

Calendar No. 548

114TH CONGRESS }
2d Session }

SENATE

{ REPORT
114-294

DELAWARE RIVER BASIN CONSERVATION ACT OF 2015

JUNE 7, 2016.—Ordered to be printed

Mr. INHOFE, from the Committee on Environment and Public Works, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany S. 921]

[Including cost estimate of the Congressional Budget Office]

The Committee on Environment and Public Works, to which was referred the bill (S. 921) to direct the Secretary of the Interior to establish a nonregulatory program to build on and help coordinate funding for restoration and protection efforts of the 4-State Delaware River Basin region, and for other purposes, having considered the same, reports favorably thereon without amendment and recommends that the bill do pass.

GENERAL STATEMENT AND BACKGROUND

The Delaware River Basin includes the Delaware River watershed in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware and the Delaware Bay. The Basin is home to more than 8 million people who depend on it as an economic engine, a place of recreation, a source of clean drinking water, and a vital habitat for fish and wildlife.

The Basin encompasses significant acres of wetlands and forest. This landscape provides essential ecosystem services, including recreation, commercial activity, and water quality benefits. The basin also provides drinking water to many cities, including New York and Philadelphia. The Delaware River is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi, and a critical component of the National Wild and Scenic River System in the Northeast.

Although organizations like the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary and the Delaware River Basin Commission are successful in their respective efforts, existing programs have limited resources to fully address the habitat, recreation, and water-related challenges

in the entire Basin in a fully coordinated manner. In addition to current Basin funding and programs, a basin-wide program would bolster restoration and conservation in the region through strategic grant-making and more coordinated implementation of existing funding mechanisms at the Federal, regional, State, and local level.

The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2015 requires the Secretary of the Interior to establish the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program (Program) within the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service). In establishing the Program, the Director of the Service is required to draw on existing management plans and work in consultation with existing organizations in the basin to identify, prioritize, and implement restoration and protection activities in the entire Basin and adopt a basin-wide strategy for implementation of the Program.

The primary purpose of the Program is to develop and implement a coordinated approach to sustain and enhance habitat, water quality and water management improvements in the Delaware River basin. The bill authorizes a competitive matching grant program to carry out high priority projects and requires the Director to provide for additional technical assistance to support on-the-ground projects. The Act also requires consultation with other Federal Agencies, States, and other public agencies and organizations involved in planning and implementation of conservation strategies in the Basin.

OBJECTIVES OF THE LEGISLATION

The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2015 (S. 921) requires the Secretary of the Interior acting through the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to establish the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program and to provide grants and technical assistance to carry out the purposes of the Program.

SECTION-BY-SECTION ANALYSIS

Section 1. Short title

Section 1 states that the Act may be cited as the ‘Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2015’.

Section 2. Findings

Section 2 includes findings regarding the Delaware River Basin and the need for restoration of this basin.

Section 3. Definitions

Section 3 includes definitions for terms used in the Act.

Section 4. Program establishment

Section 4 directs the Secretary of the Interior acting through the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service (Secretary) to establish a Delaware River Basin restoration program within 180 days. In carrying out the program, the Secretary shall draw on existing and new management plans for the Basin and work in consultation with applicable management entities; adopt a basin-wide strategy to support implementation of a shared set of restoration and protection activities and support cost-effective and measurable con-

servation efforts; establish a grant program; and provide technical assistance.

In carrying out the program, the Secretary is also directed to consult with the heads of relevant Federal agencies, the Governors of the Basin States, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, the Delaware River Basin Commission, the fish and wildlife joint venture partnerships, and other public agencies and organizations involved in conservation of the basin.

Section 4 lists the purposes of the program, which include coordinating restoration and protection activities, carrying out coordinated restoration and protection activities, and providing competitive grants for technical assistance.

Section 5. Grants and assistance

Section 5 directs the Secretary to establish a Delaware River Basin restoration grant program to provide competitive matching grants of varying amounts to carry out the purposes of the Program. This section requires that grants accomplish one or more listed activities, including restoration and protection of fish and wildlife species and their habitats, improvement or protection of water quality, improvement of the management of water volume and mitigation of flood damage to support the ecological needs of fish and wildlife, actions identified in the basin-wide strategy developed pursuant to Section 4, and restoration and protection activities with multiple benefits in the Basin.

Section 5 establishes that the Federal cost-share of any grant shall not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the activity funded. Non-Federal costs can be provided in cash or in-kind contribution of services or materials.

Section 5 authorizes the Secretary to enter into an agreement with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation or other similar organizations to manage the grant program. Any organization selected to manage the grant program shall receive amounts to carry out this section at the beginning of each fiscal year, shall invest and reinvest those amounts for the benefit of the program, and shall administer the program in accordance with this Act.

Section 6. Annual reports

Not later than 180 days after the date of enactment and annually thereafter, the Secretary must submit a report to Congress on the implementation of the Act, including a description of each project that has received funding under the Act.

Section 7. Authorization of appropriations

This section authorizes \$5 million for each of fiscal years 2016 through 2021 to carry out this Act. Seventy-five percent of any amount made available to the Secretary to carry out the Act must be used to carry out the grant program and to provide technical assistance.

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

S. 921 was introduced by Sen. Carper on April 14, 2015. The bill has 6 co-sponsors. The bill was received, read twice and referred to the Committee on Environment and Public Works.

On May 18, 2016, the Full Committee met to consider a number of bills including S. 921 and reported the bill favorably.

HEARINGS

In the 112th Congress, on April 24, 2012, the Subcommittee on Water and Wildlife held a legislative hearing to consider a number of items, including a previous version of S. 921.

ROLLCALL VOTES

The Committee on Environment and Public Works met to consider S. 921 on May 18, 2016. The bill was ordered to be reported favorably by voice vote. No rollcall votes were taken on this bill.

REGULATORY IMPACT STATEMENT

In compliance with section 11(b) of rule XXVI of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the committee finds that S. 921 does not create any additional regulatory burdens, nor will it cause any adverse impact on the personal privacy of individuals.

MANDATES ASSESSMENT

In compliance with the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (Public Law 104–4), the committee notes that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has found, “S. 921 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would benefit state and local governments, as well as public institutions of higher education, by authorizing grants and technical assistance to support restoration activities in the Delaware River Basin.”

COST OF LEGISLATION

Section 403 of the Congressional Budget and Impoundment Control Act requires that a statement of the cost of the reported bill, prepared by the Congressional Budget Office, be included in the report. That statement follows:

JUNE 10, 2016.

Hon. JIM INHOFE,
Chairman, Committee on Environment and Public Works,
U.S. Senate, Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. CHAIRMAN: The Congressional Budget Office has prepared the enclosed cost estimate for S. 921, the Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2015.

If you wish further details on this estimate, we will be pleased to provide them. The CBO staff contact is Jeff LaFave.

Sincerely,

KEITH HALL.

Enclosure.

S. 921—Delaware River Basin Conservation Act of 2015

Summary: S. 921 would authorize the appropriation of \$5 million a year through 2021 for a program to restore the Delaware River Basin. Assuming appropriation of the authorized amounts, CBO estimates that implementing the bill would cost \$24 million over the 2017–2021 period and \$1 million after 2021. Enacting the legisla-

tion would not affect direct spending or revenues; therefore, pay-as-you-go procedures do not apply.

CBO estimates that enacting S. 921 would not increase net direct spending or on-budget deficits in any of the four consecutive 10-year periods beginning in 2027.

S. 921 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act (UMRA) and would impose no costs on state, local, or tribal governments.

Estimated cost to the Federal Government: The estimated budgetary impact of S. 921 is shown in the following table. The cost of this legislation falls within budget function 300 (natural resources and environment).

	By fiscal year, in millions of dollars—					
	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2017–2021
INCREASES IN SPENDING SUBJECT TO APPROPRIATION						
Authorization Level	5	5	5	5	5	25
Estimated Outlays	4	5	5	5	5	24

Basis of estimate: For this estimate, CBO assumes that S. 921 will be enacted early in 2017 and that the authorized amounts will be appropriated for each fiscal year. Estimated outlays are based on historical spending patterns for similar activities.

S. 921 would authorize the appropriation of \$5 million a year through 2021 for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program. Under the program, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service would coordinate restoration activities and provide grants to entities involved in restoring the basin. The bill also would require the agency to submit annual reports to the Congress describing activities conducted under the program. CBO estimates that implementing the legislation would cost \$24 million over the 2017–2021 period and \$1 million after 2021.

Pay-As-You-Go considerations: None.

Intergovernmental and private-sector impact: S. 921 contains no intergovernmental or private-sector mandates as defined in UMRA and would benefit state and local governments, as well as public institutions of higher education, by authorizing grants and technical assistance to support restoration activities in the Delaware River Basin. Any costs incurred by those entities, including matching contributions, would result from participating in a voluntary federal program.

Estimate prepared by: Federal costs: Jeff LaFave; Impact on state, local, and tribal governments: Jon Sperl; Impact on the private sector: Amy Petz.

Estimate approved by: Theresa Gullo, Assistant Director for Budget Analysis.