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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Unified Coalition Launches *Our Pocono Waters Campaign* to Protect Exceptional Value Streams Currently Under Threat

(Aug. 14, 2018) Mt. Pocono, Pa. – PennFuture and a group of fellow organizations, community members, and businesses today launch ***Our Pocono Waters Campaign***, a regional movement aimed at unifying the community while educating people from all walks of life about the importance of protecting Exceptional Value designated streams, some of which are currently under threat from a group of business interests and developers challenging the highest protection of these pristine waterways.

The advertising, PR, media and citizen engagement campaign, which includes billboard advertisement placements in addition to digital, along with outreach engaging local citizens, highlights the many ways in which clean streams and economic development coexist in the Poconos region, one that is known for both its natural beauty and booming tourism industry.

“Our Poconos region is at a crossroads. Our most exceptional streams are now at risk as some would prefer to pollute ***Our Pocono Waters*** rather than invest in the engineering and technology needed to protect streams from stormwater runoff and industrial pollution,” said **Jacquelyn Bonomo, President and CEO, PennFuture**. “We look forward to working with our neighbors and businesses in the Poconos to fight to protect our truly exceptional and pristine streams so that we can continue a legacy for the region in which businesses and nature go hand-in-hand.”

***Our Pocono Waters Campaign*** is calling on citizens to sign a petition at [www.ourpoconowaters.org](http://www.ourpoconowaters.org) that will be sent to elected officials, urging them to vocally support the Exceptional Value designation of local Pocono streams by using their influence to ensure the PA Department of Environmental Protection upholds them. The website also offers several ways for citizens to get involved in the fight for protecting clean streams through attending local events, writing letters to the editor and more.

“For generations, the Poconos have been blessed with clean and abundant water that has supported every facet of our lives and livelihoods,” said **Bob Heil, executive director of Brodhead Watershed**

**Association.** “To maintain that quality of life now and for the future, it is imperative that we recognize the values of our Pocono waters and establish an ethic of preservation and stewardship of these waters.”

The Delaware River’s resources provide \$22 billion in economic benefits including from hiking, hunting, fishing, boating and farming, all activities vitally important to the Middle and Upper portions of the watershed. While only two percent of PA streams are classified as "Exceptional Value," 80 percent of the state’s “EV” streams are in the Poconos, primarily located in Monroe, Pike, and Wayne counties.

“This economy only thrives if we have clean water and healthy habitats. By designating the Poconos’ headwater streams with Exceptional Value status, we will ensure that future development and business operations embrace the widely available innovative, adaptive and sustainable approaches that protect our environment. We can have it all – healthy development, healthy business, and a healthy environment, and exceptional value status will ensure we do,” **said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

Partners in the campaign thus far include Appalachian Mountain Club, Brodhead Chapter #289 Trout Unlimited, Brodhead Watershed Association, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, PennFuture, and Pocono Heritage Land Trust. More community members will be added to the partner list as the campaign progresses at <http://www.ourpoconowaters.org>.

"The place of water in our lives runs deep. Obviously, we are most dependent on water as a physical component of our bodies (adults are made up of 60% water). But, we also depend on water and its displays in nature for a sense of beauty, radical-amazement, awe, wonder and grandeur. Rivers, springs, lakes, and streams open us to a spiritual and emotional groundedness and homeostasis as we find our place within the world in which we live. We cannot survive without water, in our bodies, but in our hearts and minds and souls as well,” **said Tom Johnson-Medland**, a local faith leader, clean streams advocate and Director of BAYADA Home Health and Hospice, who spoke at today’s press conference.

Exceptional value streams represent the highest quality and most valuable of streams to Pennsylvanians and the environment, as the streams' protection receives the highest level of legal protection under state law. After a stream is designated EV, its outstanding water quality must always be protected and no degradation of the waters is permitted under any circumstances.

“Without clean water we have nothing,” **said Kathleen Flynn**, a local angler representing those who fish along the exceptional streams of the Poconos who spoke at today’s press conference. “Water is the life blood of all living things. Both the smallest nymph that feeds the wild trout , and the largest mammal on land or sea, require clean water to exist.”

***For more information, please visit [www.ourpoconowaters.org](http://www.ourpoconowaters.org). PennFuture is leading the transition to a clean energy economy in Pennsylvania, fighting big polluters with legal muscle, enforcing environmental laws, and supporting legislative policy that protects public health. PennFuture is engaging and educating citizens about the realities of climate change, and giving them the tools needed to influence lawmakers on the issues. Visit [www.pennfuture.org](http://www.pennfuture.org) for more information.***