

NFWF and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announce \$4.1 Million in Grants from the New Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund

Twenty-five projects will accelerate restoration and conservation of wildlife habitat across the Delaware River Watershed while supporting local communities



Upper Delaware River

WILMINGTON, DE (March 22, 2019) – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) today announced \$4.1 million in grants for 25 projects that will support the protection, restoration and conservation of fish and wildlife habitat in the Delaware River Watershed.

Today's grants are the first to be awarded under the newly funded Delaware River Basin Conservation Act. The 25 projects, located in Delaware, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, will generate \$7.5 million in matching contributions for a total conservation impact of \$11.6 million.

The new Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund is a competitive grant and technical assistance program that supports the conservation and restoration of natural areas, corridors and waterways on public and private lands in the Delaware River Watershed. The grants provide vital support to migratory and resident wildlife, fish and native plants, and contribute to the quality of life and economic vitality of the communities in the Delaware River Watershed, which provides drinking water for more than 15 million people.

Grant recipients were announced at the Delaware Nature Society's DuPont Environmental Education Center in Wilmington on the banks of the Christina River, a tributary to the Delaware River.

Congress provided funds to the FWS in fiscal year 2018 to leverage public and private funding to support the environmental and economic health of the Delaware River Watershed for boots-on-the-ground conservation projects, as outlined in the [Delaware River Basin Restoration Partnership and Program Framework \(https://www.fws.gov/northeast/delawareriver/partnership/index.html\)](https://www.fws.gov/northeast/delawareriver/partnership/index.html).

This grant program is a direct result of the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act – a bill U.S. Senators Tom Carper and Chris Coons (both D-Del.) introduced and were instrumental in passing in the Senate, along with then-Congressman John Carney.

"The Delaware River Basin doesn't just provide drinking water for 15 million Americans; it's an economic engine for Delaware's tourism, hunting, fishing and agricultural industries," said Sen. Carper. "We know that federal partnerships with local stakeholders improve ecosystem vitality and boost environmental quality for the Delawareans and wildlife that depend on a healthy Delaware River Basin. That's why I'm thrilled to see the first grants under this law be awarded, and I look forward to seeing the outcomes of these 25 important projects."

"The Delaware River Watershed is on its way to becoming cleaner as a result of \$4.1 million of investment into 25 projects," said Sen. Coons. "I am excited that we were able to secure funding for the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund and grateful for NFWF's investment in projects like the Brandywine River shad restoration in Delaware to improve fish passage and recreational access on the Brandywine. I also plan to secure additional funding for more projects this year that will continue to improve water quality in the Delaware River."

"The Delaware River spans over 13,000 square miles across multiple states, which is why clean-up and restoration efforts require large-scale investment from federal, state and private partners," said Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester (D-Del.). "These funds will make meaningful strides in maintaining a healthy, well-balanced ecosystem and improve water quality throughout the region. I am excited that funding has been secured, and I look forward to the positive impact these projects will yield."

Covering 13,539 square miles of land and water, the Delaware River Watershed is home to native brook trout, red knots, river herring, freshwater mussels, oysters and many other species that are economically, ecologically and culturally important to the region. Headwaters and streams located in rural, forested and agricultural areas play a major role in the entire ecosystem, as do urban and suburban waterways such as those in Trenton, Philadelphia.

“Our work together in the Delaware River Watershed brings to life a shared vision for collaborative conservation that is driven by the needs of the fish, wildlife, and people who make their homes here,” said Wendi Weber, northeast regional director for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. “We are pleased to partner with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to support a program that will have a significant impact on the environment, economy, and quality of life for all citizens in the watershed.”

“This new fund complements and enhances the incredible conservation work already underway in the Delaware River Watershed,” said Holly Bamford, chief conservation officer for NFWF. “Knowing that 15 million people depend on the watershed for their drinking water dramatically underscores the larger and broader impact these conservation grants will have for the future.”

Work supported by the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund will take place in a variety of landscapes and habitats across the Delaware River Watershed, from the beaches and tidal salt marshes of the Delaware Bay to the farms, cities and towns of Delaware, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania to the cold-water rivers and streams of New York. The fund will expand and further facilitate restoration and conservation efforts in the basin to:

- Restore and conserve fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve and maintain water quality for fish, wildlife and people
- Manage water volume and improve flood damage mitigation for fish and wildlife habitat
- Improve recreational opportunities consistent with ecological needs

Through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, NFWF is awarding these **Conservation Action Grants** to nonprofit organizations; federal, state, interstate and local governments; Indian tribes; and educational institutions to implement on-the-ground restoration and conservation projects that achieve the goals of the framework. This year’s Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grant recipients include:

- **The University of Delaware (\$241,000)** will restore anadromous and domestic fish passage to 17.6 miles and 250 acres of freshwater spawning habitat from tidewater to the Piedmont in Delaware and Pennsylvania. Ten fish barriers along the Brandywine River will be removed to enhance fish passage and restore freshwater habitat by 2020.

- **The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Inc. (\$125,000)** will establish beds of freshwater mussels in an urban tidal living shoreline at Bartram's Garden in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. This project will enhance local water quality and vegetation within the living shoreline, while also providing erosion control services to conserve and retain connections between coastal habitats and ecosystems in order to support local species.
- **The Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Inc. (\$249,999)** will implement integrated restoration objectives in the Upper Delaware River (located in New York) to include five stream restoration and enhancement projects. These projects will improve water quality and trout spawning habitat, expand fish passage, enhance flood mitigation, and create new public access points and recreational opportunities for hiking and birdwatching.
- **The Nature Conservancy (\$249,824)** will improve wildlife habitat and public access in the Columbia Wildlife Management Area to include restoring the Paulins Kill channel and native floodplain forest after the removal of the obsolete Columbia Dam and a second fish barrier located in the Columbia Wildlife Management Area.

For more information about the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund or to download the fund's 2018 Grant Slate, please visit www.nfwf.org/delaware (<http://www.nfwf.org/delaware>) .

About the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov (<http://www.fws.gov/>) .

About the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation

Chartered by Congress in 1984, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) protects and restores the nation's fish, wildlife, plants and habitats. Working with federal, corporate and individual partners, NFWF has funded more than 4,500 organizations and generated a conservation impact of more than \$5.3 billion. Learn more at www.nfwf.org (<http://www.nfwf.org/>) .

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