

Conservation District Week April 15-21, 2018

Thank you for supporting the Commonwealth's 66 Conservation Districts!

2018-2019 Budget

Conservation districts thank members of the PA House and Senate, as well as the Governor, for supporting the districts by providing the funds necessary to preserve and protect our Commonwealth's natural resources through the budgetary process. On February 6, 2018 Governor Tom Wolf presented his budget address to the PA General Assembly, in which he recommended continued funding for conservation districts in both the PA Department of Agriculture and PA Department of Environmental Protection budgets. The House proposed state budget also includes stable funding for conservation districts.

Last year there was some confusion concerning the Conservation District fund allocations to conservation districts through the State Conservation Commission (SCC). The Conservation District Fund is comprised of money from various state agencies and the state's impact fee. Because the funding comes from various sources at different times of the fiscal year, it is difficult to ascertain a true picture of what money is allocated but not yet distributed to the districts. The allocated money should not be construed as surplus because it is not directly tied to a specific project or program.

We request full current funding in the 2018-2019 fiscal year budget.

Growing Greener III

Funding for the Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship Fund has decreased from an estimated average of \$200 million per year in the mid-2000's to approximately \$50 million in 2017. There are 19,000 miles of impaired streams and rivers in PA, meaning they are not safe for drinking or recreation use, cannot support aquatic life, and/or cannot support agriculture and other industries. Abandoned mines scar 189,000 acres in 43 counties, causing 5,500 miles of dead streams and rivers. Finally, 1,500 family farms remain on the waiting list to be protected and preserved. Investing in our natural resources and future farmland strengthens our local, regional and state economies.

A Growing Greener III concept is being discussed by members of the PA General Assembly to reflect the urgent need to address water quality issues and, if enacted, would ensure that Pennsylvanians continue to have access to clean water, parks, trails, green open spaces, and family farms through an annual allocation of Growing Greener revenues. The legislation acknowledges county conservation districts and our valuable work with farms to improve local soil and water



quality through best management practices as an allowable use of DEP's share of the Growing Greener III money. The legislation also notes that priority shall be given to conservation districts for the Department of Agriculture's share of Growing Greener funding to be used for the same purpose.

We request that you support Growing Greener III legislation.

Extraction Fee Legislation

Pennsylvania is a water-rich state, blessed with an abundance of both surface and groundwater. More than 86,000 miles of waterways define the natural, historic and esthetic values of the Commonwealth's environment. As noted above, 19,000 miles of the state's rivers and streams are impaired. HB 20 establishes a fee allowing the Commonwealth to fund clean water projects and programs from a dedicated, recurring source. Based on current consumption rates, the legislation is estimated to generate approximately \$345 million annually. The bill would implement a fee on withdrawals greater than 10,000 gallons per day for non-agricultural and non-municipal uses at 1/100th of a cent per gallon for water withdrawn and returned to the water source, or 1/10th of a cent per gallon for water withdrawn and not returned to the water source. The funds would be dispersed to water-related programs in Pennsylvania's six major watersheds from where the fees were generated. Agricultural and municipal water use would be exempt from the fee.

We request that you support a water extraction fee.

Pennsylvania's Dirt and Gravel / Low Volume Road Program

The purpose of Pennsylvania's Dirt, Gravel, and Low Volume Road Program is to create a better public road system with a reduced environmental impact, utilizing site-specific, long-term solutions to prevent erosion and pollution. The Program focuses on "Environmentally Sensitive Road Maintenance Practices" that reduce the impact of road runoff and sediment to local streams, while reducing road maintenance costs. In 2013, Act 89 was enacted, effectively increasing the funding for the Program from \$5 million to \$35 million annually. The Act dedicates \$28 million to dirt and gravel road improvements and also mandates that \$8 million be used for the maintenance of low-volume paved roads with less than 500 vehicles per day.

Pennsylvania's 20,000 miles of publicly owned unpaved roads are a prime example of non-point source pollution. Unpaved roads not only generate sediment, but also act as collectors for runoff and sediment from adjacent land uses. The Act 89 funding allows conservation districts to assist local municipalities and more effectively reduce water pollution.

Thank you for your support of the program to improve Pennsylvania's roads and water quality.

