

Clean Water Efforts Downstream Benefit Pennsylvanians

By Rep. Dan Moul (R-Adams)

The Wolf administration recently fired back at an editorial in the Baltimore Sun newspaper that challenged Pennsylvania to do more to clean up the Chesapeake Bay. ([Sue Pennsylvania? Maryland editorial on Pa.'s efforts to clean up Chesapeake Bay draws governor's fire](#)). But let's not forget about the clean water we owe Pennsylvanians right here at home.

As a member of the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee and an avid sportsman, I know firsthand the value of Pennsylvania's natural resources.

Pennsylvania has some of the finest rivers, lakes and streams in the nation. And as anyone can attest who has pulled a trout from a Commonwealth stream or sighted a buck deep in Penn's Woods, our state offers outdoor experiences that are second to none. In fact, hunting, fishing and outdoor recreation form our second largest industry, supporting more than 390,000 jobs and contributing more than \$17 billion to our economy.

Unfortunately, many of our waterways can no longer support the wildlife they could in the past. The most recent [survey](#) by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) found that pollution still impairs thousands of miles of Pennsylvania streams, impacting our fish and game species.

The governor's office seemed to argue that Pennsylvania doesn't stand to benefit from investing in practices that clean up water quality downstream in the Chesapeake Bay. While it's true our state doesn't touch the bay, the same practices that help improve the bay are key to reviving clear, clean water in Pennsylvania's rivers and streams, and that has many direct benefits for our economy and our communities.

One of the most effective ways to clean up streams is to plant trees along their banks, forming what are known as forested riparian buffers. Forested buffers and other practices that capture more water in the soil can help reduce the risk of floods during heavy rainstorms and keep valuable soil and fertilizers on farm fields.

The trees shade and cool the streams, and they drop leaves and wood material into the water that help feed and provide habitat for aquatic insects and invertebrates – creating conditions that are critical for species like trout, smallmouth bass and the Eastern hellbender. Streamside forests also provide prime habitat and food for whitetail deer, muskrats and beavers.

According to a peer-reviewed economic report, fully implementing practices that clean up water both here in Pennsylvania and in the Chesapeake Bay would increase the value of these natural benefits by approximately \$6.2 billion each year in Pennsylvania alone.

We are taking steps in the right direction. Pennsylvania farms and communities are planting streamside trees and working together to cut pollution. Hunters and fishermen contribute more than [\\$33 million](#) to fish and wildlife conservation and restoration efforts through purchases of equipment and licenses. But the fact remains that the aquatic life and wildlife we like to fish and hunt rely on clean rivers and streams.