



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF PENNSYLVANIA**

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Public Comment
League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
To the
Citizens Advisory Council
Of the
Department of Environmental Protection
October 15, 2013

The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania is appreciative of this opportunity to share comments with you this morning.

The League's concern about the depletion and conservation of natural resources dates back to nearly a century ago with our national studies on flood control and erosion. Water resources continued to be a focus of our activities in the 1950s. As a part of the evolving environmental movement in the 1970s, we built a broad national program focused on protecting and managing the interrelated aspects of air, water, land use, energy and waste management.¹ Pennsylvania was in the forefront of these issues that continue to be a current priority of the League. Thus, we would like to address three items on today's agenda.

First, the Chesapeake Bay, the largest watershed on the East Coast, is the terminus of the Susquehanna River. This river drains nearly half of the Commonwealth and contributes half of the fresh water flowing into the Bay. In 1997, it was designated as a National Heritage River worthy of special protection. Given its importance to the Bay, its history of degradation, and the continuing insults to its ecosystem brought to this Council's attention, we urge your support

¹ For a history of the League's involvement in these areas and our national positions, go to <http://www.lwv.org/content/natural-resources> .

of efforts to strengthen regulation, monitoring, and enforcement mechanisms throughout its basin. We trust today's Chesapeake Bay update will provide guidance for such efforts.

Second, as you may recall, the League was involved in discussions surrounding the regulation of long-wall mining decades ago. The lack of protection embedded in stakeholder proposals was the impetus for our withdrawal from these efforts. Our fears have become reality as shown by numerous studies, a wealth of data, and the Department's own statement last December to Consol Energy that an impacted tributary "has not been restored to conditions that existed prior to undermining" in spite of five years' worth of efforts.² Now is the time to revise Act 54 with avoidance taking precedence over mitigation. Our precious water resources are among those gifts that money cannot buy. The cumulative impact of their loss to our Commonwealth should not be the legacy of this agency nor those elected to uphold the protection of our clean water.

Third, we commend the Council for their efforts today to illuminate issues involved in proposed legislation involving threatened and endangered species. Based on Article 1, Section 27 of our Pennsylvania Constitution, we believe that attempts to ease and expedite the permitting process for industrial development at the expense of sensitive environments and their inhabitants are not only shortsighted but an erosion of our rights. Based on our work with pipelines, we are aware that there is currently inadequate assessment of the ever-changing flora, fauna, and water resources within our Commonwealth. We are also familiar with the increasing sophistication of technological tools to guide developers in locating and avoiding ecosystems of concern.³ The League thus encourages you to err on the side of caution and promote efforts to safeguard and strengthen protections to the natural, cultural and historic resources of our Commonwealth.

Thank you.

² For a full review, see <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2013/06/21/12877/new-scrutiny-longwall-mining-finds-damage-pennsylvania-streams>

³ Among the evolving tools are <https://eispctools.anl.gov>, <https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac>, and <http://www.conservationfund.org/projects/mitigation-profile-nisource-strategic-planning-to-offset-pipeline-impacts/>.