



Prepared testimony of Christopher Seymour (Private Citizen) in support of the proposal for Pennsylvania to take part in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to reduce climate change pollution.

Testimony before the Pennsylvania Environmental Quality Board (EQB), Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

December 10, 2020

Good evening and thank you for the opportunity to testify as a citizen of Pennsylvania. My name is Christopher Seymour and I reside in Baldwin Borough, Allegheny County. Today, I am speaking on behalf of myself, my wife and our two boys. One of my boys just turned 8 years old and my youngest is only 4 years old. My family's home rests on a few acres of land just south of Pittsburgh where we tend our fruit orchard, enjoy beekeeping and grow vegetables, herbs, and flowers in a garden. We also recreate locally in our county parks and also in the Laurel Highlands, where we fish for native trout in the summer and cross-country ski in the state parks come winter. These fulfilling outdoor activities are part of our Commonwealth's heritage, but I do believe they are at risk due to manmade climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions.

Over my lifetime, I've witnessed the effects of climate change and industrial pollution. In nearby Clairton, less than 10 miles from my house, the largest coke factory in North America fouls our region's air. When the wind blows gently out of the Southeast, the air outside my home has a nasty odor that stings our eyes and scratches our throats. This keeps us inside, away from our beloved outdoors activities.

Even more concerning to me is change in our region's long-term weather patterns due to climate change. Last year, in 2019, there was only one week of sufficient snowpack to support cross-country skiing in the Laurel Highlands. Our winters are noticeable different now, with less snowfall and warmer temperatures. Did you know that Pennsylvania's downhill ski resorts are not expected to remain economically viable past the year 2050? Did you know that Seven Springs Resort, the biggest ski area in the state, is the largest private employer in Somerset County? Climate change is putting our economy at risk, including in rural communities.

Warmer temperatures are no longer an anomaly. The 10 warmest years globally have all occurred since 1998. Higher temperatures are putting many of our native species at risk, including something I try to catch on my fly rod, native brook trout. I've witnessed my family's small orchard become less productive due to more parasites surviving the warmer winters. Bees, our tree and plant pollinators, are stressed by more intense summer heat and become susceptible to parasites like varroa mites. This is leading to colony collapse, threatening our food supply. Violent storms, fueled by the energy available in a warmer climate, are causing more frequent agricultural loss and property damage. Global warming is threatening our ecosystem on many levels. I share the same opinion of most climate scientists in that we are ten years away from catastrophe if we do not act to control greenhouse gas emissions now.

Pennsylvania currently accounts for 1% of all global carbon pollution. Our state emitted more energy-related carbon pollution in 2015 than all but 23 nations in the world. We must take bold action to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and transition to renewable energy resources. I strongly support a proven, market-based approach that is the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative, also called RGGI. Since the program began, RGGI has helped cut carbon pollution from Northeastern power plants by 45% even as the regional economy grew by nearly 10%.

The RGGI auction proceeds can be reinvested to help struggling Pennsylvania towns and communities negatively impacted by years of industrial pollution. A town like Clairton, PA. These investments in renewable energy and energy efficiency will create green collar jobs and further reduce greenhouse gases emitted by our Commonwealth. By investing in energy efficient products and clean energy, we will also improve the air we breathe by reducing harmful pollutants like mercury, sulfur dioxide, and ozone. Maybe my family will be able to breathe easier the next time the wind blows out of the southeast.

It's time Pennsylvania joins RGGI and cuts carbon pollution from our power sector. We are not asking our state to be the canary. Our neighboring states have shown joining RGGI creates jobs, saves consumers money and reduces pollution. We owe it to my sons and the future generations to protect our heritage, our health and our prosperity.

Thank you for your time.