



SENATOR STEWART J. GREENLEAF

Open Spaces Update

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The commitment to maintaining parkland, farmland, forests, trails and open space is strong in Pennsylvania, a state that can claim several prominent leaders of the American Conservation Movement that brought about sustainable forestry, the National Park system, urban beautification and city parks. In keeping with its conservationist tradition, Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of farm acres preserved and has funded environmental and open space initiatives with voter-approved bond issues under the programs known, respectively, as Key 93, Growing Greener, and Growing Greener II. In addition, a number of local open space initiatives have been put into effect in recent years – reflecting the environmental interest of citizens.

As a member of the Senate Energy and Environmental Resources Committee, I share a keen interest in preserving the commonwealth's open space, agricultural heritage and natural beauty, and I was honored when I received the PA Wildlife Federation's Conservation Legislator of the Year award several years ago. I sponsored the Rails-to-Trails Act and was involved over the years in securing more open space for Penllyn Woods, the protection of the Wissahickon Watershed, the preservation of Raythorn Farm and saving historic Moland House and The Nathaniel Boileau Farmstead.

This update provides information on some of the programs that are helping to preserve Penn's Woods streams and fields.

Growing Greener II Projects Funded

In the first years of the \$625 million Growing Greener II initiative, some 200 projects – many of them to retain open space, preserve farmland, protect watersheds and natural habitat, and upgrade existing community parks – have been funded.

One of the larger Growing Greener II commitments – more than \$1 million – was provided to the Pennypack Ecological Trust toward the acquisition of about 66 acres on Paper Mill Road adjacent to the Pennypack Preserve in Bryn Athyn and in Lower Moreland for open space and natural resource protection. Such grants are geared toward the preservation of lands threatened by development and are matched dollar for dollar by local communities and organizations.

More information on the progress of the six-year program is available at www.growinggreener2.com.

Breaking Out the Green

The Growing Greener II program will help fund environmental projects over six years as outlined:

- \$230 million for the cleanup of waterways and reclamation of abandoned mines and polluted sites, as well as for advanced energy programs
- \$217.5 million committed to open space, parks and conservation projects
- \$80 million dedicated to farmland preservation
- \$50 million for community revitalization
- \$27.5 million provided to the Fish and Boat Commission
- \$20 million to the Game Commission for habitat upgrades

The program gives counties discretion for spending \$90 million of the funds for local priorities.

PA's Public Lands

Pennsylvania's 3.8 million acres of parks, forests and game lands and its 83,161 miles of rivers and streams are a treasure – a sizeable one, making up an area larger than the total acreage of a few other states.

Aside from the obvious environmental benefits of preserving these public lands, an economic case can be made for their enhancement, as they benefit the commonwealth's ability to attract new employers and young families. Moreover, Pennsylvania's abundant natural resources attract tourists, from inside and outside Pennsylvania. In fact, 33 percent of all leisure travel spending in the state comes from outdoors tourism spending.

The more the commonwealth can do to protect and restore its green spaces, natural beauty and historic heritage, the better for all aspects of Pennsylvania life.



Sen. Greenleaf and Dr. David Robertson, executive director of the Pennypack Ecological Trust, discuss watershed protection near Pennypack Creek. The senator sponsored two Department of Community and Economic Development grants for the Pennypack Trust for public recreation and emergency vehicle access road improvements, and for municipal yard waste disposal field renovations.

Farmland Preservation

According to the American Farmland Trust, Pennsylvania's state-level Easement Purchase Program has protected more farmland than any other state-level easement purchase program in the nation. Agriculture and related businesses are one of the state's largest industries, producing over \$45 billion annually and providing about one in six jobs in the commonwealth.

Saving farmland is a challenge: between 1982 and 1997, 1.14 mil-

lion acres (1,800 square miles) of open space, farm fields and natural lands in the state were developed, according to the Brookings Institution.

Pennsylvania's commitment to farm preservation is reflected in the fact that a total of 3,166 farms and 354,741 acres have been removed from development through the easement purchase program to date. The program, which began in 1988, has aided in the Preservation of 89 farms in Bucks County and 105 farms in Montgomery County. Currently, Pennsylvania has

7.7 million acres of farmland, representing 27 percent of the state's land base.

Funded through Growing Greener II, dedicated monies from the Cigarette Tax and the Environmental Stewardship Fund, and county and local matching funds, the program enables state, county and local governments to purchase development rights – conservation easements – from owners of quality farmland. The program is one of several administered by the Department of Agriculture to encourage the maintenance of farmlands. For information, visit www.agriculture.state.pa.us, click on 'Producers,' and look under Farmland Programs.

Trails and Greenways

The Pennsylvania Rails to Trails Act, sponsored by Sen. Greenleaf in 1990, provided a mechanism for converting abandoned railroad rights of way to recreational trails across the state. Today, there are more than 1,000 miles of rail-trails in the commonwealth, and information on these trails is available at the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) website at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/railtrails/.

Also available is news on the Statewide Greenways Plan, initiated by former Governor Ridge in 1999 to establish an interconnecting network of greenways, or linear parks, in every county by 2020. The term "greenways" includes recreational trails as well as green buffer zones along rivers and streams. To read about the statewide program and view local progress on greenways, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/greenways/.

For those interested in guided hikes, DCNR and Keystone Trails Association have partnered for several years to host Hiking Week, which features a series of special hikes in all state regions. The 2007 event was set for May 26 through June 3 and featured pet walks, hikes for people with disabilities, geology and wildflower treks, and night hikes.

Conservation Volunteers

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) welcomes Conservation Volunteers of all ages to help build trails, plant flowers, teach student groups about wildlife, conduct heritage research, perform field studies, develop databases, assist with fire

prevention education, and welcome visitors to parks and nature centers. Interested citizens may apply for and find more information on the program at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/cons, or by calling the state park at which you wish to volunteer, or the local forestry district at 610-582-9660.



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