

RE: Shortage of special funds

Dear Senator:

I write to you on behalf of the 75 member organizations of the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association and their 120,000 contributors.

As you revisit revenue plans for the 2017-18 budget, the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association encourages you to keep the following in mind regarding the **Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund** and the **Environmental Stewardship Fund**—funds that create **exemplary public-private partnerships**:

- **Demand far exceeds the availability of dollars.** The acute shortage of funds for good projects is why many Senators support renewing the ESF/Growing Greener.
- There are **no surpluses** in these funds. Both Senate and House leaders (or, for that matter, the present and past Administrations) would have identified and taken any true surpluses long ago!
- House Taxpayer Caucus members mistook balances in bank accounts as accumulated surpluses. The reality is that these **balances are fully committed** to community grant projects and State Parks and Forest infrastructure projects administered by DCNR; community library improvements; abandoned mine drainage remediation; and many other projects that keep Pennsylvania a great place to live and work.
- Keystone and ESF grant projects are **exemplary public-private partnerships**:
 - **Projects compete** against one another for funding with the agencies ranking them and making awards using **transparent criteria**.
 - Communities bring **private, local, and federal match dollars** to projects—for example, **\$3.31 leveraged** in local investment for every Keystone Fund dollar spent.
 - The projects **address a myriad of public needs** that would otherwise place direct demands on government services.
 - The state investments **create and support private jobs**—engineers, architects, and other specialists designing park and facilities, trails, riparian buffers, abandoned mine land restorations, library rehabilitations, and other facilities; construction workers to build these improvements; outfitters; concessionaires; and many more workers.
- The funds deliver **extraordinary economic returns** to the Commonwealth—with Keystone for example, **every dollar invested returns \$7** in flood control and prevention, water treatment, and other natural services. These returns are above and beyond the jobs, tourism, improved tax base, and other economic benefits generated.
- The Commonwealth cannot achieve prosperity by cutting investments that bring **lasting improvements and benefits** to communities in all of Pennsylvania's counties.
- Polls show strong, consistent public support for these investments. A recent Penn State poll found that **97.4% of Pennsylvanians** think that state funds dedicated to protecting rivers and streams; conserving open space, forests, natural areas, and wildlife habitats; providing parks and trails; and preserving farmland should continue to be used for these purposes. The people of Pennsylvania clearly feel that the dedicated funds deliver value and must not be diminished.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
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