

Stormwater Tip:

The federal government is raising the required oxygen level in an urban stretch of the Delaware River for a 38-mile stretch between Philadelphia and Wilmington. Water quality in the urban river has improved since a low point in the mid-20th century, thanks to locally imposed restrictions on the output of nine wastewater treatment plants into the river. But the EPA now says those plants need to make more cuts in the amount of oxygen-consuming ammonia—a component of treated sewage—they discharge into the river so that more oxygen is available for fish. The rule, to be implemented starting in November, requires oxygen saturation of at least 66 percent, rising to 74 percent in the latter stage of juvenile fish development from July 1 to Oct. 31. The rule also changes the designated use of the urban river to that of “protection and propagation” of fish populations. The DRBC’s standard required just “maintenance” of those populations. Two endangered species of sturgeon are among the fish found in the Delaware River. But wastewater-treatment utilities face millions in new costs to make it happen and indicate rates will rise for residents.