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December 17, 2009

Environmental Quality Board
P.O. Box 8477
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8477

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ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY BOARD

Dear Madam or Sir:

I am writing to you regarding outdoor wood-fire boilers (OWBs) and the proposed DEP regulation of these devices. I have read the Environmental Quality Board proposals to amend Chapters 121 and 123. I am encouraged by the proposals. I live in a rural section of a northeast Pennsylvania county and have seven of these devices within 1-1/2 miles of my home. All seven of them are in use all year long, even in 90°F summer weather.

My immediate neighbor operates an OWB approximately 125 feet from my home. They installed an old, used unit, certainly not on an EPA Phase 1 or 2 burner. It smokes horribly in hot and cold weather. They own a two story old farmhouse and the wood burner sits behind the house without any extensions on the smoke stack. The farmhouse roofline is probably 30 feet off the ground and the OWB chimney is about 8 feet off the ground. When the wind blows from the house towards the OWB, the smoke is forced downwards and hangs around our properties. I cannot enjoy the outdoors in the summer. On some days I have to keep my windows shut and cannot sit on my porch. Living in the country I should be able to enjoy the outdoors in the summer and leave my windows open to let the fresh air inside.

I would hope that any legislation addresses problems with previously installed units as well as new installations. DEP must pass some type of legislation regulating OWBs. I believe they must include the following:

1. Seasonal use (banned from May to September) for new and existing units.
2. Extended smokestacks for new and existing units to two feet above adjacent roofline peaks.
3. Allow only Phase 2 OWB for new installations.
4. Enforcement of the new regulations at a state level. I cannot expect my township or county to enforce OWB regulations.

Fourteen months ago, I went to a township meeting to ask my township supervisors to adopt the DEP model ordinance for OWBs. The supervisors refused to do anything. Once my neighbors heard what I had asked for, they began to harass me and the harassment has not stopped. Once my neighbors without OWBs heard what had happened to me, they refused to speak up to our supervisors and I cannot ask them to write to you for fear of them telling my neighbors with the OWBs I asked them to support the proposals. That is why I feel I must send this letter to you anonymously for fear of my neighbors seeing my name in anyway attached to support for these new regulations. I would have spoken at one of the public hearings, but did not for fear of my neighbors.

Respectfully,

S.W.

A concerned and affected citizen