



# SENATOR STEWART J. GREENLEAF

## Open Spaces Update

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**T**he 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 Raytharn Farm and saving historic Moland House.

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

### Growing Greener II Projects Funded

In the first year of the \$625 million Growing Greener II initiative, \$212 million has been allocated for 236 projects – many of them to retain open space, preserve farmland, protect watersheds and natural habitat, and upgrade existing community parks.

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 grants provided so far in the six-year program is available at [www.growinggreener2.com](http://www.growinggreener2.com).

### Breaking Out the Green

The 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.

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## PA's Public Lands

**P**ennsylvania'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 of the commonwealth's attractiveness to new employers and to 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 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

**A**ccording 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 business is 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 million acres (1,800 square miles) of open space, farm fields and natural lands in the state was developed, according to the Brookings Institution. The state's amount of converted land usage puts it in sixth place after Texas, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina and California.

Pennsylvania's commitment to farm preservation is reflected in the fact that a total of 2,883 farms and 328,355 acres have been removed from develop-

ment through the easement purchase program to date. The program, which began in 1988, has a waiting list of 2,000 farmers, according to State Department of Agriculture officials. During 2005-2006, 14 farms in Bucks County and 14 farms in Montgomery County were preserved under the program. 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 on the programs, visit [www.agriculture.state.pa.us](http://www.agriculture.state.pa.us) and click on 'Producers.'

## Greenways: Linear Parks

**T**he 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. Nine years later, former Governor Ridge re-emphasized the importance of greenways by establishing a commission to develop a Statewide Greenways Plan for an interconnecting network of greenways in every county of the commonwealth by 2020. The term "greenways" includes recreational trails (Pennsylvania has almost 1,000 miles of rail-trails to date.) as well as green buffer zones along rivers and streams. The riparian buffers are intended for environmental protection and not for recreational usage, but they are part of greenways planning.

The ongoing program's goal is for all 67 counties to complete their greenways planning by 2007. Montgomery County's plan is underway, according to the DPCR web site ([www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)). Visit the site and click on 'Greenways and Trails' to read about the state program and its progress.

## Community Conservation Partnerships Grants

**M**ore than \$70 million is available under the Community Conservation Partnerships Program for environmental and recreational projects of municipalities, land trusts and eligible nonprofit organizations. Grants, which are made possible through a combination of state and federal funds, have assisted in projects involving parks, open space,

trails, rivers and outdoor recreation.

The deadline for submitting an application for this round of grants is September 29, 2006. For more information on the application process and program, call the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) regional office at 215-560-1182, or visit DCNR's web site at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us).

## Conservation Volunteers

**T**he Department of Conservation and Natural Resources welcomes Conservation Volunteers to help build trails, plant flowers, teach student groups about wildlife and welcome visitors to parks and nature centers.

Those interested in learning more about the state's Conservation Volunteer Program may call 1-888-PA-PARKS or visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us) and select 'State Parks and Forests.'