



To: Chairman Maher, Chairman Carroll, and Members of the  
Environmental Resources and Energy Committee  
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

Re: 8/16/2018 Informational Meeting on Senate Bill 799

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today regarding Growing Greener. With over half the current members of the State House being elected since passage of the most recent Growing Greener legislation, I appreciate the opportunity to provide a historical look at the program and the need to greatly boost Growing Greener investments to address Pennsylvania's environmental needs.

Article 1 is the Pennsylvania Constitution's bill of rights. Section 27 of Article 1 guarantees Pennsylvanians—including future generations—the right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment. This Constitutional right stands equal and together with the rights of Pennsylvanians to freedom of speech and religion, the right to bear arms, and other core rights.

Recognizing that this environmental right couldn't be upheld through environmental regulation alone, in 1999 Governor Ridge and a bipartisan group of legislative leaders established Growing Greener. Over the subsequent 19 years, Growing Greener investments have supported many hundreds of projects to ensure clean water and conserve the best of Pennsylvania. Steadily and incrementally, Growing Greener has made Pennsylvania a better place to live, work, and play.

Growing Greener grants have helped locally-based organizations help their communities. Watershed associations, land trusts, conservation districts, and other groups have brought hundreds of miles of stream back to life, made our water safer to drink, reduced the threat of flooding, and made fishing, swimming, and paddling possible where once there was only death. These organizations have used proven, cost-effective methods to get results, including:

- Passive and active treatment of abandoned-mine drainage.



- Tree plantings along waterways.
- Streambank stabilization and habitat structures.

Growing Greener investments have also:

- Restored 1600 acres of abandoned mine lands and 250 acres of brownfields to productive use.
- Plugged more than 700 abandoned oil and gas wells.
- Rebuilt water treatment infrastructure.
- Conserved 80,000 acres of open space for outdoor recreation and wildlife.
- Preserved more than 80,000 acres of productive farmland that preserve rural traditions and stabilize rural economies.
- Improved hundreds of parks, planted tens of thousands of trees, rehabilitated dams, and fixed stormwater infrastructure.
- Supported more than 130 infrastructure projects in state parks and forests, ensuring that they are sanitary, safe, and accessible for millions of visitors each year.

Growing Greener has built a tremendous record of success. But due to cumulative environmental damage dating back to the 1800s and the needs of today's population, there is much more to do:

- There are still more than 19,000 miles of rivers and streams toxic to life—unsafe for drinking, swimming, fishing, and boating.
- 200,000 acres of abandoned mine land and thousands of brownfield sites pollute our water and threaten human health and safety. What's more, these are wasted lands—lands that, if restored, could be contributing to local economies and jobs.
- Hundreds of thousands of unplugged wells (8,000 documented by DEP so far) present local hazards and vent immense quantities of methane into the air.
- The funding gap to fix aging water-treatment facilities is \$18 billion.
- Farmland is disappearing rapidly—since 1982, nearly a million acres have been permanently lost.
- State parks and forests require nearly \$1 billion in necessary repairs and improvements.
- The list goes on.



We have almost two decades of evidence showing that Growing Greener investments provide effective solutions to these challenges. The cost effectiveness of Growing Greener projects is particularly evident when we compare them to other taxpayer-funded projects. For example:

- For the cost of building one mile of highway, you can restore vegetation along 2500 miles of streams or build 77 miles of multi-use trails.<sup>1</sup>
- For the cost to build one pro sports stadium, you can permanently preserve 600 family farms or build 6,400 new playgrounds or thoroughly rehabilitate a third of our state park and forest infrastructure.<sup>2</sup>

Setting cost-effectiveness, community needs, and environmental rights aside, Growing Greener on economic considerations alone, is a good deal for Pennsylvania. For example:

- Every dollar invested in conservation returns \$7 in flood prevention and water treatment savings.
- Every dollar spent on watershed restoration leverages \$1.25 in local investments.
- By stabilizing local farm economies, preserved farms preserve jobs and business tax receipts. These farms pay more in taxes than they receive in services.
- The outdoor recreation industry, which depends on a natural resource base supported by Growing Greener investments, sustains 251,000 direct jobs (tens of thousands more than the entire energy sector<sup>3</sup>).

But Growing Greener is underfunded relative to its much higher, past funding levels and it's underfunded relative to the tremendous backlog of environmental needs waiting to be addressed. Quite simply there's a huge number of projects to

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<sup>1</sup> Cost to build a four-lane highway ranges from \$4 million/mile in rural areas to \$10 million/mile in urban areas. Cost of one mile of riparian buffer restoration ranges from \$4,000 to \$8,000/mile; trails cost \$130,000/mile (based on DCNR-funded rail-trail projects).

<sup>2</sup> PPG Paints Arena cost \$320 million (80% taxpayer-funded). Average cost to build a playground is \$50,000; average cost of protecting farmland under ACEPP is \$4,000/acre and average farm size is 130 acres.

<sup>3</sup> According to a [2017 Department of Energy report](#), Pennsylvania has 103,907 jobs in energy, plus an additional 62,000 in energy efficiency.



complete and nowhere near enough money to complete them. Without a substantial injection of new funding:

- 19,000 miles of unsafe stream will remain burdens on their communities—useless for drinking, fishing, swimming, and boating—useless to the economy and useless for life.
- Productive farms and the local economies they support will disappear.
- Abandoned mine land and brownfields will continue to burden their communities—wasting away when they should be sparking jobs and redevelopment.
- Communities will lose open spaces crucial to their identities and recreational needs.
- State parks and forests will become increasingly unpleasant, unsafe, and inaccessible—or closed altogether.

Polling shows that 91% of Pennsylvanians support increasing state funding to protect water, conserve open space, and create opportunities for outdoor recreation. This overwhelming support cuts across party lines:

- 75% of Republicans
- 82% of Democrats
- 87% of Independents

...are willing to pay more in taxes each year for these purposes. In fact, 8 out of 10 Pennsylvanians would support increasing taxes by \$10-20 per year per household for these purposes

Given this strong bipartisan support, the pressing challenges our commonwealth is facing, and the constitutional right of all Pennsylvanians to clean air, pure water, and open space, the time for greatly boosting investments in Growing Greener is now.

Respectfully submitted,

Andrew M. Loza  
Executive Committee Member, Growing Greener Coalition  
Executive Director, Pennsylvania Land Trust Association