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Earth Day Turns 50!

On April 22, 1970, 20 million Americans peacefully organized to protest the way humans treated the planet and to demand a new path forward. With that, the modern environmental movement was born. Now, 50 years later, we face the biggest challenge to humanity and the places we love—climate change.

Looking ahead to the next 50 years, what do you want for the world around us? Check out what TNC has accomplished in Pennsylvania since the first Earth Day at www.nature.org/pamilestones, and show your support for projects that will help Pennsylvania's forests, rivers and lands become resilient in the face of a rapidly changing climate.

SUPPORT PA NATURE!

Visit nature.org/pagiving today to help us safeguard lands, waters and wildlife throughout Pennsylvania. Thank you!



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Conservation Comeback

Grant Supports Roadmap for Migratory Fish Recovery

In the late 19th century, the Delaware River supported one of the largest American shad commercial fisheries on the East Coast. Shad, along with its smaller cousins, alewife and blueback herring (or river herring), played a key role in the culture and economy of communities located throughout the region.

History is filled with tales of the Delaware River's epic spring shad runs. But in the last 100 years, stories have mostly been about the decline of America's "founding fish," as John McPhee dubbed shad in his seminal book about them.

There's hope. A grant from The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) is charting a course to bring shad and other native migratory fish back to the Delaware. The NFWF funding supports a

"The American shad related to Philadelphia as the cod did to Boston."

John McPhee, The Founding Fish

two-year effort to prioritize restoration activities in areas that are key to the life cycles for these migratory fish, specifically spawning. The Nature Conservancy, together with Drexel University's Academy of Natural Sciences and the Wildlands Conservancy, will complete the project in 2021.

"We will ultimately be able to measure long-term success by the number of shad and river herring that come back to the Delaware each year," says Mari-Beth DeLucia, TNC's migratory fish program manager in Pennsylvania. "The roadmap that is produced from our research will set the stage for a healthy future for shad and river herring."

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With the arrival of the Industrial Revolution, thousands of small dams were built along eastern rivers to power mills and factories, while larger, power-generating dams dominated portions of the region’s bigger rivers. These manmade barriers cut off the path for migratory fish and prevented them from completing a life cycle that included swimming from the open ocean to their natal river waters. At the same time, pollution from growing urban areas and overfishing also threatened the survival of these migratory fish.

Today, the shad and river herring swimming in the Delaware represent just a small fraction of their former populations. But there is hope they might make a comeback—thanks, in part, to efforts by TNC and other partners working in this river basin that drains an area of more than 14,000 square miles spanning five states. Because the Delaware River is the longest undammed river east of the Mississippi, it holds the greatest potential for recovering these fish.

The NFWF project will identify key tributaries within the basin where restoration holds the greatest potential for increasing the numbers of shad and river herring.

“Our previous research laid out an overall plan for shad recovery,” adds DeLucia. This work will help us identify where we have the best chance of improving habitat and how we should go about it.”



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More About Shad

Similar to the inspiration behind its name, the Shadblow is native to eastern North America and blooms as American shad, the largest member of the herring family, travel from feeding grounds in the Atlantic Ocean to the rivers where they return to spawn each spring. American shad are making a comeback in the mid-Atlantic thanks to The Nature Conservancy’s work at New Jersey’s Paulins Kill, a tributary to the Delaware River, where removing the Columbia Lake Dam reopened historic spawning habitat that had been blocked for more than a century.

NATURE PENNSYLVANIA

(Pardon Our Dust)

PA and DE Programs Merge

In January, The Nature Conservancy’s Pennsylvania and Delaware programs merged to maximize our conservation impact in the Delaware Bay and Chesapeake Bay watersheds, which both states share.



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Chesapeake Bay Restoration

The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) granted \$1 million—matched by an additional \$2.5 million from partners—to boost wetland restoration projects that benefit the Chesapeake Bay.

“Restoring streams and wetlands adds vital wildlife habitat while helping to improve water quality,” says Su Fanok, TNC’s director of freshwater conservation in Pennsylvania. “We look forward to working in partnership to leverage existing expertise, to advance innovative and cost-effective restoration approaches, and to identify additional resources that will accelerate the pace and scale of wetland and stream restoration in south-central Pennsylvania.”

In Delaware, TNC will dedicate the funds to restoring more than 60 acres of wetlands in the Great Cypress Swamp, in partnership with Delaware Wild Lands and Ducks Unlimited, to add to 750 acres of previously restored cypress and Atlantic white cedar wetlands.