

WASHINGTON — A bipartisan group of ten U.S. Representatives from Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania introduced legislation today to enhance habitat, water quality and flood control improvements for fish, wildlife and people in the Delaware River Basin. The legislation requires the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to identify, prioritize, and implement restoration and conservation activities in the entire Basin, which is home to eight million people and provides drinking water to 15 million.

Rep. John Carney (D-DE), Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ), Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY), Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), Rep. Mike Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA), Rep. Jon Runyan (R-NJ), Rep. Rob Andrews (D-NJ), Rep. Allyson Schwartz (D-PA), Rep. Pat Meehan (R-PA) proposed the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2011, which will not add to the current budget deficit. The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service will use their existing budget to implement the requirements of the legislation.

The legislation is focused on optimizing collaboration and increasing resources and local capacity for on-the-ground and community-based projects. The legislation would enable communities and citizen groups to lead the way in addressing local watershed priorities.

□ “This program will improve coordination between government, private, and non-profit entities and focus our efforts on the most effective projects. The grants will be competitive and peer reviewed, ensuring we are being good stewards of the Delaware River Basin and taxpayer dollars alike,” said Representative John Carney (DE-AL). “I am honored to carry on this effort, which my predecessor, Mike Castle, championed.”

“The Delaware River is the longest free-flowing river in the eastern United States, spanning from its headwaters in the Catskills of New York to the mouth of the Delaware Bay. Yet the federal government has never had a comprehensive strategy addressing conservation, water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat protection,” said Representative Rush Holt (NJ-12). “The six million people who make their home along the River deserve the coordinated effort that this legislation would establish.”

“We need a comprehensive strategy to provide for conservation in the Delaware River Basin,” said Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-22). “The Basin is already a source of drinking water, recreation and prosperity for millions of people, and this legislation will help to ensure it remains

that way."

"The Delaware River Basin is not only an environmental treasure, but an economic engine for our region," said Representative Frank LoBiondo (NJ-02). "Supporting countless maritime, agricultural and recreational jobs, this legislation will ensure the watershed is protected going forward. I applaud this bipartisan legislation and the environmental partners, including the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, who tirelessly work to ensure the health of the Delaware River Basin."

"A regional coordinated effort in the Delaware River Basin will ensure that our natural resources and our communities are protected," said Representative Mike Fitzpatrick (PA-08). "Through this legislation we will be able to better manage and mitigate flooding that occurs all too frequently along the Delaware River."

"A healthy Delaware watershed is critically important to the people of my District, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and our entire region," said Representative Charlie Dent (PA-15). "Developing a coordinated federal strategy for protecting and restoring the watershed will benefit communities across our region by improving water quality, enhancing recreational opportunities and strengthening flood prevention and mitigation."

"The Delaware River watershed is a regional treasure that provides economic opportunity and recreational activities," said Representative Allyson Schwartz (PA-13). "It's time we get smarter about coordinating efforts to protect the river basin's environment. This legislation does just that. Without any additional mandates or regulations, interested parties will be able to work together throughout the entire basin and do so with the support of federal assistance."

"Protecting the Delaware River Basin is very important to our region," said Representative Patrick Meehan (PA-07). "I am pleased to support this legislation which takes a coordinated approach to the restoration and protection of the Delaware River Basin for generations to come."

In addition to current Basin funding and programs, a dedicated source of federal resources would bolster restoration and conservation in the region through strategic grant-making and more coordinated implementation of existing funding mechanisms at the federal, regional, state,

and local level. The Delaware River Basin Restoration Grant Program will support locally-driven, on-the-ground projects by non-profits, universities, state and local governments, community organizations and others.

Reps. Holt, Dent and Hinchey are co-chairs of the Delaware River Basin Task Force. Reps. Carney, Andrews and LoBiondo are all members of the Task Force.

A similar proposal is being introduced in the Senate today.

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