



THE ACADEMY
OF NATURAL SCIENCES
of DREXEL UNIVERSITY



DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED INITIATIVE BUILDS ON EARLY SUCCESSES WITH ADDITIONAL \$42 MILLION INVESTMENT FROM THE WILLIAM PENN FOUNDATION

NGO-driven conservation program represents new future for environmental progress

PHILADELPHIA, PA (April 4, 2018) – During a press conference today, the William Penn Foundation announced more than \$40 million in new funding for the [Delaware River Watershed Initiative](#) (DRWI), which stands among the country's largest non-regulatory conservation efforts to protect and restore clean water. The DRWI is a collaborative effort involving 65 non-governmental organizations working together at an unprecedented scale to protect and restore clean water in the Delaware River watershed, the source of drinking water for 15 million people in Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey and Delaware. As the lead funder to date, the William Penn Foundation's investment in the DRWI now totals more than \$100 million.

Leadership by public agencies and NGOs at the state and local levels is critical to continuing the momentum of environmental gains achieved over the past several decades. The DRWI's bottom-up approach represents a strategic path forward for the Delaware River watershed and other major watersheds across the country; it is a nationally significant model that demonstrates the power of an organized, independent, NGO-driven approach that encourages partnership among the public, private and philanthropic sectors and is rooted in local communities.

In the Delaware River watershed, about half of the pollution in the system's waterways is the result of nonpoint source pollution from myriad places, therefore inherently difficult to address through regulation alone. Rapid population growth and resulting urban and suburban sprawl are driving significant impacts to the watershed by shrinking and fragmenting forests that are critical to protecting clean water. Runoff from paved surfaces and agricultural fields carry pesticides, chemicals and other toxins into our streams and rivers. These growing problems will threaten drinking water for millions of people every day if left unaddressed.

"When we led the creation of the DRWI, our intent was to serve as a catalyst for accelerated watershed protection in our region," said Janet Haas, Board Chair of the William Penn Foundation. "We wanted to build a framework that would harness the enormous capacity of conservation organizations to work together on a shared approach, and to see whether that critical mass could affect greater change. The result is a model that will not only have an effect in the Delaware River watershed, but also will provide a model that can be replicated in other watersheds tackling similarly complex issues."

Launched in 2014, the DRWI mobilized local and regional organizations to collaborate at an unprecedented scale in an effort to accelerate conservation. The DRWI is guided by strong science and data; partners methodically assess water quality by monitoring more than 500 sites in the watershed. The resulting data drives decision-making. Over the past four years, DRWI partners have initiated projects that collectively will strategically protect 19,604 acres and restore an additional 8,331 acres to reduce the impacts of pollution. Partners have also leveraged \$72.7 million in additional public and private funds. The effort has also resulted in major collaborations to better target conservation, share data, and develop new modeling and monitoring tools with both regional and national applications.

Equipped with the learning and data from the past four years, organizations receiving this additional \$42 million, three-year investment will build on the initial successes of the initiative to protect and restore

an estimated 43,484 additional acres and continue science-driven, data-informed efforts to secure clean, abundant water in the watershed.

"Our extensive monitoring produces real-time data on water quality, and the tools developed through the DRWI have essentially created a feedback loop where we can analyze the potential impacts of projects across the watershed in order to pinpoint areas of greatest potential change, and measure whether our efforts had an effect on the water," said Roland Wall, Senior Director for Environmental Initiatives at the Academy of Natural Sciences. "Eventually, we can amplify those results to mobilize widespread action grounded in high-quality science."

The Delaware River basin is a densely populated region, providing drinking water to over 5 percent of the U.S. population. Yet it still contains many famously beautiful landscapes—the Catskills, Poconos, Delaware Water Gap, New Jersey Highlands and Pinelands, and the historic Lehigh, Schuylkill, and Brandywine River Valleys. The challenges to clean water facing this 13,500 square mile watershed are diffuse, and there are many things private landowners and local municipalities can do on their own to help solve these problems. The DRWI is addressing widespread sources of pollution that collectively have major impacts on water quality in our rivers and streams: erosion and runoff from deforested acres in the basin headwaters; polluted runoff from agricultural fields; flooding and polluted stormwater from developed areas; and depletion of the Kirkwood-Cohansey aquifer in southern New Jersey.

The DRWI assembles strong players in the conservation field in the Delaware Basin, and provides them with strategic opportunities and resources to work together in specific geographies within the watershed to accelerate conservation. Together these partners are addressing complex issues by protecting land, restoring streams, testing innovative approaches in these geographical "laboratories," and monitoring results over time. To complement their on-the-ground conservation work, partners are working side-by-side to improve planning processes, develop new sources of revenue, and involve local communities and municipalities through communications.

A steering committee of leading conservation organizations comprising the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Open Space Institute, and the Institute for Conservation Leadership provides technical assistance to 60 additional national and regional partners.

"What is being tested through the Delaware River Watershed Initiative – both the collaboration and the marrying of strategies that can be measured through water quality improvements – could have implications for generations to come," said Dianne Russell, President of Institute for Conservation Leadership. "Working together, partners are connecting each other's strengths and abilities to concentrate their efforts, resulting in both tangible change and the weaving together of relationships and capacities that will have other benefits to the environment and the people in the Delaware River Basin. The approach being tested in these 'laboratories' has the potential to expand to other locations across the watershed and beyond in the future."

"Protecting headwaters forests, which absorb, store and recharge ground water and filter out pollutants, is the first and best way to ensure clean water in the Delaware River Basin," said Kim Elliman, president and CEO of the Open Space Institute. "The Open Space Institute is pleased and honored to join with the region's land trusts as we intensify our collective efforts to protect important forestland in places like the Upper Lehigh, the Schuylkill Highlands and Pine Barrens, and riparian forested buffers on farms. By targeting our efforts and leveraging other private and public investments, we can help maintain the extraordinary natural infrastructure that keeps our water clean and sustains a rich ecosystem as well as vibrant recreational economy in this unique place."

"NFWF launched the Delaware River Restoration Fund to foster water quality improvements and habitat restoration in targeted regions of the watershed in 2014," said Jeff Trandahl, executive director and

CEO, NFWF. "A major part of the Delaware River Watershed Initiative, since the Fund's inception, we have invested \$8.5 million in 55 projects, leveraging over \$28 million in additional conservation resources, for a total conservation impact of more than \$36 million in just four years. We are proud to be a part of this dynamic partnership and look forward to the next three years of delivering restoration in the Delaware watershed."

DRWI Highlights To Date

Since 2014, the organizations participating in DRWI have made substantial progress that positions them to continue accelerating the rate of conservation in years to come. These achievements include:

- **Using science to prioritize work:** Partners determined eight priority places in which to concentrate their conservation efforts, where scientific data showed the highest potential for improved water quality.
- **Collaboration:** Dozens of conservation organizations collaborated to develop shared work plans for their efforts in those eight places, where they are pooling their resources and concentrating efforts for greater impact.
- **Baseline assessment:** The Academy of Natural Sciences brought its scientific expertise to analyze stream conditions in the eight priority areas, establishing a critically important baseline against which to measure impact.
- **Ongoing monitoring:** Water quality is continually measured within these eight areas to detect changes in stream quality and assess impact over time, harnessing the capacity of academics, professionals, and citizen scientists.
- **Conservation:** Partners collectively protected 19,604 acres of important headwater forests to protect already-clean waterways and restored an additional 8,331 acres to reduce the impacts of pollution from agriculture and stormwater on impaired streams.
- **New technology:** Expert data scientists developed nationally significant new tools to help practitioners find the best places to further concentrate conservation in the future: WikiWatershed and the Stream Reach Assessment Tool. These tools were used to identify project areas for the newly funded phase of the Initiative.

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About the William Penn Foundation

The William Penn Foundation, founded in 1945 by Otto and Phoebe Haas, is dedicated to improving the quality of life in the Greater Philadelphia region through efforts that increase educational opportunities for children from low-income families, ensure a sustainable environment, foster creativity that enhances civic life, and advance philanthropy in the Philadelphia region. In partnership with others, the Foundation works to advance opportunity, ensure sustainability, and enable effective solutions. The Foundation's assets exceed \$2.6 billion as of December 31, 2017.

About the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University

The Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University is Philadelphia's natural history museum and a world leader in biodiversity, evolution and environmental research. Founded in 1812, it is the oldest natural history museum in the Americas and has become, through its scientific research and extraordinary collection of 18 million natural history specimens, an international center for the study of

the natural world. The mission of the Academy is to advance research, education, and public engagement in biodiversity and environmental science.

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 committed more than \$4.8 billion to conservation projects. Learn more at www.nfwf.org.

About the Open Space Institute

Founded in 1974 to protect significant landscapes in New York State, the Open Space Institute is a leader in environmental conservation. OSI has partnered in the protection of 2.2 million acres in North America, from Alabama to southeastern Canada. All of OSI's work is directed by a consistent strategy emphasizing permanent protection on a landscape-level scale. OSI protects diverse landscapes including parks, preserves, working farms and forests, and utilizes climate science to identify critical landscapes for protection. OSI administers grant funds to preserve habitat for rare and endangered species, protect water resources, enhance recreational access and support sustainably managed lands.

About the Institute for Conservation Leadership

To support healthy communities and a healthy Earth, ICL strengthens leaders, organizations, coalitions, and networks through institution-building and leadership development services. Founded in 1990, the Institute for Conservation Leadership serves a variety of local, state, regional, and national groups working on conservation and environmental issues across North America and beyond. To equip a diverse set of leaders to solve the most pressing issues, ICL offers high-quality customized planning, facilitation, coaching, workshops, evaluation, and research.