

# Governor Markell Proposes “Clean Water for Delaware’s Future” Plan

- ✘ **Plan will support clean water, drinking water projects that protect public health and the environment, while creating jobs and a stronger economy**

Wilmington – Governor Jack Markell today proposed **Clean Water for Delaware’s Future** a comprehensive plan for protecting public health and cleaning up Delaware’s bays, rivers and streams within a generation, while creating jobs and strengthening Delaware’s economy.

Governor Markell and DNREC Secretary Collin O’Mara made the announcement at the DuPont Environmental Education Center overlooking the Christina River, which has some of the highest levels of toxic pollutants in the state. They were joined by state and local elected officials, leaders of the state’s business community and representatives of state and regional environmental organizations.

**Clean Water for Delaware’s Future** will generate additional funding for wastewater, stormwater and drinking water projects throughout the state. Funds will be used to support projects that will:

- Remove toxics and restore streams and rivers;
- Repair and update wastewater and drinking water treatment plants;
- Modernize stormwater infrastructure in communities to improve flood and storm resilience;
- Support conservation/agricultural practices that prevent pollutants from reaching surface and ground waters;
- Protect and restore critical natural resources like wetlands and forests that help purify water and mitigate

flooding; and

- Make important upgrades to industries, which will systematically reduce impacts to water resources.

Most of Delaware's waters do not meet water quality standards for their designated uses – drinking, swimming and supporting fish and other aquatic life. The state's list of impaired waters includes 377 bodies of water that suffer from excess nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus), low dissolved oxygen, toxics, and bacteria. Extensive analysis of chemical contaminants in fish has led to advisories that fish are unsafe to eat in more than 30 waterways statewide.

Over the next five years, more than \$500 million in wastewater facility upgrades are needed statewide. These include priority projects in all three counties –including underserved communities needing wastewater and drinking water improvements and several at-risk systems currently operated by homeowners associations in Sussex County. More than \$150 million in stormwater upgrades are needed across the state, in addition to more than \$75 million for removing toxics and more than \$75 million in upgrades at industrial facilities.

The existing Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund loan programs currently have about \$30 million annually available to fund wastewater and drinking water projects – not nearly enough to finance many of the critical projects.

**Clean Water for Delaware's Future** will generate \$30 million annually from a household clean water fee of less than \$1 a week and a proportionate fee for larger users. The fee, which will be indexed to inflation and collected through county property taxes, will leverage more than \$120 million in total financing annually for clean water investments and support more than 1,000 jobs per year in science, engineering and construction.

Revenues from the **Clean Water for Delaware's Future** fee, along

with clean water/drinking water federal revolving fund capitalization grants, other state funds, other federal grants and funding from private foundations, are estimated to be allocated as follows:

- Wastewater/Drinking Water Upgrades: 30%;
- Stormwater Upgrades: 30%;
- Conservation/Agriculture Projects: 15%;
- Toxics Removal/Site Cleanup/Stream Restoration: 20%; and
- Industrial Upgrades: 5%.

The Clean Water for Delaware's Future Fund will help finance these projects through a combination of low or no-interest loans, affordability grants, credit enhancements, matches for federal grants, and leveraged private financing, all of which will reduce the cost of constructing clean water projects for municipalities and other entities.

**Statements from the Governor, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control and others supporting the plan**

**Governor Jack Markell** said: "Clean water is essential for a healthy and prosperous Delaware. We have made great strides reducing air pollution and cleaning up brownfield sites, yet nearly every waterway in Delaware, other than our beaches, remains unsafe for swimming and fishing and nearly every community is struggling with more frequent flooding and storms. *Clean Water for Delaware's Future* will invest in projects that improve water quality, improve community resiliency, protect our health and safety, support our multi-billion dollar tourism and agriculture industries, bolster the economic revitalization of our cities and towns, and increase property values—all while creating thousands of jobs for years to come."

**DNREC Secretary Collin O'Mara** said: "Over the past forty years, Delaware has made some progress in improving water

quality of our streams, rivers, and bays by upgrading some wastewater plants, expanding stormwater infrastructure, and implementing agricultural practices that reduce pollution. But, challenges persist and if we continue on our current path, clean water is still many decades away. *Clean Water for Delaware's Future* is a comprehensive approach to cleaning up our waterways within a generation by accelerating investments that will reduce pollution and improve the resiliency of Delaware's communities."

**Senator Robert Marshall** (D- Wilmington West) said: "I commend the Governor for his initiative. His ideas about the need to clean up our waterways are much needed. The best part from my perspective is the new construction jobs that these proposals would create for those who have been hardest hit by the economic meltdown. I hope we can blend these proposals with the Governor's comments in his State of the State message, with the Blue Collar Task Force's mission of creating jobs through public works projects, and with my own legislation, S. B. 132, that would establish a Delaware Works Trust Fund for capital projects. If we can combine the need for environmental cleanup with the need to create new jobs now for those who need them most, it's a win-win for all the citizens of our state."

**Senator Karen Peterson** (D-Stanton) said: "Ever since the Glenville flood, I've been trying to find a way to find funding to address the issue of flooding in our communities, much of which is caused by the creeks and streams that have been neglected because there is no fund to maintain them. While this proposal focuses primarily on cleaning up our water it also provides for flood mitigation funding which is long overdue. This is a huge step in the right direction and certainly an answer to my prayers."

**Wilmington City Councilwoman Hanifa Shabazz** said: "It's hard to go back to my constituents and say, 'Yes, we do have an understanding of what needs to be done, but it's going to take

five to seven years.' I'm real excited about this innovative tool that's going to help us get this done much quicker to bring a much better quality of life for our residents in South Wilmington."

**Dover City Council President David Bonar** said: "My wife and I kayak in all the State Parks, yet we don't dare swim in Trap Pond because of the nutrient pollutions. You can no longer swim safely in Silver Lake. We have a serious stormwater drainage issue in the City of Dover. We need to correct these things. We need to correct them now."

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