



March 2, 2025

The Honorable *(Insert Full Name)*  
United States Senate – or – United States House of Representatives  
*Street Address*  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator -or- Representative *Insert Last Name*:

At Trout Unlimited, we bring people together across the country to care for our rivers and help make our water cleaner and our communities healthier. The Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited serves as a unified voice for the 49 local chapters representing more than 13,000 members statewide. Trout Unlimited partners with federal agencies on over 250 projects nationwide, supported by federal grants and agreements. These projects help improve water quality, promote healthy fish and wildlife populations, assist private landowners in better managing their farms and properties to prevent flood damage, and enhance local road infrastructure. In Pennsylvania, as in other regions, we create economic opportunities by hiring local contractors and equipment operators, providing family-wage jobs in rural communities, which strengthens local economies. Our approach translates into cleaner water and thriving fisheries. With these historic investments in conservation, we are working at a scale that matches the challenges America's rivers, fisheries and communities face. A Pennsylvania study for the American Sportfishing Association determined 1,550,800 anglers spent \$422.4 million to go fishing adding 6,440 jobs across the supply chain.

Trout Unlimited's federal grants in Pennsylvania, which are focused on abandoned coal mine cleanup, have a significant positive impact on local jobs and economic opportunities. More than 5,500 miles of streams and rivers across the commonwealth are polluted with abandoned coal mine drainage. Our work to improve water quality and restore damaged landscapes is especially important in former coal communities where mining has ceased. For over 25 years, we have been a leader in the cleanup of abandoned coal mines in Pennsylvania, working alongside our partners to achieve remarkable success. In the West Branch Susquehanna watershed, we are rebuilding passive water treatment systems that will extend the recovery of once-dead streams polluted by toxic mine drainage and help recover native brook trout.

An Economic Benefits Analysis we commissioned in 2023 showed that between 2012 and 2022, a \$105 million investment in watershed restoration projects in the West Branch Susquehanna River basin created 81 jobs, \$66.4 million in labor income, and \$208.8 million in increased economic output. As water quality improves and fish populations return, outdoor recreation opportunities increase, especially for anglers. Residents and visitors alike contribute significant revenue to local economies through outdoor activities, with the Economic Benefit Analysis estimating that anglers and boaters in the West Branch Susquehanna River basin generate \$125 million, including \$69

million specifically from fishing. However, the region still loses approximately \$4.5 million annually in sport fishing revenue due to polluted streams.

We ask for your support of the following key funding programs that support Trout Unlimited efforts to improve habitat and water quality while supporting local economies.

- **US Forest Service (Keystone Agreement/Inflation Reduction Act/Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act).** Trout Unlimited has partnered with the Forest Service to reconnect and improve habitat in native brook trout streams in the Allegheny National Forest. Removing barriers to fish passage such as perched culverts, as was done on Irwin Run, a tributary to the Clarion River, has reconnected over 5 miles of streams so trout and other aquatic species can access additional habitat for spawning, feeding, and thermal refuge during the heat of summer. Additionally, restoration crews are strategically adding wood to streams to enhance in-stream habitat and to make the streams function better during high flow events.
- **IIJA Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Program** (coupled with SMCRA AML/AMD). Funding is provided from the Department of Interior's Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE) to PA Department of Environmental Protection providing grants to conservation districts and other entities like Trout Unlimited to clean up abandoned mine drainage. Abandoned mine drainage is the largest source of pollution to PA's streams and rivers. Please keep the program funded as intended with IIJA and reauthorized fees for the next 12 years as there's still so much work to do!
- **EPA Chesapeake Bay Program:** Federal Programs like the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program are critical to the health of the watershed. Please keep the Chesapeake Bay Program well-funded in 2025. Trout Unlimited has utilized Small Watershed Grants and Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Program grants to leverage millions of dollars in conservation work across the watershed.
- **USFWS Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund:** The Delaware River Basin Restoration Program (DRBRP), authorized by Congress in 2016, is designed to fund environmental conservation efforts in Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New York. Trout Unlimited leverages DRBRP funding to improve coldwater habitat across the program regions, for projects that remove culverts, restore floodplains and riparian areas, and protect vulnerable fish habitats from degradation. Please support strong funding for the Delaware River Basin Restoration Program in the next appropriations bill.
- **STREAM Act.** Please continue to support funding and authorizations needed to advance cleanups. This bill allows a state to set aside up to 30% of its annual grant for abandoned mine reclamation provided under the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act for the treatment and abatement of acid mine drainage, which is the release of acidic water from abandoned coal mines.

The following examples from Twomile Run and Babb Creek illustrate how Trout Unlimited's work through these federally funded programs builds healthier ecosystems that bolster local economies and healthier communities.

Twomile Run: The Swamp and Robbins Hollow passive AMD treatment systems on Twomile Run in the West Branch Susquehanna River watershed have been critical to restoring life to the small stream, a tributary to Pennsylvania's famous Kettle Creek. As a result, the restored section of Twomile Run was formally designated a Class A native brook trout stream after its resurrection. To maintain their effectiveness, the systems require periodic maintenance, such as cleaning

*Trout Unlimited: America's Leading Coldwater Fisheries Conservation Organization*

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limestone and replacing organic compost material in settling ponds every 10 years. This \$1.4 million project will create local jobs while sustaining the recovery of brook trout and other aquatic species

Babb Creek: Babb Creek was once so polluted from abandoned mine drainage (AMD) that it was rendered essentially lifeless. The stream was so degraded that it was creating a dead zone of aquatic life in the famous Pennsylvania trout water Pine Creek for several miles below where Babb Creek entered. Construction of systems to address AMD in the watershed brought Babb Creek back to life, to the point where the stream has been formally designated a high-quality wild trout water. Pennsylvania will receive \$245 million to address AMD and, as a partner in that effort, Trout Unlimited will work with local contractors to invest \$2.2 million to complete much-needed maintenance on the Bear Run and Hunters Drift passive treatment systems to ensure Babb Creek and Pine Creek will remain healthy for future generations.

Please contact Amy Wolfe at [amy.wolfe@tu.org](mailto:amy.wolfe@tu.org) or (570) 786-9562 with questions or more information about these programs. On behalf of Trout Unlimited and the Pennsylvania Council, we respectfully ask for your support of these federally funded programs so that we can continue our important work to maintain clean water, healthy fisheries and strong local communities —benefits that positively impact us all. Thank you for your attention and support.

Sincerely,

Lenny Lichvar  
President  
PA Council of Trout Unlimited

Amy G. Wolfe  
Director, Northeast Coldwater Habitat Program  
Trout Unlimited