

REMARKS OF SEN. JOHN HEINZ (R-PA)
FEDERATION OF SPORTSMEN'S CLUBS
FALL CONVENTION-LIFE MEMBERS LUNCHEON
GEORGE WASHINGTON MOTOR LODGE
KING OF PRUSSIA, PA
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It is a pleasure to join my fellow life members this afternoon. All of us care about preservation of our natural heritage because each of us enjoys the great outdoors.

Today, I'd be tempted to tell a fish story. The next best thing to fishing is telling stories. But since my visit is short, I'd like to address instead some issues I know are important to you.

One word about gun control. It's been several years since McClure Volkmer became law, and I believe the law has been successful. We've removed unnecessary burdens on legitimate gun owners, and cracked down on criminals who use guns.

As one who cosponsored McClure Volkmer, I think we've made progress, contrary to the doomsday predictions of its opponents.

Turning to environmental concerns, I'm proud of my voting record -- 90% according to the latest league of conservation voters rating, third among all Republicans and tenth in the whole Senate.

This year, like last, will be a watershed year for environmental policy. Last year, we successfully enacted reauthorizations of the Superfund and Clean Water Acts. Eight and one half billion dollars were appropriated for superfund's next five years, which will better than quintuple our financial commitment to cleaning up and containing of hazardous waste sites and chemical spills.

This past January, I voted to override a Presidential veto on the reauthorization of the Clean Water Act, of which I was an original cosponsor. That Act, now law, will provide Pennsylvania alone with 95 million dollars for sewage construction funding. These monies are the kind most needed -- helping to ensure that future incidents of environmental pollution will not occur by going after the source of the potential problem.

A lot more needs to be done before we can say that these problems have been solved. It's important that we solve them.

Today, I'd like to spend a little more time telling about environmental issues that we all care about: acid rain and groundwater.

We in Pennsylvania for better or worse are the keystone of the acid rain problem. We both contribute to the problem as well as suffer its consequences. While there are several major sources of NOx and sulfur dioxide emissions that must be addressed, reducing sulfur dioxide emissions from electric utility plants, for example, could help abate the problem. So could using low -- rather than high -- sulfur coal. But virtually all solutions cause problems of their own. The process used to combat emissions levels from power plants, scrubbers, creates hazardous wastes of their own, slagging, and is costly to install and maintain -- which translates into higher rates for residential and business electricity consumers. And, as we all know, Pennsylvania coal has high sulfur content. Substituting western low sulfur coal could cripple some industries in our state and throw thousands of people out of work.

The Senate Environment and Public Works Committee has begun considering wide-ranging clean air legislation. Although I am not a member of that Committee, I am closely following its work, as I know you are. It is my hope that the Committee and the Senate can craft acid rain legislation that is both effective in attacking the problem and also protect the jobs and economic security of our eastern coal miners and consumers.

While air pollution may sometimes be difficult to notice until the damage is done, last October's gas pipeline leak here in King of Prussia certainly drives home the point that we all live with potential hazards. Public and private efforts to control last year's gas leak were quick and effective, but the real issue is how groundwater contamination occurs and how we can prevent it.

Groundwater provides fully half of all our drinking water. But we are fortunate that it is abundant supply, constituting 96% of the world's total water resources.

That's no reason for complacency. While still a fraction of our total reserve, America's consumption of groundwater more than tripled in the last 35 years. More troubling is the fact that virtually every aspect of modern life threatens groundwater purity in one way or another. And, once contaminated, groundwater is difficult, sometimes even impossible, to clean up.

Sources of groundwater contamination include abandoned hazardous waste sites. A total of 405 of the sites thus far identified by the EPA have been responsible for adjacent groundwater contamination. Tyson's dump here in Montgomery County is an example of how difficult it is to remove these kinds of toxic wastes before they pose a threat.

There are 93,000 landfills and 180,000 surface impoundments in the U.S., the majority of which are existing or potential sources of groundwater contamination. Some are even sited directly above or next to major drinking water reserves.

Most groundwater is not contaminated -- at least not yet. But unless we act now on a national policy, future generations may be forced to change their water consumption habits because of our mistakes.

Legislation like the Groundwater Safety Act, which seeks to protect groundwater against pesticide contamination, and which I cosponsored with Senator Durenberger, is just one step.

New efforts to protect our water, land, and air are really efforts not just to protect quality of life, but also to ensure the health and welfare of future generations. Our close working relationship has helped me to do a better job of meeting that goal, and I'm personally grateful to each of you for all of your help, and I look forward to a lot more in the future.