

PENNSYLVANIA CAMPAIGN FOR CLEAN WATER

1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1650

Philadelphia PA 19107

215-545-5250 phone

215-545-2315 fax

For Immediate Release

Endangered Species Coordination Act (HB 1576) - Passes Through Committee & Expected for Legislature Vote Soon – Bipartisan Opposition Builds

Contact: Myron Arnowitt, Clean Water Action, 412-592-1283

Maya K. van Rossum, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, 215-369-1188 ext. 102

Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, 717-232-0101

Krissy Kasserman, Youghiogheny Riverkeeper, 724-455-4200

Harrisburg, PA --- Despite major concerns from environmental and conservation organizations and the PA Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission, the House Game and Fisheries Committee voted today to move HB 1576, the Endangered Species Coordination Act, out of committee for a PA House vote that could happen as early as next week on the House floor.

Rep. Jeffrey Pyle, (R-Armstrong and Indiana Counties) is the prime sponsor of the bill which will weaken the state's Endangered Species Act and other protections that help protect wild trout, endangered bats, and other sensitive species that are part of Pennsylvania's natural heritage.

Yesterday the Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water, a coalition of over 180 environmental, conservation, sporting and religious groups from all corners of the state, sent Committee members a letter stating the coalition's strong opposition to HB 1576 and its companion bill SB 1047. Today there was bipartisan opposition in the Committee to HB 1576 and amendments accepted but not enough to keep it from moving to the House floor, possibly as early as next week.

"While the bill was amended to remove some of the provisions considered objectionable, the fundamental flaw in the bill remains: it subjects PA Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission proposed listings to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC). Thus, it will still allow what should be a scientific decision to be made by political appointees, rather than by agency scientists," said **Jeff Schmidt, Director of the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter**.

"We all know that this vote is about the political influence of the oil and gas industry in Pennsylvania. That's why they want political appointees to decide what protections the public gets. It's time for the state legislature to stop putting the interests of one industry over the

public interest, and vote down this bill on the House floor,” said **Myron Arnowitt, Pennsylvania State Director of Clean Water Action**.

“This legislation if passed would clearly put the drilling, mining and development interests before the interests of the natural heritage and clean streams that all Pennsylvanians enjoy and rely on for a healthy place to live and recreate. This would be another gift to the gas drillers if HB 1576 and SB 1047 are passed in the coming weeks. These bills are unacceptable and need to be voted down,” said **Maya K van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper**.

“We so value Pennsylvania’s wildlife and wild places—it’s part of our identity here in the Commonwealth. Our legislators must understand that every one of Pennsylvania’s threatened and endangered species will be even more at risk should they allow this proposal to become law. Decisions regarding the designation of threatened and endangered species should be driven by sound science and not by politics,” stated **Krissy Kasserman, Youghiogheny Riverkeeper**.

Committee members who were opposed to HB 1576 included from the minority: Rep. Frank Farina, Rep. Kevin Haggerty, Rep. Tim Mahoney, Rep. Gerald Mullery, and Rep. Jesse White. On the majority, Rep. Keith Gillespie, Rep. Marica Hahn, and Rep. Michael Peifer. The vote was 16 yeas and 8 nays with Rep. Todd Rock abstaining.

For a copy of the letter sent by the Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water to House Committee members yesterday:

<http://www.delawariverkeeper.org/resources/Letters/CCW%20HB1576%20and%201047%20FINAL.pdf>

For a copy of the current legislation:

http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/bill_history.cfm?year=2013&sind=0&body=H&type=B&bn=1576

###