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## **Lower Macungie Signs on to Protect Clean Water of the Upper Perkiomen Creek**

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Lower Macungie Township Commissioners (Lehigh County) unanimously voted to support a stream upgrade of the Upper Perkiomen Watershed at last week's meeting. The township's solicitor will draw up a resolution in support of upgrading the Upper Perkiomen Watershed to "Exceptional Value", Pennsylvania's highest designation for waterways. This designation can only be given to streams with very clean water. "We were impressed with the commitment shown by the Lower Macungie Township Commissioners toward protecting water resources. The Township is at the headwaters of the Upper Perkiomen and the headwaters is where we must start if we are to protect everything downstream," said Rick Loomis of Clean Water Action who attended the meeting to present this unique opportunity to the township and ask for their support.

The upgrade petition was submitted to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP) by a coalition of environmental organizations that collected scientific data showing that water in the Perkiomen Creek and its tributaries was likely cleaner than its current regulatory designation would suggest. Petitioners include the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy, Perkiomen Valley Trout Unlimited, and Lehigh, Berks, and Montgomery County Conservation Districts. With its recent sign on, Lower Macungie joins more than 100 diverse entities including local farmers, residents, and businesses including Securities America, Inc., Fabricated Alloy Products, Landhaven, and Wright Wine Works in an effort to protect this clean and healthy watershed. Other municipalities and boroughs on-board and in support include Montgomery Counties Marlborough, Pennsburg, East Greenville, Green Lane and Douglass Townships and Berks County's Hereford Township. Representative Karen Beyer, 131st District, Representative Bob Mensch, 147th District, and Senator Robert Wonderling, 24th District are also on board.

Watershed organizations and community leaders hope the proposed upgrade will be part of a continuing trend throughout the Upper Perkiomen Watershed. The Exceptional Value designation will help protect clean water and support the existing high quality of life in the Upper Perkiomen communities.

Crystal Gilchrist, Executive Director of the Perkiomen Watershed Conservancy added, "We talk to people from

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throughout the Perkiomen's 362 square mile watershed. They are concerned about water quality everywhere but more importantly, they understand that how we treat our land, whether it is a large development or our individual lawns, impacts the health of our creeks and our communities. Conditions in the Upper Perkiomen affect water quality all the way to the Delaware Bay!"

PADEP is currently reviewing the petition. Waterways in the Upper Perkiomen Watershed provide drinking water for communities throughout southeastern Pennsylvania. The "Perkie" rises in southern Lehigh County and southeastern Berks County, travels through western Montgomery County and meets the Schuylkill River in Audubon (see map).

The Exceptional Value upgrade will not limit development but will require greater care to ensure that water quality impairments are avoided. Conditions that threaten clean water include soil erosion and sedimentation of creeks resulting from lax land management practices, and stormwater runoff that carries lawn chemicals, agricultural fertilizers, pet and agricultural wastes and oil byproducts from the land into creeks. As development and paved areas increase, so do these "non-point source" pollutants. A designation of "Exceptional Value" will also lead to greater replenishment of the local ground water by limiting direct stream discharge of stormwater and industrial wastewater. The designation will not impact existing water users or currently approved construction plans