



Investing in clean water infrastructure is important for Delaware's future

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(Photo: Ambre Alexander Payne)

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My husband and I recently met with a financial advisor. Our take-home message was the importance of strategically investing in the unexpected (life insurance) and the long-term (retirement).

Yes, we must obviously address the financial needs right in front of us; but we also need to plan ahead so the unexpected doesn't make our future unattainable.

A large part of me wasn't the least bit excited about this approach. By investing in the unexpected and long-term, I don't reap any real benefit in the here and now; yet I still have to pay for it. Meanwhile, the logical part of my brain realized this strategy is essential.

State lawmakers: [Enough is enough, Delaware needs clean water](#)

[\(/story/opinion/contributors/2018/02/22/state-lawmakers-enough-enough-delaware-needs-clean-water/362845002/\)](#)

Once I came to terms with this approach, I began to realize how similar my personal situation is to investing in water resources.

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Like financial planners, water resource professionals — scientists, researchers, conservationists, policy-makers, engineers, utility providers, educators — understand how important it is to invest in both the unexpected threats and the long-term health of our water.

If we strategically invest in water quality now, we can minimize the unexpected—main breaks, lead contamination, algae outbreaks, flooding, groundwater contamination and the list could go on — and still plan for our future, too. Long-term investments, such as infrastructure upgrades, stormwater pollution reduction and water storage and security are critical pieces to ensuring the unexpected doesn't become the constant issues we don't know how to fix.

These strategic investments may not be appealing because, like life insurance and retirement investments, they don't always provide an immediate and tangible benefit. Yet without these water resource investments — as with our personal investments — our future is in jeopardy.

[Clean water: We know the problem and we know how to fix it \(/story/opinion/contributors/2017/04/27/clean-water-we-know-problem-and-we-know-how-fix/100994586/\)](#)

So what does this mean today as Delaware's legislature prepares a state budget for FY2019? It means we need to invest in water quality improvement projects now and in the future.

In the present, it's important for Delaware's Bond Bill Committee, comprised of state senators and state representatives, to ensure the \$6 million for clean water; \$10 million for open space preservation and \$10 million for farmland preservation that Governor John Carney proposed in his FY2019 budget is included in the final Bond Bill. This funding is critical and helps address the most serious water quality and quantity issues we're facing.

But we also need to put our heads together and challenge ourselves to find innovative and new ways to ensure the future of water resources is strong. This means we need to find sustainable funding for the over \$100 million annual backlog we have in current "clean water needs" to just meet our state and federal water quality standards.

One of the first questions our financial planner asked us when we met with him was, "Where do you want to be in 10, 20, 30 years?" From there, we worked backwards to figure out what we could do now to position ourselves to meet these goals in the future.

This question is exactly what we should be asking when it comes to water resources. It's a tough one to answer, but collectively, water resource professionals, utility providers, conservation experts and business representatives have great ideas and the expertise.

In fact, the legislature convened a Clean Water and Flood Abatement Task Force that studied the issue extensively and even drafted legislation and other recommendations as a result. And over 50 organizations representing business, conservation, academia and recreational use have come together to support dedicated, sustainable, funding for clean water through the Clean Water: Delaware's Clear Choice Campaign.

This group has been working together to suggest a number of effective funding models to decision makers on every level. Now, it's time for them to take a leadership role and turn these ideas into a reality.

Clean water is essential to just about every aspect of our lives. From the small-scale aspects like taking a shower to its ability to enhance Delaware's place in our national and global economy, water is important. We must be investing in water now so we have a better Delaware for generations to come.

[Lawmakers propose fee to help clean Delaware's water \(/story/news/politics/2017/04/24/clean-water/100844492/\)](#)

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