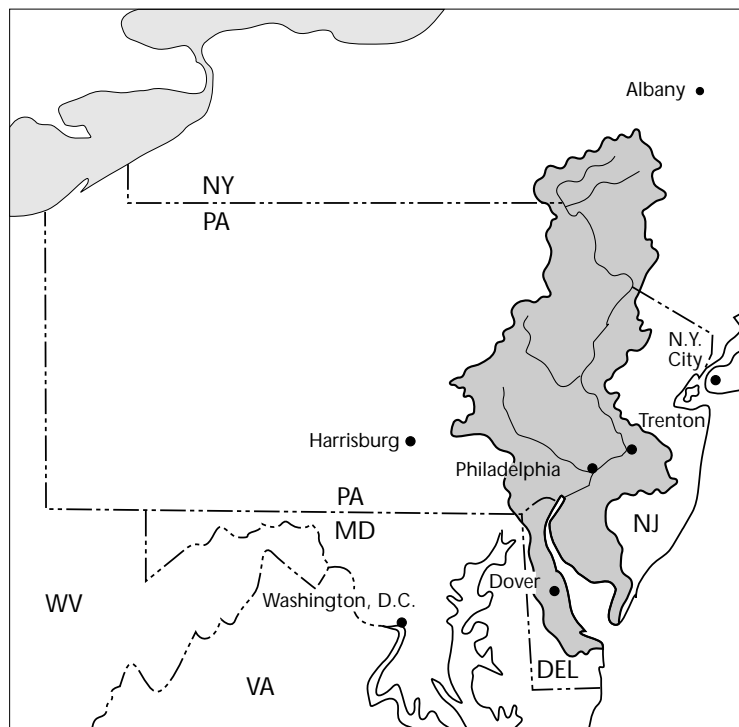


US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

Delaware River Basin Commission



— Basin Boundaries
(USGS 6-Digit Hydrologic Unit)

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Surface Water Quality

The Delaware River Basin covers portions of Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania. The Delaware River system consists of a 207-mile freshwater segment, an 85-mile tidal reach, and the Delaware Bay. Nearly 8 million people reside in the Basin, which is also the home of numerous industrial facilities and the port facilities of Philadelphia, Camden, and Wilmington.

All of the riverine waters and 94% of the estuarine waters in the Basin have good water quality that fully supports aquatic life uses. Three percent of the riverine waters do not support fish consumption and 2% have fair quality that partially supports swimming. In estuarine waters, poor water quality impairs shellfishing in 29% of the surveyed waters. Low dissolved oxygen concentrations and toxic contaminants in sediment degrade portions of the lower tidal river and estuary. Fecal coliform bacteria and high pH values impair a few miles of the Delaware River. As of April 1994, fish consumption advisories were posted on about 6 miles of the Delaware River and 22 square miles of the tidal river, cautioning the public to restrict consumption of channel catfish, white perch, and American eels contaminated with PCBs and chlordane.

In general, water quality has improved since the 1992 305(b) assessment period. Tidal river oxygen levels were higher during the critical summer period, residues of toxic chemicals in fish and shellfish declined, and populations of important fish species (such as striped bass and American shad) increased during the 1994 assessment period.

Programs to Restore Water Quality

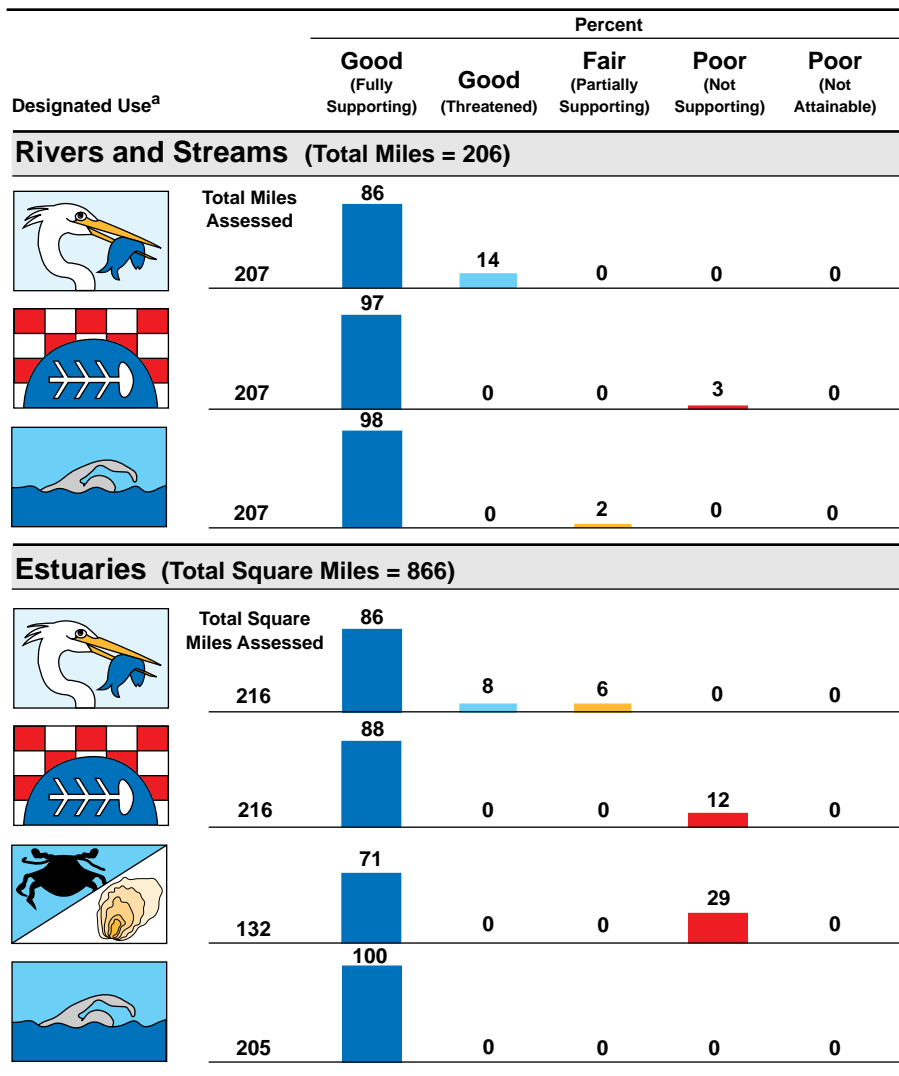
For many years, the Delaware River Basin Commission and the surrounding States have implemented an aggressive program to reduce

point source discharges of oxygen-depleting wastes and other pollutants. These programs will continue, in addition to new efforts to determine the role of stormwater runoff. The Commission also adopted new Special Protection Waters regulations to protect existing high water quality in the upper reaches of the nontidal river from the effects of future population growth and development. The Commission also promotes a comprehensive watershed management approach to coordinate several layers of governmental regulatory programs impacting the Delaware River Basin.

Programs to Assess Water Quality

The Commission conducts an intensive monitoring program along the entire length of the Delaware River and Estuary. At least a dozen parameters are sampled at most stations, located about 7 miles apart. The new Special Protection Waters regulations require even more sophisticated monitoring and modeling, such as biological monitoring and continuous water quality monitoring. The Combined Sewer Overflow Study and the Toxics Study will both require additional specialized water quality analyses in order to understand how and why water quality is affected. New management programs will very likely require customized monitoring programs.

Individual Use Support in the Delaware River Basin



^a A subset of the Delaware River Basin Commission's designated uses appear in this figure. Refer to the Commission's 305(b) report for a full description of the Commission's uses.