

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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William Penn Foundation To Fund Creation Of A New Vision For Delaware Watershed

In a major development for the Delaware River Watershed, Laura Sparks, chief financial officer of the [William Penn Foundation](#), announced Tuesday the Foundation is directing significant funding toward impacting the entire watershed and is interested in creating a "Vision for the Watershed."

The Foundation plans to impact the Delaware basin by addressing watershed-wide issues; protecting and restoring places of ecological significance; and building the constituency for the watershed by engaging people.

Sparks was part of a two-day event held October 28-29 at the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University and hosted by the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed with the generous support of the Foundation.

Coalition partners PennFuture and New Jersey Audubon helped spearhead the event at which well over 200 individuals attended sessions on preserving and protecting the Delaware River Watershed.

In all, over 60 NGOs, eight federal agencies, state and local regulators, academia, and foundations were represented at "Accelerating Action: The Delaware River Watershed Forum."

The Delaware River Basin is an ecological and economic jewel. It encompasses 13,000 square acres and provides 5 percent of the drinking water of the United States. The basin has an annual economic value of \$25 billion and its ecosystem services are valued at \$683 billion.

It is also the engine for 600,000 jobs. President John Fry of Drexel University noted, "There are few things more important than preserving and protecting our Delaware River Watershed." He added that protection of "watersheds require a commitment to the long-view."

The interactive forum included facilitated discussion to identify current opportunities, obstacles, challenges, priorities and needs for forests, agriculture, and urban and suburban landscapes as well as issues related to monitoring, policy, and restoration.

Philadelphia Deputy Mayor Michael DiBerardinis noted at the plenary, "This is a time of great challenges but also great opportunities," and added that it was vital to develop a conservation ethic while

establishing connections between diverse communities and the River.

Larry Schweiger, president and CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, talked about the significant impact that climate change will have on the Delaware, saying, "We are moving the planet outside the human experience to a time of climate consequence." His comments were particularly poignant in light of the one-year anniversary today of Superstorm Sandy.

During the luncheon keynote this afternoon, Jerry Kauffman, professor of water science and policy at the University of Delaware, declared, "an ounce of prevention or protection of the pristine headwaters is worth a pound of cure by way of restoration after the fact," noting the incredible economic value of a clean Delaware River. He closed the forum by quoting Winston Churchill, noting, "this is just the end of the beginning."

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