

**American Rivers
Appalachian Mountain Club
Clean Water Action
Delaware Riverkeeper Network
Friends of the Upper Delaware**

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***Environmental Quality Board Gives DEP the Green Light to Further Study
Delaware River Upgrade Petition***

Harrisburg, PA. This morning the Environmental Quality Board at their regular meeting voted 13-5 to give PA DEP the green light to further study an upgrade petition for the Delaware River that was submitted by 24 organizations and 150 watershed citizens on December 9, 2011 to upgrade the Delaware River and tributary streams to Exceptional Value.

DEP presented to the Board that the petition was administratively complete, therefore requesting the Board vote to move the petition through the next regulatory step of review. Kelly Heffner, PA DEP, presented a map of the proposed upgrade area that includes over 1,600 square miles of the Basin, of which the majority of those streams have high quality designation currently and are located in mostly forested and rural areas of Wayne, Pike and Monroe counties.

Petitioners include a broad array of organizations and several were present at the meeting to answer questions from the Board before the vote was taken. Petitioners also delivered additional letters of support from the community, including another 27 businesses and organizations and more than 80 citizen letters that were gathered over the weekend. Petitioners highlighted the science, diversity, water quality, and national recreational significance in this region that they say merits the upgrade.

"The upper reaches of the Delaware River and the tributaries that feed it are irreplaceable sources of clean, fresh and healthy waters, with an enviable natural beauty. Despite all the good intentions and good rhetoric, if we don't apply the laws we have on the books to protect them from pollution and harm, then we cannot honor our commitment to present or future generations of children and families of passing on a resource that is as healthy as it was when delivered into our

hands. Ensuring Pennsylvania's Exceptional Value Status is given to those reaches of the Delaware and tributaries we have petitioned for is a vital step in ensuring all of our communities can continue to benefit from these waterways and the healthy drinking water, sustainable jobs, and unparalleled family fun they provide," said Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper.

Exceptional Value status makes sense on so many levels," said Dan Plummer, Board Chairman of Friends of the Upper Delaware River. "The fishery and habitat of our streams and rivers will benefit, and local economies will see a payoff from any increased recreational usage and tourism generated by these pristine waters. Plummer says he has found unanimous community support along the Upper Delaware for EV status. "Everyone seems to see this initiative for what it is: another level of protection to keep these valuable natural resources clean, cold and pure forever," he said.

"Exceptional value protection in the Delaware Basin will ensure the opportunities of clean water: vibrant livelihoods, safe recreation and healthy drinking water. These are values consistent with national and state investments that help communities thrive," said Liz Garland, American Rivers.

"By upgrading the status of the Upper and Middle Delaware to Exceptional Value, we are making a smart investment in the protection of this critical resource, as well as in the future of the 22 billion dollar a year recreational tourism industry that it supports", said Cathy Frankenberg, Appalachian Mountain Club.

"The Clean Streams Law of PA was written to protect streams from further degradation from the moment the law was passed. If data shows that the Upper Delaware watershed meets the criteria for Exceptional Value status, then under the law it should receive that designation in Pennsylvania's environmental rulemaking. We know that Clean Water Action members will support DEP when, after its review, they find that the Upper Delaware should have received this status long ago," said Brady Russell, Eastern PA Director, Clean Water Action.

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