

**For Immediate Release:**

February 13, 2018

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**Environmental Groups Urge PA DEP to Implement Strong Water Quality Standards**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Environmental groups are urging the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) to strengthen water quality standards as part of its triennial review process to protect Pennsylvania’s water.

Every three years, PADEP is required to review its water quality standards, with opportunity for public comment. The entire state water quality standards system is up for analysis, debate and revision during this time. Environmental groups are urging PADEP to use this opportunity to enhance protections for Pennsylvania’s water. They are asking PADEP to set standards for bacteria, nutrients, and chloride, which will protect Pennsylvania streams from impacts like brine gas drilling wastewater and road salt applications in the winter. The groups are also urging PADEP to add PFA (Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl substances) to the 11 proposed toxins considered for addition to PADEP’s list of pollutants to be regulated.

Additionally, the regulations should be updated to reflect the improving dissolved oxygen levels and fish propagation that is occurring in the Delaware River, which will protect critical fish species.

However, PADEP is also considering downgrades and removals, which the groups are cautioning against. Stream downgrades and removal of the water contact/swimming existing use from the Delaware River from Riverton wharf downstream to Bridgeport Ferry are two concerns highlighted by the groups. In addition, PADEP is proposing to remove conservation easements held by Pennsylvania land trusts as elements that can be used to support stream upgrade petitions which would provide greater water quality protections.

PADEP’s water quality standards are critical for protecting the health of the state’s waterways. The public is encouraged to participate in the comment process and have a voice in protecting Pennsylvania’s water quality. The Delaware Riverkeeper Network has created a resource page for residents to get informed and engaged in this currently open public process. The page can be found at <http://bit.ly/PAWaterStandards>.

“The people of Pennsylvania are entitled to clean water as a right under the state constitution. Strong water quality standards are essential for protecting this right by preventing dangerous pollution levels that impact peoples health and the quality of our lives, and that will ensure the protection of the natural resources we need and hold dear. This is an important opportunity for the people of Pennsylvania to speak up in their own defense and ensure that the state put in place strong protections that will serve the

people, rather than allowing regulatory rollbacks that will make it easier for industry to inflict damaging pollution and harm,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

“In commenting on Pennsylvania’s Triennial Review of water quality standards, PennFuture asks DEP to apply the most protective standards to the waters of the Commonwealth that we all use and enjoy,” said **PennFuture Staff Attorney Alice R. Baker.** "As chloride salts from natural gas extraction and road de-icing increasingly impact aquatic life in our streams, PennFuture asks DEP to set a chloride standard as soon as possible"

“Mountain Watershed Association encourages the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to utilize this time of public engagement and represent the citizens of the commonwealth by establishing strong standards and increasing protections for waters of the state and US. Public opinion needs to be accounted for and thorough examination of public comments needs to happen. The PA DEP needs to protect the high quality streams, especially high-quality streams with reproducing trout populations and regionally or nationally rare species, from development and degradation while improving the biological and chemical conditions of impaired streams,” said **Eric Harder, Youghiogheny Riverkeeper at Mountain Watershed Association.**

“The federally endangered Atlantic sturgeon and other reproducing fish that currently live and breed in the tidal Delaware River deserve stronger elevated dissolved oxygen standards and immediate listing of these zones as fish propagation is needed. Studies show propagation is occurring and dissolved oxygen levels have improved so this existing use should be reflected in the regulations now,” said **Faith Zerbe, Chair of the PA Campaign for Clean Water Exceptional Value Work Group.**