

# **CLEANING UP ABANDONED MINE DRAINAGE IN THE WEST BRANCH SUSQUEHANNA WATERSHED: WHY IT MAKES ECONOMIC SENSE<sup>1</sup>**

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**Abstract:** Abandoned mine drainage (AMD), which is the primary source of pollution to Pennsylvania's waterways, is the cause for more than 1,200 miles of polluted streams throughout the West Branch Susquehanna watershed in central Pennsylvania. Capital costs for construction of remediation projects are estimated to be at least \$110 million, with annual operation and maintenance costs in the realm of \$16 million. For the purpose of describing and quantifying the local and statewide economic benefits that arise from remediation of the West Branch Susquehanna watershed, Trout Unlimited contracted the development an economic benefits analysis. Detailed economic analyses were conducted for the following: 1) jobs and economic activity, 2) recreational spending, 3) property values, and 4) impacts on public and private drinking water supplies. A willingness-to-pay survey was also conducted to gauge the maximum amount of money that residents in the watershed, and the general public outside the watershed, would be willing to pay to restore the West Branch Susquehanna watershed. The conclusions of the economic benefit analysis demonstrate that short-term investment in restoration of these waters will result in a long-term economic benefit to the local communities and rest of the Commonwealth.

**Additional Keyword(s):** abandoned mine drainage, remediation benefits, economic benefits, West Branch Susquehanna

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