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Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Association Asks the DEP to Stop Putting Polluters in Charge of Remediation Projects

(Sewickley, Pa.) – The Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Association (BSCWA) has written the state Department of the Environment Protection (PADEP) asking them to consider mandating that companies charged with the environmental restoration of an area be directed to preserve and restore the same areas that they damaged, in this case, land within the Big Sewickley Creek Watershed.

The concern arose when the Energy Transfer Company (ETC), the subsidiary of Energy Transfer Partners (ETP) that constructed the Revolution pipeline in Beaver County, was ordered by the PADEP in May 2019 to restore and repair dozens of streams and wetlands that were eliminated or altered by the construction of the Revolution pipeline.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection fined Energy Transfer \$140,000 for construction violations on a Beaver County natural gas pipeline.

As part of a consent order and agreement signed by ETP's subsidiary, ETC agreed to put in place a plan to fix its erosion and construction issues and submit progress reports to DEP.

As a result of that order, ETC is proposing to purchase mitigation credits 47 miles away to offset wetland losses in Baden, Beaver County, rather than restore where the ETC Northeast Pipeline wetland losses occurred, says BSCWA.

While this approach does replace and preserve the lost wetlands filled by the pipeline, the mitigation credits are not located anywhere near the impact site. "With this approach, there is still a loss of wetland acreage, habitat and functions and values within the BSCW," the letter states.

"The Big Sewickley Creek Watershed Association (BSCWA) respectfully suggests that the mitigation proposal should be to create and preserve or purchase and improve/restore/preserve wetlands within BSCW – thus replacing lost functions and values within the same watershed," said Katie Stanley, president of BSCW. "Their current permit should clearly discuss why wetland mitigation within BSCW is not reasonable or feasible."

Following a 30-day comment period on the permit, PADEP will review the permit, including the mitigation proposal, and decide if the permit will be issued as proposed or if further analysis or justification is needed to support their proposed mitigation.

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