

# Stanfield warns of possible harm to Tohickon Creek

*Betty Orlemann*

The proposed PPL power line through Richland and Springfield townships, has brought attention to the future of the headlands of the Tohickon Creek.

“This is pristine forested land,” said Robert B. Stanfield, a scientist and longtime member of local environmental committees. “It is sparsely developed and is on diabase rock, which is not porous. The forest floor provides the stormwater management necessary to prevent flooding. The headwaters of a stream are very important to the watershed.”

Stanfield explained that removing the trees and disturbing the land in that area would cause floods that would spread all the way down the Tohickon and even cause problems in the Delaware River.

Francine Schmitt lives in Richland Township just across the border from Springfield. “My neighbors and I are livid,” she says with conviction. “This has upset a whole mess of people.”

PPL has shrugged off the comments of the people that the water in the Tohickon is high quality. Schmitt says that to the contrary, a PPL spokesman claimed the stream has the “lowest rating.”



*The Tohickon Creek is a pristine waterway rated as “high quality” by the Department of Environmental Protection.*

However Stanfield takes exception to and says that the Tohickon has a high quality designation that could soon be upgraded to “exceptional.”

PPL has requested permission from PUC to construct a new 7-acre substation on an impervious area of the headlands. A call

placed to PPL was not answered.

The area where the electrical power line is proposed is wetland and flood prone, Schmitt explains. If the trees are removed there would be only one course for the water to follow.

In addition to the beauty of the area, Schmitt continues, there are

historic structures on old farmland. Some date back to the late 1600s and eligible for the National Historic Register.

The citizens are also concerned about endangered species indigenous to the area. Among them in particular is the bog turtle.

The citizens are not sitting still. In the Springtown Firehouse a year ago, 150 attended a meeting. Schmitt said. She added that 66 percent of Springfield Township residents signed a petition against the power line and many Richland Township residents did the same.

Stanfield said “Alternatives available for the line along Route 309 or the abandoned SEPTA rail bed would be far less invasive and minimize impact on the downstream communities. PPL has manipulated the process by making the decision to place a substation in a resource protected area rather than the available commercial and industrial properties that are adjacent to its existing lines.”

Stanfield reminds residents that on May 18, 1971 Pennsylvania’s voters ratified Article 1, section 27 of the state constitution. The Environmental Rights Amendment reads, “The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and

to the preservation of natural, scenic and esthetic values of the environment.

“Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustees of these resources the commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.”

Jennifer Cocher of PUC’s communications office has said, “We are nearing the end of decisions. The commission must make a decision of information in this case. PPL must present the burden of proof, but throughout the case there will be opportunities for public protest.”

Springfield Township has filed an exception and both Richland and Springfield have filed petitions to intervene with PUC Judge Angela T. Jones’ decision of Feb. 10, to allow PPL’s application to construct power lines in the Tohickon headwaters watershed.

Following Judge Jones’ decision there were 20 days for interested parties to file. The time expires on March 12.

Legislators, nonprofit organizations, individuals and businesses has submitted petitions that will be read by the PUC.