



**Open Letter to
Members of the General Assembly and Governor Wolf
June 2, 2021**

Pennsylvania's waterways need help. The American Rescue Plan can clearly play a major role in providing this assistance. At least \$500 million (7%) of state government's \$7 billion share of Rescue money should be directed to our huge green infrastructure needs:

- Billions of dollars in water investments are needed on a multitude of fronts to restore 25,468 miles of Pennsylvania waterways that are unsafe for drinking, swimming, and fishing.
- Lack of investment in addressing stormwater management and flood prevention leave many Pennsylvanians highly vulnerable to loss of property, health, and life.
- Farmers need help to implement conservation practices like forested stream buffers to keep soil and nutrients on the land instead of running into the water.
- Untreated abandoned mine drainage, desolate abandoned mined lands, and uncapped oil and gas wells harm our water and drag down local economies.

Funding these needs out of the American Rescue Plan is a great fit:

- These are lasting capital investments! They are not operational expenditures that have to be supported with state general funds after the federal money is gone.
- Tens of millions of dollars in green infrastructure projects are shovel ready now. Many more can be ready in short order if money is made available.

The American Rescue Plan presents a momentous opportunity to begin addressing the Commonwealth's enormous backlog of green infrastructure needs. In addition to water-related projects, other states are moving to invest more broadly in other green infrastructure needs. American Rescue Plan dollars might also be appropriate for addressing:

- Our State Parks and Forests, which require nearly \$1 billion in restoration and repair work.

- Local parks and community open spaces that are seeing a surge (often doubling) in public usage and resulting wear-and-tear in this new era of increased interest in outdoor recreation.

American Rescue Plan dollars applied to green infrastructure would support myriad small businesses and good-paying jobs with them. Projects involve surveyors, appraisers, legal services, engineers, planners, drafters, environmental remediators, hydrologists, geologists, agricultural consultants, nurseries, architects, landscape architects, landscapers, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, heavy equipment operators, painters, roofing contractors, fencing installers, paving contractors, material delivery, sign makers, archaeologists, and arborists. Supplies and equipment are needed from nurseries, lumber yards, quarries, building material suppliers, hardware stores, equipment manufacturers, and equipment rental businesses.

Investing in Pennsylvania’s environment makes strong fiscal sense. It is well established that state environmental investments provide tremendous rates of return—whether the measure is job creation and economic activity, costs avoided (such as public health and flooding), net tax revenues, or the wellbeing of people and communities. (See the numerous studies documenting the benefits in the [Economic Benefits](https://conservationtools.org) section of <https://conservationtools.org>.)

For more information, please reach out to the people and organizations of the Growing Greener Coalition including but not limited to:

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