

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

Edited By: David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

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Corbett Proposal To Permanently Eliminate Keystone Fund Faces Stiff Opposition

In February, Gov. Corbett proposed to [permanently eliminate funding](#) for environmental projects from the [Keystone Recreation, Parks and Conservation Fund](#) leaving a \$36 million annual hole in the budget for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

In addition to this cut, Gov. Corbett has proposed these other reductions:

- \$10.5 million in General Fund monies from DEP, and \$2.5 million from DCNR;
- Continues the \$102.8 million cut made by Gov. Rendell beginning in FY 2010-11;
- Takes \$20.5 million in Cigarette Tax revenue previously earmarked for agricultural land preservation and puts it in the General Fund to balance the budget;
- Takes \$6.5 million in Utility Gross Receipts Tax revenue normally transferred to the Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant Fund and puts it in the General Fund; and
- Again zeroes out funding again for the PA Center for Environmental Education (\$368,000) and McKeever Environmental Center (\$213,000).

So far, the Corbett Administration has cut, diverted or proposed to continue cuts in environmental programs [totaling \\$376.5 million](#). The Rendell Administration made \$1.4 billion worth of cuts in environmental programs during its tenure.

Keystone Fund Details

This is not the first time a Governor and members of the General Assembly proposed eliminating the Keystone Fund.

In 2007 Gov. Rendell, Senate Republicans and House Democrats, then in charge of the House, agreed [to eliminate Keystone Fund](#) support for environmental projects, but a bipartisan group of House members and conservation organizations beat back the challenge.

During budget hearings in March, many members of both parties on the Senate and House Appropriations Committees expressed concern about eliminating the Keystone Fund, but so far no proposals have been made to restore funding.

DCNR Secretary Richard [Allan told the Committees](#) he advised the Governor's Office the reduction in funding will require the agency to put off some maintenance projects and reduce the funding going for grants. He also said the transfer will require the agency to look to other sources of monies to support their operations, like the Oil and Gas Fund, the Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund and the new drilling impact fee revenue.

Passed in 1993 as a Senate Republican initiative by Sen. Joe Loeper (R-Delaware), the Keystone Fund generated overwhelming bipartisan support in the General Assembly.

The Keystone Fund allocates a small portion-- 15 percent-- of the state's real estate transfer tax to recreation, conservation, and open space. Later that same year, 67 percent of the voters of Pennsylvania resoundingly endorsed the action taken by the General Assembly and supplemented the Keystone Fund with an additional \$50 million in bond revenues.

Since its inception, these monies have been invested in Pennsylvania at the local, county and state levels to improve outdoor recreation opportunities, enhance health, and stimulate local economies.

Take Action

[On May 22](#) the [PA Recreation and Park Society](#) and other parks, recreation and conservation advocates will hold a Capital Day in Harrisburg to meet with legislators urging them to restore the Keystone Fund. [Click Here](#) for more background.

You can also sign at petition against the Keystone Fund cuts by [Clicking Here](#).

The [PA Parks and Recreation Foundation](#) and other groups recently created a [Keystone Fund website](#) to educate the public and members of the General Assembly on the value of the Fund, the types of projects its supports and the need to restore this much-needed funding.

[Click Here](#) for a fact sheet on the Keystone Fund. [Click Here](#) to learn how you can help restore the Keystone Fund.

NewsClips: [Enviro Group Looks Beyond Impact Fee Law](#)

[Editorial: Conservation Funding Can't Survive More Hits](#)

[Next Thursday, Friday Critical For Impact Fee](#)

[Wayne County Approves Gas Drilling Impact Fee](#)

[Editorial: Drilling Fee Revenues Now In Doubt](#)

[Budget Secretary: It's Up To Lawmakers To Offset Cuts](#)

[Op-Ed: Corbett Keeps His Promises On Budget](#)

[Amount Of Legislature's Cash Reserve A Mystery](#)