

Committee on Resources

Subcommittee on National Parks & Public Lands

Witness Statement

Testimony of Janet L. Bowers
Executive Director, Chester County (PA) Water Resources Authority
National President, American Water Resources Association
Before
The House of Representatives Subcommittee on
National Parks and Public Lands
Committee on Resources
The Honorable James V. Hansen, Chairman
On
H.R. 3520
White Clay Creek Wild and Scenic Rivers System Act
June 8, 2000

Good morning Mr. Chairman, and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of H.R. 3520, the bill to designate White Clay Creek in Delaware and Pennsylvania as an addition to the National Wild and Scenic River System.

I am the Executive Director of the Chester County Water Resources Authority, a government entity of the County of Chester, in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I am here today to speak on behalf of the Authority as well as on behalf of the Chester County Board of Commissioners who have supported this initiative from the onset. I also currently serve as the National President of the American Water Resources Association, an international organization of water resources professionals, and I am a Registered Professional Geologist in both Pennsylvania and Delaware.

Chester County is the only one of 67 counties in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that has established and maintains a separate agency for the purpose of facilitating and conducting water resources management and planning. The Chester County Commissioners established the Authority in 1961 and have continued that commitment to coordinated water resources management and preservation for nearly 40 years. The mission of the Authority is to provide technical studies, planning, management decisions and assistance to the County, state, local municipalities and water users to protect the integrity of our streams and aquifers, to ensure their balanced use by ALL USERS, while accommodating planned growth.

The County and the Authority support the proposed designation of the White Clay Creek and its tributaries because it will directly facilitate implementation of the following 3 other major initiatives underway in Chester County and in the region for sustainable land use management:

First, *Landscapes* - Chester County's National Award Winning Comprehensive Growth Management Plan that was adopted by the County Commissioners in 1996 to establish policies and growth management boundaries to guide growth into the most appropriate areas while preserving the natural resources and assets of the County. Landscapes has been voluntarily adopted through Memorandum of Understanding by 70 of the 73 municipalities within Chester County, including 11 Chester County municipalities within the White Clay Creek watershed.

Second, *Watersheds* - Chester County's Integrated Water Resources Management Plan. This plan, currently under development, will be completed by year's end as a functional element of Chester County's *Landscapes Comprehensive Plan*. The *Watersheds* will provide the municipalities, land owners, government and non-government entities with the understanding, technical guidance, and tools to implement more effective and coordinated practices that accommodate planned growth while sustaining the quality and quantity of our natural water resources for ALL USERS. The *Watersheds Plan* addresses 6 goals:

- *Engaging all public and governments in individual responsibility for watershed stewardship*
- *Protecting recreational, cultural and natural resources*
- *Protecting the watershed water balances*
- *Improving water quality of the streams and aquifers*
- *Integrating water and wastewater utility planning with municipal land use planning*
- *Reducing stormwater runoff and flooding.*

Third, the Christina River Basin Water Quality Management Strategy is an inter-state, inter-county, inter-governmental initiative that was begun in 1995 to develop a coordinated and scientifically sound approach to improving the water quality of the streams and aquifers of the 385-square mile Christina River Basin in Pennsylvania and Delaware. This Christina River Basin includes the White Clay Creek and its tributaries. The goal of this initiative is to improve the water quality of the streams and aquifers in support of all users including the natural resources, recreational users, industries and the water supply needs of the region. This strategy is relying upon voluntary participation by many land owners and agricultural operations to implement improved best management practices to reduce the discharge of pollutants from lands to the waterways. It is also relying on the opportunities presented within the existing regulatory framework to reduce the pollutant loadings to the streams, such as the Clean Water Act NPDES and TMDL processes.

All 3 of these initiatives - Landscapes Comprehensive Plan, Watersheds Water Resources Management Plan, and the Christina River Basin Water Quality Management Strategy, have been widely embraced locally, regionally, by the states and Federal entities for their leadership and effectiveness. All 3 initiatives demonstrate effective models to sustain our economic growth and viability, enhance our neighborhoods and communities, protect public health and safety, and preserve the integrity of our natural waters and their ecosystems within the existing regulatory framework and maintaining the full rights of land owners

The designation of the White Clay Creek as a wild and scenic river will add an additional important component to these initiatives by ensuring that federal actions within the designated areas of the White Clay Creek and its tributaries are consistent with the goals and policies of all three of these initiatives. Also, the White Clay Creek Management Plan, that was prepared as part of the Wild and Scenic River Study, will

facilitate the coordinated local implementation of many of the same recommended conservation practices that were addressed in Landscapes, the Watersheds Plan and through the Christina Water Basin Water Quality Management Strategy, in a manner that allows the flexibility and best use of the land by the land owner.

By adding this final piece of the management framework offered by H.R. 3520 and the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System, a complete and coordinated framework will be established to support the work undertaken by so many at all levels involved in these 3 initiatives. This designation will require no new regulatory authorities, no land acquisitions, no infringement of land owner rights, yet will involve all entities in accepting their individual responsibility and role to help these communities thrive while preserving the very resources upon which they depend.

On behalf of the Chester County Board of Commissioners, the Chester County Water Resources Authority, and the local municipalities and citizens of the White Clay Creek watershed, I commend Congressman Pitts for his leadership in introducing HR 3520, and I ask for your support of HR 3520 to provide the final piece of an effective management framework and add the streams of White Clay Creek into the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System for the benefits to be enjoyed by all today and in many generations to come.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today and for your consideration of H.R. 3520.

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