

**PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

**Proposal to join the**

**REGIONAL GREENHOUSE GAS INITIATIVE**

**Testimony of the Brodhead Watershed Association**

**Virtual Public Hearings, December 2020**

Good evening. My name is Kelly Gallo and as the executive director for the Brodhead Watershed Association I represent a watershed organization with a 30-year history of protecting the Brodhead Creek and its many tributaries. Our dedicated members watch-over 563 miles of streams, most of which are high quality and exceptional value streams. It is because of a desire to protect this priceless resource in the Poconos that I speak before you tonight.

Due to greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuels like coal, natural gas, and oil, the climate is changing across the globe. Changing here in Pennsylvania. Here in Monroe County. Climate change is water change. This water is vital to our lives and livelihoods. Pennsylvania's electric power sector is currently the fifth dirtiest in the nation. Therefore, it is vital that Pennsylvania becomes part of the solution- to protect our water, to protect our lives, and to protect our livelihoods.

The Pocono region has been experiencing the effects of these greenhouse gas emissions the past few decades. Storms are more frequent and more intense. While our stormwater BMPs and infrastructure are compliant, they are no longer able to function as originally intended. Heavy, fast rainfall from these storms causes flash flooding in our headwater tributaries, putting lives at risk and negatively impacting the cold-water fisheries that our local economy depends upon. These downpours also increase run-off that picks up harmful pollutants and further impacts these fisheries as well as our drinking water. Water runs off so quickly, it does not allow for infiltration to recharge aquifers that recharge the streams throughout the year.

On the other side of the climate extremes that we are experiencing we have had low amounts of precipitation throughout the summers and our streams run below their historic levels at times. To further compound this problem, our air temperatures are rising. Temperatures in Pennsylvania are projected to increase by 5.4 degrees by 2050 and the number of days with a heat index above 90 degrees will increase dramatically from eight to 40 per year. As we experienced this year this means higher water temperatures and therefore dangerously low dissolved oxygen levels for the wild and native trout that visitors come here for. These warming water temperatures may also compromise spawning and embryo survival further impacting our native brook trout populations.

The Pocono economy is heavily dependent on tourism and another casualty of climate change is our ski industry. For the ski industry to remain economically sustainable, the season must be at least 100 days - and having snow during the holiday time period is vital to profitability. Our changing climate continues to shorten our ski season and bring about precipitation in the form of snow later in the season. The increased need for snowmaking operations cuts into profits further hurting the industry. Additionally, warming temperatures may eventually make snowmaking infeasible. If our resorts become economically unviable and close the loss of the resort-generated revenue would be a huge hit to our community and the many people that depend on this industry for their livelihoods.

As seen in many areas of Pennsylvania, our region has also been heavily impacted by flooding in the last several years. PennDOT spent more than \$125 million in 2018 alone to repair flood and landslide damage around the state.

Any way you look at these effects from climate change, the costs are high. Costs to our health, our environment, our economy are burdens shouldered by the taxpayers and citizens of Pennsylvania now and well into the future. Pennsylvania's involvement in RGGI will help to ensure the private industry pays for their environmental degradation instead of passing the costs on to us. RGGI has been successful in the 10 states where it is already in place, cutting climate pollution by a third and raising nearly \$3 billion to invest in clean energy projects. An in-depth analysis for the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) confirmed that Pennsylvania would see a similar benefit: RGGI may lead to a net increase of more than 27,000 jobs and add \$1.9 billion to our state's economy.- all while ensuring we are no longer burdened with the costs of private industries' environmental degradation and protecting the lives and livelihoods of the people of Pennsylvania. Climate change is water change and it is time for Pennsylvania to tap into RGGI's record of success and reduce its carbon pollution.