



PENNSYLVANIA BIOLOGICAL SURVEY

February 9, 2012

The Honorable Tom Corbett, Governor
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

The Honorable Richard J. Allan, Secretary
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8767

Dear Governor Corbett and Secretary Allan:

I am writing on behalf of the Pennsylvania Biological Survey (PABS) to express our concern about the recent and unanticipated cut in funding for the Wild Resource Conservation Program. PABS is a nonprofit organization whose purpose is "to increase the knowledge of and foster the perpetuation of the natural biological diversity of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania." Our membership includes scientists, educators, representatives of state and federal agencies concerned with natural resource management, and representatives of non-profit conservation organizations.

The Wild Resource Conservation Program (WRCP) has a thirty-year history of providing much-needed support for scientific research, conservation, and education projects focused on preserving Pennsylvania's biodiversity. Scientific research is of particular importance, as the wildlife and ecosystems in the Commonwealth are facing a number of environmental stressors, including climate change and the effects of energy resource extraction. In order to develop the best policies and procedures to deal with these stressors, there must be a reliable funding mechanism to support independent research. The dramatic reduction in WRCP funds this year stands in harsh contrast to statements that PA's natural resource policies are based on sound science. Although DCNR is to be commended for recently hiring additional staff for monitoring the impacts of energy development, this is not a substitute for independent scientific research. While monitoring is important and necessary, scientific investigations by independent researchers are critical in identifying impacts and determining monitoring needs.

In the present economic climate, it is not unexpected that budgets will be trimmed. What we find most alarming is the magnitude of the cuts to the WRCP budget, especially at a time when scientific research on environmental stressors is so critical to our continued conservation of the Commonwealth's natural resources. Considering that one of the greatest potential impacts to biological diversity in Pennsylvania today is coming from energy development, we urge you to consider tapping into energy development as a source of revenues in order to sustain or, better yet, increase the funds available through the WRCP. Two possible sources of funding would be 1) an impact fee or severance tax on natural gas extraction, or 2) revenues from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund, many of which have been diverted to the General Fund in recent years.

In order to have sound environmental policy, that policy must be based on sound science, which in turn requires adequate funding. The PABS membership urges you to restore and increase future funding for the Wild Resources Conservation Program. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Maret". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Timothy J. Maret
President, Pennsylvania Biological Survey
Professor, Department of Biology
Shippensburg University
Shippensburg, PA 17257