

Environmental Law & Policy Center - Hoosier Environmental Council - Indiana Wildlife Federation - Kentucky Waterways Alliance- Lower Ohio River Waterkeeper - National Wildlife Federation - Ohio Environmental Council - Ohio River Foundation - Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition - PennFuture - Prairie Rivers Network -Sierra Club, Cumberland (Ky.) Chapter - Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter - Sierra Club Illinois Chapter - Sierra Club Ohio Chapter - Valley Watch - Watershed Organizations Advisory Committee - West Virginia Rivers Coalition

Groups Applaud Progress on Ohio River Protections

LANSING, W.VA. (October 4, 2018)—Environmental groups applauded a move to keep clean water protections for the Ohio River. The regional body charged with overseeing the health of the river, the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, today decided not to vote on a controversial proposal that sought to replace 70 years of regional cooperation among eight states bordering the river in setting pollution control standards. The commission stated they intend to continue deliberations on the matter, and conservation groups see this as an opportunity for more meaningful dialogue about its implications for the future health of the river.

More than 5 million people depend on the Ohio River for their drinking water, and conservation groups staunchly opposed the move to outright scrap the current pollution-reduction arrangement. Massive public input in favor of regional cooperation helped convince commissioners to take a step back and reassess their options.

After the meeting, conservation groups applauded the action by the commissioners and by the governors who appointed them, including Govs. Bruce Rauner (Ill.), Eric Holcomb (Ind.), Matt Bevin (Ky.), Andrew Cuomo (N.Y.), John Kasich (Ohio), Tom Wolf (Pa.), Ralph Northam (Va.), and Jim Justice (W.Va.).

Environmental groups said:

“This is a positive step for the Ohio River and the 5 million people who depend on it for their drinking water, jobs, and way of life. We thank the commissioners and governors who decided to take a step back to assess the consequences of overturning 70 years of collaboration and cooperation around pollution standards. We also thank the over 6,500 members of the public for standing up and advocating during the comment process for a clean and healthy Ohio River, which is the foundation of our environment, economy, and regional identity.

“Serious problems such as sewage contamination, toxic pollution and harmful algal blooms continue to threaten the Ohio River and its many communities—and we firmly believe that the most effective, efficient and fair way to prevent pollution into the river is to work together. Pollution that enters the river upstream can impact communities downstream, which is why we need consistent, strong protections to protect people no matter where they live along the river.

“We appreciate the commissioners taking the time to gather the information that is needed to make an informed decision on the best way forward to reduce pollution into the Ohio River. We hope that the process moving forward will welcome additional input from the many stakeholders along the river and

will continue to be transparent, inclusive, fair, and effective. We look forward to working with the states to improve the health of the Ohio River so that we can protect our drinking water, public health, economy, fish and wildlife, and way of life now and for generations to come.”

"The Hoosier Environmental Council is grateful to Governor Holcomb and the Indiana Commissioners for taking this step to carefully consider how best to protect the Ohio River," said Dr. Indra Frank, Director of Water Policy for HEC. "This is a wise move for Indiana since we are nearly at the end of the river. In EPA records there are at least 490 permits to discharge waste into the Ohio River before it reaches us, so we stand to benefit from protective pollution control standards."

Conservation Groups on the Ground in West Virginia include:

Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (W. Va.): Robin L. Blakeman, robin@ohvec.org, (304) 840-4877

West Virginia Rivers Coalition: Angie Rosser, arosser@wvivers.org, (304) 437-1274

Lower Ohio River Waterkeeper (Ind./Ky.): Jason Flickner, Jason@ohioriverwaterkeeper.org, (502) 276-5957

National Wildlife Federation: Jordan Lubetkin, lubetkin@nwf.org, (734) 904-1589

Ohio Environmental Council: David Miller, dmiller@theoec.org, (614) 487-7506

Other Groups willing to comment on the action include:

Environmental Law & Policy Center (Ill.): Madeline Fleisher, mfleisher@elpc.org, (857) 636-0371

Hoosier Environmental Council (Ind.): Marianne Holland, mholland@hecweb.org, (317) 981-3210

Indiana Wildlife Federation: Emily Wood, wood@indianawildlife.org, (317) 875-9453

Ohio River Foundation (Ohio): Rich Cogen, rcogen@ohioriverfdn.org, (513) 460-3365

PennFuture (Pa.): Stephanie Rex, rex@pennfuture.org, (412) 463-2942

Sierra Club, Cumberland (Ky.) Chapter: Hank Graddy, hank.graddy@gmail.com, (859) 229-4033

Sierra Club Hoosier Chapter (Ind.): Bowden Quinn, bowden.quinn@sierraclub.org, (317) 695-3046

Sierra Club Illinois Chapter: Cindy Skrukud, cindy.skrukud@sierraclub.org, 312-251-1680 x1015

Sierra Club Ohio Chapter: Cheryl Johncox, cheryl.johncox@sierraclub.org, (740) 360-0420

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