

The Delaware River and its 216 tributaries are vital sources of fresh water.



Threats to Clean Water in the Delaware River Basin

Industrial Pollution

The Delaware River basin is an important source of clean water for drinking, wildlife and recreation. Environment America's interactive online map depicts threats to clean water in the basin – including pollution from industrial facilities.

This is one of five fact sheets summarizing data from the map.

The Delaware River Basin Is a Vital Natural Resource

The Delaware River basin, which spans 13,500 square miles and encompasses the Delaware Bay, the Delaware River, and the river's 216 tributaries, is a popular recreational area, a critical resource for wildlife, and a vital source of fresh water.¹ Roughly 15 million people, living both inside and outside of the watershed, rely on it for drinking water.²

Unfortunately, this important watershed faces a number of threats. Environment America's online map provides residents of the Delaware River basin with a unique tool to explore potential sources of water pollution where they live and across the region – including threats posed by industrial pollution. The map is available at www.delawarewatershed.org.

Industrial Pollution Is a Threat throughout the Basin

Generations of industrial activities have left lasting impacts on the Delaware River and its tributaries. Those impacts continue today. For example:

- There are 62 industrial facilities that reported direct releases of toxic chemicals to waterways in the Delaware River basin via the EPA's Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) in 2015, including 12 facilities that ranked among the top 20 percent of facilities reporting to TRI nationwide based on the toxicity of their releases to waterways.
- There are more than 600 facilities permitted to release pollutants into Delaware River basin waterways.
- There are thousands of hazardous waste sites scattered throughout the region, including more than 100 in the federal Superfund program.

Releases of Toxic Pollution Threaten People and Wildlife

Dozens of industrial facilities continue to pollute Delaware River basin waterways with toxic chemicals that threaten the health of humans and wildlife. Toxic discharges to the basin's waterways include releases of cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene, and toxic metals such as lead and copper.³

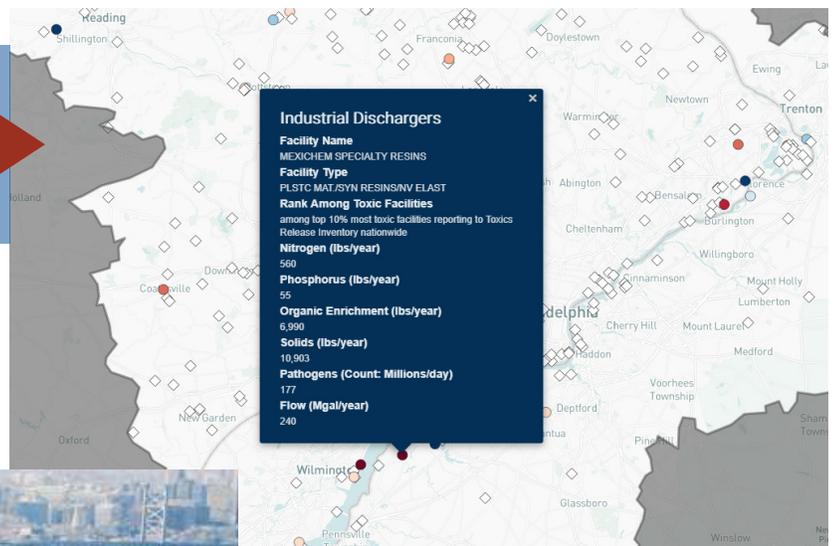
In 2016, half of the monitoring zones on the Delaware River failed water quality standards for toxic pollutants designed to protect aquatic life.⁴ "Legacy" toxic pollutants dumped decades ago still threaten our waters. For example, state officials continue to warn small children and women of childbearing age against consuming certain species of fish from rivers in the basin due to contamination from cancer-causing PCBs, which have been banned for almost 40 years.

The facilities reporting toxic releases are ranked in Environment America's online map based on the toxicity of their releases compared with all industrial facilities reporting water discharges to the EPA's Toxic Release Inventory nationally.

Hundreds of Industrial Facilities Add to Pollution Concerns

In addition to the dozens of toxic polluters in the region, there are hundreds of industrial facilities that release other pollutants into Delaware River basin waterways, such as nitrogen, phosphorus, solids and pathogens. These pollutants can lower oxygen levels, make water murky, and potentially carry disease. Impacts can be seen throughout the basin. For example, even though dissolved oxygen concentrations in the Delaware River have been improving over time, they are still occasionally low enough to harm aquatic life.⁵ Environment America's online map shows industrial facilities that collectively released more than 1.4 million pounds of nitrogen, 136,000 pounds of phosphorus, and 9.7 million pounds of solids in the basin in 2017.

Industrial facilities in the Delaware River basin discharge toxic chemicals and other pollutants to rivers and streams. Environment America's online map enables users to explore industrial polluters in their neighborhoods.



Industrial development along the Delaware River has created a legacy of pollution from which the river is still recovering.

Hazardous Waste Sites Threaten Human Health and the Environment

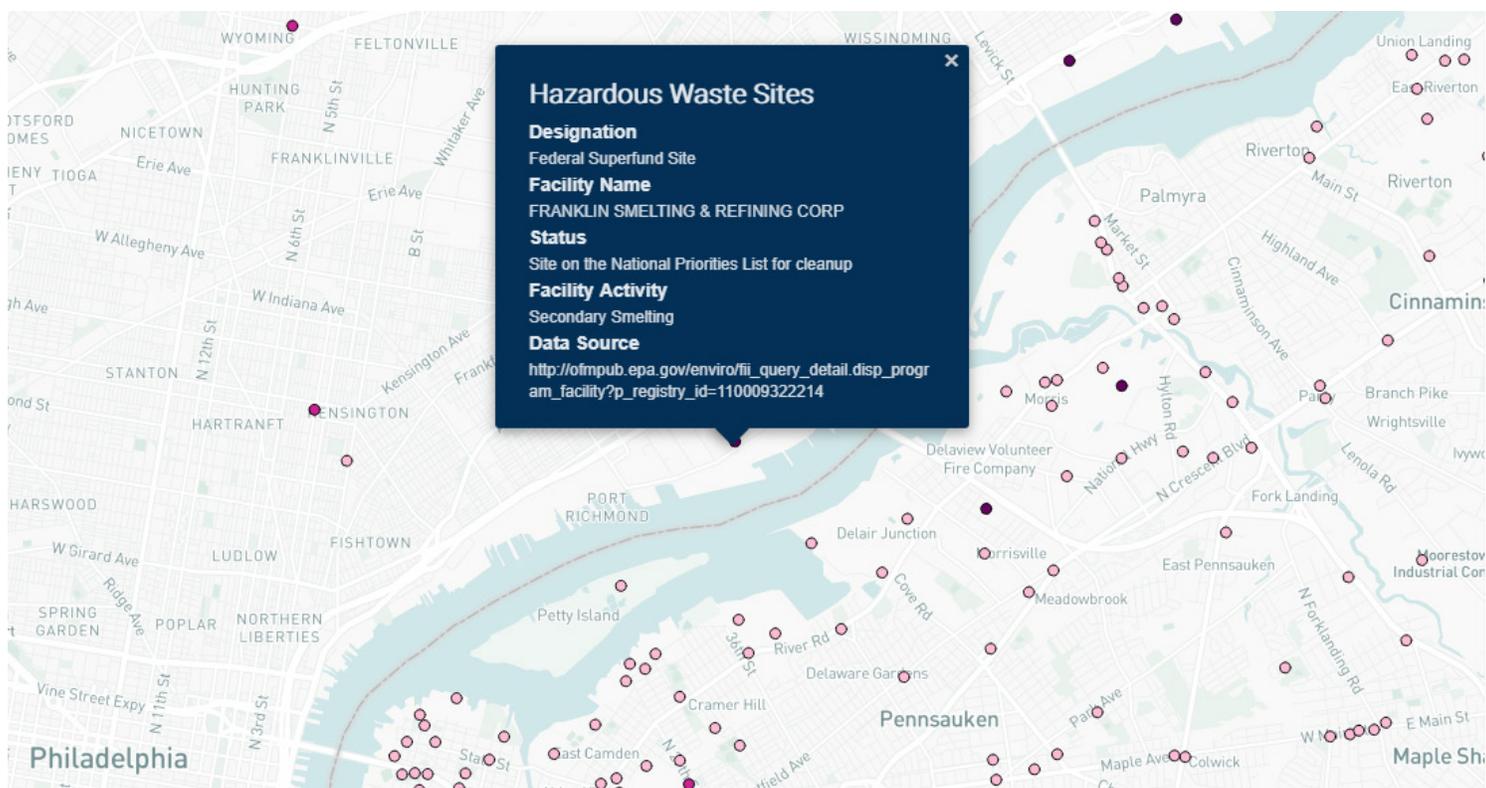
Industrial activity in the Delaware River basin has left behind thousands of sites contaminated with chemicals, heavy metals, petroleum products and other dangerous substances. Many of these sites are located close to rivers or streams or near important sources of groundwater, posing a potential threat to water quality. In New York's Sullivan County, for example, the former Cortese Landfill is located just 450 feet from the Delaware River, and contamination from the site has reached the river via groundwater in the past.⁶

More than 100 hazardous waste sites within the Delaware River basin are included in the federal Superfund program. These are generally the most severely contaminated sites, or those with the greatest potential impact on human health and the environment. The U.S. EPA is engaged in cleanup at non-Superfund sites as well, while state governments also designate hazardous waste sites requiring cleanup.

In addition to hazardous waste sites, many industrial facilities in the basin store hazardous chemicals on site – creating a potential threat to waterways in the event of flooding or accidental spills.



There are more than 100 Superfund sites in the Delaware River basin, including the Metal Bank site in Philadelphia. While many of these sites have been at least partially cleaned up, some continue to pose potential threats to water quality.



Environment America's online map enables users to identify hazardous waste sites in their areas. In the case of Superfund sites, the map provides access to more detailed information on the EPA website about the nature of the contamination and the status of cleanup efforts.

Industrial Pollution by the Numbers

The online map shows hundreds of industrial facilities permitted to release pollution to waterways, along with thousands of hazardous waste sites in the Delaware River basin. This list is unlikely to be exhaustive – for example, the federal Toxics Release Inventory only captures data on the releases of certain toxic chemicals by certain types of facilities that meet certain thresholds for reporting.⁷ The table below gives an overview of the facilities that are included on the map.

Type of Threat	Number within the Delaware River Basin
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Industrial Facilities

Toxic Polluters Reporting to the Toxics Release Inventory	62
Other Industrial Facilities with Permits to Pollute	600

Hazardous Waste Sites

Superfund National Priorities List	126
Federal Non-Superfund	58
State Hazardous Waste Sites	2,511

Notes

1. Delaware River Basin Commission, *2016 Delaware River and Bay Water Quality Assessment*, August 2016, 2, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180619142442/http://www.nj.gov/drbc/library/documents/WQAssessmentReport2016.pdf>.

2. Ibid.

3. Based on Toxics Release Inventory data for 2015. Reflects releases of lead and benzene from Monroe Energy's Trainer Facility in Pennsylvania and copper from American Nickeloid and Cambridge-Lee Industries in Pennsylvania.

4. See note 1.

5. Delaware River Basin Commission, *Monitoring Oxygen Shows Improvement in Water Quality* (factsheet), 8 August 2017, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180619212457/http://www.nj.gov/drbc/library/documents/DOfact-sheetAug17.pdf>.

6. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Cortese Landfill – Vil of Narrowsburg, NY*, 27 March 2018, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180619212531/https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/cursites/csitinfo.cfm?id=0201867>.

7. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) Program, *Reporting for TRI Facilities*, 9 February 2018, archived at <https://web.archive.org/web/20180619212616/https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/reporting-tri-facilities>.

Protecting the Delaware River Basin from Industrial Pollution

To ensure that the Delaware River basin can continue to support recreation, provide healthy ecosystems for wildlife, and serve as a source of clean and safe drinking water for 15 million Americans, we need to limit industrial pollution. Necessary steps include:

- Prioritizing pollution prevention by requiring industrial facilities to reduce the amount and toxicity of the chemicals they store and use and require disclosure of additional data about the toxic substances they handle.
- Expediting the thorough cleanup of existing hazardous waste sites.
- Ratcheting down permitted pollution levels from industrial facilities in order to move toward the Clean Water Act's zero discharge goal.
- Strengthening enforcement of clean water laws by ensuring that all facilities receive regular and thorough inspections and by establishing mandatory minimum penalties sufficient to eliminate any economic benefit from polluting.
- Maintaining and strengthening all federal clean water protections.
- Ensuring that state environmental agencies have the resources they need to properly enforce environmental laws.

Explore Threats in Your Area

To learn more about sources of industrial pollution near your home or source of drinking water, explore Environment America's interactive map of the basin:
www.delawarewatershed.org.

