



## PRESS RELEASE

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### Report Shows Delaware Estuary is Economic Engine for Tri-state Region

PHILADELPHIA — The nonprofit [Partnership for the Delaware Estuary](#) announced yesterday that waterways like the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers contribute over \$10 billion to the region's economy every year; this, according to a new study released by the [University of Delaware](#).

Researchers assessed the economic value of the tidal Delaware River, Delaware Bay, and land downstream of Trenton, New Jersey. They compiled data on both the economic activity and the jobs associated with waters in this region to arrive at an estimate of over \$10 billion in economic activity supporting jobs for more than half a million people.

The results of this study were made public during a press conference at the [Bridesburg Outboard Club](#), a private boat launch on the Delaware River in Philadelphia. Organizers chose this venue because it neighbors the former Philadelphia Coke Works, a site many would like to see restored as a park along the 2,500-mile [East Coast Greenway](#). They also chose it because recreational boaters spend about \$47 million every year according to UD experts.

The new study, entitled "[Economic Value of the Delaware Estuary Watershed](#)," is the first of its kind in more than two decades. It follows similar reports which catalog the value of other coastal regions, like the Chesapeake Bay, Florida Everglades, and Great Lakes. Those who will use it include economists, environmentalists, legislators, researchers and key decision makers.

"You cannot put a price tag on the value of the Delaware River and Bay to peoples' lives — it's much more than an economic resource. However, we live in a time when major decisions about activities like drilling, dredging and development are made based in part on economics," said [Jennifer Adkins](#), executive director of the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. "This study will help people to consider the economic contributions of our estuary in those types of decisions."

[Gerald J. Kauffman](#), director of UD's Water Resources Agency, is the lead author of the study. In addition to using traditional economics, he and his colleagues used a modern technique called "natural capital valuation." This allowed them to estimate the value of natural goods and services provided by local land and water at over \$12 million annually.

"We found that drinking water alone provides \$1.3 billion in value to the region," said Kauffman. "If you combine that with the value of drinking water taken from the Delaware River before it reaches Trenton, that value skyrockets to \$3.1 billion."

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To foster good investments in environmental improvements, public and private-sector environmental leaders have joined forces to advance the restoration of key sites, like the adjacent Philadelphia Coke Works. Other projects they are promoting include:

- Using “living shorelines” to prevent marshes from washing into Delaware Bay
- Restoring freshwater mussels in local waterways to purify water
- Evaluating the health of underwater plants
- Restoring oyster reefs in Delaware Bay
- Teaching school children about maritime culture by restoring oysters

[Patrick Starr](#), senior vice president of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, believes that restoring the riverfront in Bridesburg should be a top priority. He values it for its proximity to urban residents, scale, shoreline contours, and landowner cooperation, all of which combine to make it a rare site in Philadelphia.

“Philadelphia is the most populous community in the estuary, yet its residents are sorely deprived of access and enjoyment of the estuary’s rich natural resources,” said Starr. “Our proposed ecological restoration is intended to provide recreational use as public open space in tandem with new wildlife habitat and environmental quality.”

This is the second time Bridesburg’s riverfront has been selected as a high-priority restoration project. Each year the PDE Alliance ([Alliance for Comprehensive Ecosystem Solutions](#)) selects five or six projects its members will support. Members of the PDE Alliance include more than a dozen member-organizations located in Delaware, southern New Jersey, and southeastern Pennsylvania. Working together, they identify and promote the best investments for restoring and protecting the Delaware Estuary.

The Delaware Estuary Watershed is the tidal portion, or the lower half, of the Delaware River Basin. It includes all of the land and waterways draining into the tidal Delaware River and Bay. This watershed stretches as far west as the Schuylkill River’s headwaters near Pottsville, Pennsylvania, and as far east as the Rancocas River’s headwaters near Fort Dix, New Jersey. Its 6,800 square miles make the Delaware Estuary’s watershed one of the largest in the country. Within these boundaries are over 200 species of fish, the continent’s second-highest concentration of shorebirds, and over 400,000 acres of wetlands.

To learn more about the economic value of the Delaware Estuary Watershed, visit [DelawareEstuary.org](http://DelawareEstuary.org).

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**The Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, a National Estuary Program based in Wilmington, leads collaborative and creative efforts to protect and enhance the Delaware Estuary, and its tributaries, for current and future generations. We envision everyone working together to make the Delaware Estuary the most inviting, prosperous and healthy natural resource of its kind in the nation.**