

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

February 12, 2007

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)



Susquehanna River ice flows north of I-81 bridge.

Waste Fee Increases for Growing Greener II Debt, Hazardous Sites Funding

Gov. Rendell this week proposed a \$27.3 billion budget that included a \$2.75 per ton increase in municipal waste disposal fees to pay the debt service for the \$625 million Growing Greener II bond issue and to finance the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program.

Fifty cents of the fee increase, which would generate an estimated \$11 to \$12 million per year based on 2005 municipal waste disposal, would be devoted to paying the debt service for the Growing Greener II bond issue.

The Governor's Budget Book says a total of \$26.9 million will be devoted to paying Growing Greener II bond debt service covering 2006-07 and 2007-08 obligations from the Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund.

Passage of this new fee could potentially free up some monies in the Environmental Stewardship Fund to be spent on the original Growing Greener Program purposes like watershed restoration, mine land reclamation, farmland preservation and State Park and Forest improvements.

Reacting to the proposed waste fee increases, the Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association this week said Gov. Rendell's proposed \$2.75 per ton increase in Pennsylvania trash taxes would cost Pennsylvania municipalities, businesses, and consumers nearly \$41 million a year in higher costs for collection and disposal of trash.

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"We are surprised and disappointed that the Rendell administration has proposed an increase in trash taxes amounting to \$2.75 per ton as part of its 2007-08 budget," PWIA President Tim O'Donnell said.

The DEP budget also proposes a slight increased allocations from the Growing Greener II bond funds and Environmental Stewardship Fund for abandoned mine reclamation and watershed restoration projects. A total of \$625 million in Growing Greener II bonds were authorized by voters in 2005.

DEP will also be proposing fee increases on permits and applications in law that the Budget Book says will yield about \$9.1 million annually and a new \$2.5 million flood, stormwater planning and prevention initiative and mine safety initiative are also included.

The DCNR budget proposal also includes a State Parks Enhancement Initiative, although cuts grant funds available to land trusts for permanent land conservation.

The Fish and Boat and Game Commissions along with the Department of Agriculture and the PA Infrastructure Investment Authority will get an increase in allocations of Growing Greener II bond issue funds to spend this coming year.

The Department of Environmental Protection opened a new webpage devoted to the [Energy Independence Program](#) proposed as part of the budget this week.

[Gov. Rendell's budget proposal is available online.](#)

Here are some details we know now....

Department of Environmental Protection -----

A 50 cent increase in the fees on the disposal of municipal waste to finance the debt service on the \$625 million Growing Greener II bond issue and a \$2.25 increase in the fee on the disposal of municipal waste to fund the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program. State fees now on municipal waste total \$6.25 -- \$2.00 per ton for Recycling and \$4.25 for the Environmental Stewardship Fund (Growing Greener).

Increases

- \$ 1,500,000 – Flood, Stormwater Planning and Prevention in Response to 6/2005 Flood
- \$ 1,000,000 – Local Flood, Stormwater Planning and Prevention
- \$ 678,000 - Mine Safety/Mine Rescue Station

Note: DEP will also be proposing increases in fees for permits and applications that the Budget Book says will yield about \$9.1 million annually.

Cuts

- \$800,000 – Scrap Tire Clean Projects
- \$300,000 – Chesapeake Bay Education Program
- \$500,000 – County Conservation Districts*

Environmental Stewardship Fund Allocations**

	Proposed	2006-07
Abandoned Mine Reclamation	\$ 1.5 million	-0-
Oil and Gas Well Plugging	-0-	-0-
Watershed Protection/Restoration	\$ 22.1 million	\$19.3 million
Sewage/Drinking Water Grants	\$ 2.1 million	\$ 2.3 million
Transfer to Hazardous Sites	-0-	\$30.0 million

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Growing Greener II Bond Fund***

	Proposed	2006-07
Envir. Improvement Projects	\$10.0 million	\$10.0 million
Mine Drainage Cleanup	\$18.0 million	\$ 6.0 million
County Envir. Grants	\$18.0 million	\$ 6.0 million

Overall

Decreases from \$695.9 million (2006-07) to \$693.7 million (proposed). In 2002-03, DEP’s budget was \$728.2 million.

DEP’s staff complement is proposed at 3,039, in 2003 it was 3,211.

Department of Conservation & Natural Resources -----

Increases

\$ 1,982,000 – State Parks Enhancements to Operations, Seasonal Staff

Keystone Parks & Recreation Fund Allocations

	Proposed	2006-07
State Park & Forests Rehab	\$25.9 million	\$31.2 million
Local Recreation	\$21.5 million	\$26.0 million
Land Trusts	\$ 8.6 million	\$10.4 million

Environmental Stewardship Fund Allocations**

	Proposed	2006-07
State Parks & Forest Rehab	\$ 7.3 million	\$ 6.1 million
Community Conservation Grants	\$ 8.2 million	\$ 7.0 million
Natural Diversity Grants	\$ 980,000	\$ 750,000

Growing Greener II Bond Fund***

	Proposed	2006-07
Parks & Recreations Improv.	\$ 2.0 million	\$ 5.0 million
Parks & Forest Projects	\$12.0 million	\$10.0 million
Open Space Conservation	\$12.0 million	\$10.0 million

Overall

Decreases from \$347.9 million (2006-07) to \$341.1 million (proposed). In 2002-03, DCNR’s budget was \$322.9 million.

DCNR’s staff complement is proposed at 1,402, in 2003 it was 1,391.

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Department of Agriculture -----

Increases

\$500,000 – Farm-School Nutrition Initiative

Cuts

\$590,000 – County Conservation Districts*

Environmental Stewardship Fund Allocations**

	Proposed	2006-07
Farmland Conservation	\$ 10.2 million	\$ 8.5 million

Growing Greener II Bond Fund***

	Proposed	2006-07
Farmland Conservation	\$20.0 million	\$20.0 million

Overall

Increase from \$262 million (2006-07) to \$274.3 million (proposed).

Agriculture’s staff complement is proposed at 673, in 2003 it was 656.

PA Fish & Boat Commission -----

Growing Greener II Bond Fund***

	Proposed	2006-07
Capital Improvement Projects	\$3.0 million	\$2.0 million

Overall

Increase from \$55.9 million (2006-07) to \$58.3 million (proposed).

PA Game Commission -----

Growing Greener II Bond Fund***

	Proposed	2006-07
Capital Improvement Projects	\$7.0 million	\$3.0 million

Overall

Increase from \$81.3 million (2006-07) to \$83.3 million (proposed).

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PA Infrastructure Investment Authority -----

Environmental Stewardship Fund Allocations**

	Proposed	2006-07
Water Grants-PENNVEST	\$ 16.3 million	\$ 13.7 million

Special Fund Allocations -----

***Conservation District Fund** (created in 2006)

\$4.3 million - \$3.1 million to DEP, \$1.2 million to Agriculture

Note: This represents a \$1.1 million cut in funding for Conservation Districts from 2006-07 levels.

****Environmental Stewardship Fund Summary**

	Proposed	2006-07
Debt Service GG II Bond (2 yrs)	\$ 26.9 million	-0-
Transfer to Hazardous Sites	-0-	\$30.0 million
Watershed Protection/Restoration	\$ 22.1 million	\$19.3 million
Abandoned Mine Reclamation	\$ 1.5 million	-0-
Oil and Gas Well Plugging	-0-	-0-
Sewage/Drinking Water Grants	\$ 2.1 million	\$ 2.3 million
State Parks & Forest Rehab	\$ 7.3 million	\$ 6.1 million
Community Conservation Grants	\$ 8.2 million	\$ 7.0 million
Natural Diversity Grants	\$ 980,000	\$ 750,000
Water Grants-PENNVEST	\$ 16.3 million	\$ 13.7 million
Farmland Conservation	\$ 10.2 million	\$ 8.5 million

*****Growing Greener II Bond Fund**

	Proposed	2006-07
Main Street/Downtown (DCED)	\$18.0 million	\$12.0 million
Farmland Conservation	\$20.0 million	\$20.0 million
Parks & Recreations Improv.	\$ 2.0 million	\$ 5.0 million
Parks & Forest Projects	\$12.0 million	\$10.0 million
Open Space Conservation	\$12.0 million	\$10.0 million
Envir. Improvement Projects	\$10.0 million	\$10.0 million
Mine Drainage Cleanup	\$18.0 million	\$ 6.0 million
County Envir. Grants	\$18.0 million	\$ 6.0 million
Fish & Boat Commission	\$ 3.0 million	\$ 2.0 million
Game Commission	\$ 7.0 million	\$ 3.0 million

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Note: Since November 2005, counties have requested more than \$41 million of the \$90 million set aside in the Growing Greener II Bond Fund for projects under the County Environmental Initiative Program-- \$5 million for farmland preservation, \$2 million for DCED community projects, \$14 million for DCNR community recreation projects and \$20 million for watershed and other environmental improvement projects from DEP.

Link: [DEP Press Release on Governor's Budget Request](#)

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Session Schedule

The Senate and House both return to session on February 12 and 13, then they break for budget hearings until March 12.

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- Treasury Dept., PA Environmental Council Partner on Green Investment Strategy

On the Hill

- On the Senate/House Agenda/Bills Introduced
- Senate Will Not Disapprove Mercury Rule, Will Consider Mercury Reduction Bill
- House Committee Told Access to Fishable Waters Critical Issue
- Rep. George to Introduce Measure to Increase Nuclear Power Plant Fees
- Sen. Brubaker Announces “Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania”
- President’s 2008 Budget Proposal Worst Ever for States

Other News

- PUC Chair Tells Committee “Conserve, Conserve, Conserve” Electricity
- PUC Seeks Comments on Strategy to Ease Transition From Electric Rate Caps
- Pennsylvania Helps the Nation Save Energy with 79 Energy Star Buildings
- Penn State Puts Its Own Green Roof Technology to Work
- GreenSense 2007 Speaker to Address Economic Benefits of Green Buildings
- Two Deaths in Abandoned Mines in 2006, 29 in Past Six Years
- Report Recommends Improvements to Susquehanna Flood Warning System
- Save the Date: May 4-5 All Volunteer Watershed Monitors Summit
- Nutrient Credits To Be Used by Developer in Perry County
- Streambank Stabilization, Habitat Enhancement Workshops in March
- Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference May 10-12
- \$2.7 Million Available to Local Communities to Reduce Toxic Exposure
- EE Connections Newsletter Now Available from PA Environmental Ed Center
- Bluebird Society Hosts Annual Conference March 30-31 in State College
- Peregrine Falcon Educator’s Workshop to be Held April 5

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- Banff Adventure Film Festival Returns To Lehigh Valley March 4

Opinion

- Federal Mine Reclamation Funding Will Lead to Economic Development Opportunities on Abandoned Mine Lands *by Robert E. Hughes, Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation*

Feature

- Snow Geese Are Harbinger of Spring at Middle Creek *by Joe Kosack, Pennsylvania Game Commission*

[Go To: PA Environment Digest Calendar Page](#)

Video Blog

Treasury Dept., PA Environmental Council Partner on Green Investment Strategy

Brian Hill, President & CEO of the [Pennsylvania Environmental Council](#), talks about developing a new Green Investment Strategy for Pennsylvania in partnership with the State Treasurer's Office.

The Highlights include:

1. **The Keystone Green Fund** – a new investment fund Casey is establishing to attract and leverage private sector investments in clean technology products and firms that will benefit Pennsylvania's economy. The Fund will include up to \$40 million in Treasury assets and several million more from Pennsylvania-based energy funds.
2. **Active Equity Management** – Casey will reallocate up to \$50 million in Treasury assets from existing investment managers to those who can demonstrate a track record of providing superior returns on their investments in clean technology stocks.
3. **Environmental Equity Screens** – Treasury will develop new investment screens for its investment managers and outside consultants to use when evaluating a company's potential exposure to environmental liabilities.
4. **Investor Network for Climate Risk** – Pennsylvania will formally join the INCR, a network of institutional investors and financial institutions that promotes better understanding of the financial risks and investment opportunities posed by climate change.

Video Blog: [Brian Hill Talks About the Keystone Green Investment Strategy](#)

For more information, visit the [Keystone Green Investment Strategy webpage](#).

On the Hill

On the Senate/House Agenda/Bills Introduced

Here are some upcoming activities by Senate and House Committees....

Senate Committees: the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee holds a hearing on the nomination of Michael DiBerardinis as Secretary of Conservation and Natural

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Resources; the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee holds a listening session on agriculture and rural issues in Ephrata.

House Committees: the Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee meets to discuss committee rules and its future agenda; the Game and Fisheries Committee meets to hear the Game Commission present its annual report; the Appropriations Committee hears presentations on budget needs by House members.

Other Meetings: Legislative Forestry Task Force Meeting, Joint Conservation Committee meets in State College.

Bills Introduced

Several more environmental bills were introduced this week, here's the rundown...

Small Business Impacts of Rules: [House Bill 210](#) (Pickett-R-Bradford) would require agencies to evaluate the impact of regulations on small businesses.

Historic Preservation Grants: [House Bill 221](#) (Tangretti-D-Westmoreland) would establish the Historic Preservation Incentive Grant Act to provide grants to eligible properties that undertake building improvements.

Flood Insurance Premium Assistance: [House Bill 236](#) (Miller-R-York) establishing the Flood Insurance Premium Assistance Program.

Energy Efficient State Buildings: [House Bill 238](#) (Miller-R-York) establishing the Energy Efficiency in State Government Buildings Act.

Terminating Utility Service: [House Bill 285](#) (George-D-Clearfield) providing revised procedures for termination of utility service.

Mineral Rights: [House Bill 297](#) (Yewcic-D-Cambria) creating a surface property rights owner right of first refusal in transfer of subsurface mineral rights.

Hybrid Exemption: [House Bill 309](#) (Boyd-R-Lancaster) exempting hybrid electric vehicles that have a city fuel economy rating of 40 mph from emissions inspections.

Smoking in State Parks: [House Bill 312](#) (Leach-D-Montgomery) would prohibit smoking in State Parks.

Redirecting Growing Greener Funds: [House Bill 319](#) (O'Neill-R-Bucks) would require the redirection of Growing Greener fee monies to the General Fund.

Funding Local Climate Change Plans: [House Bill 334](#) (Vitali-D-Delaware) providing funding for the preparation of local climate change plans.

Sportsman’s Federation: [House Resolution 71](#) (Gergley-D-Allegheny) recognizing the 75th anniversary of the Federation of Sportsman’s Clubs.

Energy Efficiency Tax Exclusion: [Senate Bill 37](#) (C.Williams-D-Montgomery) exempting appliances meeting the Energy Star energy efficiency standards from Sales and Use Tax.

Lead-Testing: [Senate Bill 40](#) (C.Williams-D-Montgomery) requiring the Department of Health to test child day-care and preschool facilities for lead.

Mercury Thermometers: [Senate Bill 51](#) (C.Williams-D-Montgomery) prohibiting the sale or distribution of thermometers containing mercury.

Environmental Insurance: [Senate Bill 58](#) (Erickson-R-Delaware) creating the Environmental Insurance program to facilitate the remediation of contaminated property.

Right of First Refusal: [Senate Bill 61](#) (Wozniak-D-Cambria) establishing the Mineral Rights Transfer Act creating a right of first refusal for surface rights owners in the transfer of mineral rights.

Senate Will Not Disapprove Mercury Rule, Will Consider Mercury Reduction Bill

Senators Mary Jo White (R-Venango) and Ray Musto (D-Luzerne), Majority and Minority Chairs of the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, sent a letter to the Department of Environmental Protection this week saying the Committee will not be taking action to disapprove the final mercury emission reduction regulation.

As a result, the mercury regulation will be “deemed approved” on February 10.

The letter said that when the committee voted to extend its review of the regulation, it did so with the understanding that they would work to achieve a consensus on the issue. However, the letter continued, there is “not a desire from the Administration to reach an acceptable compromise at this time.”

The Senators said, however, that they intend to introduce and advance legislation that will: require a 90 percent mercury emission reduction from each electric generating unit (just as DEP has proposed), establish a 2015 compliance deadline (just like DEP proposed), but allow power plants to use the federal allowance trading program to achieve reductions over 90 percent that may be required to meet the federal mercury emissions budget for Pennsylvania.

House Committee Told Access to Fishable Waters Critical Issue



Connecting anglers and boaters to the water and families to outdoor activities are critical challenges that must be successfully addressed, said Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Dr. Douglas Austen in his [annual report](#) to the House Game and Fisheries Committee this week.

In addition to highlighting the agency’s work during 2006 - such as the development of an automated licensing system, exciting new changes to trout fishing and funding for infrastructure – Dr. Austen also used his

time with the Committee to discuss programmatic directions for the future.

“Even with its wealth of public lands, Pennsylvania is not immune to the trend toward privatizing access to our waterways and expanded posting of private property. The implications to fishing are clear: private lands border 83 percent of our stocked trout waters, about 70 percent of our wild trout waters, and approximately 59 percent of our class A trout waters,” Dr. Austen told the legislators.

He cited work by the Commission and other partners to secure access through purchases and fishing easements along Lake Erie and its tributaries through a special fund. He noted, however, that there is currently no viable funding mechanism for expanding such efforts to the rest of the Commonwealth.

Beyond the need to provide access for existing sportsmen and women, Austen cautioned that more work needs to be done to attract new generations of anglers and boaters.

“Traditional outdoor activities are simply not engaging youth in the right ways. We don’t have the organized activities in the schools, our teaching methods are antiquated, we don’t have enough family activities that offer well-structured programs for parents and kids, and we’re not nearly as visible in the cities as we should be,” he said.

Dr. Austen stressed the agency’s commitment to meeting the challenge, but cautioned new thinking and new revenue for youth education would be required. He renewed his call for funding in the form of an inexpensive fishing license for 12- to 15-year-olds. “

“The message is clear: We simply cannot continue doing the same things and expect different results. If we want to offer new programs we need new funding for clubs, instruction, information, family events - in short, everything that will make Pennsylvania a leader in youth fishing and the development of young people who understand the resource.”

In closing his remarks, Dr. Austen requested that lawmakers examine two other funding-related concerns: important programs supported by fishing license dollars and watercraft registration fees that aren’t directly related to recreational angling or boating and the current process for establishing license and registration fees.

He noted that the Commission takes a great deal of pride its efforts to manage reptiles, amphibians and non-game fish species and to train emergency responders in water rescue, but noted that general Commonwealth funds may be more appropriate than using sportsmen’s dollars. He also suggested that the historically lengthy time frame between license and registration fee updates lead to sizeable increases and sales declines.

The full text of [Dr. Austen’s remarks](#) is available on the Commission’s website.

Also available on the Commission’s site is a [comprehensive annual report](#) detailing strategic initiatives advanced in 2006, financial information and program specific statistics. Several highlights from the annual report include:

- Nearly 2 million people fished in Pennsylvania contributing over \$1.65 billion to the state’s economy and more than 2.5 million people boated in Pennsylvania generating over \$1.7 billion for the state’s economy;
- The Commission established two different opening days for trout season—March 31 for an 18 county central and southeast and April 14 for the remainder of the state;
- Sponsored 19 dam removal and fishway projects totaling \$718,000;
- The Lake Habitat Section’s Adopt-a-Lake Program work with 40 cooperators and completed 35 lake habitat enhancement and installed over 1,000 habitat structures; and

- The Adopt-a-Stream Program in the Stream Habitat Section worked with 85 cooperators and completed 38 stream habitat enhancement projects, including installation of 135 habitat structures.

The Committee will hear a presentation on the Game Commission’s 2006 annual report on February 15. (*see Calendar of Events*) **Link:** [Engaging Youth In Fishing](#)

Rep. George to Introduce Measure to Increase Nuclear Power Plant Fees



Rep. Camille “Bud” George, Chair of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, this week said he is introducing legislation needed so utilities can pay for enhanced safety and emergency-response programs at Pennsylvania’s five nuclear plants.

“State government and the nuclear industry are moving full-speed ahead implementing better protections so the lessons of Sept. 11, 2001, are not ignored,” said Rep. George (D-Clearfield). “We now are better prepared for any accidents or incidents involving nuclear plants, and the measure I am introducing provides a responsible method to pay for those improvements.”

Rep. George said nuclear-plant operators and the Rendell administration agreed to new fees -- last increased more than 14 years ago -- to pay for enhancements that include:

- A Radiological Emergency Response Planning and Preparedness Program to focus and streamline emergency-preparedness resources;
- Enhanced monitoring at nuclear plants to provide real-time data through secure systems;
- Bolstered oversight, inspections, and response-development services provided by the state Department of Environmental Protection’s Bureau of Radiation Protection; and
- Updated training provided by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency to more than 700 state, county and hospital officials.

Rep. George said the increased fees are comparable to those in other states and will cover a \$1.5 million shortfall. Under the legislation, plant operators would pay \$550,000, an increase of \$150,000, for each of the five nuclear-plant sites to cover the DEP’s increased costs, and \$350,000 for each site, up from \$200,000, to cover the PEMA shortfall.

“The measure is identical to Democratic and Republican bills filed late last session in the House and Senate but never brought to a vote,” Rep. George said. “It will be a priority in this session.” ([House Bill 6](#) and [Senate Bill 1276](#) last session)

Similar legislation will be introduced in the Senate by Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango).

Pennsylvania’s five commercial power plants provide 25 percent of the state’s electricity. They are Beaver Valley in Beaver County, Susquehanna in Luzerne County, Limerick in Montgomery County, Peach Bottom in York County and Three Mile Island in Dauphin County.

According to the Energy Information Agency, Pennsylvania is second only to Illinois in nuclear capacity and output.

NewsClip: [State Seeks Boost in Nuke Plant Fee](#)

Sen. Brubaker Announces “Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania”



Sen. Mike Brubaker (R-Lancaster), chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, announced he will be holding a series of listening sessions across the state to help identify priorities for his Committee during the 2007-2008 session.

This would be a great time for farmers, watershed groups and conservation organizations to tell the Committee about the needs for farm conservation and watershed restoration.

“The goal of ‘Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania’ is to gather input from agriculture communities, rural communities and anyone affected directly or indirectly by our Committee’s actions,” Sen. Brubaker said. “I want to hear from a broad spectrum of individuals so that we can craft an agenda that will truly meet the needs of our Commonwealth.”

Sen. Brubaker said that he expects committee members will hear discussion on a wide variety of topics throughout the listening sessions, such as farmland preservation, health care accessibility and affordability, property taxes and sprawl issues. Additional sessions are being scheduled in the coming months throughout the state, including Philadelphia.

“While locations such as Philadelphia are obviously not rural in nature, every citizen in this state is impacted by the agriculture industry and what it produces,” Sen. Brubaker said. “We want our agenda to embrace the perspectives of all Pennsylvanians in order to build a comprehensive vision for the future.”

The public is invited to attend the first session at Four Seasons Produce, 400 Wabash Road, Ephrata, on February 14 from 10 a.m. to noon. The second listening session is set for February 21 at the North Philadelphia Health System (16th and Girard Ave.) in Philadelphia.

Anyone who is interested in coming should contact Senator Brubaker’s Ephrata office at 717-738-1600 to register, as space is limited. Participants should also indicate if they have an interest in speaking at the session.

President’s 2008 Budget Proposal Worst Ever for States

The President’s February 5 budget proposal for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency cuts \$474 million from State and Tribal Assistance Grants (STAG) for 2008, the highest one-year reduction in the agency’s history, according to the [Environmental Council of the States](#).

“The states implement nearly every federal environmental program, and these proposed cuts to the states will adversely affect the nation’s environmental quality,” said Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) President Robert W. King, Jr. of South Carolina.

“It is disappointing to see a budget proposal that cuts air programs and water programs, and has the biggest cut to water infrastructure in the history of the agency,” said Steve Brown, ECOS’ executive director. “We strongly believe there are alternatives to this budget proposal that respect the tight federal fiscal situation while restoring funding to the top-priority areas of environmental protection: air, water, and waste management.”

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The [states' environmental agencies are asking Congress](#) to appropriate \$1.22 billion in assistance grants to help states implement federal programs that EPA has delegated to them, and \$2.51 billion in infrastructure assistance to help local governments with construction of drinking water and wastewater treatment facilities, and other cleanup actions.

In this budget, however, even non-STAG funds take a \$28 million reduction, changing the pattern of recent years in which all cuts were absorbed by the states.

The largest cut was again placed on the Clean Water State Revolving Loan Fund. The 2007 Continuing Resolution (still pending in the U.S. Senate) has placed congressional earmarks into the SRF for 07, so the proposed EPA cut is extraordinarily large: about \$396 million. This brings the total to around \$420 million in infrastructure cuts alone.

Cuts include about \$48 million from categorical grants:

- \$35 million cut from air programs, a repeat of last year's request;
- \$10 million cut from Section 319 (non-point sources) of the wastewater programs;
- \$7 million cut from environmental information support;
- \$7 million cut from targeted watersheds;
- \$1 million cut from wastewater operator training programs;
- \$10.5 increase for Underground Storage Tanks;
- \$1 million increase for RCRA (waste program);
- \$1 million increase for wetlands; and
- \$1 million increase for pollution prevention.

For more information, visit the [Environmental Council of the States website](#).

Other News

PUC Chair Tells Committee “Conserve, Conserve, Conserve” Electricity



Sen. Tomlinson &
Sen. Mary Jo White

Wendell F. Holland, chair of the Public Utility Commission, told the Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee this week that he had one message for the Committee and electric consumers—“conserve, conserve, conserve.”

The Committee, chaired by Sen. Tomlinson (R-Bucks) with Minority Chair Sen. Boscola (D-Lehigh), held a hearing on the issue of transitioning from electric rate caps that are due to expire in most areas of Pennsylvania in 2010 to a market-based system for setting rates.

An estimated 83 percent of electric customers are still under rate caps that were imposed in 1996 as part of the state's Electric Choice Act that brought competition into Pennsylvania's electric markets and separated electric generation from electric distribution.

[Chairman Holland](#) said he and his fellow commissioners are well aware of the consequences of not easing in market-based electric rates, saying they did not want Pennsylvania to be another California, with its massive brownouts, or a Maryland, where a

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72 percent rate increase forced fundamental restructuring of the way that state regulates electricity rates. ([Link to PowerPoint Presentation](#))

Pennsylvania's limited experience with a transition from caps to market-based pricing has been mixed so far.

When caps expired in 2005 for customers in Pike County, electric rates jumped 73 percent, although Chairman Holland and the other commissioners called that increase a unique case because the utility bought all of its electric in the market at one time.

Duquesne Light Company customers experienced an 11.5 percent increase in rates, although in inflation adjusted terms the cost was actually 15 percent below the rates in effect in 1996. Duquesne was also somewhat unique because they had some of the highest rates in the state when the Electric Choice Act took effect.

UGI's electric company customers experienced a 59.4 percent increase in generation rates once the caps were lifted.

A recently approved plan for Pennsylvania Power increased residential rates up to 33 percent and for large industrial customers over 50 percent.

Chairman Holland emphasized the importance of educating electric customers to help them understand the cost of energy and how they can play a role in responsible energy use.

[James H. Cawley](#), Vice-Chair of the PUC, said the Electric Choice Act has saved Pennsylvania electricity customers over \$6 billion since 2006 and that restructuring the electric system under the Act has not been a failure.

Commissioner Cawley said the impact of switching to market rates for electricity will vary in the remaining areas of the state. For example, when the extra stranded cost charge imposed as part of the 1996 law to allow utilities to recover the cost of building nuclear power plants expires in the PECO area in the Southeast, it will offset the higher cost of electricity and may only result in an estimated 10-20 percent increase in rates.

Conservation was also emphasized by Commissioner Cawley. He said we have to start conserving electricity through the use of new tools like smart meters and smart pricing which gives consumers the signals they need to help in conservation efforts.

Commissioner Cawley did note that "conservation alone is not going to do it in the face of growing demand."

At the same time the Commissioner said there may be a need to exempt certain groups, due to low income or health problems, from the full impact of market pricing.

[Commissioner Kim Pizzingrilli](#) noted a [recent independent study](#) found that even modest reductions in electricity use during times of peak demand through demand management systems resulted in significant savings throughout the PJM regional electricity grid.

Commissioner Pizzingrilli said extending the rate caps was not the answer to the transition and each of the Commissioners seemed to agree that simply extending the caps would invite the kind of "disaster" California had when its system of deregulation led to severe brownouts.

The Commissioner also noted the PUC has one vacancy on its Board and encouraged the General Assembly to act quickly to fill the position once a nomination is received from the Governor.

[Commissioner Terrance Fitzpatrick](#) noted the conditions existing at the time the 1996 Electric Choice Act was passed have changed, namely that wholesale prices of

electricity have risen higher than the electric rate caps and are more volatile and electric customers are not as anxious to go directly to that market to buy electricity.

The increase in wholesale prices, which Commissioner Fitzpatrick noted the PUC has no authority to control, are also the reason there is less competition in Pennsylvania's electric market today.

In 1996 about one-third of the electricity market was powered by competitive suppliers and now only about 10 percent is.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick said 98 percent of Duquesne Light's industrial base is served by competitive electric suppliers because they have market-based rates.

Sen. Tomlinson summed up the dilemma for Pennsylvania this way, "We have to lift the rate caps to get competition to get lower prices."

In response to a question from Sen. Tomlinson, Commissioner Fitzpatrick said, "There is no doubt that environmental regulations have a big affect on the cost of electricity and if climate change issues are important, we're going to have to pay for them."

Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango) asked whether the Commissioners support a suggestion by Gov. Rendell last week that long-term contracts be used to help stabilize electric prices.

Commissioner Cawley said they might be appropriate to encourage some new technologies, however, the overall impact of locking in one electric generator at one price for a long period of time is to crowd out competition, and if New Jersey's experience is any indicator, promote a steady increase in electric rates.

Commissioner Fitzpatrick noted one uncertainty surrounding long-term contracts relates to new congestion transmission fees the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has created. Generators are reluctant to enter into long-term arrangements because they will not know what those fees will be.

Chairman Holland suggested electric transmission issues are "enormous" for Pennsylvania and recommended the Committee hold a separate hearing on that issue.

Sen. Boscola said she was both "relieved and scared" at the prospect of transitioning to market-based pricing for electricity rates.

Both Commissioners Cawley and Fitzpatrick noted Pennsylvania's aging fleet of baseload power plants will have to be replaced in the future. But, said Commissioner Fitzpatrick, no one knows whether anyone will build a new baseload plant given the uncertainty in the electricity market and over what environmental policies will be in the future.

For more information, visit the [PUC's Electric Division webpage](#).

NewsClips: [Heating Demands Propel Utilities to Usage Records](#)
[PJM Sets Winter Electricity Use Record](#)

PUC Seeks Comments on Strategy to Ease Transition From Electric Rate Caps

The Public Utility Commission this week asked for public comment on proposed regulations and a policy statement that will establish the criteria on how electric generation service is provided to customers who choose to not obtain generation service from an alternate supplier.

The Commission also asked for input on proposed strategies to mitigate potential electricity price increases.

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As part of an overall strategy for addressing generation rates, the Commission voted 4-0 to issue an Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking on default service regulations and a policy statement. Commissioner Kim Pizzingrilli [issued a statement](#). Commissioner Terrance Fitzpatrick also [issued a statement](#).

The Commission also voted unanimously [on a motion](#) by Commissioner Pizzingrilli to issue proposed policies to mitigate potential electricity price increases. Commissioner Fitzpatrick [made a statement](#) on the mitigation policies. The actions represent a comprehensive strategy for addressing retail electricity rates in the context of the expiring generation rate caps.

The default service regulations are one of the most important rulemakings for the Commission since the restructuring of the electric industry. The Commission reopened the public comment period for the regulations in November 2005 to address conditions in the wholesale market and the relationship between the default service rulemaking and the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004.

Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking for default service regulations

About 40 parties filed comments in response to the Commission's proposed regulations. As a result, the Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking significantly modifies the previous proposals. The changes include:

- Allowing regular adjustments to default service rates to reflect changes in the actual incurred costs of the default service provider (DSP);
- Requiring individual procurement plans to be submitted by DSPs that may include a mix of fixed term and spot market energy purchases;
- Encouraging procurement plans that include purchasing generation supplies in multiple steps to reduce risks of unusual price volatility rather than purchasing all supply at one time;
- Simplifying rate design and providing normal incentives for energy conservation and facilitating customer choice; and
- Offering each default service customer a single rate option known as the "price-to-compare," which represents a blend of all generation and transmission related costs.

Policy statement

In reviewing the comments and considering revisions to the proposed default service rules, the Commission recognized that some elements of the default service rules should be addressed in a policy statement that provides guidance to the industry rather than strict rules. The policy statement, which provides a framework for DSPs, addressed:

- Electric generation supply purchases;
- Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards compliance;
- Competitive bid solicitation processes;
- Default service cost elements;
- Interim price adjustments and cost reconciliation;
- Retail rate design; and
- Rate Change mitigation.

The proposed policy statement also establishes a Retail Markets Working Group to develop policy recommendations, which are aimed at removing barriers to retail market development including rate-ready billing, customer referral programs, uniform statewide supplier tariffs and a retail choice ombudsman at both the Commission and Electric Distribution Companies.

Policies to mitigate potential electricity price increases

On May 19, 2006, the Commission began a process that may lead to the development of policies to mitigate higher electricity prices. Most Pennsylvania electricity consumers are paying capped generation rates and will continue to do so until the end of 2009 or 2010. Recent events in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware have shown that consumers of electricity can be exposed to sudden dramatic price increases when long-term generation caps expire. The long-term caps were agreed upon during state restructuring proceedings.

More than 30 parties filed comments with the Commission regarding ideas to assist in addressing potential significant price increases. The proposed policy changes and plans for future action include:

- Initiating statewide and utility specific consumer education campaigns to educate consumers about the real price of electricity, responsible energy usage and alternative electric generation suppliers;
- Developing recommendations for alternatives to mitigate abrupt price increases that include final development of the default service regulations;
- Examining energy efficiency, conservation and demand side response. On Sept. 28, 2006, the Commission initiated an investigation into cost-effective and reasonable efforts that electric utilities can take to help consumers conserve energy and use it more efficiently. Further recommendations in these areas are expected this spring;
- Improving low-income programs. The Commission proposes to become more of an advocate for state funding of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP). The Commission also will continue with a rulemaking to modify its Customer Assistance Program rulemaking and policy statement; and
- Continuing active participation before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission on wholesale market issues.

The Advanced Notice of Final Rulemaking and the proposed policy statement will be docketed separately at the Commission. In both cases, interested parties have until March 2 to file comments. Reply comments to both are due by March 23. The comments will be posted to the PUC Web site at www.state.pa.us.

An original and 15 copies of comments or reply comments should be marked with the appropriate docket numbers for either the Advanced Notice of Rulemaking or the proposed policy statement and submitted to: Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, Attention Secretary, P.O. Box 3265, Harrisburg, PA 17105

Comments on the proposed policies to mitigate potential electricity price increases are due 20 days after the entry of the Order.

All comments also should be marked with the appropriate docket numbers and submitted electronically to Shane Rooney at srooney@state.pa.us. Attachments may not exceed 3 megabytes.

NewsClip: [PUC Seeks Comment on Electric Rate Strategy](#)

Pennsylvania Helps the Nation Save Energy with 79 Energy Star Buildings

In Pennsylvania, there are 79 [ENERGY STAR-qualified buildings](#) represent approximately 10.9 million square feet of space that save an estimated \$26.8 million annually in lower energy bills, while meeting industry standards for comfort and indoor air quality.



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These buildings also prevent 608 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to the emissions from more than 49,277 vehicles.

"By partnering with EPA, building owners are realizing that they can reduce energy costs without sacrificing comfort or tenant satisfaction," said EPA Regional Administrator Donald S. Welsh. "ENERGY STAR building owners in Pennsylvania are to be congratulated for taking an important leadership step. Commercial buildings account for more than 18 percent of our nation's greenhouse gas emissions"

Buildings earn the ENERGY STAR based on EPA's energy performance rating system. These buildings must score a 75 or better (on a scale from 1-100) based on their actual energy use, and also meet industry standards for comfort and indoor air quality. The average score for ENERGY STAR labeled buildings in 2006 is 84.

Buildings that earn the prestigious ENERGY STAR use one-third less energy than other buildings. Among the top performers nationally are 320 office buildings, 320 supermarkets, 200 public schools and 90 banks, courthouses, financial centers, hospitals, hotels and dormitories.

For more information and a complete list of buildings and their locations, please visit the [ENERGY-STAR Buildings webpage](#).

Penn State Puts Its Own Green Roof Technology to Work



[Long a leader in green-roof research](#), Penn State this spring will plant vegetation on two large green roofs that were prepared last fall and begin a monitoring program that promises to last for years.

One of the green roofs will be what lead researcher Rob Berghage calls "a showcase," on top of the University's recently opened \$30.5 million Forest Resources Building at the corner of Park Avenue and Bigler Road.

The green roof was a key factor in the structure recently receiving a LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certification by the U.S. Green Building Council.

The LEED designation is something officials in the University's College of Agricultural Sciences point to as proof that they are serious about developing sustainable buildings that are more energy efficient, water efficient and ecologically sound.

"Since our academic unit is based upon the principles of sustaining natural resources, we are aptly proud of the LEED Silver Certification earned by our new home," said Chuck Strauss, director of the School of Forest Resources.

A special feature of the green roof on the Forest Resources Building, according to Strauss, is a large viewing deck built with a composite wood-plastic material developed by a researcher in the school. "Once the plants are growing on the roof and the weather gets nice, that deck will be a popular place for students, faculty and staff to have lunch and relax," Strauss predicted.

What makes the green roof "green" is the dense covering of plants and groundcover-like vegetation placed on top of the building, explained Berghage, associate professor of horticulture. "Typically a flat roof works best," he said. "To have a green roof, a building must be designed to support the extra weight of the vegetation, 4 to 12 inches of planting medium, a roof membrane and a drainage layer."

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Those preparations were completed last fall on the 4,700-square-foot roof over part of the Forest Resources Building, and on the 4,500-square-foot roof over a root cellar near the greenhouses behind Tyson Building off Eisenhower Boulevard. Runoff from the green roof over the root cellar will be collected and piped to a basin where students in Berghage's Eco-Roof Technology horticulture class can monitor the water quantity and quality, as well as plant growth and effectiveness of the green roof.

"This monitoring will be part of our research and it will go on for long time," he said. "Penn State has been doing green roof research longer than any other institution in North America."

The large, shallow-media "extensive" zones of the roofs will be planted with a variety of sedum species and other drought-tolerant plants such as allium and talinum, while the deeper "intensive" parts of the roof will have larger showy herbaceous perennials such as salvia and lavender.

Green roofs offer a number of benefits, explained Berghage. "Many older cities have sewage-treatment problems, and their sewage systems often overflow with stormwater," he said. "Green roofs absorb and hold some of that water. Every drop of water that hits a roof must go somewhere, and usually that place is a stormwater basin. Not only do we lose valuable land by setting it aside for stormwater-retention basins, but they become an eyesore and a breeding ground for mosquitoes, which may carry West Nile Virus. Green roofs address these issues."

Also, the insulation provided by the vegetation can reduce the energy needed to cool or heat a building by 10 percent or more, Berghage pointed out.

Yet, with all the positives, Berghage noted that green roofs can be difficult to implement. "You generally run into problems in terms of weight," he said. "The cost of reinforcing an existing roof may not justify it, so most green roofs these days are constructed on new buildings such as the Forest Resources Building."

Green roofs have been popular in Europe for decades but have been slow to catch on in the United States. However, the move toward constructing green roofs in this country seems to be gaining momentum, according to Berghage. "We are beginning to see a shift toward more green roofs in places like Chicago to counteract problems with heat in buildiigs," he said. "In fact, from last year to this year, there has been an 80 percent increase in green roof projects."

A graduate student working with Berghage is surveying people working in the Forest Resources Building to gauge their attitudes before and after the green roof there is installed. "There is some evidence that absenteeism goes down among employees working in a building with a green roof," he said. "Some of the leading corporations in this country are doing this kind of research because there is big money in amenities for employees. Companies have discovered that they can rent offices faster if they look out on green roofs."

For more information, visit the [Penn State Green Roof Research Center](#).

GreenSense 2007 Speaker to Address Economic Benefits of Green Buildings



The developer of the country's first green, master-planned, mixed-use, arts and residential neighborhood will be the keynote speaker for [GreenSense 2007](#) on March 15 in Pittsburgh.

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Susan Eastridge, chief executive officer of Concord Eastridge, will open the conference with a discussion of her company's commitment to building profits through green building. Concord Eastridge is the winning developer of the [Pittsburgh Cultural Trust's RiverParc](#) design/development competition to create a \$460 million “green” arts/residential neighborhood within the Cultural District.

The luncheon speaker will be Jim Hartzfeld, managing director, InterfaceRAISE, Interface Corporation. The Atlanta company has been a leader in transforming the carpet and flooring industry into a corporate leader that protects the environment while serving the needs of shareholders.

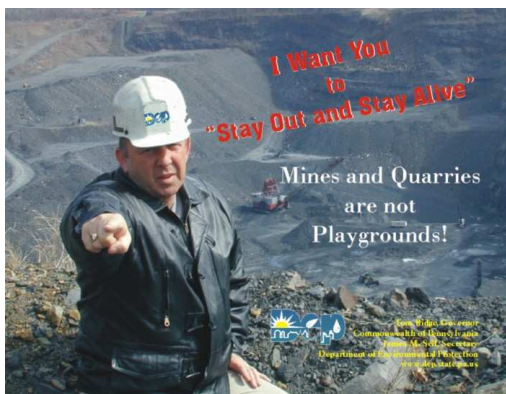
"Green building has evolved from a grassroots movement to a thriving industry that is delivering substantial and sustainable results for the bottom lines of its participants and the health of the environment," said Rebecca Flora, executive director, Green Building Alliance. "Economic forces are fueling the growth in the green building industry. In many cases, green buildings are leasing faster, commanding premium rents and qualify for insurance discounts."

Winners of the [Shades of Green Leadership Awards](#) will also be announced at the GreenSense luncheon. The awards recognize individuals in Western Pennsylvania who have contributed to the region's environmental transformation through green leadership within the built environment.

GreenSense 2007 is a one-day conference highlighting case studies and strategies in green building, featuring nationally recognized experts. Exhibit booths displaying green building products and afternoon tours of Pittsburgh-area green buildings are also available.

To register or obtain more information, call 412-431-0709 or visit the [GreenSense 2007 Conference webpage](#).

Two Deaths in Abandoned Mines in 2006, 29 in Past Six Years



The Department of Environmental Protection this week said two people died while trespassing at mine sites in Pennsylvania last year, despite increased efforts to educate the public about the dangers of mines and quarries.

“These are tragedies that could have been avoided,” said DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty. “Abandoned mines and quarries are dangerous places, and although the number of fatalities at these sites has dropped over the past two years, we are still troubled by these deaths. Our message

to all Pennsylvanians is very clear: mines and quarries are not playgrounds; they can kill you. Stay out and stay alive.”

The most recent death occurred on December 30 at a mine site in Brush Valley Township, Indiana County. A 37-year-old man was killed when his ATV overturned while he was attempting to climb a 65-degree slope in an area that was posted as closed to all motorized vehicles. A passenger on the ATV escaped serious injury.

A second fatality happened on October 18 in Cass Township, Schuylkill County, at an abandoned mine site in the Duncott area. A 25-year-old man climbed onto the support

structure of a conveyor belt system approximately 25 feet above the ground and came in contact with a 23,000-volt power line. He was found in a stream below the conveyor.

This is the lowest number of fatalities involving trespassing at mines and quarries in Pennsylvania since 2001. Although there were no drowning fatalities in quarries for the first time in the past six years, the state recorded an ATV-related fatality for the third consecutive year.

With two fatalities in 2006 and five fatalities in 2005, 29 people have died while trespassing in abandoned mines and quarries in 19 different counties in the commonwealth since January 2000. In fact, more people are killed each year while trespassing in mines and quarries than from accidents at all active mining operations in Pennsylvania. Thirty people died nationwide in abandoned mines in 2006.

To help counter this problem, DEP has partnered with the U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration, other state agencies and the active mining industry to promote the “[Stay Out-Stay Alive](#)” campaign. The goal of this national effort is to educate the public about the dangers of abandoned and active mines.

Inspectors from DEP’s Bureau of Mine Safety have been meeting with property owners and local and county emergency responders to have them post signs that warn of the dangers of abandoned sites and to restrict access to these places. In addition, mine rescue personnel visit schools, colleges and community groups to speak about the dangers of abandoned mines and quarries.

DEP is also reaching out to hunters and other outdoor recreation groups by including “Stay Out-Stay Alive” materials in Pennsylvania Game Commission publications and in ATV and snowmobile registrations mailed by DCNR.

Pennsylvania has the largest abandoned mine lands problem in the country, with more than 180,000 acres of unmarked shafts, unstable cliffs and waste piles, water-filled pits and abandoned equipment left over from when mining was largely unregulated prior to 1977.

Congress recently reauthorized a 15-year extension to the federal Abandoned Mine Lands Trust Fund that will deliver over \$1 billion to Pennsylvania to reclaim the most dangerous abandoned mine sites.

DEP is planning to conduct a series of public outreach meetings to involve state and local elected officials, environmental and watershed groups, businesses, foundations and economic development organizations to explore options for addressing the host of problems faced by Pennsylvania’s former mining communities, and to look at opportunities presented by this historic legislation.

For more information, visit the “[Stay Out-Stay Alive](#)” program webpage and watch the online video Stay Out-Stay Alive [public service announcement](#).

Report Recommends Improvements to Susquehanna Flood Warning System



The Susquehanna River Basin Commission this week released a [report making recommendations](#) on how to improve the Commission’s Flood Forecast and Warning System.

The report evaluates the System’s response to the June 25-26, 2006 flood that devastated much of southern tier New York and central Pennsylvania.

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The report evaluates the performance of the [Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System](#) leading up to and during the flood, and makes recommendations for system improvements, including enhancing select stream gages, installing new rain and stream gages and improving the way weather data is collected, monitored, interpreted and disseminated to the public.

"The Susquehanna system utilizes radar and a network of stream and rain gages to provide data used by the National Weather Service to forecast river levels and issue more timely and accurate early flood warnings," said Paul Swartz, SRBC Executive Director. "These early warnings help reduce flood damages by an average of \$32 million annually throughout the Susquehanna basin, as businesses and residents have time to secure their property and get themselves to safer locations before flood waters strike."

The SFFWS is maintained and operated by an interagency committee coordinated by SRBC since 1986 and comprised of representatives from the federal government and the states of New York, Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The goal of the SFFWS is to provide at least 6 hours of advance warnings. While the National Weather Service forecasters achieved the 6-hour goal during the June 2006 flood, the storm proved difficult to track and certain gaps in the SFFWS became apparent.

Following are 10 of the more than 35 recommended improvements listed in the June 2006 flood report (based on the interagency committee's own assessment and feedback received during several post-flood community dialogue and technical sessions convened by SRBC):

- Flood-proof stream gage structures at Rockdale, Unadilla, Vestal and Conklin, N.Y.;
- Install and maintain real-time stream gages at Middletown, Pa. (Swatara Creek) and Binghamton and Oneonta, N.Y. (Susquehanna River);
- Expand precipitation monitoring network to fill gaps in coverage at or near Vestal, Waverly, Oneonta, Cuyler/Homer area and Haskinville/Cohocton area in New York;
- Extend the rating curves (that show the relationship between depth and river flow) at all river forecast points to 125 percent above the record flow, with priorities at Rockdale, Unadilla, Bainbridge, Conklin, Cortland, Sherburne, Green, Chenango Forks, Vestal, Owego, Waverly and Chemung in New York, and Tunkhannock, Old Forge and Bloomsburg in Pennsylvania;
- Develop modeled forecast points for the Susquehanna River at Oneonta, Windsor and Owego, N.Y.;
- Develop crest-crest relationships for forecasts in New York at Norwich (Chenango River) and Binghamton (Susquehanna River);
- Provide more forecast information on the Lower Lackawanna River in Lackawanna County, Pa., in the area of the flood damage reduction project;
- Provide forecast information on the Codorus Creek in the York, Pa., area;
- Increase and enhance web server capacity of the NWS' Advanced Hydrologic Prediction Services. (Users had difficulty obtaining current flood information during the June 2006 event due to web server exceeding capacity.); and
- Develop flood inundation maps to provide emergency managers a functional tool to facilitate emergency response.

The SFFWS interagency committee has already implemented some of the recommended improvements and has others under consideration. The implemented improvements to date include: U.S. Geological Survey is currently installing the new

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

stream gage on the Swatara Creek at Middletown, Pa.; the NWS increased web server capacity to improve reliability; and SRBC is working with USGS and NWS to develop flood inundation map layers - currently for Binghamton, N.Y., and surrounding communities - and finalize logistics for installing rain and stream gages at several locations in New York

Swartz said, "Given the tremendous damages suffered as a result of the June flood, many residents and businesses still are grappling with recovery efforts. The final damage estimates throughout the Susquehanna basin also are not yet fully known."

Forty-eight of the 67 counties in the Susquehanna basin were impacted during the June 2006 flood, with the most severe flooding occurring in New York where flood crests reached all-time record highs at several locations including Binghamton, Conklin and Vestal in Broome County, Oneonta and Sidney in Otsego County, and Owego and Waverly in Tioga County. In Pennsylvania, record flooding hit Tunkhannock in Wyoming County, Bloomsburg in Columbia County and Hershey in Dauphin County.

"As bad as this flood was, the Susquehanna basin is fortunate to have one of the best flood warning systems in place, and an extensive network of structural flood damage reduction projects," said Brig. General Todd Semonite, SRBC Federal Commissioner and North Atlantic Division Commander, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "The structural projects maintained by the Corps' Baltimore District averted nearly \$1 billion in damages during the flood."

The [June 2006 Flood Report](#) and information about the Susquehanna Flood Forecast and Warning System are available on the SRBC's website. Hard copy reports are also available from SRBC by calling 717-238-0423 ext. 302 or by sending e-mail to: srbc@srbc.net.

Save the Date: May 4-5 All Volunteer Watershed Monitors Summit

The DEP's Citizens Volunteer Monitoring Program and the Pennsylvania Senior Environment Corps are sponsoring the 4th annual [All Volunteer Watershed Monitors Summit](#) on May 4-5 at the Eisenhower Conference Center in Gettysburg.

There are four conference tracks: restoration and protection, volunteer program management and sustainability, monitoring nets and boats and making monitoring matter: Government 101.

For more information, visit the [All Volunteer Watershed Monitors Summit webpage](#) or call 717-244-6248.

Nutrient Credits To Be Used by Developer in Perry County

Nutrient credits will be used by HAMM Equities LLC to meet the zero nitrogen/zero phosphorus permit limits for a new sewage treatment plant that the King of Prussia-based developer is constructing to serve a commercial development in Howe Township, Perry County.

[Red Barn Trading Company](#) facilitated the trade for the project designed by CEDG Engineers, which is headquartered in Mechanicsburg, Pa. McNees Wallace & Nurick LLC of Harrisburg, Pa., counsel for Red Barn, drafted the sales agreements.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

DEP's nutrient reduction goals, requiring millions of pounds of phosphorus and nitrogen decreases, affect new or existing facilities and developments in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Developers, industries and sewage treatment plant operators meet the new discharge limits by buying DEP-approved credits or upgrading to meet the standards. Since existing technology cannot meet zero nitrogen/zero phosphorus standards, buying sufficient credits to offset the discharge of nutrients is the only way for developers of new sewage facilities to meet DEP requirements.

Red Barn generates credits by working with its extensive agricultural client base to identify farm improvements that reduce phosphorus or nitrogen. Credits are then pooled to meet buyers' needs.

Red Barn's [first nutrient credit sale](#), announced in November, was for a Susquehanna County development by developer Daniel Maisano, Dunn Lake LLC. Those credits are being used toward permitting of a residential sewage treatment system.

Currently, Red Barn has more than 380,000 DEP-Certified nutrient credits – the majority of credits on the market – and expects to submit applications for 200,000 additional credits to DEP in the next few weeks. **Link:** [DEP Nutrient Trading Web Page](#)

Streambank Stabilization, Habitat Enhancement Workshops in March

The Fish and Boat Commission will sponsor streambank stabilization and habitat enhancement workshops on March 12 in Lycoming College and March 13 at DEP's Moshannon District Mining Office.

The Fish and Boat Commission has been installing habitat enhancement structures, which also provide significant bank protection, since 1988 and this may be just the ticket for small scale problems.

The Fish and Boat Commission has developed design specifications for structures (mostly log and rock) that stabilize up to 250 linear feet of bank while significantly improving fish habitat. These structures take minimal design, require very limited stream system evaluation, require GP1 permits (which are very simple) and are relatively inexpensive to build.

The workshops will be held--

- March 12 - [Lycoming College](#), Room G11 Heim Science Building, Lycoming County, 7-9 p.m.; and
- March 13 - [DEP Moshannon District Office](#), Philipsburg, Centre County, 7-9 p.m.

For more information, contact the Habitat Management Division of the Fish and Boat Commission at 814-353-2225.

Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference May 10-12

The [2007 Pennsylvania Land Conservation Conference](#) will be held in State College May 10 to 12.

This year's conference will feature a keynote presentation by Larry Schweiger, President of the National Wildlife Federation entitled, "Good Planets Are Hard to Find," on the issue of global climate change.

Another highlight of the conference will be the presentation of the Legislative Leadership Award to Rep. Chris Ross (R-Chester).

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

This is Pennsylvania's premier training, networking and inspirational event for those involved with private and public land conservation.

For registration and other information, visit the [Conference webpage](#).

\$2.7 Million Available to Local Communities to Reduce Toxic Exposure

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week announced the availability of \$2.7 million to support community-based partnerships in reducing risks from toxics in local communities.

Applications are due April 9.

EPA will award about \$2.7 million in two types of cooperative agreements through the [Community Action for a Renewed Environment](#) (CARE) program.

Level I cooperative agreements will help establish community-based partnerships and set priorities for reducing risks from toxics in a community.

Examples of past projects include addressing water quality in Puget Sound, helping to rebuild St. Bernard Parish in Louisiana, helping the Cherokee Nation deal with toxic waste, and reducing air toxics in Tucson. EPA anticipates awarding eight to 10 cooperative agreements under Level I, ranging from \$75,000 to \$100,000.

Level II cooperative agreements are for communities that already have undertaken a comprehensive process to assess risks from all sources of toxics, formed a broad-based collaborative, have identified risk reduction priorities and are ready to implement risk reduction strategies. EPA expects to award six to eight cooperative agreements, ranging from \$150,000 to \$300,000.

A range of community groups may apply for funding, including county and local governments, tribes, non-profit organizations and universities. EPA will conduct three conference calls, Feb. 20 and 26 and March 1, for prospective applicants to ask questions about the application process.

The CARE program, which began in 2005, helps to build broad-based local partnerships for reducing risks from toxic pollutants that come from numerous sources.

Additional information about the 2007 cooperative agreements, projects awarded in 2005 and 2006, the conference calls, and how to apply for the cooperative agreements, visit the [CARE Program webpage](#).



EE Connections Newsletter Now Available from PA Environmental Ed Center

Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education



The February issue of [EE Connections newsletter](#) from the [Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education](#) is now available online. The highlights from this month's issue include—

PCEE News: [Question of the Week Fall 2006 Award Recipients](#), PCEE Director Attends Wildlife Habitat Council;

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General News: Former Pennsylvania Senator Named "Conservationist of the Year," The Building Green Exhibit, Farm Show Features Pennsylvania's Renewable Energy, Aviary Tracks Raptors, Green Building Programs;

K-12 News: Restoring the Nature of Childhood, "Clean Water Begins and Ends with You," Environmental Community Service Award, 2007 Rivers Conservation and Fly Fishing Youth Camp, Environmental Education Awards;

Higher Education: Tropical Field Ecology, Master of Science in Ecological Teaching and Learning, NOAA Undergraduate Scholarship;

Professional Development: Confluence 2007 Workshop, PAEE Conference Reminder, "Invasive Species: Awareness to Action" Conference, Energy Efficiency Seminar, Act 48 Program Opportunities; and

Grants/Awards: Diesel School Bus Retrofit Program, AF & PA Recycling Awards.

To get your own copy, send an email to: info@pcee.org or visit the EE Connections [sign-up webpage](#).

Bluebird Society Hosts Annual Conference March 30-31 in State College



The Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania will host its [9th Annual Conference](#) in State College which features a variety of speakers, displays, a live auction, raffles, quilt raffle and luncheon.

The conference will entertain participants on a range of topics regarding the eastern bluebird and share the joys and problems found in bluebird nest boxes, and on the bluebird trail.

Scheduled speakers include:

- **Bet (Elizabeth) Zimmerman** was a featured presenter at the NABS 2006 Conference and hosts a wonderful educational bluebird website www.sialis.org. She will discuss effective house sparrow control methods and will share her innovative trail monitoring techniques and tips that she uses on her three bluebird trails in Woodstock, Ct.
- **Susan Renkel** is an avid bluebirder, nature photographer, conservationist, published freelance writer and artist. She currently serves as BSP County Coordinator for Snyder County, BSP newsletter formatter/illustrator, and member of BSP's Speaker's Bureau. Susan will present an exciting, close-up photographic journey into the life of some of some of Pennsylvania's native cavity-nesting songbirds that utilize nest boxes.
- **Andrew Ohrman** is the Co-Chair of the BSP Research Committee and is very skilled in utilizing audiovisual technology along the bluebird trail for research and for the sheer enjoyment of observing the wonders of nesting songbirds. He will share his fascinating video of bluebirds and other cavity nesting species inside and outside of the nest box at his bluebird trail at the Penn State University/ Middletown campus.

In the 1900's, Eastern bluebird populations plummeted by 90 percent throughout their range, and were absent from many areas in Pennsylvania. The bluebird uses cavities

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

in dead or dying trees for nesting, but this habitat was and still is, commonly destroyed by human activities.

In the late 60's and 70's, a grassroots effort rose up nationwide to erect and monitor artificial nesting boxes along what are called “bluebird trails”. These volunteer-driven trails have helped bring bluebirds back to the fields of Pennsylvania.

Early Bird Registration- \$30.00 per person (before February 12th) after this date- \$35.00 per person

For more information, visit the [Bluebird Conference webpage](#).

Peregrine Falcon Educator’s Workshop to be Held April 5



The Department of Environmental Protection invites teachers, non-formal educators, homeschoolers, and youth group and scout leaders to attend a free, Peregrine Falcon Educator’s Workshop, WILD in the City, from 9 a.m.-3 p.m., April 5, in the Rachel Carson State Office Building’s auditorium in Harrisburg.

Registrations are due March 28.

The workshop is sponsored by DEP and the Game Commission, in cooperation with ZOOAMERICA

North American Wildlife Park of Hershey.

Since 1997, a pair of Peregrine falcons has made its home on the 15th Floor of the Rachel Carson State Office Building in downtown Harrisburg. The falcon pair has reproduced successfully since 2000. Each year, DEP and the Game Commission track the activities of these amazing birds of prey and share educational information with the world via the Internet.

Workshop participants will explore the successes of peregrine falcon reintroduction in Pennsylvania; examine falcon specifics and endangered species concepts; and observe falcons in Harrisburg. Participating teachers are eligible for 5.5 credit hours under Act 48. Lunch and refreshments will be provided.

The workshop will feature a number of peregrine falcon experts, including PGCornithology biologist Dan Brauning, ZOOAMERICA Education Coordinator Elaine Gruin, DEP Environmental Educator Jack Farster, Project WILD Coordinator Theresa Alberici and others.

To register for the Peregrine falcon workshop, educators should contact DEP’s Environmental Education and Information Center at 717-772-1644, or e-mail adevine@state.pa.us by March 28. Space is limited, so registrations will be accepted on a first-come, first-service basis.

For more information, visit the [DEP Peregrine Falcons](#).

Banff Adventure Film Festival Returns To Lehigh Valley March 4

Experience the courage, the passion and the thrill of adrenaline-packed action sports, mountain expeditions, remote cultural experiences and the earth’s last great wild places when this year’s [Banff Mountain Film Festival World Tour](#) comes to the new Parkland High School’s auditorium on March 4, sponsored by the [Wildlands Conservancy](#).

The tour features award-winning films from the Banff Mountain Film Festival, a 31-year tradition held in early November at the Banff Centre in Alberta, Canada. Over 300 films entered this year's competition.

Making its way from British Columbia to Africa, the World Tour spans the globe to 260 locations spread over 30 countries. On March 4, the Wildlands Conservancy, with Nestor's Sporting Goods, brings the World Tour to [Parkland High School](#) at 6:00 p.m. Twelve of the festival's best films will be showing.

"These are outdoor adventures like none other, captured in high definition," says long-time sponsor and board member, Karen Nestor. "Coming to this film festival is a great way to psyche-up for planning some adventures of your own."

Tickets are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door and \$10 for college and high schools students with valid ID. All net proceeds benefit Wildlands Conservancy's preservation efforts.

Tickets are available at Nestor's Sporting Goods Whitehall, L.L. Bean at the Promenade Shops, the Wildlands Conservancy office in Emmaus, by calling 610-965-4397 ext 10, and online at www.wildlandspa.org.

This year, in addition to the prize give-away at intermission, Wildlands Conservancy offers its members a chance to win prizes in a members-only drawing. There will be a welcome table in the lobby for conservancy members where they may fill out their tickets and chat with staff.

Opinion

Federal Mine Reclamation Funding Will Lead to Economic Development Opportunities on Abandoned Mine Lands

Robert E. Hughes

Luzerne Conservation District

Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation



MaryD Reclamation Project,
Schuylkill County

New recent amendments to the Federal Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977 legislation, often referred in the environmental community as "Title IV," will provide a much-needed injection of funding for abandoned mine reclamation and mine drainage abatement into Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania is expected to receive at least \$1.5 billion over the next 15 years to clean up the worst Priority 1 (health) and 2 (safety) sites, which include dangerous highwalls, unmarked shafts, unstable vertical cliffs and crop falls, water-filled pits and sites with abandoned equipment and buildings.

The Department of Environmental Protection has estimated the total Pennsylvania abandoned mine land clean-up price tag at \$15 billion, which includes remediating mine drainage across the State that impacts nearly 4,600 stream miles.

For the first time, there will be guaranteed funding for clean-up from fees collected from the coal companies, stopping the practice of Congressional Appropriations

Committees creating annual tug-of-wars over the fund distribution as well as diversion of funds to unrelated Federal projects.

The idle Anthracite mine-scarred lands of Luzerne, Lackawanna, and Schuylkill Counties will have the opportunity to be dramatically transformed, reclaimed, and redeveloped, to best suit the needs of the surrounding areas that have been idle for decades.

Community leaders, environmental and economic development groups, as well as regional Chambers of Commerce's and industrial development authorities can assist the Commonwealth in prioritizing projects that will not only eliminate priority health and safety hazards that dot the Northeast Region, but can also begin to attract new businesses, commercial and industrial development, extension of existing coal field communities with new housing market opportunities, recreational opportunities, tourism, and of course, most importantly, job creation.

The December 2006 amendments to "Title IV" were part of a much larger bill, the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006, one of the very last acts passed by the outgoing 109th Congress.

A brief synopsis of the amendments to date follows to digest what is most important to Northeastern PA.

Reclamation Fees & State Funding

First, the reclamation fees will be extended; however, there will be a decrease in reclamation fees from active coal mining operations over the 14 year period. The authority to collect the reclamation fee on each ton of coal mined in the United States was extended another 14 years, but with a two-tiered decrease over the next six years to 80 percent of the current levels (35 cents to 28 cents per ton of surface-mined coal; 15 cents to 12 cents per ton of deep mined coal). After 14 years (2021), collection of reclamation fees will end, and funding to states will extend to 2022.

The 20 percent reduction and 14-year limit of fees were compromises in getting the law passed. Second, full funding from reclamation fees will be mandated to historic coal producing states, such as Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

The full amount of money collected from reclamation fees (minus the portion allocated to the Federal Office of Surface Mining) will now go directly to the states, rather than be appropriated by Congress.

In past years, Congress was stingy with their appropriations, resulting in an unspent balance of nearly \$1.8 billion in the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund that had severely hampered Pennsylvania's progress in reclaiming additional abandoned mine lands and improving the quality of life in our Anthracite coal field communities.

This change alone, was almost a miraculous accomplishment!

Third, the funds will be distributed according to reclamation need. The formula that determines how much funding goes to each of the various states has changed to generally direct future fees to states based on reclamation need and Pennsylvania needs more than its fair share. There will be a funding progression period where States will receive partial amounts of the reclamation funding due to them during the next five years, allowing them time gear up to the higher grant levels. The money initially withheld by Congress will be paid in later years.

Water Quality

From a water quality standpoint, and from the color of our orange-tainted streams that flow into the Lackawanna, Susquehanna, and Schuylkill Rivers, that eventually drain into the Chesapeake Bay, there is an opportunity for the Commonwealth to allow up to 30

percent set-aside of the funds for abandoned mine drainage abatement, operation, and maintenance of our Region’s notorious mine discharges such as the Old Forge Borehole, Duryea Outfall, Solomons Creek Boreholes, Honey Pot Outfall, Gravity Slope #1, Buttonwood Shaft, and the Vandling discharge, to name just a few.

The maximum percentage of a state’s annual grant that can be used to address abandoned mine drainage has increased from 10 percent to up to 30 percent, at the State’s discretion.

With recent developments in innovative mine water treatment technologies and the potential for the resource recovery of iron and aluminum oxides that color our rivers and streams hues of orange to skies of gray, there are opportunities to eliminate the precipitation of metals into our communities’ watersheds and backyards, and turn the pollutants into profits.

Remining Provision

Yet another positive outcome of the “Title IV” legislative amendments to the Tax Relief and Health Care Act of 2006, is that State’s can now give additional remining incentives to industry by offering Federal incentives for remining, daylighting deeper coal veins, going back into abandoned mine sites that would not likely be reclaimed by industry without the incentives for a third or fourth cut at the coal and then reclaiming the sites back to approximate original contours according to today’s current mining and reclamation standards.

Economic Development and National Security Opportunities

Pennsylvania must be prepared to use the anticipated future allocations wisely and in the most efficient, strategic way possible across Pennsylvania and throughout the Northeastern to seriously look at the existing abandoned mine land inventory and sit down with regional community business, economic, and environmental leaders to capitalize on locations that are high priorities, while at the same time will create huge returns on the investment in terms of jobs, economic development, and quality of life issues.

Our community leaders have a moral obligation to build our communities in the Northeastern up, for our families, and our children’s families, by helping out the Commonwealth in making decisions where the environment isn’t pitted against new development, since our communities in the region have already made enough sacrifices for decades in the best interest of the country, let alone Pennsylvania.

We have been left literally “taking our lumps” of coal for decades. The Federal Office of Surface Mining must review project proposals before they can be added to the inventory.

What’s even more ironic and related to national security is the fact that Northeastern Pennsylvania is slowly becoming the talk of Wall Street, termed “Wall Street West.”

Future reclamation and economic redevelopment of our mine lands are within a 60 mile radius of New York City and we have an open invitation to become the backup locations of data, information technology, and server computers and jobs that could end up providing national economic stability, if ever another tragic event should occur.

How important is Pennsylvania on a national level? You decide.

There are opportunities here in Northeastern Pennsylvania for great things to occur on a national level, it’s not just about the environment, it’s about a national debt that hasn’t been paid back to Pennsylvania, and the timing is now to finish the reclamation and

redevelopment projects that await Northeastern Pennsylvania and let our Anthracite Region, once again, help our Nation become even greater than it already is today.

Robert Hughes is the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program Manager at the [Luzerne County Conservation District](#) and liaison for the [Eastern Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation](#) (EPCAMR). He can be contacted by sending email to: rhughes@epcamr.org or by calling 570-674-7993.

Opinion

Snow Geese Are Harbinger of Spring at Middle Creek

by Joe Kosack

Pennsylvania Game Commission

Spring draws closer with each setting sun. Its approach creates a stir in wintering snow goose populations that erupts into migration, sending them north by the tens of thousands to the Game Commission's [Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area](#).

Although their name connotes winter, and the possibility of snow still accompanies most weekly weather forecasts, snow geese soon will be converging on Middle Creek - on the Lebanon/Lancaster county line - in their annual spring migration to their northern nesting grounds. Many other species will be doing the same thing, but they just don't have the compelling presence that thousands upon thousands of bright-white snow geese create while crossing a sunny sky or yakking it up in an agricultural field. Their arrival confirms spring's imminence, although it doesn't assure an end to snow. However, it does provide one comforting thought: there is less to winter than there was.

This winter has been an odd one. Enjoyably - and sometimes even uncomfortably - warmer than Pennsylvanians are accustomed to, winter has been almost anything but, for much of December and January in the state's eastern counties. Some trees and plants had been coaxed into sprouting prematurely for spring. A few bears roused out of winter dens to prowl.

Winter birds are working the fields, instead of birdfeeders. Schools haven't been canceling - hardly even delaying - for snow. Few eastern Pennsylvanians have held - much less used - a snow-shovel since last winter. That mildness compelled some snow geese to head northward. Then winter reclaimed Pennsylvania's portion of the Piedmont and Appalachians. The snow geese didn't stay.

"During an early January warm spell, we had about 15,000 snow geese at Middle Creek and a flock of about 5,000 at Muddy Run in southern Lancaster County," said John



Dunn, Game Commission waterfowl biologist. "Then winter rolled back in and the 'early birds' went south. When warmer weather moves in again, the birds will start pushing north.

"If there's a few inches of snow on the ground, or the surface of Middle Creek's main impoundment is frozen, it's a good day to stay home, because when snow geese labor to find food or open water, they generally head south, often back across the Mason-Dixon Line. Despite their name, snow geese really don't seem to have much tolerance for snow and cold weather. On the other hand, tundra swans, another spring migrant that frequents Middle Creek, seem more willing to tough it out and wait for the snow to melt."

Although they sometimes head north prematurely, Dunn said snow geese usually have their migration timing down.

"Their movements north are generally triggered by photoperiod - or the length of daylight in a day - the availability of open water for resting, and snow-free fields for feeding," Dunn said. "Access to open water and food is vital to these birds. Coming north before they have it almost always leads to a southern retreat."

At the height of migration, 100,000 to 150,000 snows may converge on Middle Creek creating a surreal, pulsating panorama that allows observers time to take in and comprehend. So if you're interested in experiencing the biggest show, timing is everything.

To help visitors sort out when to come, the [Game Commission regularly posts updates](#) on Middle Creek's snow goose and tundra swan numbers on its website. When migration is on and snow geese are dropping anchor at Middle Creek on their trek north, they usually number in the tens of thousands.

Of course, there's no guarantee snow goose numbers will build to six figures here, or that they'll even stay within viewing distance from the roads that wind through Middle Creek's tapestry of rolling hills, forested areas, croplands and wetland-dominated lowlands. Waterfowl lives intuitively, and its daily movements between sunrise and sunset are largely random; they go where they will. That's why the Game Commission's Middle Creek updates are subject to rapid and dramatic change.

"What is here in the morning may start leaving in the afternoon or the next day," said Jim Binder, Middle Creek's resident manager. "But they also may stay for several days, or even weeks. Bird migrations - triggered by photoperiod - are fluid and strongly influenced by weather conditions, such as a strong southern wind. One thing's for sure, though, they're on the clock after they pull out of their wintering grounds and you can figure that Middle Creek's biggest flocks will have passed through by mid-March."

Periodic updates about Middle Creek's snow goose and tundra swan numbers can be found on the Game Commission's website (www.pgc.state.pa.us) by clicking on the "Watchable Wildlife" link in the right-hand column and then, under the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area menu, selecting "Waterfowl Migration."

Middle Creek is one of the southernmost staging areas that snow geese use. They typically stay two or more weeks before heading further north. Snows start migrating northward from their wintering grounds in February. But it's not a fast trip back to their nesting grounds in the Canadian arctic.

En route, the large birds hit key staging areas where they rest and eat as heartily as possible to build energy reserves that will fuel their journey - often at an elevation of about 2,000 feet - and greatly influence their reproductive potential upon arrival at their nesting grounds.

When they leave Middle Creek, snow geese head for the St. Lawrence River estuary, their last major staging area before pushing through to the arctic region. The

estuary, more than 300 miles long, is one of North America's most important marine ecosystems and an exceptional stopover for migrating snow geese. After this, snow geese will move with purpose toward their nesting grounds. There the birds will scuffle with the elements and arctic foxes to fulfill their migratory mission to nest and raise young.

When they occupy Middle Creek, snow geese often can be observed working the fields for food and resting on the large impoundment. They're usually pretty vocal and aren't necessarily flighty. Wildlife watchers who keep their distance and use spotting scopes or binoculars, generally get quite a show. If something spooks the sprawling accumulation of geese, they take flight, often en masse, in an uplifting event that will please even the most ardent curmudgeon.

In the early 1990s, snow geese came to Middle Creek in relatively limited numbers. Then, in 1997, a phenomenal 150,000 snows blanketed the management area's fields and large impoundment, and the birds have been visiting in large numbers pretty much ever since then.

The Atlantic Flyway population of snow geese currently numbers about one million. The growth in the greater snow goose population has been phenomenal. In the 1930s, there were only a few thousand. Now, the population is twice as large as the goal of 500,000 set by Canadian and United States waterfowl managers.

The tundra swan's occupation of Middle Creek parallels that of snow geese. Traditionally, swans leaving their wintering grounds further south used to stage on the Susquehanna River and, when they were ready, headed north. Now, Middle Creek - along with the Susquehanna River - has become a migratory staging area that is used each spring by several thousand tundra swans.

Since its creation in the 1970s, Middle Creek, which is part of the larger State Game Land 46, has become a critically important migratory bird stopover and staging area. The 6,254-acre property also contains a 400-acre lake and a wide variety of waterfowl-friendly potholes, ponds and wetlands.

"Middle Creek's habitat diversity and intensive management are responsible for making it so appealing to migratory waterfowl," Binder said. "Through its restricted areas, wildlife plantings, habitat enhancements, and wetland creation and manipulation, Middle Creek has been molded into an area that now rivals the Susquehanna River in waterfowl appeal. It has become a waterfowl oasis in a portion of the Atlantic Flyway dominated by intensive farming and development."

Snow geese weigh six to eight pounds and have a four- to five-foot wingspan. Tundra swans weigh 14 to 18 pounds and have a six- to seven-foot wingspan. Both species feed on waste grain, winter wheat shoots and grasses, and aquatic vegetation.

"Toward sunset, and as long as there's open water, waterfowl converges on the main impoundment," said Binder. "Nightly returns and sunrise liftoffs are about the only snow goose movements we can forecast. When they may arrive, where they go to feed and how long they stay at Middle Creek is strictly up to the birds and closely related to weather conditions."

On weekends, Middle Creek draws a considerable number of spectators who come to see waterfowl. Weekdays are typically much slower paced. There are driving routes to follow with plenty of roadside pull-offs, as well as trails to hike. There also are restricted areas where public access is denied. Pending weather and road conditions, the driving routes may be closed.

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"One of the reasons we're able to attract and hold large numbers of waterfowl is because we have large restricted areas that are off limits to human activities," Binder said. "These areas are well-marked and monitored regularly. Individuals who enter these areas will be fined."

Middle Creek's visitor center, which houses a large wildlife exhibit, is a good first-stop for newcomers. This visitor's center is two miles south of Kleinfeltersville, Lebanon County, just off Hopeland Road, near the lake's western shore. It is staffed and open to the public six days a week. Its schedule is: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 5 p.m. The center is closed on Mondays.

For more information, visit the [Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area webpage](#).

Quick Clips

Here's a selection of NewsClips on environmental topics from around the state...

[Editorial: Scientists Agree Time is Running Out](#)
[Op-Ed: PA Must Take Lead in Global Warming Fight – Vitali](#)
[Editorial: Global Warming](#)
[Montco Finalizing Timetable to Reduce Gas Emission](#)
[In 100 Years, It May Be Balmy Here in February](#)
[Finding Shift Debate from Cause to Cost of Global Warming](#)
[Op-Ed: Time to Capitalize on New Coal](#)
[Rendell Asks Bush to Put Coal Loan Back in Budget](#)
[Op-Ed: Ethanol Isn't Making Local Farmers Rich](#)
[Cold Weather and Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel Fuel](#)
[Clarion Area Eyes Energy Improvements](#)
[DEP Secretary Visits Erie Biodiesel Plant](#)
[Wind Turbine Manufacturing Plant Wins Excellence Awards](#)
[DEP Invests \\$1 Million in Pittsburgh Brownfields Project](#)
[State Reducing Number of Waste Tires](#)
[Pocono Raceway Give \\$1 Million for Downtown Beautification](#)
[Editorial: Fairmount Park](#)
[Chesco Conservancy Goes on the Attack... of Vines](#)
[Outdoors: The Barrens' History Helps Porcupines Now](#)
[Outdoors: Thinning and Pruning Forests for Wildlife](#)
[DEP Announces Enhanced Inspections of Anthracite Coal Mines](#)
[Mine Safety Boost Hailed](#)

Watershed NewsClips

Read a sampling of NewsClips on watershed topics from around Pennsylvania.

[West Branch Susquehanna Improving Despite Problems from Past](#)
[When Cleaned, Mine Water Might Supply Proposed Airport](#)
[Watershed Leaders Reaching Out for Volunteers](#)
[Officials Support Swatara Creek Land Purchase Plan](#)

[Watershed Funds Coming for Flood Damage in Wayne County](#)
[Mine Reclamation Projects in Lackawanna County](#)
[Swamp Creek a Critical Natural Area](#)
[Brainstorm on the Delaware Waterfront](#)
[Design Team Forms to Assist Delaware Waterfront Plan](#)
[York Raising Sewer Rates to Comply with Chesapeake Bay Reduction](#)

Regulations

The Department of Environmental Protection [published notice](#) of a March 14 hearing in Hermitage on proposed revisions to the State Implementation Plan for Youngstown-Warren-Sharon Ozone Nonattainment Area and the Fish and Boat Commission published a [final list of additions to the Class A Wild Trout streams](#).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – February 10, 2007](#)

Comment Deadlines: [Technical Guidance \(DEP website\)](#)

[Copies of Proposed Regulations \(DEP website\)](#)

[Status of Regulations, 6-Month Calendar \(DEP website\)](#)

Technical Guidance & Permits

The Department of Environmental Protection published a final policy on utilization of disadvantaged business enterprise firms and a draft policy covering the coal mining applicant violator system.

Final: DEP ID: 381-5511-014 Guidance on the Utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Firms for Participation under the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving Fund Loan Programs. This guidance provides Department staff and loan program borrowers specific information on steps to be taken to meet mandated Federal procedures for the solicitation of Minority and Women's Business enterprise firms for participation in the construction of sewage, stormwater and drinking water projects funded under the Clean Water and Drinking Water State Revolving fund loan programs.

Draft: DEP ID: 562-3000-802. Coal Mining Applicant Violator System (AVS) Compliance Manual. The AVS is a National computer system managed by the Federal Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement to track coal mining permit information and permittee ownership and control information for the states where coal is mined. Comments due: March 12.

[For copies of Draft Technical Guidance \(DEP website\)](#)

[For copies of Final Technical Guidance \(DEP website\)](#)

Calendar of Upcoming Events

Upcoming conferences, meetings, workshops, plus links to other online calendars. Meetings are in Harrisburg unless otherwise noted. [Go To: PA Environment Digest Calendar Page](#)

- [DEP No-Cost Internet Training Courses](#)
- **February 12** – House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee meets to discuss committee rules and future agenda. Room 60 East Wing. 2:30.
- **February 12** – DEP [Technical Advisory Committee on Diesel-Powered Equipment](#) Special Meeting. Fayette County Health Center, 100 New Salem Road, Uniontown. 10:00.
- **February 13** – Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee hearing on the nomination of Michael DiBerardinis as Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources. Room 8E-B East Wing. Noon.
- **February 14** – Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs listening session. Four Seasons Produce, 400 Wabash Road, Ephrata. 10:00.
- **February 14** - House Appropriations Committee – Presentation of budget needs by House members. 9:00.
- **February 15** – House Game and Fisheries Committee meets to hear Game Commission present its annual report. G-50 Irvis Building. 10:00.
- **February 15** - House Appropriations Committee – Presentation of budget needs by House members (if needed). Majority Caucus Room. 9:00.
- **February 15** – Legislative Forestry Task Force Meeting, Joint Conservation Committee. Penn Stater Conference Center, State College. 10:00.
- **February 15** – **CANCELLED**. DEP [Small Water Systems Technical Assistance Center](#) meeting. Next schedule meeting is May 17.
- **February 21** - Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs listening session. North Philadelphia Health System (16th and Girard Ave.) in Philadelphia.
- **February 22** – Senate State Government Committee hearing on holding a constitutional convention. Duquesne University School of Law, Pittsburgh. 9:00.
- **February 26** - Senate Appropriations Committee - Dept. of Revenue (1:15). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **February 27** - House Appropriations Committee – PA Emergency Management Agency (11:30). Majority Caucus Room.
- **February 28** - Senate Appropriations Committee - Budget Secretary (3:00). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **February 28** - House Appropriations Committee – Public Utility Commission (9:00), Dept. of Community and Economic Development (10:00). Majority Caucus Room.
- **February 28** – **CHANGE**. Senate Appropriations Committee - [Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources](#) (9:00). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **March 3** – [Schuylkill Watershed Congress](#). Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown.

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- **March 5** - House Appropriations Committee – Dept. of Environmental Protection (1:30), Dept. of Agriculture (3:00). Majority Caucus Room.
- **March 6** - Senate Appropriations Committee - Dept. of Transportation (9:00). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **March 6** - House Appropriations Committee – PA Economy League on Transportation Funding (10:00), Dept. of Transportation (2:00). Majority Caucus Room.
- **March 7** - Senate Appropriations Committee - Dept. of Community and Economic Development (1:15). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **March 7** – House Appropriations Committee – Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (3:00). Majority Caucus Room.
- **March 8** - Senate Appropriations Committee- Dept. of Agriculture (9:00), Public Utility Commission (10:30), Dept. of Environmental Protection (1:15). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **March 18-20:** [Governor’s Outdoor Conference](#). State College.
- **April 5-6:** [Preparing for the Storm: Stormwater Solutions for PA Communities](#). State College.
- **April 13-15:** [PA Assn. Environmental Educators “No Child Left Inside” Conference](#). Wilkes-Baree.
- **April 27-28:** West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium III. Genetti Hotel. Williamsport. Contact: Amy Wolfe at 570-726-3118 or send email to: awolfe@tu.org .
Video Blog: [Amy Wolfe Talks About Restoring the West Branch](#).

[DEP Calendar of Events](#)

[Watershed Events](#) (courtesy [PA Organization for Watersheds & Rivers](#))

[Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

(courtesy [PA Center for Environmental Education](#))

[Senate Committee Schedule](#) [House Committee Schedule](#)

Helpful Web Links

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

[Daily NewsClips](#) [Daily DEP Update](#) [GreenTreks Network](#) [Watershed Weekly](#)

[DEP Press Releases](#) [DEP Advisory Committee Meetings & Agendas](#)

[DCNR Resource Magazine](#) [DCNR Press Releases](#)

[Fish & Boat Commission Press Releases](#) [Game Commission Press Releases](#)

Stories Invited

Send your stories about environmental issues, programs and positive actions to *PA Environment Digest* - DHess@CrisciAssociates.com or go to www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com .

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