

May 7, 2024

Dear Governor Shapiro and Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly:

On behalf of the undersigned members of the Choose Clean Water Coalition, the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, and various partner organizations throughout Western Pennsylvania, we ask for your support of the following requests to protect Pennsylvania's creeks, streams, and rivers:

- Full fair-share funding of all of the interstate basin commissions
 - Delaware River Basin Commission (\$1,047,000)
 - Susquehanna River Basin Commission (\$740,000)
 - Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission (\$182,000)
 - Great Lakes Commission (\$97,000)
 - Potomac River Basin (\$51,000)
- Codification of the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Environmental Justice (Senate Bill 158/House Bill 742) and Environmental Justice Advisory Board (House Bill 707)
- The creation of the Healthy Outdoors for All Program (HOAP), which would provide matching grants to fund projects that support trails, parks, and open spaces
- Support for the Riparian Buffer Protection Act (House Bill 1275)
- Dedicated funding for the Clean Streams Fund

Together the Choose Clean Water Coalition, Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed, Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes Coalition, and organizations from Western PA harness the collective power of over 600 organizations to advocate for healthy rivers, streams, and communities in every watershed of Pennsylvania. Our members, spanning conservationists, farmers, hunters, and anglers, are unified by a shared recognition: **investing in and managing our water resources must be a paramount priority for the Commonwealth.**

Over one-third of Pennsylvania's 86,000 stream miles are degraded and considered "impaired" by the Department of Environmental Protection. This is an enormous undertaking, which is why we need to 1) fully fund the interstate basin commissions; 2) protect marginalized communities who bear the brunt of downstream pollution by codifying the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB); 3) create the Healthy Outdoors for All Program (HOAP); 4) strengthen standards for riparian buffers along our waterways; and 5) establish sustainable funding for the Clean Streams Fund.



Inadequately funded and staffed commissions put Pennsylvania's communities at risk of suffering from increased water pollution, infrastructure issues, and declining aquatic wildlife. Basin commissions oversee water quality and quantity issues related to flood control, flow management, water withdrawals, aquatic flora, recreation, navigation, and industrial runoff. Funding requirements for the interstate basin commissions have been established for decades, and Pennsylvania must honor the commitment made to these compacts.

Clean water issues are also often environmental justice issues. We strongly advocate for strengthening the roles of the Office of Environmental Justice and the Environmental Justice Advisory Board to address the disproportionate burden borne by marginalized communities.

Clean water quality isn't just crucial for safeguarding public health and preserving ecosystems; it also enriches the recreational pursuits of those who cherish parks, trails, and the great outdoors. Supporting the establishment of the Healthy Outdoors for All Program will help revitalize and enhance parks, trails, and outdoor spaces, particularly expanding access for disadvantaged communities.

Riparian buffers play a crucial role in curbing pollution runoff, combating climate change impacts, safeguarding ecosystems, and serving as a cost-efficient method for managing water quality. The Riparian Buffer Protection Act stands as a vital initiative through which the Commonwealth can actively encourage the establishment of more of these invaluable natural assets.

Finally, the scale of water pollution in Pennsylvania means that a one-time injection of funds into the Clean Streams Fund will not be sufficient. Establishing dedicated funding will ensure the protection of our water resources for generations.

With funding in hand, policies like the Riparian Buffer Act, and agencies like OEJ & EJAB in place, Pennsylvania can make great strides in improving and protecting water quality for all residents. Please contact Adam Nagel at nagel@pennfuture.org with questions or for more information.

Respectfully submitted,

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