



For Immediate Release

December 8, 2011

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**Over 20 Groups Petition PA Dept of Environmental Protection for a
Regional Upgrade of the Delaware River and Tributaries
to Exceptional Value Status**

12/8/11, Bristol, PA – Delaware Riverkeeper Network, American Rivers, Clean Water Action, Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited and over twenty local, state, and national organizations are submitting a regional stream upgrade petition to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to urge the Commonwealth to redesignate the Upper and Middle Delaware River and all tributary streams flowing into the River in these reaches on the Pennsylvania side to “Exceptional Value” status. This designation is reserved for the cleanest streams of the Commonwealth and only about 4% or 3,076 miles of Pennsylvania’s 86,000 miles of streams have received this designation (2009 data). Many of the streams of the proposed upgrade area have High Quality designation because of the clean streams in this region. The petitioners are submitting a 70-plus page petition that highlights water quality data from agency and non-agency sources and other qualifiers that they say, make this watershed deserving of an upgrade to Exceptional Value - the highest designation available to Pennsylvania streams. With this designation should come stronger protections to ensure this region’s water quality does not degrade in health over time.

According to **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper**, “our petition makes clear, the current designation given the Upper and Middle Delaware and its tributaries do not reflect the unique and important attributes of this River region as a whole.” The petitioners are requesting the PADEP expedite the petition

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due to proposed drilling in Marcellus shale deposits anticipated for the region which is underlain by the Marcellus Shale. “The streams and River subject to this petition are highly vulnerable from both development and drilling; in order to honor its commitment to the public to protect the health of the Commonwealth’s streams this petition must move forward and be granted as quickly as possible,” states van Rossum.

“The Delaware River Basin provides drinking water for millions of Americans. An Exceptional Value designation is not only warranted, but essential to safeguard the health of the people, fish, and wildlife that rely on the clean water that the Delaware River provides every day.” **Jessie Thomas-Blate, American Rivers**

“The Delaware River is a National Wild and Scenic River, designated by Congress for its outstanding resources. The River is the largest undammed River east of the Mississippi, flowing freely for 330 miles, and it is home to threatened and endangered species including diverse populations of native freshwater mussels, forty species of resident and migratory fish, and a valuable wild trout fishery in the upper reaches.” **Ken Undercoffer, PA Council of Trout Unlimited.**

A recent report by the University of Delaware shows this River Basin provides the region \$22 billion in economic benefits from activities like hiking, hunting, fishing, boating, and farming. The Delaware River Basin is one of the largest water supply basins in the mid-Atlantic, providing drinking water for more than 15.6 million Americans.

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