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**PENNSYLVANIA BLUESTONE ASSOCIATION, INC.
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PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PO BOX 2063
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ATTN: Michele Tate

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IRRC

Thank you for allowing the Pennsylvania Bluestone Association (PBA) to respond to the proposed fees.

Several years ago, it was this association that proposed this "fee" idea to the Department in the ability to gain funding to help with bonding and reclamation funding. At that time bonding was at a low one thousand dollars per acre. Since then, new bonding rates have been imposed and now the "fee" idea is still being put in front of us. This does not seem fair to the Association (PBA) that came up with the initial idea.

New permit fees are somewhat understandable due to the Department's increased expenses. The annual fees are the hardest to accept, especially the \$200 dollar small surface mining permit, the \$300 dollar small surface mining with blasting, the \$1,450 large surface mining permit, the \$1,850 large surface mining permit with blasting as well as the fees for inactive small noncoal permits and permits not started.

These fees for our bluestone operations are hard to accept given the extra bonding and regulatory expenses that have all been accumulating over time. This is also commencing at a slow economic time which has already hit our industry very hard. Our bluestone industry feels we have "lost" over 400 quarrymen in the last 3 years due to over-regulation. We need to be encouraging more people to come into the industry which will definitely generate more tax revenue for the state.

In closing consideration, any withdrawal from these annual fees will greatly help our 100 year old bluestone industry to continue to operate.

Respectfully yours,



William Ruark (President)
Pennsylvania Bluestone Association, Inc.