 of the 4 most important shorebird
4 migration sites in the world;

5 (10) the Basin, 50 percent of which is forested,
6 also has over 700,000 acres of wetland, more than
7 126,000 acres of which are recognized as inter-
8 nationally important, resulting in a landscape that
9 provides essential ecosystem services, including
10 recreation, commercial, and water quality benefits;

11 (11) much of the remaining exemplary natural
12 landscape in the Basin is vulnerable to further deg-
13 radation, as the Basin gains approximately 10
14 square miles of developed land annually, and with
15 new development, urban watersheds are increasingly
16 covered by impervious surfaces, amplifying the quan-
17 tity of polluted runoff into rivers and streams;

18 (12) the Delaware River is the longest
19 undammed river east of the Mississippi; a critical
20 component of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers
21 System in the Northeast, with more than 400 miles
22 designated; home to one of the most heavily visited
23 National Park units in the United States, the Dela-
24 ware Water Gap National Recreation Area; and the
25 location of 6 National Wildlife Refuges;

1 (13) the Delaware River supports an inter-
2 nationally renowned cold water fishery in more than
3 80 miles of its northern headwaters that attracts
4 tens of thousands of visitors each year and generates
5 over \$21,000,000 in annual revenue through tourism
6 and recreational activities;

7 (14) management of water volume in the Basin
8 is critical to flood mitigation and habitat for fish
9 and wildlife, and following 3 major floods along the
10 Delaware River since 2004, the Governors of the
11 States of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and
12 Pennsylvania have called for natural flood damage
13 reduction measures to combat the problem, including
14 restoring the function of riparian corridors;

15 (15) the Delaware River Port Complex (includ-
16 ing docking facilities in the States of Delaware, New
17 Jersey, and Pennsylvania) is one of the largest
18 freshwater ports in the world, the Port of Philadel-
19 phia handles the largest volume of international ton-
20 nage and 70 percent of the oil shipped to the East
21 Coast, and the Port of Wilmington, a full-service
22 deepwater port and marine terminal supporting
23 more than 12,000 jobs, is the busiest terminal on
24 the Delaware River, handling more than 400 vessels

1 per year with an annual import/export cargo tonnage
2 of more than 4,000,000 tons;

3 (16) the Delaware Estuary, where freshwater
4 from the Delaware River mixes with saltwater from
5 the Atlantic Ocean, is 1 of the largest and most
6 complex of the 28 estuaries in the National Estuary
7 Program, and the Partnership for the Delaware Es-
8 tuary works to improve the environmental health of
9 the Delaware Estuary;

10 (17) the Delaware River Basin Commission is a
11 Federal-interstate compact government agency
12 charged with overseeing a unified approach to man-
13 aging the river system and implementing important
14 water resources management projects and activities
15 throughout the Basin that are in the national inter-
16 est;

17 (18) restoration activities in the Basin are sup-
18 ported through several Federal and State agency
19 programs, and funding for those important pro-
20 grams should continue and complement the estab-
21 lishment of the Delaware River Basin Restoration
22 Program, which is intended to build on and help co-
23 ordinate restoration and protection funding mecha-
24 nisms at the Federal, State, regional, and local lev-
25 els; and

1 (19) the existing and ongoing voluntary con-
2 servation efforts in the Delaware River Basin neces-
3 sitate improved efficiency and cost effectiveness, as
4 well as increased private-sector investments and co-
5 ordination of Federal and non-Federal resources.

6 **SEC. 3. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

8 (1) **BASIN.**—The term “Basin” means the 4-
9 State Delaware Basin region, including all of Dela-
10 ware Bay and portions of the States of Delaware,
11 New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania located in
12 the Delaware River watershed.

13 (2) **BASIN STATE.**—The term “Basin State”
14 means each of the States of Delaware, New Jersey,
15 New York, and Pennsylvania.

16 (3) **DIRECTOR.**—The term “Director” means
17 the Director of the United States Fish and Wildlife
18 Service.

19 (4) **FOUNDATION.**—The term “Foundation”
20 means the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, a
21 congressionally chartered foundation established by
22 section 2 of the National Fish and Wildlife Founda-
23 tion Establishment Act (16 U.S.C. 3701).

24 (5) **GRANT PROGRAM.**—The term “grant pro-
25 gram” means the voluntary Delaware River Basin

1 Restoration Grant Program established under sec-
2 tion 5.

3 (6) PROGRAM.—The term “program” means
4 the nonregulatory Delaware River Basin restoration
5 program established under section 4.

6 (7) RESTORATION AND PROTECTION.—The
7 term “restoration and protection” means the con-
8 servation, stewardship, and enhancement of habitat
9 for fish and wildlife to preserve and improve eco-
10 systems and ecological processes on which they de-
11 pend, and for use and enjoyment by the public.

12 (8) SECRETARY.—The term “Secretary” means
13 the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Di-
14 rector.

15 (9) SERVICE.—The term “Service” means the
16 United States Fish and Wildlife Service.

17 **SEC. 4. PROGRAM ESTABLISHMENT.**

18 (a) ESTABLISHMENT.—Not later than 180 days after
19 the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary shall es-
20 tablish a nonregulatory program to be known as the
21 “Delaware River Basin restoration program”.

22 (b) DUTIES.—In carrying out the program, the Sec-
23 retary shall—

24 (1) draw on existing and new management
25 plans for the Basin, or portions of the Basin, and

1 work in consultation with applicable management
2 entities, including representatives of the Partnership
3 for the Delaware Estuary, the Delaware River Basin
4 Commission, the Federal Government, and other
5 State and local governments, and regional and non-
6 profit organizations, as appropriate, to identify,
7 prioritize, and implement restoration and protection
8 activities within the Basin;

9 (2) adopt a Basinwide strategy that—

10 (A) supports the implementation of a
11 shared set of science-based restoration and pro-
12 tection activities developed in accordance with
13 paragraph (1);

14 (B) targets cost-effective projects with
15 measurable results; and

16 (C) maximizes conservation outcomes with
17 no net gain of Federal full-time equivalent em-
18 ployees; and

19 (3) establish the voluntary grant and technical
20 assistance programs in accordance with section 5.

21 (c) COORDINATION.—In establishing the program,
22 the Secretary shall consult, as appropriate, with—

23 (1) the heads of Federal agencies, including—

24 (A) the Administrator of the Environ-
25 mental Protection Agency;

1 (B) the Administrator of the National Ocea-
2 nic and Atmospheric Administration;

3 (C) the Chief of the Natural Resources
4 Conservation Service;

5 (D) the Chief of Engineers of the Corps of
6 Engineers; and

7 (E) the head of any other applicable agen-
8 cy;

9 (2) the Governors of the Basin States;

10 (3) the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary;

11 (4) the Delaware River Basin Commission;

12 (5) fish and wildlife joint venture partnerships;

13 and

14 (6) other public agencies and organizations with
15 authority for the planning and implementation of
16 conservation strategies in the Basin.

17 (d) PURPOSES.—The purposes of the program in-
18 clude—

19 (1) coordinating restoration and protection ac-
20 tivities among Federal, State, local, and regional en-
21 tities and conservation partners throughout the
22 Basin;

23 (2) carrying out coordinated restoration and
24 protection activities, and providing for technical as-
25 sistance throughout the Basin and Basin States—

1 (A) to sustain and enhance fish and wild-
2 life habitat restoration and protection activities;

3 (B) to improve and maintain water quality
4 to support fish and wildlife, as well as the habi-
5 tats of fish and wildlife, and drinking water for
6 people;

7 (C) to sustain and enhance water manage-
8 ment for volume and flood damage mitigation
9 improvements to benefit fish and wildlife habi-
10 tat;

11 (D) to improve opportunities for public ac-
12 cess and recreation in the Basin consistent with
13 the ecological needs of fish and wildlife habitat;

14 (E) to facilitate strategic planning to maxi-
15 mize the resilience of natural systems and habi-
16 tats under changing watershed conditions;

17 (F) to engage the public through outreach,
18 education, and citizen involvement, to increase
19 capacity and support for coordinated restora-
20 tion and protection activities in the Basin;

21 (G) to increase scientific capacity to sup-
22 port the planning, monitoring, and research ac-
23 tivities necessary to carry out coordinated res-
24 toration and protection activities; and

1 (H) to provide technical assistance to carry
2 out restoration and protection activities in the
3 Basin.

4 **SEC. 5. GRANTS AND ASSISTANCE.**

5 (a) DELAWARE RIVER BASIN RESTORATION GRANT
6 PROGRAM.—To the extent that funds are available to
7 carry out this section, the Secretary shall establish a vol-
8 untary grant and technical assistance program to be
9 known as the “Delaware River Basin Restoration Grant
10 Program” to provide competitive matching grants of vary-
11 ing amounts to State and local governments, nonprofit or-
12 ganizations, institutions of higher education, and other eli-
13 gible entities to carry out activities described in section
14 4(d).

15 (b) CRITERIA.—The Secretary, in consultation with
16 the organizations described in section 4(c), shall develop
17 criteria for the grant program to help ensure that activi-
18 ties funded under this section accomplish one or more of
19 the purposes identified in section 4(d)(2) and advance the
20 implementation of priority actions or needs identified in
21 the Basinwide strategy adopted under section 4(b)(2).

22 (c) COST SHARING.—

23 (1) FEDERAL SHARE.—The Federal share of
24 the cost of a project funded under the grant pro-

1 gram shall not exceed 50 percent of the total cost
2 of the activity, as determined by the Secretary.

3 (2) NON-FEDERAL SHARE.—The non-Federal
4 share of the cost of a project funded under the grant
5 program may be provided in cash or in the form of
6 an in-kind contribution of services or materials.

7 (d) ADMINISTRATION.—

8 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary may enter
9 into an agreement to manage the grant program
10 with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or
11 a similar organization that offers grant management
12 services.

13 (2) FUNDING.—If the Secretary enters into an
14 agreement under paragraph (1), the organization se-
15 lected shall—

16 (A) for each fiscal year, receive amounts to
17 carry out this section in an advance payment of
18 the entire amount on October 1, or as soon as
19 practicable thereafter, of that fiscal year;

20 (B) invest and reinvest those amounts for
21 the benefit of the grant program; and

22 (C) otherwise administer the grant pro-
23 gram to support partnerships between the pub-
24 lic and private sectors in accordance with this
25 Act.

1 (3) REQUIREMENTS.—If the Secretary enters
2 into an agreement with the Foundation under para-
3 graph (1), any amounts received by the Foundation
4 under this section shall be subject to the National
5 Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act (16
6 U.S.C. 3701 et seq.), excluding section 10(a) of that
7 Act (16 U.S.C. 3709(a)).

8 **SEC. 6. ANNUAL REPORTS.**

9 Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment
10 of this Act and annually thereafter, the Secretary shall
11 submit to Congress a report on the implementation of this
12 Act, including a description of each project that has re-
13 ceived funding under this Act.

14 **SEC. 7. AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.**

15 (a) IN GENERAL.—There is authorized to be appro-
16 priated to the Secretary to carry out this Act \$5,000,000
17 for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2021.

18 (b) USE.—Of any amount made available under this
19 section for each fiscal year, the Secretary shall use at least
20 75 percent to carry out the grant program under section
21 5 and to provide, or provide for, technical assistance under
22 such program.

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