

June 28, 2017

Honorable Governor Tom Wolf  
Honorable Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17120

Dear Governor Wolf and Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature:

We, the undersigned advocates for restoring Susquehanna River health and safe drinking water sources for Pennsylvanians across the state, call for your swift and significant action to increase investments in water quality protection.

Approximately 20,000 miles of Pennsylvania's rivers and streams are unsafe for either drinking, swimming, fishing, or aquatic life according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Many of these impaired river miles are in the Lower Susquehanna Watershed, which makes up a large portion of America's first national water trail, the Captain John Smith Trail, a recreational resource with broad economic benefits potential. According to a recent nation-wide report by the Natural Resources Defense Council, Pennsylvania ranks third, behind Texas and Florida, for drinking water safety violations. Failing water infrastructure, reduced workforce within DEP and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), and insufficient watershed restoration funding have put Pennsylvania families and local economies at risk.

On June 17, 2017, residents from across the state joined together to voice concerns about Pennsylvania's water crisis and to draw attention to three key actions that require near term response from the state legislature and the administration. Both Fox and ABC TV covered the event. Coverage of the Susquehanna River Rally and a video of the event can be found at the link below.

We urge the following actions by each of you:

- 1) **Reject proposed budget cuts** to DEP and DCNR;
- 2) Enact and fully fund **Growing Greener 3 legislation** that is active in both chambers of the legislature;
- 3) Establish a **dedicated fund for water quality protection** efforts.

Further description of these three requests can be found in an attached addendum to this letter.

The undersigned national, regional, state-wide, and local organizations who served as rally co-hosts represent more than 175,000 Pennsylvanians and over 250 organizations restoring Pennsylvania landscapes and watersheds. Along with our members and supporters, we urge you to consider the devastating impacts that failing to address Pennsylvania's water crisis will have on our communities, our economies, and the health of your constituents. During this legislative session and this budget cycle, we call on the state lawmakers to heed the call of the Susquehanna River Rally advocates. Please reject

proposed cuts to the DEP and DCNR budgets, pass and fully fund Growing Greener 3 legislation, and establish a dedicated water quality fund. With questions or follow up, please email Amanda John at [ajohn@npca.org](mailto:ajohn@npca.org).

Susquehanna River Rally – Highlight Video:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B9FYRApr3ku9cVFvNTA0R1J5MGs/view>

Fox 43 Coverage – Susquehanna River Rally:

<http://fox43.com/2017/06/17/kayakers-canoers-raise-their-paddles-for-clean-water-at-susquehanna-river-rally/>

ABC 27 Coverage – Susquehanna River Rally:

<http://abc27.com/2017/06/17/river-rally-pushes-for-clean-water-changes-in-pennsylvania/>

Sincerely,

The Susquehanna River Rally Hosts

Amanda John, Pennsylvania Program Manager  
**National Parks Conservation Association**

Brook Lenker, President  
**Susquehanna River Trails Association**

Ezra Thrush, Clean Water Campaign Manager  
**PennFuture**

Chante Coleman, Director  
**The Choose Clean Water Coalition**

Nicole Faraguna, Outreach Director  
**Pennsylvania Land Trust Association**

Kyle Shenk, Pennsylvania Director  
**The Conservation Fund**

Marci Mowery, President & CEO  
**Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation**

Andrew Heath, Executive Director  
**The Pennsylvania Growing Greener Coalition**

Mark Platts, President  
**Susquehanna Heritage, Inc.**

Tim Herd, President  
**The Pennsylvania Parks & Recreation Societ**

Supporting Organizations:

Will Brandau, President  
**Association of Warm Season Grass Producers**

Christopher Clouser, President/Principal  
Biologist- Wetlands and Wildlife Habitat  
**BluAcre, LLC**

Ed Wytovich, President  
**Catawissa Creek Restoration Association**

Anna Yelk, Executive Director  
**Central Penn Conservancy**

Steve Hvozdovich, Pennsylvania Campaigns  
Director  
**Clean Water Action**

Mary Beth Birks, Kids Club Coordinator  
**Cranberry Township**

Jaclyn Rhoads,  
**Darby Creek Valley Association**

Robert Hughes, Executive Director  
**Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned  
Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR)**

John H. Rosenfeld, Owner  
**Go Native Tree Farm**

Craig Lukatch-Setser, President  
**Lacawac Sanctuary & Field Station**

Bernie McGurl, Executive Director  
**Lackawanna River Conservation Association  
(LRCA)**

Joseph J. Corcoran, Executive Director  
**Lackawanna Heritage Valley**

Philip R. Wenger, CEO  
**Lancaster County Conservancy**

Christopher Thompson, District Manager  
**Lancaster County Conservation District**

Ted Evgeniadis, RIVERKEEPER®  
**Lower Susquehanna RIVERKEEPER®  
Association**

Melinda Hughes, President  
**Nature Abounds**

Bill Moul, President  
**North Area Environmental Council**

William Reichert, President  
**Schuylkill Headwaters Association, Inc.**

Joanne Kilgour, Chapter Director  
**Sierra Club PA**

Kristy Owens, Parks & Recreation Manager  
**Silver Spring Township**

Scott E. Pepperman, Chairman  
**Silver Spring Township Recreation Advisory  
Council**

Gail Kulp, Executive Director,  
**Susquehanna Greenway Partnership**

Paul Garrett  
**Trails and Trees Environmental Center  
Mechanicsburg Environmental Club  
Camp Hill Environmental Club  
Green-Cause.org**

Gary Peacock, Executive Director  
**Watershed Alliance of York, Inc. (WAY)**

## Sign-on Letter Addendum

### **1) Reject proposed budget cuts to DEP and DCNR**

The proposed budget cuts to DEP and DCNR have the potential to make our state water crisis worse. HB 218 proposes cuts to DEP's General Operations by 10 percent, its Environmental Programs by 6.5 percent, and its Environmental Protection programs by 5 percent. It cuts all river basin commissions by up to 50 percent and hacks 8 percent from the Chesapeake Bay program. These cuts put DEP's ability to protect our water resources in jeopardy, while stressing the agency's basic functions, like permit oversight, to unprecedented levels. HB 218 also proposes cuts to DCNR's budget by \$2.8 million, which could result in closures of state campgrounds and parks, a lack of maintenance at public facilities, and the elimination of key programs that support trails, road maintenance for hunters at state forests, and programs that battle forest fires.

Over the last 10 years, state lawmakers have cut investments in environmental protection by making fundamental oversight by our state agencies more challenging. Since FY02-03, DEP funding has been cut by 53% and DCNR has been cut by 24%, adjusted for inflation. Spending accounts that these agencies rely upon such as the Oil & Gas Lease Fund have been raided for other purposes or left without update that resulted in fewer dollars entering these fund each year. In the FY16-17 budget, DEP and DCNR relied upon these funds for 42% of their revenues. Yet, the revenue provided from these funds has decreased by 26 percent at DEP and 18 percent at DCNR.

### **2) Pass and fully fund Growing Greener 3 legislation that is active in both chambers of the legislature;**

Funding for Pennsylvania's Growing Greener program is at an all-time low. To ensure that Pennsylvanians continue to have access to clean water, parks and trails, green open spaces, and family farms, Governor Wolf and the General Assembly must provide adequate funding for a Growing Greener 3 program by investing \$315 million annually in conservation, recreation and preservation projects. These investments support our state's economy and enhance the health of our communities and quality of life for our residents.

Fifty-six percent of the proposed funding blueprint for the Growing Greener 3 legislation would directly support water quality programs. If fully funded, this would total a much-needed \$177,000,000 to address the approximately 20,000 miles of impaired rivers and streams, the source of the water that Pennsylvanians drink. Of tremendous import to the 6 million Americans who rely on it for the source of their drinking water, the Susquehanna River would receive 40% of those water quality benefits. This would help local river-based economies and advance our state's regional watershed cleanup requirements.

### **3) Establish a dedicated fund for water quality protection efforts.**

Pennsylvania lacks a robust source of funds for the implementation of water quality practices. The largest single source of non-point source funding in Pennsylvania is the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). In FY16, approximately \$100 million in requests for conservation support came to NRCS from Pennsylvania farmers. Only \$20 million was available, leaving a backlog of \$80 million, a 4:1 ratio of unmet need.

A large funding shortfall hinders Pennsylvania's restoration efforts. Unlike Pennsylvania, Maryland and Virginia are two states that are on track to meet their state-wide water quality goals. These states have the advantage of large dedicated state funding programs for both wastewater treatment and non-point source practices. The sources of revenue for these programs vary from a sewer bill surcharge to rental car and real estate recordation fees.

In Pennsylvania, a water use fee has been proposed. Through a dedicated fund, fee revenues would support water protection programs across the Commonwealth, in every part of the state, including the Ohio, the Genesee, the Susquehanna, the Delaware, the Erie and the Potomac watersheds.

- Currently, 5.9 billion gallons of the commonwealth's water are used each day, statewide, without compensation.
- By instead charging only one-hundredth of a cent per gallon for all withdrawals over 10,000 gallons per day, and one-tenth of a cent for all consumptive uses over 10,000 gallons per day, an estimated \$245 million per year could be generated.
- This is even after municipal water systems and agricultural production are exempted and existing fees charged by the Susquehanna and Delaware River Basin Commissions are deducted.

Funding water quality is a good investment. Studies of the Chesapeake Bay, Great Lakes and Everglades have estimated at least a 2:1 benefit to cost ratio for water quality restoration. In other words, for every dollar spent on water quality improvement, two dollars of benefit, such as economic activity, ecosystem services and increased property values are realized. The jobs created by restoration activity are often in the high-value STEM professions, and the quality of life in healthy watersheds helps to attract employers and retain employees. For more information, please read the Chesapeake Bay Commission's Water Rich & Water Wise report at <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B4Y3VQLxjkxOZXQ0YTIEZUtMMWM/view>