



The League of Women Voters of Delaware

Believes that DNREC must have Funding Sufficient to carry out its Mandated Role of Protecting the Health and Safety of Delawareans

PRESENTATION TO
THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET
ON THE FY 21 BUDGET REQUEST
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL
NOVEMBER 2019

The League of Women Voters believes that natural resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. Pollution of these resources should be controlled in order to preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of ecosystems and to protect public health.

Delaware is facing numerous challenges to the quality of its most basic natural resources. Air quality in northern Delaware is badly compromised by ozone and other smog-producing pollutants blown into this area from coal-fired power plants to our west and southwest. Until changes in federal regulation improve this situation, we must take every possible step to minimize further pollution from vehicles, power generation and industries in Delaware. DNREC has important roles to play on this issue.

Delaware's water is also badly compromised. Most of our streams are not safe for swimming or fishing. The drinking water in too many places has been rendered unsafe by chemicals such as dry cleaning fluids like perchloroethylene and the PFAS used in fire-fighting foams. There is also widespread contamination of drinking water in Sussex County from farming and poultry processing. DNREC needs to ensure that these problems are resolved.

As applications for new chemical industries are considered for old industrial parcels in the Coastal Zone, expertise in very specific areas of chemistry and chemical engineering will be required to determine, first, if a project is appropriate for a given location and second, whether equipment and processes are designed and implemented in such a way as to avoid potentially catastrophic incidents such as those that occurred at Croda and the Energy Solutions refinery within the last year. Proper evaluation of risks requires DNREC to have access to individuals with very specific expertise.

The first duty of a government is to protect the lives and health of those it governs. If DNREC is to play this vital role in Delaware, it must receive the funding needed to hire appropriate personnel for routine inspections of all industrial facilities. It must also be able to hire, perhaps on a contract basis, individuals capable of evaluating the designs for complex chemical processes and then others who can monitor the day-to-day operations of such a plant in order to ensure that they are being carried out properly.