

FISHABLE SWIMMABLE WATERS

TAPPING THE LEGACY OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT

The Clean Water Act enables millions of people to live, work, and play on the Delaware River basin. One of the most far-reaching policies of our time, the Act transformed our waters from industrial dumping grounds into public treasures.

For grantees of the William Penn Foundation working to protect and build community around our waterways, the Clean Water Act plays a vital role through a system of stream protections known as "designations." Granted at the state level, a designation keeps a stream clean and free-flowing for the ways in which people use it most--from swimming to commercial boating. And in many states, designations preserve the health of fish and wildlife.

States mainly enforce their designations through local wastewater permits; by gradually scaling back on the pollution they allow from nearby businesses and water treatment facilities, states get closer to meeting designated quality standards. For streams already in pristine condition, designations also protect the surrounding landscapes that keep pollution at bay.

MAKING THE CASE FOR CLEANER DESIGNATIONS

In theory, any stream that supports recreation and vulnerable wildlife should receive the cleanest designation available. In reality, all too few of our local waters enjoy such protection.

Fortunately, states reevaluate their designations every one to three years, giving conservation and environmental education groups a chance to weigh in on the process.

From paddlers testifying at public hearings to stream monitors sharing data, organizations can tap into work already underway to improve local designations. Together, grantees can leverage each other's strengths to ensure waterways are protected for their true community values.

Learn more about the designation process:

Liz Deardorff, American Rivers

ldeardorff@americanrivers.org

Alan Hunt, Ph.D., Musconetcong Watershed Association

alan@musconetcong.org

Learn more about water quality standards:

River Network's Recreational Designation Map

<https://tinyurl.com/riverrec>

Stefanie Kroll, Academy of Natural Sciences

sak345@drexel.edu

Learn how "fishable, swimmable" work meets grant milestones:

Nathan Boon, William Penn Foundation

nboon@williampennfoundation.org

Advocacy and communications support:

Emily Balduff, PennFuture

Balduff@pennfuture.org

Doug O'Malley, Environment New Jersey

domalley@environmentnewjersey.org

Kristin Zilcosky, Conservation Voters of PA/New Jersey LCV

kristin.zilcosky@conservationpa.org

Adam Hymans, Resource Media

adam@resource-media.org

A Tale of Two Rivers...

SAVING OUR POCONO WATERS

Nestled in the evergreen forests of Monroe County, Pennsylvania, the Brodhead Creek is a rare jewel in former coal country. Known as the birthplace of American fly fishing, the creek's unspoiled waters have lured sports enthusiasts since the early 19th century.

The Brodhead enjoys distinction as one of the few streams in the Delaware River Basin designated for its "exceptional value" under the Clean Water Act.

In 2018, a group of developers sued to downgrade the Brodhead's status, hoping to clear and develop over its protective forests. Local groups rallied to defeat the challenge, including the Delaware Highlands Conservancy, the Brodhead Watershed Association, and several others.

Local leaders locked arms with state and national partners including PennFuture, River Network, and Trout Unlimited and drew faith leaders and small business owners into its ranks. Ultimately, the community won its battle to protect Pocono waters, thanks to collaboration powered by the Clean Water Act.



(RE)MAKING HISTORY ON THE COOPER RIVER



Camden's Cooper River has always played a leading role in the story of the Delaware River Watershed. The Lenape people, the watershed's original caretakers, depended on the Cooper for its abundant fish and game. For a young environmentalist named Benjamin Franklin, the river served as a stop on the path to greatness.

Over the next two centuries, Camden's industrial and residential footprint stressed the Cooper River to its breaking point. By the time the Clean Water Act passed in 1972, almost half of the river was full of raw sewage. The Act laid out a vision for conservation groups and city agencies; together, they restored the Cooper from a dead zone into a destination.

Today, the return of paddlers and endangered mussels heralds a new age for the Cooper. For the first time in New Jersey's history, an urban river stem has qualified for a C1 designation--one of the state's cleanest water protection standards. Local outdoor groups like Urban Promise are bringing the community back to the water as PowerCorps turns neighbors into citizen scientists. Inspired by their success, Environment New Jersey, the River Network, other advocacy groups are working to improve designations throughout the state.