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## Pennsylvania Gov. Ridge Signs 'Growing Greener' on Open Space That Now Will Be Protected from Development in Chester County

Gov. Ridge Signs into Law His No. 1 Legislative Priority 'Growing Greener';

Makes Largest Environmental Investment in PA History - Nearly \$650 Million



TREDFRINT TOWNSHIP, Chester County, Pa., Dec. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- Overlooking open space that now will be preserved, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge today signed into law his "Growing Greener" plan to invest nearly \$650 million in Pennsylvania's environment.

"Today, I sign a law that will make the largest environmental investment in modern Pennsylvania history - nearly \$650 million!" Gov. Ridge said. "'Growing Greener' was my top priority this fall -- and, standing here, it's easy to see why.

"'Growing Greener' is about preserving open space -- protecting our lands and waters for fishing, hiking and farming. For all of us and for our children.

"It's about slashing the state's backlog of farmland-preservation projects. It's about making the best state parks in the country even better and creating even more recreational trails. And it's about honoring our proud industrial heritage by reclaiming abandoned mines.

"Our Constitution gives Pennsylvanians the right to clean air, to pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. We have a constitutional obligation to leave 'Penn's Woods' better than we found them -- and today we act decisively to fulfill it."

Gov. Ridge signed House Bill 868 on a hill overlooking Cedar Hollow -- 60 acres of undeveloped land in one of Pennsylvania's busiest commercial corridors that now will be protected as open space through a \$100,000 Land Trust Grant to the Open Land Conservancy of Chester County. This grant would not have been possible without the influx of funds through "Growing Greener." Also on the land is an 'exceptional value' trout stream that will be enhanced through a \$75,000 watershed grant enabled by "Growing Greener."

"The vista we're enjoying today represents what 'Growing Greener' will do statewide," Gov. Ridge said. "We're in one of the fastest growing areas of the state, 20 miles from Philadelphia, six miles from King of Prussia, one-half mile from corporate centers and subdivisions. Without 'Growing Greener,' development might have gobbled up this land. Instead, thanks to 'Growing Greener,' Pennsylvanians will have trails for hiking and cross-country skiing with their families; a clean, clear stream for trout fishing; and pristine woods and fields to experience just as the first settlers did.

"We fought for 'Growing Greener' because we must protect these special open areas today, or they will be lost tomorrow. And once developed, they are gone forever."

Gov. Ridge today was joined by Environmental Protection Secretary James Seif; Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary John Oliver; Agriculture Secretary Samuel Hayes; Walter Pomeroy of the state Organization for Watersheds and Rivers; Michael Wilson and Marian Toland of the Open Land Conservancy of Chester County; the Chester County Commissioners; members of the Valley Creek Coalition; members of Chester County Agricultural Land Preservation Board; and lawmakers.

Gov. Ridge thanked the many members of the General Assembly who helped to enact his No. 1 legislative priority, particularly: Rep. Art Hershey (R-Chester); Rep. David Argall (R-Schuylkill); the bill's sponsor, Rep. Sam Smith (R-Jefferson); Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Butler); Sen. Raphael Musto (D-Luzerne); and Senate Minority Leader Robert Mellow (D-Lackawanna).

House Bill 868 last week overwhelmingly passed the Senate by a vote of 49 to 1, and the House, 166 to 28.

The bill also enacts the Environmental Good Samaritan Act, which provides

legal immunity for people who volunteer to clean up polluted lands in cooperation with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). First introduced by Gov. Ridge in January, "Growing Greener" will slash the backlog of farmland-preservation projects statewide; protect open space; eliminate the maintenance backlog in state parks; clean up abandoned mines and restore watersheds; provide funds for recreational trails and local parks; help communities address land use; and provide new and upgraded water and sewer systems.

"Growing Greener" will spend \$645.9 million over five years, \$105.9 million the first year and \$135 million a year for the next four. It will come from about \$473.4 million in new money from the General Fund and \$172.5 million in funds redirected from the Recycling and Hazardous Sites Cleanup funds, and the Landfill Closure Accounts.

"Growing Greener" is Pennsylvania's third major environmental achievement since Gov. Ridge took office in 1995. Gov. Ridge signed legislation creating the Department of Environmental Protection and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. He also signed the nationally acclaimed Land Recycling Program, which so far has cleaned up more than 600 abandoned industrial sites. In November, Gov. Ridge was honored by the Pennsylvania Alliance for Environmental Education with the 1999 Green Leadership Award. In October, Gov. Ridge received an Environmental Partnership Award for his leadership in forming collaborative efforts that affect the environment of Northeastern Pennsylvania, such as the 21st Century Environment Commission, "Growing Greener," land-use forums, industrial sites reuse and river conservation. And in September, Gov. Ridge received this year's Interstate Council on Water Policy Distinguished Leadership Award for establishing the 21st Century Environment Commission and for Pennsylvania's leadership on interstate environmental issues.

Cedar Hollow is 60 acres of wetlands, woods and open fields slated for protection by the Open Land Conservancy of Chester County. The conservancy will receive a \$100,000 grant through the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Land Trust Grant Program, which now receives additional funding from "Growing Greener."

In addition to DCNR's Land Trust Grant, the Open Land Conservancy will use funds from the Chester County Preservation Partnership Program to purchase the property. Preservation of Cedar Hollow will protect water resources and wildlife habitat, provide recreational opportunities, and offer vital flood control for downstream properties, including Valley Forge National Historic Park.

Acquisition of the tract also will significantly enhance the protection of Valley Creek, a Class A trout stream that is a cold-water fishery and that has the Commonwealth's highest stream designation -- "Exceptional Value."

The Valley Creek Coalition will use its \$75,000 grant from DEP to retrofit existing stormwater management facilities, improve water quality in the creek and demonstrate effective stormwater management practices for new development in the watershed.

For more information, access the Pennsylvania homepage at [www.state.pa.us](http://www.state.pa.us), or Tom Charles, Deputy Press Secretary Pennsylvania Office of the Governor, 717-783-1116, or PAGER, 888-305-5214.