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Pennsylvania Resources Council, Inc.

"Working to protect the environment since 1939"

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RE: Decades of Environmental Progress Threatened by State Budget Cuts

Budget cuts now being considered by the General Assembly and Gov. Rendell are threatening to undermine more than 20 years of environmental progress by transferring money from the Recycling Fund and proposing cuts to the Education Improvement Tax Credit Program (EITC) to balance the state budget.

The General Assembly and Governor transferred nearly one-third-- \$15 million-- from the Recycling Fund to help balance the 2008-09 budget and more cuts are anticipated. Those funds were originally intended to support the recycling, waste reduction and anti-litter programs which over the last 20 years has resulted in recycling more than 45.3 million tons of municipal waste.

Disruptions in funding will send community recycling programs into a tailspin and increase their cost. Like sewage and water supply, it's not a service that can be stopped and restarted without dire consequences.

Cuts to the EITC Program are also being considered that could dramatically reduce the support businesses provide to educational programs, in particular environmental education program which help local school districts meet state-mandated curriculum requirements.

The Pennsylvania Resources Council, just one of hundreds of qualified EITC providers, has provided supplemental, in-classroom programming to over 25,000 students in the past six years. Those programs help student meet the new academic standards for Environment & Ecology as well as Science and Technology. Students will be tested on those new standards and their school will be evaluated on how well they perform.

Over \$784 million, in environmental funding, have been diverted in recent years to balance the state budget or to provide funding for programs that could not get funding on their own.

If these new threats to environmental funding are successful, the environmental progress we have made will start to decline for the first time in the 39 years since the first Earth Day.

Call your state Senate and House member and Gov. Rendell and urge them to:

- Make certain budget cuts do not disproportionately target environmental programs and services like they already have.
- Restore at least a portion of the \$15 million redirected from the Recycling Fund and resist any further attempts to use those funds for any programs not specifically identified in Act 101.
- Support legislation that removes the sunset date of December 31, 2011 for the \$2/ton recycling fee mandated by Act 101.
- Keep the EITC program, and specifically the EIO side, intact and resist efforts to reduce and/or eliminate the credits now offered to businesses throughout Pennsylvania.
- Support legislation that institutes a severance tax on natural gas extraction in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale to mitigate the environmental impact from natural gas production and to support other environmental programs.
- Resist reallocation of funds generated via the sale of Marcellus Shale gas leases on State Forests to help balance the General Fund.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Myers", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

The Pennsylvania Resources Council (PRC), is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, environmental organization founded in 1939. PRC leads and promotes individual and collective actions to preserve Pennsylvania's environmental resources for each generation. Their headquarters is in Ridley Creek State Park in Delaware County and they have a regional office in Pittsburgh. They offer environmental programs and services to schools, communities and businesses in the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Harrisburg regions.