

June 18, 1998

Robert D. Reber, Jr., Majority Chairman
Environmental Resources and Energy

RE: House Bill 1975

TO: Chairman Reber and Committee Members

I am Donna Williams, a resident of Susquehanna County. I own an active family dairy farm. My three sons operate and manage the farm. I am President of Susquehanna County Farm Bureau.

Our nations economic foundation has been and still is agriculture, of which America's family farm, is the cornerstone. Economists expect the loss, of family farms, to accelerate in the next decade.

According to the 1992 Census of Agriculture, in Susquehanna County, 21% of the farmers work more than 200 days a year off the farm. In addition, 37% of the people involved in agriculture, supplement their income with alternate sources of income.

Susquehanna County Farm Bureau has a 1998 membership of 486. We are an affiliate of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau with a state membership of 26,015. Farm Bureau is a grassroots organization, with policy developed at the county levels. In 1993, Susquehanna County Farm Bureau presented a policy at the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau State Convention, which was adopted by the voting delegates representing all counties of Pennsylvania. This policy reads "We recommend that persons mining 1,000 tons or less of a marketable mineral be exempt from the Provisions of Act 394 and Act 219". Farm Bureau could see the need for a Bill, such as House Bill 1975. This Bill would be a definite advantage for a farmer to supplement his income, without obtaining work elsewhere.

It is most evident, that non-coal quarries are located on land owned by active dairy farmers, or land that was owned by a dairy farmer, who in most cases has sold that land because of economic conditions. The majority of "Mom and Pop" stone producers, would not exceed a 200 ton per year of cut stone or stockpile/waste stone.

Regarding stockpile/waste stone - In 1965, my husband and I, purchased my grandfather's farm which had had a productive bluestone quarry some years before 1965 . This quarry had some large piles of waste stone. In the early 1990's, after the death of my husband, I received \$3,500. for the pallets of broken stand-up and drywall stone. Not a shovel of dirt was moved to realize this income. This money was a welcome income to pay real estate taxes.

More times, than not, where there is evidence of stone, once excavation has been done, it is found that the stone is not bluestone or it is not stone suitable for sawing. Therefore, its marketability falls in the category of palleting as broken stand-up, drywall or colonial. In today's market, there is a good demand for stone that is not sawed, therefore no need for water in the quarry. Let me give you an example - a load of broken stand-up, drywall or colonial would weigh out at 20 to 22 ton per load, consisting of 16 pallets. It would take approximately 45 truck loads to reach the 1000 ton limit. House Bill 1975, is of utmost importance, to the small non-coal quarrying operation, in the providing of supplemental income to the agricultural community.

House Bill 1975 would eliminate burdensome and expensive regulation. The costs associated by present licensing and permitting, the hiring of professional engineers or registered professional land surveyors, costs of obtaining maps from the local Conservation District, cannot be justified by the small quarry operator. Time involved is also a precious commodity.

House Bill 1975, with the local Conservation District as the overseer, would be a mechanism to encourage implementation of reasonable soil and erosion plans. There would be little discernible impact on the environment. The operations performed by "exempt" operators, with the Conservation District as overseer, would preserve the environmental integrity of the area and protect the hydrologic balance of the area. This Bill is a reasonable balance of landowner and environmental needs.

I thank you, personally as a landowner and active family farmer and as President of Susquehanna County Farm Bureau, for the opportunity to present this testimony today.

Sincerely,



Donna Williams
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