The Voluntary Pennsylvania Eco-Initiative (VPEI)

Presented to: The Governor’s Marcellus Shale Advisory Commission – Subcommittee on Public Health, Safety and Environmental Protection

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Highlights of the Initiative

• With energy resource growth, inevitable impacts to publicly and privately-owned wetlands, streams and forests
• A private sector initiative to address the restoration of wetlands and streams, replace impacted forest land, improve floodplains and address the capture of nutrients (TMDL’s)
• Produce a network of state-wide wetland, stream, floodplain, forest and nutrient restoration, mitigation sites and banks, all operated and produced by private sector (primarily energy resource) entities
• Will produce thousands of acres of restored wetlands, miles of restored streams, open space, parkland and cleaner water
• All voluntary program
• No cost to Pennsylvania
• Creates green jobs
• Involves schools, universities, and not-for-profit organizations
The $100 Million Voluntary Pennsylvania Eco-Initiative (VPEI)

Example of Companies Jointly Developing Wetland and Stream Restoration, Reforestation Projects

- Multiple companies fund projects—Mitigation Banks / Stream Restoration opportunities in key watersheds
- A single “umbrella bank” instrument (Agreement with Federal and State Regulators) allows for joint ownership, use and sharing of credits from each project
Multiple umbrella bank projects will be developed statewide producing a network of valuable and ecologically-beneficial projects in critical areas benefiting the energy industry and other ecological initiatives important to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
But . . .

- Not all projects will be “mitigation banks” – some may produce no “credits”
- Even those projects gaining bank approval will not likely sell out of credits for many years, or at all.

So . . .

- The environment will benefit from the restoration of the wetlands, streams, forests and floodplains for many years, far in advance of impacts to corresponding resources
- Projects will be sited in critical locations in watersheds throughout Pennsylvania where DEP, environmental advocates and others believe they will provide the greatest benefits to . . .
Ecological Benefits

- Restoration of wetlands for:
  - Water quality
  - Flood control
  - Nutrient capture/sedimentation control
  - Diversity and growth of aquatic species
- Stream restoration for:
  - Water quality
  - Sedimentation and nutrient control
  - Improvements to aquatic resources
- Floodplain enhancement for:
  - Flood control
  - Water quality
  - Sedimentation control
- Reforestation for:
  - Water quality
  - Sedimentation control
  - Habitat diversity and enhancement
  - Carbon sequestration
- Placement of projects in “the right places” – not just in the “back of the Walmart”
Financial Benefits

Green Jobs!

• Ecological enhancements without government cost or enforcement requirements
• Economies of scale in production of multiple, large-scale, multi-faceted projects
• “Free” parkland and open space for communities
• Restoration, maintenance, monitoring and long-term stewardship opportunities for not-for-profit groups, educational institutions and communities
Users of Ecological Credits (when available)

- Gas drillers
- Pipeline companies
- Coal mining
- Rock and gravel extraction
- Road construction
Who / What Benefits from VPEI

- The comprehensive Pennsylvania environment
- Cash-strapped communities
- Parkland/open space for State and local governments
- Passive recreation/outdoorsmen and women
- Educational institutions and students
- Environmental and other not-for-profit organizations
- Participating landowners
- Industry seeking ecological solutions
A Final Thought

The birds, fish and deer do not know, or care, what organization financed or developed their new, restored eco-habitats. . . but, they are appreciative . . . and so should we be.

Seize the opportunity.