

TESTIMONY OF DR. JEWETT-SMITH, NOVEMBER 14, 2007
DEP PUBLIC HEARING ON WQM PERMIT #
Pocono Mountain Swiftwater Intermediate School, 7 PM

Hello, I'm Dr. Jeri Jewett-Smith, Director of the Environmental Studies program at East Stroudsburg University, member and incoming president of the Brodhead Watershed Association and resident of Pocono Township.

I'm here today to talk about the problems that I see with the current Pocono Township Sewage Project, in particular the site of discharge of the 2 million gallons per day of effluent into the Brodhead Creek along the Brodhead Greenway below the Stokes Avenue Bridge. I'm concerned about removing 20% or more of the low flow volume of Pocono Creek. I'm concerned about the increasing sprawl along the 611 corridor and the environmental damage that sprawl is doing to the forest and stream ecosystems of Pocono Township.

The Brodhead Creek has always been an important part of the local scene. We have township festivals in the parks, provide scenic paths for walking, access for fishing and swimming and we use it as a classroom to teach ecology. Yet the current plan to discharge into the river may endanger the coldwater fishery that hangs on in that section of the stream. The designation of CWF may be based upon a few fish, but think about how those studies are done: they are snapshots in time, done over a few hours. Yet those scientific studies found fish of a size that are not planted. Some may argue that those fish could have come from upstream. I'd argue that fish swim away from conditions that would stress them: on the days of those studies, those fish were there because the stream met their needs for food and shelter. I am disappointed that so much energy was spent over the past couple of months trying to disprove the Brodhead qualifies as a CWF. As someone who cares about the watershed, I'd rather that energy (and taxpayer dollars to lawyers and consultants) be put into how to best protect the fishery.

I do not want this plan to be the pipe that broke the back of the stream. Once it is in place, there is no going back. No putting the water back into the Pocono where at least 20% originally came. No changing the impact of thermal pollution. All of our streams have taken 3 recent huge hits in the form of century level floods... they do not need or deserve more stress in terms of increased loads of salts, nutrients and turbidity and decreased flow at some sites, increased warm flow at others. Land application allows the water to percolate back to the aquifer, filtered and available to maintain the water table.

I have only lived in Monroe County for 9 years. Yet in that time I've seen habitat destruction from unsustainable land use that boggles my mind. There is not a week that goes by that I don't see major changes along the 611 corridor that I travel daily. Mature trees are often cut to the edge of streams, as seen recently along the Scotrun downstream of the Scotrun Post Office, just to be able to see a for sale sign. I saw major erosion from construction of the Lowes complex at the Bartonsville Truck stop that dumped enormous amounts of sediment into the Pocono during heavy rain a year ago. I have walked many portions of the Pocono, McMichaels, and Brodhead this summer and last and I saw extreme bank erosion, rocks embedded in sediment and little or no forest buffer along much of the stream's banks in the lower reaches. The development of the sewer pipe along the 611 corridor and across the watershed divide to the Brodhead discharge site will result in more habitat destruction: deforestation, erosion, storm water runoff and more sprawl.

We, all of us, are responsible for the future of this land. How can I, as a university professor to 20 year olds answer their common questions: They ask, "What can we do against the pressure of quick profit developers? How can you expect us to do the right thing when your generation didn't? Should I take a job in the environmental field when I can't make a difference?" These young women and men want to work at DEP, DCNR, Fish and Boat Commission, National Park Service and help to conserve our natural resources. Let's give them that inspiration, with leadership at the Township, State and industrial partner level. Let's make a stand here to do the right thing, protect the watershed and associated aquifers. Let's take a hard look at land application. We don't want to find ourselves in the position where wells are running dry, sewer fungus grows so thick that kids can't wade in the Brodhead and the Pocono is a dry stream bed. Unprecedented growth, coupled with global climate change could put us into a position where jobs are moot because there is no water to drink. Let's provide the leadership to move away from old style Big Pipe dreams and plan for sustainable water use, sustainable land use.

I do not expect that what BWA and TU members have said here tonight will change anything in the DEP review and decision making process. This project is politically driven. The only way that Sanofi's needs can be met in a sustainable way is for Sanofi to take the lead, continue with their land application plans and keep the water in the watershed. With guidance from their legal counsel and Sanofi's leadership, Pocono Township can come to understand that the public dollars committed to help Sanofi, must help Sanofi, and not be used to develop an environmental and social disaster for the Pocono watershed.