An Overview of the Delaware River

A Tour of the River from the Mountains to the Sea

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Overview of the Delaware River
The Delaware River Basin Commission
5 Takeaways
Q and A
Delaware River Fast Facts

- Flows 330 miles from NYS to the Delaware Bay where it meets the Atlantic Ocean
- Forms an interstate boundary its entire length; basin includes portions of NY, PA, NJ, and DE
- 216 tributary streams
- Longest undammed U.S. river east of the Mississippi (dams are located on tributaries, not on the main stem)

- Drains 13, 539 mi$^2$ or 0.35% of the continental U.S. land area
- Roughly 13.5 million people (~ 4% of the U.S. population) rely on the waters of the basin (8+ million live in the DRB)
- National Wild and Scenic River: 6 sections
What is a Watershed?

(Video courtesy of caringforourwatersheds.com: https://www.youtube.com/embed/K_o-jK6vWlo)
Where does the Delaware River begin?

The Delaware River has an east branch and a west branch, both located in New York State.
The East & West branches meet at Hancock, N.Y. to form the main stem Delaware River.
Upper Delaware River

- Begins at Hancock, N.Y. and flows 73 miles, forming the border between Pa. and N.Y.
- Known as the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River, a unit of the National Park Service
- Designated part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.
- While a lot of this land is privately owned, this section of river is still heavily forested and not very developed.
The “Big Eddy” at Narrowsburg, N.Y. -- The deepest (113 feet) spot on the main stem Delaware River.
Roebling’s Delaware Aqueduct

Roebling’s Delaware Aqueduct -- oldest surviving wire suspension bridge in the U.S. Connects Minisink Ford, N.Y. & Lackawaxen, Pa.

Photo: Laurie Lobregt
Tri-State Rock

Marks where the three states meet:
Near Port Jervis, N.Y.
Middle Delaware River

- Begins just south of Port Jervis, N.Y. and flows ~40 miles downstream to Stroudsburg, Pa.
- Known as the Delaware Water Gap National Recreational Area, a unit of the National Park Service
- Designated part of the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Program.
- Most of the river corridor is federally owned and therefore not very developed.
The Water Gap is where the Delaware River cuts through a large ridge of the Appalachian Mountains. It began to form over 400 million years ago.
Scenes from the National Recreation Area

Photo: Rena Hottinger; Dingman’s Falls (Pa.)

Photo: Kevin Haines
The section of river south of the Water Gap to Washington Crossing, Pa.

Parts included in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System – stretch of the river & sections of several tributaries

Southernmost section of the non-tidal river

More suburban, developed – scenic/historic river towns of Easton, New Hope, Lambertville, Frenchtown, Stockton, Milford, and Riegelsville are located along this section of river.
Delaware River at Easton, Pa.: confluence of the Lehigh River
Delaware River at Washington Crossing

Graves of America’s First Unknown Soldiers Along the Delaware
Scenes from the Lower Delaware

Photo: Keith Balderston
The Delaware Estuary:
The Tidal Delaware River

- The Delaware River is tidal from Trenton south ~130 miles to the Atlantic Ocean.
- This section of the Delaware River is also known as the Delaware Estuary; it includes the Delaware Bay.
- An Estuary is where salt and fresh water mix.
- Tides can be anywhere up to 8 feet (change between low & high tide).
The Delaware River Port Complex (including docking facilities in Pa., N.J., and Del.) is the largest freshwater port in the world.
The Schuylkill River:
the Delaware’s largest tributary
What is the Likely Origin of the Word “Hoagie” and What Does it Have to Do With the Delaware River?
Why Does Major League Baseball Depend on the Delaware River Watershed?
Delaware River Estuary
The Maurice River: A Delaware Bay Tributary (Bivalve, N.J.)
Horseshoe Crabs & Red Knots: Interconnected Species
Th Delaware Bay at Lewes, Del.: Where the river finally meets the sea
Clean, cold water makes the upper Delaware River and its tributaries great places to fish for trout.

Photo: Aaron Harris
In fact, you can fish all along the non-tidal Delaware & its tributaries
You can even fish the tidal Delaware River, its tributaries, & the Delaware Bay.

Photo: Delaware Waterfront Corporation

Photo: Phila. Water Dept.
The Delaware River is also great for birding.

Photo: John Martin

©Mike Slickster Photography
And, you may see amphibians....
Or even reptiles & mammals
Camp, Hike, Bike – so many things to do!

Photo: Keith Balderston
Paddle, Boat, Swim – so much FUN!
2019 Delaware River Sojourn:
Friday, June 14 – Saturday, June 22

- Guided river trip that combines paddling, camping, and educational programming
- 2019 Theme: Celebrating 25 Years of Paddling Adventures
- For new to experienced paddlers
- Join for one or all eight days (June 14: volunteer river cleanup)

DRBC participates on the steering committee that plans this not-for-profit event.
Delaware River Sojourn

Video Link: https://youtu.be/rDgQ71XbgP4
Delaware River Basin Commission
Founded in 1961

Five Equal Members:
- Delaware
- New Jersey
- Pennsylvania
- New York
- Federal Government

Note: New York City and Philadelphia are “advisors” and not members
Why was the DRBC created?

- Water supply shortages and disputes over the apportionment of the basin’s waters;
- Severe pollution in the Delaware River and its major tributaries;
- Serious flooding

The 1937 Philadelphia Record editorial page cartoon depicts the time when the tidal Delaware was an open sewer, where pollution in some stretches robbed the river of all its oxygen needed to support fish and other aquatic life.
DRBC Functional Responsibilities

- Water Supply
- Drought Management
- Flood Loss Reduction
- Water Quality
- Watershed Planning
- Regulatory Review (Permitting)
- Outreach/Education
- Recreation
5 Takeaways

1. The Delaware River is a LIVING & WORKING RIVER
   • Its habitat supports fish, birds, and other wildlife
   • Its freshwater port is the largest in the world
2. The Delaware River is CLEANER than its been in decades
   • Water Quality improvements & protections
3. The Delaware River is FUN
   • So many opportunities to get outdoors and enjoy the river: boating, fishing, camping, hiking, biking
4. The Delaware River CONNECTS ALL OF US
   • Nearly 14 million people depend on the Delaware for drinking, agriculture, and other needs.
5. The Delaware River NEEDS US
   • We must all do our part to help keep the river clean
Connect with DRBC on Social Media

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Thank you!

Photo: David B. Soete