



Pinchot  
Institute

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## Delaware River Protection Legislation Introduced by Federal Lawmakers

**Washington, D.C.: Thursday, June 23, 2011**, Congressional leaders from the Delaware River region introduced, in both the U.S. House and the Senate, new legislation focused on the protection and restoration of the Delaware River watershed. The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2011 would bolster efforts in the region to coordinate the restoration and enhancement of important river-related habitat, to reduce flood damages, and to improve water quality for the people, fish and wildlife of the region.

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Senate cosponsors include: Tom Carper (D-DE), Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), Robert Menendez (D-NJ), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Chris Coons (D-DE), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY) and Robert Casey (D-PA).

House cosponsors include: John Carney (D-DE), Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Rush Holt (D-NJ), Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Congressmen Michael Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Charles Dent (R-PA). Robert Andrews (D-NJ), Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Jon Runyan (R-NJ) and Patrick Meehan (R-PA).

"The Delaware River is the largest drinking water supplier in the MidAtlantic and is the basis of a multi-billion dollar economy that supports our region. When the River's critical habitats, such as floodplains and wetlands are protected, the River can better protect communities from flood damages. And our River is home to species recognized the world over. The leaders advancing this legislation are ensuring a healthy future for our communities and our children," says **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper**, leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.

"The Delaware provides drinking water for millions; a great fishery for trout, bass and other game fish; recreational opportunities for canoeists, kayakers and other boaters; world-class scenery; and habitat for iconic creatures like the bald eagle and Atlantic sturgeon. Any river that gives so much to so many is certainly entitled to "river of the year" designation, and deserves all the protection that we can give it." **Gregory R. Belcamino, President, Delaware Highlands Conservancy**.

"The Delaware River is home to some of our nation's most valuable natural resources and special places. Protecting the land of the Delaware Basin protects our drinking water, our bay and our world class wildlife resources This legislation provides a critical tool in our efforts to protect, and where necessary, restore those irreplaceable lands. The sponsors show great leadership and vision in moving this legislation forward " said **Tim Dillingham, Executive Director of the American Littoral Society**, a coastal conservation organization with a Delaware Bay program.

"As the National Estuary Program, our focus is on keeping the tidal Delaware River and Bay healthy and productive," says **Jennifer Adkins, Executive Director of the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary**. "That's becoming more and more difficult without the level of investment and coordination with upper-watershed partners that the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act would provide."

"From the cool, clear headwaters in New York to the bustling Delaware Bayshore fisheries, this River is key to the health and livelihood of so many- people, wildlife and businesses. We applaud the tremendous leadership shown by members of the NJ federal delegation and their continued commitment to protecting this nationally significant River Basin," said **Kelly Mooij**,

**Director of Government Relations for New Jersey Audubon.** "It is clear that coordination and planning between the states and various federal agencies will be critical in protecting this great River, now and in the future."

"The Delaware River basin provides clean drinking water to 15 million people, supports diverse wildlife and economically important fisheries, and provides numerous recreational opportunities. This legislation will provide a critical tool in the coordination of future conservation and restoration activities so that we may continue to enjoy the river's bounty," says **Laura Craig, Associate Director of River Restoration for American Rivers.**

"I don't believe there has ever been a more thoughtful, insightful proposal to make resources available to help the Upper Delaware River Basin," said **Dan Plummer, Chairman of Friends of the Upper Delaware River.** FUDR is behind the proposed legislation 100 percent. We believe the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act would fund precisely the sorts of projects that we all have been working on, including stream restoration, economic impact studies, and protecting this near perfect resource from any environmental threats. We need to form new basin-wide partnerships going forward and this bill encourages and supports just that. The Upper Delaware River Basin has lacked a coordinated federal/state/local oversight effort for far too long, even though it is home to more than 8 million people and provides drinking water for close to 15 million. The lack of this coordination leaves the Basin vulnerable, something we just can't allow.

"The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act will help spur a coordinated effort and new partnerships to adopt a basin wide management strategy that would benefit millions of people in four states. As an advocate for local, non-profit land trusts working throughout the Delaware River watershed, we applaud this initiative to secure dedicated funding for conservation and strategic grant making in the region," said **Kevin Case, Northeast Program Director for the Land Trust Alliance.**

"The Delaware River Basin provides critical habitat for North America's waterfowl and incredible outdoor opportunities for sportsmen and women in the region," said **Bernie Marczyk, Governmental Affairs Representative for Ducks Unlimited.** "The bipartisan sponsors of this legislation should be praised for their leadership as they protect a national treasure like the Delaware River Basin. Ducks Unlimited has conserved more than 94,000 acres of waterfowl habitat in the Basin states, and this legislation will enable conservation groups to protect and restore many acres for future generations."

"We strongly support the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act", said **Pinchot Institute President, Al Sample** "Alongside the diversity of organizations forming the Common Waters  
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Partnership in the upper reaches of the Delaware, we urge more concerted effort to conserve the forests, rivers, and streams that provide enjoyment, jobs, and drinking water to millions of people."

**Jan Jarrett, president and CEO of Citizens for Pennsylvania's Future (PennFuture),** praised the proposal, saying "it is time the river, our local waterways and the entire basin receive the federal attention and resources to protect water quality, improve public access and ensure flood control."

The proposed legislation would secure federal resources to encourage, advance and support basin-wide coordination of habitat, water quality and flood damage reduction initiatives. The legislation employs a non-regulatory, voluntary approach to improving conservation and restoration throughout the Delaware River Basin, from the Catskills to the Delaware Bay.

Key elements of the proposed legislation include a program run by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service that would develop a strategic investment strategy to efficiently address the highest priorities for conservation and restoration in the Basin, and a competitive grant program that would support locally-driven, on-the-ground projects by non-profits, universities, state and local governments, community organizations and others. The bill would bring additional resources to the entire Basin; the Delaware watershed has historically received comparatively little federal attention despite being home to more than 8 million people and providing drinking water, recreation, and \$22 billion in annual economic benefit to nearly 16 million.

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