



**For Immediate Release:**

March 19, 2021

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**Report Highlights the Economic Benefit of Dissolved Oxygen in the Delaware River Estuary**  
*Dissolved oxygen improvements could stimulate benefits approaching \$1 billion*

**Philadelphia/Camden/Wilmington** - A new report released by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network spotlights the enormous economic benefits that could result from cleaner water and dissolved oxygen (D.O.) improvements in the Delaware River Estuary. The report, titled "Economic Value of Dissolved Oxygen Restoration in the Delaware River Estuary" was prepared through a collaboration between the Delaware Riverkeeper Network and Key-Log Economics using an ecosystem services framework to estimate key societal benefits, with a particular focus on the communities of Camden, Philadelphia, Chester, and Wilmington.

Every summer, despite the improvements made in D.O. levels over the last 50 years, an approximately 20-mile zone of hypoxia, or depressed dissolved oxygen levels, reappears from Philadelphia down to the Delaware state line, impairing the estuarine ecosystem and doing direct damage to species such as the endangered Atlantic sturgeon. The report shows that even a moderate restoration scenario for eliminating this hypoxia could have benefits of \$44 - \$62 million annually, including increases in property values, commercial fishing activities, and recreation. Report modeling also showed regional economic benefits from dissolved oxygen restoration would total at least \$500 to \$840 million for benefits estimated in the analysis.

There are also important benefits for environmental justice communities. According to the report:

"Restoring water quality could bring a cascade of benefits to all communities within the estuary. There are likely positive environmental justice implications as it may engender economic opportunities and improvements in social conditions in economically disadvantaged communities. Traditional cost-benefit analyses do not focus enough on the holistic value of restoration, primarily in communities facing environmental injustices."

"Year after year, decade after decade, our riverside communities have paid the price of inaction, of polluted water, of impaired ecosystems, and the lack of robust and healthy fish populations. This study begins the healing process by documenting the costs of inaction, and the benefits to our entire region for

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investing in clean water,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network**. “The results highlight the need for immediate regulatory revisions to bring full Clean Water Act protections to this tidal section of the Delaware River, the last area in our entire region lacking these basic but fundamental protections, and to finally bring justice to these communities.”

The report contributes to an effort by the Delaware Riverkeeper Network and partner organizations to petition the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC) to upgrade the regulatory status and protections for the Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington reach of the Delaware River. The initiative seeks to ensure that water quality standards governing the river provide full Clean Water Act protections and adequate dissolved oxygen for the survival of fish and other aquatic life.

“The restoration of the tidal Delaware River is easily within reach and simply requires installing conventional technologies at those few remaining wastewater facilities that have yet to upgrade their treatment,” said **Erik Silldorff, Ph.D., Restoration Director at the Delaware Riverkeeper Network** and one of the report’s co-authors. “The benefits of restoration are truly extraordinary, for the estuary ecosystem itself and for the people living along this great river.”

A virtual press conference about the report and the Delaware Riverkeeper Network’s efforts to improve dissolved oxygen levels in the Estuary will be held on March 24 at 10:30 a.m. Register at <http://bit.ly/DRNDOPressConference>.

The Delaware Riverkeeper Network and partner organizations will also be holding a webinar on April 7th, 2021 to provide details of the study’s findings and to describe their efforts to petition the DRBC for upgraded water quality standards. The webinar will be open to the public and registration information will be available on the Delaware Riverkeeper Network’s website.

Read the report here: <https://www.delawariverkeeper.org/sites/default/files/DRN%20Keylog%20-%20Economic%20Value%20of%20DO%20Restoration%20in%20the%20DE%20%282020-12%29.pdf>

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