



6/25/2008

Environmental groups and legislators call for forested buffers to protect PA streams and communities

Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water

www.pacleanwatercampaign.org

For Immediate Release

June 18, 2008

Contact:

Myron Arnowitt

Maya van Rossum

Environmental groups and legislators call for forested buffers to protect Pennsylvania's streams and communities

(Harrisburg, June 18, 2008) – The Pennsylvania Campaign for Clean Water today publicly launched its “Buffers 100” initiative, urging the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to propose new regulations that would require minimum 100 foot buffers on new development on all rivers and streams in the state. The proposal has been endorsed by 110 organizations, businesses and municipal organizations from across the state, along with 25 legislators from both parties and both chambers of the General Assembly.

The Campaign's proposal would require new developments to preserve a strip of land at least 100 foot wide from the top of the stream bank, keeping that land in its natural state with native vegetation and trees. The proposal would impact new development only and could not affect existing structures within the buffer zone. Buffers would be built and maintained by developers, at no cost to taxpayers.

Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, explained, “If we are to protect our communities from flooding, drought and pollution, if we are to provide our communities with high quality drinking water, recreation, and growing businesses, it is critical we protect our streams and rivers with forested buffers that are a minimum of 100 feet wide, and greater where we have more sensitive streams.”

Delaware Riverkeeper Network

300 Pond Street, Second Floor
Bristol, PA 19007

tel: (215) 369-1188

fax: (215) 369-1181

drkn@delawariverkeeper.org

www.delawariverkeeper.org

Myron Arnowitt, state director for Clean Water Action, noted, "12,500 miles of streams in Pennsylvania are already degraded by pollution. Buffers can help restore many of these streams to health and protect the rest from harmful pollution."

Tavis Dockwiller, a landscape architect from Viridian Landscape Studio, described how streams would benefit from buffers, "Through a lack of understanding about how important protecting our streams is, we have paved over and otherwise abused our watersheds. We must stop making the same mistakes. 100 foot minimum stream buffers are not a luxury of environmentalists but instead are necessary to protect our health and safety. These buffers protect and clean our water, and reduce both flood damage and the cost of stormwater management."

Andy Paravis of the Federation of Northern Chester County Municipalities noted that his township, North Coventry, has already adopted a 100 foot buffer requirement and has seen positive benefits from it. But he added, "the state needs to require buffers on all streams since water doesn't respect municipal boundaries and we're all affected by what the municipality upstream does."

Rep. Camille George (D-Clearfield), chair of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, Rep. Kate Harper (R-Montgomery), and Rep. Robert Freeman (D-Northampton) all spoke in favor of the proposal, urging DEP to propose strong buffer regulations. "Mother Nature needs a buffer zone. We need a buffer zone," said Rep. George. "There is nothing extreme about this except for extreme common sense."

Rep. Harper stated, "We have only recently become aware of how our use of nearby land affects the quality and quantity of water and aquatic life in our rivers and streams. With that knowledge comes a responsibility to define for the entire Commonwealth a safe buffer area for Pennsylvania waterways so that we can continue to enjoy the benefits of clean water for generations to come."

Rep. Freeman agreed, "Establishing riparian buffers along our Commonwealth's waterways is critical to protecting the quality and availability of water across Pennsylvania, enhancing our environment, and mitigating the potential for destructive flooding."

The three legislators were joined by other members of the House and Senate who demonstrated their support for the Campaign for Clean Water's "Buffers 100" proposal, urging the DEP to propose regulations that would require minimum 100 foot buffers.