



2400 W. 17th St., Clash Wing  
Wilmington, DE 19806-1311  
lwvde@comcast.net  
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## **DNREC must have Funding Sufficient to carry out its Mandated Role of Protecting the Health and Safety of Delawareans**

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The League of Women Voters believes that natural resources should be managed as inter-related parts of life-supporting ecosystems. As citizens of the world we must protect our planet from the physical, economic and public health effects of climate change while also providing pathways to economic prosperity.

Delaware continues to have serious issues with air, water and soil contamination. Northern Delaware suffers from high levels of ozone and fine particulate matter. As in other locations with air pollution, this has increased the likelihood and severity of COVID-19 infections, particularly in Environmental Justice communities. While much of the air pollution is coming from out-of-state sources, it is still vitally important to ensure that new development does not continue to increase the burden of toxic air in poor communities.

Chemical plants are another possible source of air pollutants. The numerous leaks of ethylene oxide from the Croda facility suggest that this plant requires more monitoring to prevent these incidents and the harms they cause to the surrounding communities. Appropriate monitoring will require expertise in specific areas that DNREC can't really cover at current funding levels.

Our water pollution problems remain severe, with nitrate and even bacterial contamination in too much of the drinking water in Sussex. Concern about contamination with PFAS (poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances) has grown over the past year, in part because of testing results and in part because of consternation that the Department of Defense may not fund cleaning up contaminated areas around military bases to the extent previously recommended as safe by the EPA: 70ppt. Contamination levels near air bases can be as much as one million times the EPA level. Many areas in New Castle County have also been contaminated, making it the second most contaminated county in the U.S.

In addition to all these problems, rising sea levels from global warming are already making life difficult for many residents in E.J. communities.

Contamination of our natural resources damages human health and destroys the environment that can attract both people and employers to Delaware. The League of Women Voters of Delaware believes that properly protecting our vital resources requires funding DNREC at a level that will allow it to be more proactive. Whenever possible DNREC needs to be able to take action to prevent problems rather than attempting to remediate problems that have already occurred.