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**Conservation and environmental coalition calls for part of gas severance fee
to be reinvested in Pennsylvania's natural resources;**
Going in to Budget Address, conservation programs have suffered larger cuts than others

Harrisburg, PA (February 4, 2009) - Members of the Pennsylvania Alliance for Restoration and Conservation (PARC) today called on Governor Rendell and the General Assembly to invest a portion of the proposed severance fee on drilling for natural gas in Pennsylvania to environmental protection and improvement through the Environmental Stewardship Fund.

“We agree with the governor that these are desperate economic times, and they call for everyone to bear their share of the burden, but we cannot miss this opportunity to invest in the future of our land and water,” said Jan Jarrett, president and CEO of Citizens for Pennsylvania’s Future (PennFuture). “The Marcellus shale gas deposit has the potential to make Pennsylvania the Saudi Arabia of natural gas. It needs to be recovered responsibly and drillers should pay their fair share of fixing any damage to our natural resources that drilling causes.”

“These economic times call for shared sacrifice, said Andy Loza of the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association, “but in the proposed budget, conservation programs have lost far more than others. Even before the state budget imploded with our faltering economy, the Environmental Stewardship Fund had been reduced by 40 percent, or \$29 million annually, to pay off bond debt. And the governor plans to divert \$174 million – or 92 percent – of the Oil and Gas Lease Fund to pay for general state operations, leaving environmental infrastructure needs unmet. As gas drilling impacts our natural resources, the natural gas severance fee provides an opportunity to reinvest in our natural resources — to protect our streams, safeguard our drinking water, restore our parks and conserve our productive farms and community open spaces.”

“The proposed fee for drilling for natural gas is long overdue,” said David Masur, director of PennEnvironment. “Unlike 39 other states, drillers here have not had to pay a fee for extracting our natural resources. And unless part of this fee goes to environmental protection and cleanup, funds for reinvesting in our parks, forests and other green infrastructure will continue to evaporate – just when public works efforts and great green jobs could be most beneficial to the economy. A severance tax invested at least in part in the Environmental Stewardship Fund could make Pennsylvania a better place to live, work and play.”

PARC is an alliance of conservation, parks, and environmental organizations that work to ensure adequate funding for conservation and restoration projects around the state. PARC was instrumental in the passage of the Growing Greener II legislation and ballot initiative. In addition to PennFuture, the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association and PennEnvironment, PARC groups include Audubon Pennsylvania, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, the Conservation Fund, GreenSpace Alliance, the Nature Conservancy, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, the Pennsylvania Parks and Recreation Society, the Trust for Public Land, and local and regional land trusts.

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