



# The GEORGE Report

On May 17, Pennsylvania voters will have an opportunity to do something that will benefit Clearfield and Centre counties immensely.

Short of a freeze on landfill permits, I can't think of anything that will benefit our area more than approval of the Growing Greener II initiative. The ballot question will ask voters to approve a \$625 million bond issue to be used to fight acid-mine drainage and abandoned mines and make other critical investments in our communities and public lands.

When you look at a map of acid-mine drainage and abandoned mines, the Moshannon Valley bleeds red. The scars from old mining bleed us economically, as our bad water deters business investment and jobs. The problems also subtract from our quality of life.

Growing Greener II will help to change all that. Already, our region's ample

waste coal deposits — for too long an economic and esthetic blight — are being seen as a valuable energy source. Growing Greener II will speed development and removal of waste coal for fuel use as part of Pennsylvania's new Alternative Energy Profile.

In many ways, Growing Greener II can be seen as the antithesis of the "Trash Our Towns" effort underway with the landfills proposed in Boggs Township, Clearfield County, and Rush Township, Centre County.

The landfills would heap more problems, odors and pollution on the Moshannon Valley while benefiting a few select landowners and developers. Growing Greener II, in contrast, would benefit all by making an investment for all of us, including the generations that will follow.

We deserve better than dead streams and using our tax dollars to take wealthy mine owners to court to

make sure treatment continues on our drainage-damaged waterways.

We deserve better, but some of the tactics employed by landfill developers indicate that the old "keep 'em down" philosophies still find favor.

A local watershed group sold its soul — and perhaps the region's — by inking an agreement that would have the landfill developer provide \$150,000 a year for acid-mine restorations in the watershed.

Irresponsible mining operations have scarred our lands and hindered our growth for decades. To quote President Theodore Roosevelt, "I recognize the right and duty of this generation to develop and use our natural resources, but I do not recognize the right to waste them, or by wasteful use, the generations that come after us."

But now a landfill developer says we'll help you address those problems, but you have to sign off on a landfill that will reduce property values, clog our roads with garbage trucks, fill our nostrils with stench, deplete our wallets with state-funded highway interchange and rail projects and subject us to a new round of environmental problems.

Some deal, huh? What

are we, second-class citizens? The state Constitution says we have a right to clean air, pure water and the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. It says nothing about having those rights only if we accept an unneeded and unwanted landfill.

Opponents of the landfill proposed in Boggs Township can expect a similar "buy your support" effort. To put it in perspective, Growing Greener pumped more than \$4.1 million into abandoned mine restoration efforts in Boggs and Bradford townships alone between 1998 and 2003, making the \$150,000-a-year offer look rather chintzy.

Under Gov. Rendell's vision of Growing Greener II, \$300 million would be devoted to environmental cleanups. In Centre County, three dams and two hatcheries would be on priority lists for infrastructure improvements. Our economy, parks and communities also will benefit.

We're worth the investment Growing Greener II would provide, and I urge voters to approve the initiative on May 17.

We also deserve better than what either landfill would do to our area.