

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

Edited By: David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

Winner 2009 [PAEE Business Partner](#) Of The Year Award

Harrisburg, Pa

February 11, 2013

Click On Link Below To Print Entire Digest

<http://goo.gl/jZ2aB>

Corbett Proposes \$10 Million Increase In Farmland Preservation, More DEP Staff Cuts

Gov. Tom Corbett Tuesday proposed an FY 2013-14 budget which increases farmland preservation by \$10 million to \$35 million, but would eliminate an additional 40 positions from the Department of Environmental Protection.

The General Fund appropriations for DEP would increase \$639,000 and there is a \$37,000 increase in the proposed Department of Conservation and Natural Resources budget.

The Governor's budget would decrease the Department of Agriculture's budget by \$11.6 million, a 9 percent cut as a result of transfers to other special funds and programs and a reduction of an additional 11 staff positions.

Funding Not Missed?

Recall what Budget Secretary Charles Zogby said last week, "Inheriting a mess, Gov. Corbett got to work getting our state's fiscal house in order. We clearly have today a state budget this is leaner, more agile than when we found it a couple of years ago. There's a lot of things that have gone away in terms of funding that, frankly, I don't think the world has missed too much. The sun still rises in the morning, it sets in the evening and we go about our business."

Here are some details--

Environmental Protection

Overall the General Fund budget for DEP was increased slightly to \$127.6 million from \$126.8 last year, about \$639,000.

- 40 additional positions are proposed to be eliminated
- Environmental Stewardship Fund Watershed Restoration- \$3.8 million increase
- Environmental Hearing Board increase of \$165,000 for new regional office.
- Sewage Facilities Planning Grants zeroed out for 2nd year- \$436,000 cut.
- Sewage Facilities Enforcement Grants zeroed out for 2nd year- \$620,000 cut.

- Conservation Districts zeroed out- \$2.8 million (although made up in Act 13 drilling fees*).
- \$35 million in federal funds for a State Energy Program was not reflected in the budget.

Context: DEP General Fund budget in FY 2002-03 was \$728.2 million, now reduced to \$127.8 million, and its full-time salaried staff complement was 3,211, now reduced to 2,556 over the last 10 years.

Conservation & Natural Resources

Overall the General Fund budget for DCNR was increased very slightly to \$52.760 million from \$52.723 million, about \$37,000. Again this year monies from the Oil and Gas Fund, which includes revenue from drilling on State Forest lands, was used to cover DCNR personnel and other costs.

- 1 position is proposed to be eliminated
- Environmental Stewardship Funds increase of \$2.5 million in grants for Community Conservation, Parks and Forest Facility Rehabilitation and Natural Diversity Conservation Grants;
- Oil and Gas Fund revenues for FY 2013-14 projected to be \$85 million
- Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund monies were kept within DCNR

Context: DCNR General Fund budget in FY 2002-03 was \$322.9 million, now reduced to \$52.76 million

Statement: DCNR Secretary Richard Allan released this information on DCNR's proposed budget:

"DCNR's proposed General Fund budget allocation for fiscal year 2013-14 is just slightly above the current fiscal year at \$52.76 million. Similar to this fiscal year, DCNR will use dollars from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund generated by rents and royalties to offset General Fund allocations for our state park, forest and other government operations.

"We have been able through good management, and the support of the General assembly, over the past several years to offset General Fund reductions by using the Oil and Gas Lease Fund to support DCNR conservation and recreation efforts," Secretary Allan said. "During this time DCNR's budget has remained intact at a time of significant reductions in other areas.

"By constantly looking for new efficiencies and sources of revenue, DCNR will continue to maintain its unique balance of conservation practices and economic development," Allan said.

The Governor's 2013-14 budget proposes \$20.1 million from the Keystone Fund for state park and forest infrastructure and \$43.7 million for grants for recreation and conservation.

Agriculture

Overall the General Fund budget for Agriculture was reduced to \$117.8 million from \$129.5 million, a cut of about \$11.6 million, , a 9 percent cut as a result of transfers to other special funds and programs, including an additional \$3.4 million in the General Operations personnel line item. -- Eleven additional positions are proposed to be eliminated.

- Farmland Preservation Funding increased by \$10 million to \$35 million
- Resource Enhancement and Protection (Farm) Tax Credit funding retained at \$10 million.
- Conservation Districts zeroed out- \$1 million cut (although made up in Act 13 drilling fees*).
- PA Race Horse Development Fund withdrawal of \$5.3 million

Context: Agriculture's General Fund budget in FY 2002-03 was 274.3 million, now reduced to \$117.8 million.

State System Of Higher Education

- PA Center for Environmental Education - zeroed out for 3rd year a \$368,000 cut
- McKeever Environmental Center - zeroed out for 4th year a \$213,000 cut

Marcellus Shale Legacy Fund

The proposed budget would make these amounts available to various programs from the Act 13 drilling fees in FY 2013-14--

- County Grants - \$11.2 million
- Commonwealth Financing Authority - \$15 million
- Commonwealth Financing Authority H2O Program - \$9.4 million
- Community & Economic Development - \$3.7 million
- Environmental Protection - \$7.5 million
- PennVEST - \$9.4 million
- Highway Bridge Improvement - \$18.8 million
- Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund - \$27.5 million

Commonwealth Financing Authority

- CFA [will have \\$14.5 million](#) from the Act 13 drilling fees to fund grants for abandoned mine drainage abatement, watershed restoration, water quality monitoring, greenways, trails and recreation, well plugging, flood hazard mitigation and sewage facilities funding in 2013.

Film Production Tax Credit

- \$60 million in tax credits for film and television production proposed (really?)
- * **Corrected:** Act 13 Marcellus Shale drilling impact fees provide [conservation districts](#) about \$5 million in 2013-- \$2.5 million distributed to counties for districts from the PUC, \$2.5 million to the State Conservation Commission for distribution to districts. While cut of \$3.8 million to the line items in Agriculture and DEP is less than the \$5 million in Act 13 fees districts are proposed to get, the impact on individual county districts will vary. Some may get less, some may get more that if the line items were made whole.

[Click Here](#) for the full budget document, proposed line-by-line appropriations and the Governor's Budget PowerPoint summary. [Click Here](#) for the text of the Governor's budget speech. House Democrats have also produced a line-by-line [appropriations list](#) which goes into more detail than the one produced by the Governor's Office. Senate Republicans also put out their own line-by-line [appropriations spreadsheet](#).

Link: [Growing Leaner: Shrinking Commitment To The Environment Over Last 10 Years](#)