

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

Edited By: David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

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Growing Greener Coalition To Corbett: Protect Environmental Funding

The [PA Growing Greener Coalition](#), the largest coalition of conservation, recreation and preservation organizations in the Commonwealth, Wednesday issued the following letter to Gov. Corbett urging him to protect funding for critical programs that help, protect our open space, preserve our family farms, support parks and recreation, and safeguard our historic treasures.

The text of the letter is as follows:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Growing Greener Coalition, thank you for your recent announcement of more than \$20 million in grants for watershed protection projects across the Commonwealth.

These grants from the Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship Fund are important investments in our communities and play a significant role in combating pollution and keeping our drinking water clean.

As you prepare to deliver your budget address next week, the Coalition strongly urges you to protect funding for the Environmental Stewardship Fund as well as for other critical conservation and recreation programs.

In addition to the Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship Fund, these programs include Farmland Preservation, Historic Preservation, the [Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund](#) and the Heritage Areas program.

The Coalition is firmly opposed to any cuts or freezes to these programs, especially at a time when Pennsylvania needs to be investing more money to protect our open space, preserve our family farms, support parks and recreation, and safeguard our historic treasures – not less.

Consider that:

- The Commonwealth still has 19,000 miles of streams that are unsafe for fishing and swimming.
- More than 2,000 family farms remain on the statewide list for preservation.
- Pennsylvania continues to lose three times as much forest, wildlife habitat, farmland and other open spaces to overdevelopment than we are able to preserve.

— Abandoned mines still scar almost 190,000 acres in 44 counties and are the cause of more than 5,000 miles of dead streams.

Also, consider that investments in conservation, recreation, and preservation bolster the economy. A Trust for Public Land study found that for every \$ 1 invested in land and water conservation, \$7 in natural goods and services is returned to the state of Pennsylvania.

Moreover, investments in parks and open space add billions of dollars to property values and help support Pennsylvania's tourism and recreation industry. A report by the Outdoor Industry Association indicates that outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania generates \$1.6 billion in state and local tax revenue and supports 219,000 direct Pennsylvania jobs.

In addition, conservation funding is an essential component for meeting federal Clean Water Act mandates associated with the Chesapeake Bay Blueprint and the need to reduce pollution in our local rivers and streams. Failure to meet the requirements to reduce nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment according to the Bay Blueprints timeline opens the Commonwealth up to backstops from the federal Environmental Protection Agency. Growing Greener grants are needed for on-the- ground efforts to help meet these mandates.

Lastly, polls show strong, consistent public support for programs that improve our quality of life, boost the economy and protect the environment throughout Pennsylvania. The Growing Greener Environment Stewardship Fund – which celebrates its 15th anniversary this year – has enjoyed strong, bipartisan support from voters, legislators and governors since the beginning. Please do not change that now.

We recognize the challenges ahead and look forward to working with you and the Legislature to ensure that funding for programs that protect our open space, preserve our family farms, support our parks and trails, and safeguard our historic treasures remains intact.

Thank you.

Sincerely, Andrew Heath, Executive Director

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