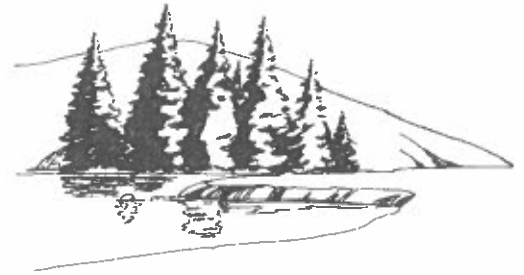


Toby Creek Watershed Association, Inc.
of
Elk and Jefferson Counties

P.O. Box 247 • Brockway, Pennsylvania 15824



Statement of Opposition to Proposed Rail Line Hauling Trash Through the Toby Creek Watershed

Date: December 5, 2025

To: Surface Transportation Board

From: Toby Creek Watershed Association, Inc.

Subject: Opposition to the Lampwrights LLC Proposed Trash-Hauling Rail Line Through the Toby Creek Watershed

FD 36833

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ENTERED
Office of Chief Counsel
December 18, 2025
Part of
Public Record

Dear Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed rail line that would transport trash through the Toby Creek Watershed. This watershed has endured significant environmental damage from historic coal mining and the resulting acid mine drainage (AMD). For more than 50 years, the Toby Creek Watershed Association, in partnership with numerous cooperating agencies, has worked tirelessly to restore and protect this fragile ecosystem.

A **historical timeline summarizing these restoration efforts** is attached for your review. This timeline documents decades of community-driven remediation, infrastructure improvements, AMD treatment systems, habitat restoration, and long-term monitoring- all of which underscore the extraordinary investment made in bringing this watershed back to health.

1. A Vulnerable Watershed with a Long Recovery History

The Toby Creek Watershed's recovery has been slow and difficult, as acid mine drainage severely degraded water quality, aquatic life, and surrounding habitats. The restoration progress achieved to date remains vulnerable to disruption from industrial activity, particularly operations that involve transporting and handling solid waste.

2. Environmental Threats Posed by the Proposed Rail Line

Routing a trash-hauling rail line through this watershed poses several serious risks:

- **Potential contamination from spills or leaks**, which could reintroduce toxic pollutants into a watershed that has only recently begun to stabilize.
- **Disturbance to restored areas**, including AMD treatment systems that could be damaged by construction, runoff, vibrations, or accidents.
- **Habitat fragmentation and increased pollution**, threatening wildlife that depends on the recovering habitats along Toby Creek.

CC:Party of Record

Given the watershed's history, even a single incident could reverse decades of progress.

3. Long-Term Implications for Water Quality and Community Investment

The Toby Creek Watershed is a living example of what sustained community commitment can achieve. Residents, nonprofits, and state and federal partners have invested enormous resources into this recovery effort. Allowing a trash-hauling rail line to cut through this area disregards that investment and puts public and environmental health at unnecessary risk.

4. Request for Alternative Solutions

I urge the Surface Transportation Board to:

- Consider **alternative routes** that avoid environmentally sensitive areas.
- Evaluate **safer, decentralized waste management practices** that reduce the need to transport trash across long distances.
- Engage with the Toby Creek Watershed Association and other local stakeholders to ensure that **any future infrastructure planning protects existing restoration work**.

Conclusion

The Toby Creek Watershed has spent more than half a century recovering from the lasting impacts of coal mining. The attached restoration timeline demonstrates the extraordinary effort that has gone into healing this ecosystem. Introducing a trash-hauling rail line through this region would jeopardize water quality, wildlife, public safety, and the significant progress that has been achieved.

For these reasons, I strongly urge you to reject the proposed rail line and pursue alternatives that do not endanger this recovering watershed.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



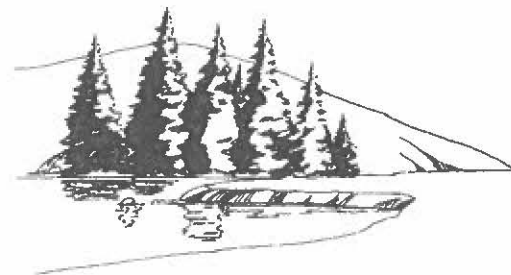
William J. Sabatose, President
PO Box 247, Brockway, PA 15824

CC:Party of Record

Toby Creek Watershed Association, Inc.

of
Elk and Jefferson Counties

P.O. Box 247 • Brockway, Pennsylvania 15824



History of the Toby Creek Watershed Association

The Toby Creek Watershed encompasses 125 square miles, beginning near Coal Hollow and emptying into the Clarion River near Portland Mills.

1967 - A group of concerned citizens of the Elk and Jefferson County Soil and Conservation Districts formed the Toby Creek Watershed Association. William "Bill" J. Sabatose was chosen as the first president. Their first goal was to determine the source of the damage to the watershed. They uncovered 113 sources of acid mine drainage because of the intense deep and strip mining in the watershed. The association also became aware of industrial pollution and raw sewage drainage in the watershed.

1968 - The Toby Creek Watershed Association was incorporated.

1969 - The Pennsylvania Association of Soil and Water Conservation chose the Toby Creek Watershed Association as "Watershed of the Year" for its achievements for its early efforts in finding and cleanup of the acid mine drainage sources.

100,000 trees were planted on the watershed in Elk and Jefferson County sponsored by the Elk and Jefferson County Soil and Conservation Districts.

1970 - The Swamp Creek Acid Mine Drainage Treatment plant was opened in the village of Rasselas in Elk County. This plant helped treat the water that fed the East Branch of the Clarion River.

1971 - The Toby Creek Watershed Association became part of the very first Earth Day by enlisting public support and giving free tours of the watershed.

1974 - Under the leadership of President Bill Sabatose, the Toby Creek Watershed Association attained funds from "Operation Scarlift" as part of the Project 500 state program. Various projects included sealing mines, improving slope, rechanneling water, and planning the first lime treatment plant on Toby Creek.

1992 - The Toby Creek Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Plant opened in the village of Toby in Elk County. The Coal Hollow plant opened in the village of Coal Hollow, Elk County.

History of the Toby Creek Watershed Association

1999 - The Brandy Camp Acid Mine Drainage Treatment plant on Kyler Run was completed by the DEP. The small facility automatically fed hydrated lime to treat the acid mine drainage and used settling ponds to filter out the heavy metals.

2002 - Major improvements were made to the Brandy Camp Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Plant. The 1999 plant needed improvements to treat the increase in acid mine discharge. A Growing Greener grant of \$769,784 was awarded to the Toby Creek Watershed Association.

2004 - Trout were stocked in a section of Little Toby Creek for the first time since 1870. Kathleen McGinty, Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection, assisted the PA Fish and Boat Commission in stocking the creek near Crenshaw, PA. President Bill Sabatose of the Toby Creek Watershed Association stated, "Besides bringing back to life 5 miles of the Little Toby, the Brandy Camp facility in tandem with other projects also improves the water quality of 28 additional miles of the Little Toby and 52 miles of the Clarion River."

2005 - The Blue Valley Acid Mine Drainage Treatment Plant and Fish Culture Station in Elbon, Elk County was opened. This plant removed the metals from the drainage so well that that trout from the PA Fish and Boat Commission could be raised in the restored water and later stocked in area streams.

2006 - The Jefferson County Conservation District with the assistance of the Toby Creek Watershed Association received a \$340,000 Growing Greener II grant to finance a natural stream channel design and restoration flood control project in Brockway Borough and Snyder Township.

2008 - The Swamp Creek Treatment Plant underwent an improvement project of \$133,000. The aging plant benefited thousands of residents and visitors to enjoy fishing at East Branch Lake. The area once known as "The Dead Sea" attracts millions of dollars in tourism activity.

2014 - The first annual Veteran's Trout Fishing Derby hosted by the Toby Creek Watershed Association was held at the Blue Valley Treatment Plant and Fish Culture Station in Brandy Camp, Elk County.

2025 - The Toby Creek Watershed Association under the long-term leadership of President, Bill Sabatose, continues to oversee the operation of the 5 acid mine drainage treatment plants in the watershed. Trout raised at the Blue Valley Fish Culture Station are stocked annually in the pristine waters of the Toby Creek Watershed. The watershed is an area of recreation and tourism in the PA Wilds Region.