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Time for Action is Now: Local Impact Fee Will Increase Protection for Natural Resources, Environment

(Harrisburg, PA) – The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts with Lehigh, Berks, Carbon, and Northampton County Conservation Districts, local officials and community representatives joined to urge the state legislature to support dedicated funding for the conservation districts through a Local Impact Fee from natural gas drilling.

Two bills, one introduced by Senator Joseph Scarnati (SB 1100), and one introduced by Representative Quinn (HB 1700) would deliver the much-needed funding to reimburse Pennsylvania's counties and municipalities affected by drilling, statewide conservation efforts, as well as important environmental and infrastructure projects. Both these bills also appropriate funds annually to assist conservation districts in their efforts to provide these vital services at the local level.

Money for the Districts would be placed into a Conservation District Fund and funding would be administered by the State Conservation Commission.

"The communities where each one of us lives, works and plays offers a challenge when it comes to protecting the environment and our natural resources," said Robert B. Maiden, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts. "But without a thriving, healthy and clean environment, our communities will be unable to thrive and protect future generations from polluted water, contaminated soil and unhealthy air. It is now that we must provide the funds and manpower to protect these vital resources."

Maiden continued, "Now more than ever, with substantial and anticipated increase of drilling for natural gas in the Marcellus Shale, it's important that the districts be provided with a dedicated annual stream of funding that will support the increased demand on the conservation districts as a result of the drilling for natural gas in communities throughout the state.

A new stable stream of funding would also allow the Districts the opportunity to:

- Provide technical Assistance to install numerous BMP's such as riparian buffers, streambank stabilization and fencing projects, water quality monitoring and improvement



projects, and stormwater management projects to minimize erosion and runoff;

- Provide technical assistance to assist the farming community to develop and implement conservation and nutrient management plans;
- Assist municipalities with floodplain ordinances and stormwater management; and
- Provide Environmental education opportunities to promote conservation and protection of natural resources – general outreach opportunities.

The Districts will also continue to work in communities throughout the state on existing and additional utility right of ways, roads, bridges, sewage treatment, and water treatment facilities will be expanded or upgraded along with the expansion of the natural gas industry. The Conservation District's involvement is constant and will be requested and required as this important resource is developed.

In addition to its efforts to protect the environment from any impacts from natural gas drilling, additional funding would continue the Districts efforts to help Pennsylvania meet the goals outlined in the Chesapeake Bay Water Implementation Plan; improve and protect the state's water and air quality; administer stream bank erosion programs; and preserve valuable farm land.

During the event, MaryAnn Warren, President of the Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts lauded the important work done by the districts in counties across the commonwealth.

"The districts have touched every one of Pennsylvania's communities for more than 65 years. The districts dedication during these times has not waned," said Warren. "They have endured extreme budget cuts, fundamental changes in state and federal environmental regulations, reduced staff and very little appreciation for the hard work they do."

Warren added, "But through it all, the districts keep moving forward, staying true to their goal...to protect Pennsylvania's environment and natural resources."

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PACD, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization representing Pennsylvania's sixty-six conservation districts. For more information on the PACD visit www.pacd.org.

