
**ASSESSMENT OF INTERSTATE
STREAMS IN THE
SUSQUEHANNA RIVER BASIN**

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INTRODUCTION

The Susquehanna River Basin is the largest river basin on the Atlantic Coast of the United States, draining 27,510 square miles. The Susquehanna River originates at the outlet of Otsego Lake, Cooperstown, N.Y., and flows 444 miles through New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland to the Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, Md. Eighty-three streams cross state lines in the basin. Several streams traverse the state lines at multiple points, contributing to 91 crossings. Of those 91 crossings, 45 streams flow from New York into Pennsylvania, 22 from Pennsylvania into New York, 15 from Pennsylvania into Maryland, and 9 from Maryland into Pennsylvania. Many streams are small and 32 are unnamed.

One of the functions of the Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) is to review projects that may have interstate impacts on water resources in the Susquehanna River Basin. SRBC established a monitoring program in 1986 to collect data that were not available from monitoring programs implemented by state agencies in New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. The state agencies do not assess all of the interstate streams and do not produce comparable data needed to determine potential impacts on the water quality of interstate streams. SRBC's ongoing interstate monitoring program is partially funded through a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

The interstate water quality monitoring program includes periodic collection of water and biological samples from interstate streams, as well as assessments of their physical habitat. Water quality data are used to: (1) assess compliance with water quality standards; (2) characterize stream quality and seasonal variations; (3) build a database for assessment of water quality trends; (4) identify streams for reporting to USEPA under Section 305(b) of the Clean Water Act; (5) provide information to signatory states for 303(d) listing and possible Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development; and (6) identify areas for restoration and protection. Biological conditions are assessed using benthic macroinvertebrate populations, which provide an indication of the biological health of a stream and serve as indicators of water quality. Habitat assessments provide information concerning potential stream impairment from erosion and sedimentation, as well as an indication of the stream's ability to support a healthy biological community.

SRBC's interstate monitoring program began in April 1986. For the first five years, results were reported for water years that ran from October to September. In 1991, SRBC changed the reporting periods to correspond with its fiscal year that covers the period from July to June. Reports are typically completed during the following summer for the data from the previous fiscal year. In 2007, a web-based format was initiated to provide a more user-friendly product that is easily accessible to not only government agencies but also to anyone who is interested in the condition of these streams and rivers. Recent reports are available online from the SBRC website at <http://www.srbc.net/docs/Publications/techreports.htm>.