



Pennsylvania
**Department of Conservation
and Natural Resources**

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**Shapiro Administration Celebrates New Naturalistic Fish Passage at
Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County**

The fish passage – a structure that allows aquatic life to swim around structures like dams -- contains natural materials such as boulders creating pools and riffles and allows aquatic life to go around the inflatable dam at the park.

Unique passage being highlighted during Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week for its benefits both upstream and downstream.

Selinsgrove, PA – As part of the watershed-wide [Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week](#), the **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** today celebrated the new naturalistic fish passage at Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County for its upstream benefit to native species such as American shad and eels, and its downstream benefit to the Chesapeake Bay.

In 2024, **Governor Josh Shapiro** [highlighted](#) that Pennsylvania's portion of the watershed is significantly improving because the Commonwealth has brought people together and invested in Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts.

“Stewardship and conservation of our environment is the core of what DCNR does every day. You can see the results of our efforts in this fish passage, which is designed to function and look natural and help many kinds of life thrive in the river,” **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** said. “The result of many partnerships at the state, regional, and federal level, this project is good for Pennsylvania, and it helps Pennsylvania be a good neighbor.”

Spanning the width of the Susquehanna River between the towns of Shamokin Dam and Sunbury, the inflatable dam at Shikellamy State Park creates the seasonal Lake Augusta -- a 3,000-acre recreational pool that offers boating, fishing, and other water-based activities. The fish passage allows aquatic life to go around the dam.

The fish passage is:

- About 900 feet long
- Located on the dam's west end
- Made with natural materials such as boulders and rip rap to simulate a streambed

- Four resting pools and five riffles
- Engineered for self-cleaning during high-water events
- Activated automatically once the dam is inflated in the spring and lake elevation is reached

The passage is recognized as one of the largest and most naturalistic fishways on the East Coast. The design has garnered nationwide attention and stands as a model for future fishway projects.

“Speaking for the aquatic life who can’t speak for themselves, this is a wonderful completion of a project which allows all aquatic life to move freely up and down the Susquehanna River as they once did. What is good for the fish, is good for the humans as well,” said **Sid Jamieson, an indigenous Cayuga Nation Iroquois**.

Key species supported include American shad which migrates upstream to spawn and American eel that hosts freshwater mussel larvae. Freshwater mussels are natural water filters. Restoring their populations improves overall water quality.

“Fish passage on every scale is important, allowing our native aquatic species to move unobstructed through our small streams and large rivers, in many cases, to complete vital stages of their life cycles that ensure strong populations in the future,” said **Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission**. “Projects like this within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, with smart designs that invite fish to migrate up and down the river naturally, complement other habitat efforts statewide to benefit fish, anglers, and everyone who appreciates healthy waterways in their own communities and hundreds of miles upstream and downstream. Thanks to innovative partnerships across the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania is a fish passage leader.”

The Chesapeake Bay Agreement has a [goal](#) of continually increasing access to habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in the watershed’s freshwater rivers and streams by opening an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage.

The Susquehanna River is the largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, playing a critical role in its overall health and ecology.

Since 2021 Pennsylvania has invested more than \$580 million in on-the-ground projects to improve local water quality in the bay watershed. This includes more than \$61 million in Growing Greener grants, more than \$92 million in farmland preservation and conservation projects, and nearly \$9 million to plant forest buffers and restore urban tree canopy.

During the past five years Pennsylvania also has added three new state parks in the watershed and DCNR has led with increased funding and technical assistance in planting streamside forest buffers across the Commonwealth, leading all Bay states in buffers planted.

At the confluence of the North and West branches of the Susquehanna River, [Shikellamy State Park](#) includes a 50-acre marina section and a 190-acre overlook section with a spectacular view of the confluence of the river branches.

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