

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

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[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

Remember the Wild Resource Conservation Fund at Tax Time

By Sara Nicholas

Wild Resource Conservation Program

With the ringing in of the New Year, the [Wild Resource Conservation Fund](#) turns a ripe old 25, making it one of the longest-running and longest-surviving state non-game wildlife programs in the country.

The Fund, now housed within DCNR as the Wild Resource Conservation Program, has survived economic downturns, changes of administration and legislative turnovers, and competition from an ever-crowded field of charitable and service programs vying for public donations and attention.

Like the northern flying squirrel that will be our featured critter this year, the Fund climbs, glides, and dips, but manages to hang on, often with flair.

When it was first created in 1982 by an act of the state legislature, the Wild Resource Conservation Fund was the first tax check-off “special fund.” It was such a good idea that others followed suit, and now there are currently seven special tax-check-offs on the state income tax return form.

This year also marks the sunset for the tax check-off for three of these special funds, including WRCF, so legislative efforts are underway to ensure that the WRCF check-off and others are reauthorized. Stay tuned!

A few years after the tax check-off idea, when revenues were not keeping pace with the demands of a vibrant and sought-after grant program to support research and conservation of Pennsylvania’s non-game resources, the Wild Resource Conservation Program had another good idea: to issue a special revenue-generating license plate.

First came the saw-whet owl, which brought a financial boom to the Fund with a mid-1990s peak of more than \$1 million in annual revenue. Then came the otter, which had its own peak and then decline.

Like the tax check-off, it was such a good idea that there are now more than 300 special license-plate funds.

Today, donations to the Fund are coming from three primary sources; the tax check-off, the license plate sales, and sales of videos, books, and other educational materials developed by the Fund.



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The annual grants program is supported separately through DCNR's contribution of Growing Greener I fund monies.

The income-tax check-off is still by far the largest and most important source of funding to carry the cost of administering the Fund, which is not supported by state general fund monies, and for creating and publishing new outreach and educational programs and materials on non-game wildlife and native plants in Pennsylvania.

Data on the WRCF tax check-off show that in the early days of the Fund—the mid to late 1980s—one million Pennsylvanians received refunds and 7 percent of them donated an average of \$2.37 to the Fund.

By 1997, due in part to the competition from other special tax check-off funds, only 3.1 percent of the one million Pennsylvanians receiving refunds steered part of their refunds to the WRCF, although at a higher average donation of \$5.30 per individual.

Today those figures are slightly lower, with a total annual revenue stream to the Fund holding steady at about \$123,000 a year. Unfortunately, costs to administer the Fund and to develop outreach and educational materials run more than \$200,000 a year.

The Fund needs another good idea.

Some of the ideas being debated this year—and in years prior—include broadening the number of Pennsylvania taxpayers who are eligible to contribute to the tax-check-off to those who owe taxes—almost 70 percent of filers—and not just those who are due a refund.

A study done several years ago for the DCNR policy office suggests this would instantly double the revenue stream from the tax check-off to the Fund, a policy that has worked well in 8 other states.

Other ideas include a non-game wildlife stamp; annual wildlife art prints; a dedicated revenue stream related to the purchase of watchable wildlife equipment or related recreational trips; a line-item for the Fund in the next state budget; a voluntary contribution opportunity each time wildlife license-plate holders renew their licenses, and many more.

Any Pennsylvanian or out-of-state wildlife supporter still has the opportunity to contribute to the Fund any time by sending in a donation.

Note: Sen. Ray Musto (D-Luzerne) introduced [Senate Bill 98](#) this week that would remove the December 2007 sunset date on the Wild Resource Conservation Fund tax checkoff program and extend it to 2012.

Link: [Wild Resource Conservation Fund](#)

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Session Schedule

The Senate and House both break for budget hearings until March 12.

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- Student Video Highlights Amphibians, Penn State’s Environmental Strategy
- EPA Webcast on TMDL Implementation, Nutrient Trading February 21

On the Hill

- On the Senate/House Agenda
- Senate/House Bills Moving
- Bills Introduced
- Weather Postpones State Senate, House Committee Hearings
- Specter, Casey & Holden Convince OMB to Fund Coal-to-Diesel Plant

Other News

- Estimating the Economic Value of Growing Greener Watershed Restoration Projects
- DEP to Hold Growing Greener Application Workshop in Harrisburg February 27
- New Grant Pays for Monitoring AMD Treatment Systems
- Five Watershed Restoration Success Stories Posted, Including Manatawny Creek
- Hearing on Bernhart Creek Watershed TMDL Set for February 21
- EPA Invites Comments on Four PA TMDL Watershed Plans
- West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium III April 27-28
- Westmoreland District Offers Stormwater Design Roundtable in March
- Chesapeake Bay Community Partner Award Nominations Due May 31
- Low Impact Development Recognition Award Nominations Due March 9
- Northeast Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Conference Set for March 17
- Wildlands Conservancy Schedules Native Plant Sale in May
- Philadelphia Housing Authority to Build ENERGY STAR Home
- DEP Dedicates Solar Power System At DEP Southeast Regional Office
- PennDOT Adopts Compost Specs, Have Your Compost Pre-Approved
- Farm Composting Subject of Rodale Institute Workshop February 20
- PA CleanWays Accepting Applications for Sue Wiseman Scholarships
- Winter Trout Stocking Schedule Announced By Fish & Boat Commission

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

Online Video

Student Video Highlights Amphibians, Penn State’s Environmental Strategy

A story in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* this week highlighted the work of Slippery Rock Area High School student Alex Petridis and his video project exploring the world of amphibians and reptiles.

“The Awesome Spirit of Wildlife” (TASOW) highlights the natural inhabitats of the Wolf Creek Narrows, a 125 acre wildlife area near Slippery Rock.

To see the video visit: [Teens’ DVD Aims to Save Amphibians, Reptiles](#)

The second online video this week highlights how Penn State University is working to reduce its environmental impact and save money.

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Greenhouse gases and rising fuel costs have caused Penn State and other institutions to consider ways to reduce the ecological "footprint" they leave on the planet.

Steve Maruszewski, deputy vice president for physical plant, outlines the strategy that the University has devised to combat the problem.

[Watch the video online.](#)

Online Training

EPA Webcast on TMDL Implementation, Nutrient Trading February 21

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Watershed Academy will sponsor a webcast on [Implementing TMDLs and Trading through the National Estuary Program](#) February 21 starting at 1:00.

The program features Darrell Brown, Chief of EPA's Coastal Management Branch; Mark Tedesco, Director of EPA's Long Island Sound Office; and Gary Johnson, Senior Environmental Engineer for the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

The webcast will provide an overview of the National Estuary Program and highlight how the Long Island Sound NEP is successfully using its Comprehensive Conservation and Management Plan as the basis for developing a total maximum daily load.

The webcast will also discuss the innovative trading program used in Long Island Sound that is reducing nitrogen loads faster and more cost effectively.

The next webcast will be on March 28 and will cover Key EPA Internet Tools for Watershed Management.

For more information or to access archived audio versions of past webcasts, visit the [Watershed Webcast webpage](#).

On the Hill

On the Senate/House Agenda/Bills Introduced

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

Senate Committees: the Agriculture and Rural Affairs has scheduled a "Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania" listening session in Philadelphia.

Senate/House Bills Moving

The House took action on these environmental bills this week...

Historic Preservation Grants: [House Bill 221](#) (Tangretti-D-Westmoreland) providing for Historic Preservation Incentive Grants was reported from the House Commerce Committee with a request that it be re-referred to the House Tourism and Recreation Development Committee.

Federation of Sportsmen: [House Resolution 71](#) (Gergely-D-Allegheny) congratulating the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmens’ Clubs on their 75th anniversary was adopted by the House.

Bills Introduced

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

PUC Environmental Funds: [House Bill 338](#) (Barrar-R-Chester) providing for an annual audit of economic, environmental or other funds created by the Public Utility Commission.

Local Health Response: [House Bill 355](#) (Santoni-D-Berks) Amends the Local Health Administration Law requiring county health departments to plan for and respond to public health emergencies.

State Energy Office: [House Bill 366](#) (George-D-Clearfield) establishing a State Energy Office within the Department of Environmental Protection.

HAZMAT Teams: [House Bill 370](#) (Fairchild-R-Union) requiring a review of equipment and training standards for Hazardous Materials Response Teams responding to biological and chemical terrorist incidents.

Mine Employment Credit: [House Bill 374](#) (Haluska-D-Cambria) allowing mine inspectors to take state retirement credit for time spent working in mines prior to state service.

Impact Fees: [House Bill 397](#) (Petri-R-Allegheny) authorizing the collection of development impact fees under the Municipalities Planning Code.

Coal Bed Methane Permits: [House Bill 414](#) (Stairs-R-Westmoreland) establishing a program to require permits for extraction of coal bed methane gas.

Phasing Out MTBE: [House Bill 436](#) (Dermondy-D-Allegheny) requiring the phaseout of MTBE in gasoline. *(text not yet online)*

Environmental Advocate: [House Bill 454](#) (Frankel-D-Allegheny) establishing the Office of Environmental Advocate within DEP. *(text not yet online)*

Storage Tanks: [House Bill 463](#) (Yudichak-D-Luzerne) making changes to Underground Storage Tank Pollution Prevention Program. *(text not yet online)*

Energy Assistance: [Senate Bill 76](#) (Tomlinson-R-Bucks) establishing the Home Energy Assistance Act to provide matching public funds to hardship funds contributed by stockholders, employees and ratepayers of home energy providers.

Tax Checkoff Provisions: [Senate Bill 90](#) (Tomlinson-R-Bucks) technical change to provisions for special tax checkoffs like the Wild Resource Conservation Fund. (*text not yet online*)

Emergency Services Grant Program: [Senate Bill 96](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) providing for an extension of the Volunteer Emergency Service Partnership Grants by vote of the General Assembly. (*text not yet online*)

Wild Resource Checkoff: [Senate Bill 98](#) (Musto-D-Luzerne) would eliminate the December 2007 sunset for the Wild Resource Conservation Fund tax checkoff program and extend it to 2012. (*text not yet online*)

Weather Postpones State Senate, House Committee Hearings

Central Pennsylvania's first big snow of the winter disrupted not only driving, but Committee activities planned for this week.

The Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee postponed the confirmation hearing for Michael DiBerardinis as Secretary for Conservation and Natural Resources and the first "Building a Vision of Rural Pennsylvania" visioning session by the Senate Agriculture Committee in Ephrata.

The House Game and Fisheries Committee also cancelled its meeting to hear the Game Commission present its annual report.

Specter, Casey & Holden Convince OMB to Fund Coal-to-Diesel Plant

U.S Senators Arlen Specter and Bob Casey, along with Congressman Tim Holden, announced this week the Administration has reversed its decision to rescind a \$100 million grant for a coal-to-diesel plant in Schuylkill County.

Under the agreement, WMPI will now have until December 31, 2007 to secure full funding for the plant, after which they may use the \$100 million award from the Department of Energy. Director of the Office of Management and Budget Robert Portman called Senator Specter this morning to notify him of the decision.

"I applaud the Administration's decision to keep available these funds for this important project. At a time when our nation is grappling with energy security, we should be using every incentive and tool at our disposal to promote clean coal-to-liquid technology in the U.S., along with other important alternative energy technologies," Senator Specter said.

"I thank OMB Director Portman for his prompt and personal attention and his action to continue innovative investment in alternative energy and economic development for Schuylkill County. Senator Specter and Congressman Holden have been champions of this issue for years and I was glad to join them in this effort," Senator Casey said.

"I thank the Administration and OMB Director Portman for deciding to not withdraw the funding for this project. We must invest in alternative technologies as we strive toward energy independence," Congressman Tim Holden said.

The administration's intent to rescind the funding came to light on February 5, 2007 with the release of the administration's fiscal year 2008 budget proposal. The president's budget contained language announcing the Department of Energy's (DOE) plan

to withdraw the \$100 million Clean Coal Power Initiative funding to help build the plant in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania.

Senator Specter and Congressman Tim Holden have been working on the development of the project for nearly a decade.

Other News

Estimating the Economic Value of Growing Greener Watershed Restoration Projects



Boggs Run Treatment Facility
Montour Run Watershed
Allegheny County

For the latest round of Growing Greener Watershed Restoration Grants, the Department of Environmental Protection is asking applicants to estimate the economic value and employment to be generated by a project, in addition to the most important value – how much they will cleanup the environment.

While more precise estimates are generated using site specific information, several groups across the state have developed rules of thumb and other information that may help watershed groups generate these estimates for their projects.

Eastern Coalition for Abandoned Mine

Reclamation: Robert Hughes and Michael Hewitt have posted an [Excel worksheet](#) on the ECAMR website that allows groups to plug in basic information for their project and estimate the economic gain associated with the project.

EPCAMR obtained the basic information for the worksheet for the Fish and Boat Commission and cautioned the information based on 1995 values and has not been updated to reflect the inflation rate.

Contact Michael Hewitt at 570-674-3414 or send email to: hardcoal@epcamr.org.

Fish and Boat Commission: John Arway provided a stream by stream [Excel spreadsheet](#) showing estimates of lost recreational (fishing) values for streams impacted by acid mine drainage throughout the state. The estimates have been increased to reflect 2006 values.

Contact: John Arway at 814-359-5140 or send email to: jarway@state.pa.us.

West Branch Susquehanna Project: [Amy Wolfe](#), Trout Unlimited, provided a number of rules that are useful. For example, the Project estimated that for every \$1 million spent on abandoned mine reclamation construction projects, approximately 27 jobs are created directly or indirectly.

The total recreational value lost in the West Branch due to impaired water quality is estimated to be \$16.4 million per year, conversely the benefit of cleaning up the West Branch. ([click here for a copy of the study](#))

A follow up to this Project study will be a more definitive economic analysis, including a property value study, local benefits of remediation dollars and the benefits of increased recreation.

Contact Amy Wolfe at 570-726-3118 or send email to: awolfe@tu.org.

DEP to Hold Growing Greener Application Workshop in Harrisburg February 27

The Department of Environmental Protection will hold an informational session on February 27 to answer questions on the 2007 Growing Greener I & II grant application process and schedule.

The information session is planned from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. at [DEP's Southcentral Regional Office](#), 909 Elmerton Avenue, Harrisburg.

There will be a brief overview followed by an open question and answer session on the 2007 Growing Greener application package. Participants are strongly encouraged to review and print out the guidance package, which can be found on the Department's website, prior to attending the session.

The session is meant to be an open forum which will allow for exchange of information among the attendees.

For more information about or directions to the Growing Greener Grant Application Session, call 717-787-5267.

Link: [DEP Accepting Applications for Growing Greener Watershed Grants](#)

New Grant Pays for Monitoring AMD Treatment Systems

The [FACTS Grant Program](#) "Funding AMD Chemistry in Treatment Systems" will provide chemical analyses to monitor passive abandoned mine drainage treatment systems and will ease the financial burden on cash-strapped grassroots watershed organizations that have accepted the responsibility of maintaining passive treatment systems.

Pennsylvania has invested heavily in passive technologies to treat the largest water pollution problem in the Commonwealth: abandoned mine drainage. Regular water sampling and testing is crucial in diagnosing a treatment system's wellbeing and success.

The FACTS Grant puts satisfactory monitoring programs within the reach of the volunteer-based groups by covering the cost of laboratory analyses—hundreds of dollars annually for each system.

In addition to funding the analyses, the FACTS Program streamlines the transfer of test results from laboratories using an Internet repository for water sampling data, called Datashed. Laboratories upload analysis results to Datashed using unique Sample IDs that link each water sample to a specific date, treatment system, and sampling location.

Datashed will store the complete history of a passive treatment system, helping to diagnose problems and allowing researchers to study and evaluate various AMD treatment technologies.

To apply, visit the [FACTS Grant Program webpage](#). *(By Jeffrey Gerard, AmeriCorps OSM/VISTA)*

Five Watershed Restoration Success Stories Posted, Including Manatawny Creek

Five new stories focusing on restoring nonpoint source impaired streams were posted on the [Section 319 Nonpoint Source Success Story webpage](#), including [Manatawny Creek in Montgomery County](#).

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The other watersheds include: Vermont (Chase and Slide Creeks), North Carolina (Brasstown Creek), Virginia (Muddy Creek and Lower Dry River), and Michigan (Furlong Creek).

The stories involve erosion and sediment control, dam and livestock removal, streambank stabilization, riparian enhancements, and other best management practices. In most cases, stream segments were removed from the state's 303(d) impaired waters list.

For details on these stories and others, please visit the [Section 319 Nonpoint Source Success Story webpage](#).

Hearing on Bernhart Creek Watershed TMDL Set for February 21

The Department of Environmental Protection will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. February 21, in Berks County to give residents a chance to comment on the health and future of the Bernhart Creek Watershed.

The hearing will be held at the Berks County Agriculture Building on County Welfare Drive, Leesport.

“We are looking at the total maximum daily load, which is the ceiling on the amount of pollution Bernhart Creek can take in without becoming impaired,” DEP Southcentral Regional Director Rachel Diamond said.

A portion of Bernhart Creek is currently impaired by urban and agricultural runoff.

The Clean Water Act requires states to submit total maximum daily load plans to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for approval. The proposed total maximum daily load was developed using water quality samples taken during various flow conditions in 2006.

Those interested in presenting comments at the hearing should call Vicki Welty at the DEP Southcentral Regional Office at 717-705-4729, to pre-register. Each registered speaker will be given 10 minutes to present his or her testimony.

The department will also accept written testimony, which should be sent to Joseph Adams, 909 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17110, or at josephadams@state.pa.us.

The proposed total maximum daily load for the Bernhart Creek Watershed is available online through [DEP's TMDL webpage](#).

EPA Invites Comments on Four PA TMDL Watershed Plans

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is inviting public comments on four Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) watershed plans in Pennsylvania.

The watersheds include: [Schuylkill River](#) mainstem focusing on PCB contamination, [Sawmill Run](#) for acid mine drainage and sediment impairments, the [Shenango River](#) with a focus on metals and [South Branch Bear Creek](#) for acid mine drainage impairments.

For more information, visit the [EPA Region III TMDL webpage](#).

West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium III April 27-28

The third annual West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium will be held on April 27 and 28 at the Genetti Hotel in Williamsport.

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Scholarships will be available to help with lodging and/or registration fees for students and volunteer group representatives.

The purpose of the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium is to promote the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative, which is aimed at the cleanup of abandoned mine drainage throughout the West Branch Susquehanna watershed.

This event serves as a forum for the exchange of ideas regarding abandoned mine drainage abatement in the region and provides an excellent opportunity for networking among volunteers, technical experts, students, and others interested in restoring land and water impacted by abandoned mine drainage.

The topics to be addressed include:

- Could acid mine drainage affect the health of the Chesapeake Bay;
- Freshwater mussels and eels: A missing link in the Susquehanna;
- Barnes & Tucker Treatment in West Branch headwaters;
- American shad restoration in the West Branch;
- Update on the comprehensive West Branch AMD Remediation Strategy;
- AMD project highlights from over a dozen watershed groups throughout the West Branch; and
- The Abandoned Mine Land Fund has been reauthorized – Now what?

A special tour of the Babb Creek Watershed acid mine drainage projects will be held on the afternoon of April 28.

The first-ever West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium was held in May 2005 and the second one was in May 2006. Over 300 people attended representing watershed, sportsmen, and conservation organizations; local, state, and federal government; private industry; and others just simply interested in restoring the West Branch Susquehanna watershed.

For more information on the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative, read the “[West Branch Susquehanna River Watershed: State of the Watershed Report](#)” completed in 2005 by the West Branch Susquehanna Task Force.

For more information on the West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative or the Symposium, contact Amy Wolfe by sending email to: awolfe@tu.org or Rebecca Dunlap at rdunlap@tu.org of Trout Unlimited or call them at 570-726-3118.

Westmoreland District Offers Stormwater Design Roundtable in March

Engineers, municipal officials, and others who plan, build or review stormwater management systems should be sure to bring their calculators to this year’s annual design roundtable hosted by the [Westmoreland Conservation District](#), because they’ll have a chance to put them to work.

A big part of the professional development event is a hands-on activity, where attendees will use Pennsylvania’s new stormwater manual and its Chapter 8 worksheets to design a mixed-use, residential, or office park on a real, 100-acre site in the county.

The “Design Roundtable” workshop also will feature new information on and practical applications of conservation-by-design practices and erosion-control materials, presented by Alex Graziani, ACIP, of the Smart Growth Partnership of Westmoreland County; Chris Kriley, PE, and Bob Scheib, PE, of the Bureau of Watershed Management, Department of Environmental Protection; Kevin Weaver, certified installer of Filtrexx InletSoxx™; and Jim Pillsbury, PE, of the Westmoreland Conservation District.

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The event, held at Giannilli's II on Route 30, is a full day long – from 8:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. – and will be offered twice so that interested individuals can choose the date that best suits their schedule March 15 and again on March 16.

The workshop begins at 8 a.m. with a trade show featuring vendors of stormwater management products and services, and includes a continental breakfast, lunch, workshop materials, and a copy of the conservation District's new stormwater manual. The event concludes at 3:30 p.m. with door prizes.

Cost is \$50, and space is limited.

To register, contact Christie at the Westmoreland Conservation District by telephone at 724-837-5271 or by email at christie@wcdpa.com by March 7.

Effectively managing stormwater runoff is important to everyone because it can reduce flooding, recharge groundwater supplies, and lessen the stress on our storm sewer systems. It also can keep our local streams cleaner and healthier by reducing the amount of pollutants (including motor oil and lawn fertilizers) that wash into our streams.

Chesapeake Bay Community Partner Award Nominations Due May 31

The [Chesapeake Bay Partner Community Awards Program](#) is now accepting applications from local governments to earn recognition as a Chesapeake Bay Partner community member.

Applications are due May 31.

The award recognizes, encourages, and supports local governments in the Chesapeake Bay watershed who demonstrate a commitment to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay, its rivers, and streams.

Chesapeake Bay Partner communities are selected for their accomplishments in four theme areas: improving water quality, promoting sound land use, protecting and restoring living resources and habitat, and engaging the community.

For more information and to download the application, visit the [Chesapeake Bay Partner Community Awards Program webpage](#).

Low Impact Development Recognition Award Nominations Due March 9

The [Low Impact Development Awards Program](#) is now accepting nominations to recognize developments across the country that use the LID design philosophy to manage stormwater in ways that maintain or restore the natural hydrologic functions of a site and protect its natural resources.

Nominations are due March 9.

LID addresses stormwater through small, cost-effective site design and landscape features. LID projects/programs also promote public awareness, education and participation in environmental protection.

The awards program was created through a partnership between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the [Low Impact Development Center, Inc.](#) to develop a leadership model for low impact development recognition

The chosen projects and programs will be showcased on EPA and other panel member websites.

More information may be found at the [Low Impact Development Awards Program webpage](#).

Northeast Pennsylvania Forest Landowners Conference Set for March 17

[Keystone College](#) will host the 2007 [Northeast Pennsylvania Forest Landowner Conference](#) on March 17 in Wilkes-Barre.

The Conference will focus on enhancing wildlife habitat and include topics such as establishing wildlife food plots, managing forest wetlands and riparian areas for waterfowl, aquatic stream habitats, grassland habitats, early successional forest habitat; finding resources and tools to enhance habitat on private lands; controlled hunting programs; and a discussion of liability associated with hunter access to private forest lands facilitated by an attorney from the Game Commission.

While public forestland abounds in north-central Pennsylvania, most of the forestland throughout the State is privately owned (69 percent). In recent surveys, forest owners cited a wide range of reasons for owning land, including income and investment potential, recreation, peace and solitude, and providing wildlife habitat. The management of these private forests has important economic and ecological implications.

The conference was developed through a partnership of DCNR Bureau of Forestry, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Penn State School of Forest Resources, Keystone College, and the North Branch Land Trust.

The conference is scheduled from 8:45 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Keystone College in LaPlume, Pennsylvania. The conference fee is \$25 for participants and includes lunch, breaks and written materials. Pre-registration for this conference is required.

For more information, [download the Conference brochure](#) or contact Penn State Cooperative Extension at 570-825-1701 or your local DCNR Bureau of Forestry office.

Wildlands Conservancy Schedules Native Plant Sale in May

Wildlands Conservancy announced this week its annual Native Plant Marketplace will be held May 4, 5, 6, 12 and 13 at the [Pool Wildlife Sanctuary](#).

Over 100 types of species of native trees, shrubs, ferns, grasses, perennials and vines will be available at reasonable prices, with gardening experts on hand to help with selections and to answer questions.



“Native plant sales are integral to the Wildlands Conservancy Native Plant Initiative,” says Chris Kocher, president. “This program seeks to educate the local community on the importance and usefulness of native plants.” Net proceeds benefit the Wildlands Conservancy.

Native Plant Sale Dates and Hours: May 4 - Members' Day - 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.; May 5 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; May 6 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; May 12 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.; May 13 - 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Pennsylvania's native plants are plant species that lived and thrived in this area before it was colonized by Europeans in the 1600s, when it was introduced to “foreign plants.”

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Native plants, then, are well adapted to similar soil, moisture and weather conditions of the area. Because of this, they are more apt to survive the winter cold and summer heat, and require no irrigation or fertilization once established. They are resistant to most pests and diseases; thus, native plants suit today's interest in "low-maintenance" gardening and landscaping.

Native plants are important for storm water management, erosion control, air and water quality, landscape aesthetics, recreational opportunities, food and habitat for wildlife, and maintaining the biodiversity that keeps our ecosystem healthy. Native plants are the natural food source for butterflies and hummingbirds, and many are resistant to browsing by deer and other pests.

Literature, materials and educational programs related to the importance of planting native plants will also be available from related government agencies and other entities.

For more information visit the [Pool Wildlife Sanctuary](#) webpage.

DEP Dedicates Solar Power System At DEP Southeast Regional Office

The Department of Environmental Protection this week dedicated a 4.8-kilowatt solar power system on the roof of DEP's Southeast Regional Office Building in Norristown that will conserve electricity and provide emergency power to critical systems that protect public health and safety.

Funding for the solar system was provided by BP Products North America in partnership with DEP and the Sustainable Development Fund which provided technical advice.

Chester County-based Mesa Environmental Sciences Inc. was the project team leader and was selected by BP to design, install and maintain the system.

"This solar system showcases how the use of alternative energy, combined with the advanced energy efficiency and conservation technologies in use at the Southeast Regional Office, can conserve electricity and meet Gov. Rendell's aggressive goals for production of clean energy," DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty said. "Solar power is an important piece of the Governor's strategy to dramatically reduce energy costs for homes and businesses, create new jobs and strengthen our economy by increasing the production and use of renewable energy."

The new solar PV system consists of 30 160-watt poly-crystalline solar photovoltaic modules manufactured by BP Solar, a sister company of BP Products.

The system will feed 4.8 kW of solar power to supply a portion of the building's power needs and charge eight emergency backup batteries to provide at least 24 hours of backup power to critical infrastructure in the event of a blackout.

The panels will generate approximately 5,343 kWh per year or 160,291 kWh over the expected 30-year life of the modules. By using solar power instead of buying electricity from traditional power plants, the commonwealth will eliminate the emission of 7,804 pounds of carbon dioxide annually.

The DEP Southeast Regional Office building was designed to meet the rigorous "[green building](#)" standards of the U.S. Green Building Council. The building received the Gold Level of the internationally recognized Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program.

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Green buildings use less water and electricity than other buildings and utilize environmentally friendly and recycled construction materials; they promote technology that can preserve resources and save money; and they offer tremendous health benefits.

Philadelphia Housing Authority to Build ENERGY STAR Home

The [Philadelphia Housing Authority](#) set an example for developers of affordable housing this week when it marked completion of 60 homes certified to the federal ENERGY STAR standard – and broke ground to begin construction on 125 more.

This is the first time that a housing authority in Pennsylvania has built homes to that standard.

PHA Executive Director Carl Greene said his agency has two motives for building energy efficient homes, “The cost of utilities has been soaring for us and for our low-income residents. These homes will save significantly on heating and air conditioning bills. We also joined the ENERGY STAR program to show our concern for the environment.”

PHA’s partner in the ENERGY STAR program is the Energy Coordinating Agency, a nonprofit organization certified to work with builders seeking ENERGY STAR Homes certification.

ECA Executive Director Elizabeth Robinson praised PHA for taking the step, “PHA has shown tremendous leadership in the national effort to increase energy efficiency in affordable housing. These Energy Star Homes will not only be more affordable to their occupants in the years to come, they will be more durable, comfortable, and more valuable.”

Energy efficient construction is only a part of PHA’s overall energy conservation plan. The agency is installing compact fluorescent bulbs in all its buildings and apartments and replacing older toilets with new efficient models. The agency is also conducting its “Conserve Energy, Preserve Public Housing” information campaign to educate residents on the value of conservation.

Said Director Greene, “Every dollar we save on energy costs is a dollar we can invest in housing and neighborhoods. At a time when federal funding for public housing has fallen so far, saving money on energy is more important than ever.”

The Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority also provided funding for this project.

The federal ENERGY STAR standard considers factors such as insulation, ventilation, high performance windows, tight construction, and efficient heating and cooling equipment. Testing must confirm these homes are at least 15 percent more energy efficient than homes built to the 2004 International Residential Code (IRC).

PennDOT Adopts Compost Specs, Have Your Compost Pre-Approved

The Department of Transportation adopted the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) Standard Specifications entitled, “Compost for Erosion/Sediment Control - Compost Blanket and Filter Berms” into PennDOT’s Construction Publication 408, effective April 2.

Both specifications call for furnishing, placement, and maintenance of organic compost that is well-decomposed, stable, weed-free and meets AASHTO MP-9 standards.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

The specification also calls for Compost for Erosion/Sediment Control (Filter Berms) derived from a variety of feedstocks including agricultural, forestry, food, or industrial residuals; bio-solids (treated sewage sludge); leaf and yard trimmings; manure; or tree wood with no objectionable odors or substances toxic to plants.

In addition, all of the compost must be tested in accordance with U.S. Composting Council's Test Methods for Examining of Composting and Compost, with the U.S. Composting Council's Seal of Testing Assurance Program certification and product label. PennDOT's Strategic Recycling Program is currently working with the Bureau of Design to develop composting projects across the state that incorporate these new specifications.

The specification was adopted under Section 800 - Roadside Development, in Subsection 866, titled 'Compost Filtersock' and Subsection 867, titled 'Compost Blanket and Compost Filter Berm.'

If you would like further information regarding these new specifications or how to place your product on the approved sellers list for PennDOT, please contact Rocksroy C. Bailey at c-rbailey@state.pa.us.

Farm Composting Subject of Rodale Institute Workshop February 20

[The Rodale Institute](#), along with [LandStudies, Inc.](#), [Wenger's Feed Mill, Inc.](#), Terra-Gro, Inc., [TeamAg, Inc.](#) and the Department of Environmental Protection, will hold a "Composting: Turning Excess Farm Nutrients into Valuable Resources" workshop on February 20.

The workshop will be held from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Acorn Farms, Mt. Joy, Lancaster County.

The workshop will cover basic compost production concepts and practices, as well as new research findings that will turn manure and organic wastes into a valuable resource.

Topics will include essential composting principles, advances in technology and amendments to produce a better quality product, and an overview of compost markets. Participation is limited to 100 registrants.

Admission and lunch are FREE courtesy of LandStudies, Inc., Wenger's Feed Mill, Inc., Terra-Gro, Inc.,

For more information or to register by phone, please contact Maria Pop, Training Coordinator, The Rodale Institute at 610-683-1481 or send email to: maria.pop@rodaleinst.org.

PA CleanWays Accepting Applications for Sue Wiseman Scholarships

PA CleanWays is now accepting applications for the [Sue Wiseman Scholarship](#), an annual \$1,000 scholarship that honors a youth who has demonstrated outstanding commitment and dedication to the environment.

Applications are due May 1.

The Sue Wiseman Scholarship is open to Pennsylvania youth, ages 16-21, who have initiated and carried out personal project(s) that address littering, illegal dumping, recycling, proper disposal, beautification, or education. An education project must address one of the other topics listed.

The scholarship is named for Sue Wiseman, whose own commitment and dedication to a cleaner environment led to the founding of PA CleanWays, a statewide

nonprofit organization empowering people to eliminate illegal dumping and littering in Pennsylvania.

Application forms are available electronically at the [Sue Wiseman Scholarship webpage](#) or by calling the PA CleanWays office at 877-772-3673.

Winter Trout Stocking Schedule Announced By Fish & Boat Commission



The Fish and Boat Commission is stocking longer, heavier adult trout in 2007 and for those interested in “where” and “when” those fish will be released, a comprehensive [stocking list is now available online](#).

The list is designed so anglers can quickly get details from easy-to-read tables detailing an entire year’s worth of stockings. To

make the list simple to use, stocking information is broken down by county.

Within each county, stream sections and lakes to be stocked are listed alphabetically and the entire year’s worth of trout stocking dates is shown for each. Stockings will start March 1 and as in previous years, will be spread throughout the spring, fall and winter months.

“Trout stocking information has always been popular with Pennsylvania anglers. With bigger trout being stocked and an earlier opening day for 18 counties this year, we expect the interest will be higher than ever,” said PFBC Executive Director Doug Austen. “The Commission web site continues to be the go-to source for all anglers getting ready for bigger and better trout fishing in 2007. You can find stocking changes, [print maps](#), [locate a wild trout water](#), [buy a license](#) – everything you need except a larger landing net.”

The Commission will stock some 3.4 million adult trout in Pennsylvania waters open to public angling. This figure includes trout produced at [state fish hatcheries](#), trout obtained from the United States Fish & Wildlife Service as part of a cooperative agreement, and trout obtained through a purchase contract with a commercial hatchery.

Overall, there will be a 30 percent increase in the weight of these fish, and the average length will increase to 11 inches – with more than a few trophy-sized fish mixed in as well. Since the Commission’s hatchery system production is capped at 1.9 million pounds of trout, statewide the number of individual trout produced was adjusted accordingly.

“By making the change to raising fewer but larger adult trout, the Commission is responding to the preference expressed by anglers through input at public meetings, correspondence, and on-the-water angler surveys” Dr. Austen noted.

In addition to the boost in fish size, the size of the trout season is growing as well for 18 counties in southcentral and southeastern Pennsylvania.

The 2007 trout season will open at 8 a.m. March 31 in waters in Adams, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Cumberland, Dauphin, Delaware, Franklin, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Perry, Philadelphia, Schuylkill and York counties. (The season starts at 8 a.m. April 14 elsewhere.)

Differences exist in climate across Pennsylvania and the time frame for providing optimum conditions for trout angling during the spring arrives earlier in portions of

southern Pennsylvania. Warmer temperatures there provide conditions better suited for trout angling at an earlier time in the spring.

However, these same warming conditions also can limit trout angling opportunities by mid-spring. The combination of a mid-April opening day and the potential for these waters to become too warm for trout angling by mid-May constricts the amount of time that trout angling can be provided.

“Starting the trout season earlier in parts of Pennsylvania expands fishing opportunities and improves our stocking and management efforts,” said Dr. Austen. “Opening Day has long been a time of great anticipation for anglers. This change promises to add more excitement in 2007 to an already popular pursuit.”

Quick Clips

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

[PUC Aims to Develop Electricity Rate Rules](#)
[PPL Turns Waste into Energy](#)
[Emphasis on Conservation Promises to Ease Power Burden](#)
[State Leaders Working Budget Gaps for Highlands](#)
[Planning Critical to Protect Ecosystems Near Developments](#)
[Northampton County May Preserve 380 Acres More](#)
[Agriculture Approves More Farms for Preservation](#)
[Screech of Gulls Has Local Birders All Aflutter](#)
[Earth-Friendly Products, Plants Growing Popular](#)
[Editorial: Global Hysteria](#)
[Editorial: Concerned About Global Warming? Think About This](#)
[Letter: Global Warming](#)
[More Global Warming Hysteria](#)
[Mountain Land’s Desirability for Wind Projects Increasing](#)
[GE Unit Investing \\$270 Million in Wind Farms](#)
[Editorial: Energy Initiative Worth the Cost](#)
[Local Firm Gears Up for Biodiesel](#)
[Editorial: Liquid Coal](#)
[Mining the Ore of Joy – ATVs](#)
[3 Schuylkill Mine Officials Targeted](#)
[Major Recycling Expansion to West, Southwest Philadelphia](#)
[Town Recycled Nearly 2,800 Tons of ‘06 Waste](#)
[Eco-Friendly School Aids Western Wayne](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Seniors Plunge Into Water Monitoring](#)
[Flood Forecasting System Due for Upgrade](#)
[Flood Forecasts Outrun by Nature](#)

[Wells Sought for Pike County Groundwater Study](#)
[Farming for Extra Credit – Nutrient Trading](#)
[Problem Creek in Valley Forge at Center of \\$500,000 Study](#)
[Watershed Project Hinges on Funding](#)
[Watershed Funds Directed in the Northeast](#)
[Ice Anglers Embrace Below Zero Temperatures](#)
[Fish and Boat Lacking Draw for Youth](#)

Regulations

The Department of Environmental Protection, Delaware River Basin Commission, Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission all published proposed regulatory revisions. Here are the details...

The Delaware River Basin Commission will hold a public hearing on proposed changes to the [Flow Management Rules](#) for water for New York City Reservoirs.

The Department of Environmental Protection published the [2007 Nitrogen Oxide Trading Program Set-Asides](#), revisions to the [Erie County Ozone Attainment Plan](#) and [final mercury emissions reduction regulations](#).

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission [published comments](#) on changes proposed to Water Resources Planning regulations.

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission [published proposed changes](#) to approval of water resources projects and procedures for enforcement actions.

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – February 17, 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 notice of proposed changes to the [Coastal Zone Management Program](#).

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

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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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 21** - Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs a “Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania” listening session. Board Room at St. Joseph’s Hospital, 16th and Girard Ave., Philadelphia. 10:00.
- **February 21** – **CHANGE**. DEP [Upper/Middle Susquehanna Regional Water Resources Committee](#) meeting. Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency, Wilkes-Barre. 10:00.
- **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** –Senate Appropriations Committee - Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (9:00). Hearing Room 1, North Office.
- **February 28** – DCNR [Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **March 3** – [Schuylkill Watershed Congress](#). Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown.
- **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 16** - Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs a “Building a Vision for Rural Pennsylvania” listening session. Four Seasons Produce, 400 Wabash Road, Ephrata. 10:00.
- **March 18-20**: [Governor’s Outdoor Conference](#). State College.
- **March 21** – Tree Care and Planting Workshop at Gifford Pinchot State Park. 10:00. Contact: Bob Deffner at R.B. Winter State Park to register by sending email to: rbwintersp@state.pa.us .

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- **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.

PA Environment Digest is edited by David E. Hess, former Secretary Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, and is published as a service to the clients of Crisci Associates and the public. Crisci Associates is a Harrisburg-based government and public affairs firm whose clients include Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations. For more information on Crisci Associates call 717-234-1716.

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