



Electronic Version Sent: July 22, 2017

Updated: August 30, 2017

Dear Members of the General Assembly,

As discussions continue on the 2017-2018 Fiscal Year budget, we, the undersigned business and community leaders, elected officials, and organizations, strongly urge you to protect special funds for conservation, recreation, and preservation programs critical to the protection of our land, water, and heritage.

We recognize current budget challenges, but we also recognize that the Commonwealth cannot achieve prosperity by cutting crucial investments in Pennsylvania's future – investments that bring lasting improvements to our communities and contribute so much to our economic and environmental health.

We request your leadership in opposing proposals that reduce or eliminate dedicated funding to programs that protect our land and water, strengthen our communities, and protect our families.

We want to emphasize and reiterate the importance of keeping intact the **Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund**, the **Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship Fund** and the **Farmland Preservation** program.

Now more than ever, Pennsylvania needs to *increase and optimize* its investment in local efforts to protect our open space, preserve our family farms, support parks and recreation, and preserve our historic and cultural sites.

The investments made by these successful and time-tested programs in conservation, recreation, and preservation are proven to bolster the economy. For example, a Trust for Public Land study on the Keystone Fund found that for every \$1 invested in land and water conservation, the Commonwealth saw a \$7 return on investment in goods and services.

Public polls show strong, consistent, and bipartisan public support for programs that improve our quality of life, boost the economy, and protect the environment throughout Pennsylvania. A survey released by Penn State found that more than **90.7 percent of Pennsylvanians surveyed support increasing state funds dedicated to protecting rivers and streams; conserving open space, forests, natural areas and wildlife habitats; providing parks and trails; and preserving farmland.**

The survey also found that more than three-quarters of respondents, **82.6 percent, would support increasing state funds to address these threats to our environments, even if it would cost the average household \$10 more annually.**



The people of Pennsylvania feel that these conservation, recreation, and preservation programs offer substantial value and must not be diminished.

We recognize the challenges ahead and look forward to working with you 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 remain intact.

Thank you.

Andrew Heath, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Growing Greener Coalition

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