

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Holston & Crisci

March 7, 2005

Budget Cuts by Rendell “Run Deep”

DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty said budget cuts proposed in Gov. Rendell’s budget request for next fiscal year “run deep,” which makes taking action on his Growing Greener II proposal all the more urgent.

DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis described his budget in less dire terms saying it was “lean and responsible.”

Both agencies, however, said they are still able to accomplish their missions.

More details, including the full budget testimony of both agencies, are included in this *Digest*.

This *Digest* also includes a DEP announcement that it would no longer accept proposals under its Land Recycling Program for projects to clean up environmental problems on agricultural land slated for development.

And in response to requests, we created an instant “Digest Photo Gallery” for all the photographs contributed by readers since we began publishing. We invite you to submit your photographs to share with others showing how beautiful our habitat is in Pennsylvania!

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Chickee's Point along the Susquehanna River, Lancaster County. Print your own copy from the PDF file attached to this webpage.

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On the Hill

DEP Budget Cuts “Run Deep,” Push Is On For Growing Greener II

DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty told the House Appropriations Committee the cuts proposed in the Governor’s Budget Request for the Department of Environmental Protection “run deep,” but the agency is juggling resources to “deliver the services Pennsylvanians count on to protect their health and preserve their environment.”

Secretary McGinty itemized the cuts proposed in the Governor’s Budget Request in each of the last three years to illustrate the challenges faced by DEP—in 2003-04 there was a 26 percent cut in the request (most of which was eliminating the Act 339 sewage operating grants to municipalities); in 2004-05 the cut was 5 percent and in the current request for 2005-06 it is 10 percent.

But in spite of the cuts requested by the Governor, DEP has been accomplishing its mission and promoting several key objectives—

1. using environmental protection as a driver of economic growth;

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2. developing indigenous energy resources;
3. making government more efficient and saving the regulated community time and money; and
4. developing key partnerships between environmental groups and others, like in the case of nutrient trading involving Wall Street brokers.

Secretary McGinty said they have also begun a new initiative to ensure that “every budget dollar helps us achieve measurable progress on environmental protection and improved human quality of life.”

She said the agency has developed “real world” outcome-based performance measures and numeric targets for each of their programs to show how progress is being made toward cleaner air, cleaner water, better protection of land, more livable communities and sustainable energy. These measures were included in this year’s budget document for the first time.

Cuts proposed in federal environmental programs will also likely have an impact on corresponding state efforts, including funding for water and wastewater infrastructure projects.

The combined impact of all the cuts-- state and federal-- make it more important, Secretary McGinty said, to “rescue” key environmental programs and launch new initiatives. She called House passage of its Green PA Plan an “encouraging step,” but at the same time said the Governor has pledged to veto the plan if significant changes are not made.

She also pointed out again the particular problems with the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund and the need to provide both a stopgap appropriation for the current fiscal year and a more permanent solution to fund cleanups and emergency response activities.

A copy of Secretary McGinty’s testimony and the program measures outlined in the budget document are attached to this webpage.

NewsClip: [DEP Secretary Presents Testimony to House DEP, DCNR Letter Comparing Growing Greener II, Green PA Plan](#)

Governor Hears “Buzz” on Black Fly Spraying Program

According to a spokesperson for Gov. Rendell this week, the Governor heard the “buzz” about his decision not to recommend funding the Black Fly Spraying Program next fiscal year. He notified House Appropriations Chairman Rep. Brett Feese (R-Lycoming) that he now would fund the program in the coming year.

NewsClip: [Buzz Has Rendell Trying to Spare Black Fly Program](#)

DCNR Looks at Inns, Lodges, Expanding PA Wilds, Wind Energy Opportunities

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis told the Senate and House Appropriations Committees this week, that in spite of an over all \$4 million cut in his budget and having to use some existing Growing Greener Program dollars to cover administrative costs, “we will not close any parks, lay off any full-time staff, or eliminate any full-time positions.”

He also described several [new initiatives over the next year](#)—

Small Inns/Lodges

DCNR will finish two feasibility studies for small overnight lodges or inns at two State Parks—S.B. Elliott in Clearfield County and Erie Bluffs, in Erie County. “We believe that a small-scale inn or lodge could be a logical progression in the range of overnight options currently being offered (in State Parks),” said DiBerardinis.

Expand PA Wilds

DCNR and other agencies began an initiative last year to promote a 13-county region in Northcentral Pennsylvania with special signage and other activities. It will broaden that effort this year by designing a welcome center, doing an inventory of recreation assets and form a coalition of groups to work on acid mine drainage problems on the West Branch of the Susquehanna River. (*See the related story in this Digest about the West Branch Task Force Symposium.*)

Wind Power

DCNR is developing site selection criteria and a better understanding the needs of commercial wind power facilities that could come to State Forests. DiBerardinis said he would not consider commercial facilities in State Parks.

Regional Partnerships

DCNR plans on developing more regional partnerships, like the [TreeVitalize](#) in the Southeast, to address regional conservation issues.

Land Conservation

DCNR will continue to work closely with local governments, non-profit groups and private landowners to support land conservation initiatives with its financial resources and technical assistance.

DCNR also highlighted its activities in dealing with the issue of deer management in State Parks and Forests. The Secretary said two important facts will drive DCNR’s policy in the future—what is the current size of the herd and what is the appropriate size of the herd. His agency is working on both issues in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission in a [recent deer survey](#) and other actions.

The Secretary opened his remarks with a strong message urging the General Assembly to adopt Gov. Rendell’s Growing Greener II initiative.

“Most of us agree - Republicans and Democrats, House and Senate alike - there are pressing needs that get more urgent each passing day,” said Secretary DiBerardinis. “The Governor remains strongly committed to his original Growing Greener II proposal, which, if passed, could bring millions more dollars to DCNR to help with infrastructure improvements, critical land protection and community conservation and recreation initiatives. I am hopeful we can come to an agreement on a proposal that works for our citizens and our environment.”

Senator Mary Jo White (R-Venango), chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, commented that to the extent the Growing Greener II proposal has new fees attached to it, its chances “diminish.” But, added negotiations on the issue will continue.

DCNR now has available its blueprint for future plans called, “[Shaping a Sustainable Future: DCNR’s Blueprint for Action](#).”

Also available from DCNR is a [Q&A on the 2005-06 Budget Request](#).

A copy of Secretary DiBerardinis’ budget testimony is attached to this webpage.

In Other News

New Watershed Resource Guide Available, DEP Sets Workshops

The Department of Environmental Protection this week published a new “[Watershed Stewardship: A Planning and Resource Guide](#)” that is available two ways-- free online or on a CD upon request.

The Guide is designed to give grassroots watershed groups and local governments a framework for developing comprehensive watershed plans that address local goals, ensure compatibility with regional and state-scale planning efforts, and provide groups with the most current data available on restoration efforts.

The Guide includes a general introduction to watershed resources and six special “toolboxes” for--

- Watershed Organization Development and Sustainability;
- Securing Financial and Human Resources;
- Watershed Assessments;
- Developing the Watershed Management Plan;
- Implementation; and
- Monitoring for Success

The introduction and each of the toolboxes must be downloaded separately from DEP’s e-Library.

The DEP Watershed Academy and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Watershed Assistance Center are offering two, one-day workshops to watershed managers, watershed specialists, municipal officials, planners and watershed organizations interested in learning how to use the Guide effectively.

The workshops will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on two dates:

- March 16 in the Susquehanna Room of DEP’s Southcentral Regional Office, 909 Elmerton Ave., Harrisburg, Dauphin County.
- March 22 in the Terrace Room of the Genetti Hotel, 200 W. Fourth St., Williamsport, Lycoming County.

To register or for more information on the workshops, call the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Watershed Assistance Center at 724-459-0953, ext. 113, before March 9.

“[Watershed Stewardship: A Planning and Resource Guide](#)” is available on CD and DEP’s online e-Library.

For more information on the Guide, contact Diane Wilson, DEP Watershed Assistance Division, by phone at 717-787-3730 or via e-mail diawilson@state.pa.us.

Targeted Watersheds Nominations Due to DEP March 10

On February 18 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency invited states to submit nominations for its [Targeted Watersheds Grant Program](#). (*See Feb. 18 PaED*)

On March 1 DEP announced it is accepting nominations for the program from groups until March 10.

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This program is intended to support partnerships that have completed watershed assessments and have watershed management plans ready to implement. In addition, special emphasis will be placed on water quality trading projects.

DEP is requesting that eligible grantees who believe they could compete in the process and who would like to be considered for nomination for nation-wide projects should submit a one-page summary to Glenn Rider at the address below. Electronic submission is preferred.

DEP will select a small number of proposals and will then work with the local sponsors to develop complete nomination packages by April 8.

Questions should be directed to Glenn Rider at DEP, Bureau of Watershed Management, Rachael Carson State Office Building, P.O. Box 8555, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8555. Telephone 717-772-5807 or email to: grider@state.pa.us

Federal Recovery Grants Available for Floodplain Relocation, Debris Removal

The Department of Community and Economic Development announced this week the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development is making available \$2.5 million in Community Development Block Grants for disaster recovery activities related to severe storms and hurricanes that hit Pennsylvania in 2003 and 2004.

The deadline for local governments to submit applications is April 4.

Grants of from \$100,000 to \$500,000 will be available to local governments for a variety of purposes including relocating homes and businesses from floodplains, debris removal not previously covered, demolition of structures and other purposes.

For details and contact information see the [PA Bulletin Notice published on March 5](#).

Kettle Creek TMDL Available for Public Comment

The Department of Environmental Protection and the Susquehanna River Basin Commission are inviting comments on the Kettle Creek Watershed Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in Clinton and Potter counties. A public meeting will be held March 15 in Renovo. Comments are due May 4.

For more information contact Lee McDonnell, DEP, 717-787-9637 or email lmcdonnell@state.pa.us.

For a copy of the proposal, visit [DEP's TMDL webpage](#).

Sign Up Now for Watershed Snapshot 2005 -- April 15–24

Join the thousands of volunteers participating [Watershed Snapshot 2005](#) and help educate the public about water quality in their own backyards.

Each year a specific week is set aside around Earth Day when groups and individuals all over the country go out and sample streams, lakes and ponds and report their results. This year the week of April 15 to 24 is designated for the Watershed Snapshot.

Watershed Snapshot 2005 has undergone some major changes to streamline the reporting process and make the information collected more accessible. DEP said there

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will be no mass mailings of reminder cards or participation packets. All information, including field data sheets, is available on the DEP website.

To participate, go to the [Watershed Snapshot 2005](#) webpage and get field sheets and other instructions.

Then sometime between April 15 and April 24, go to any water body and complete as much of the information as you wish. There is no need to do all of the testing and measuring listed on the form.

You decide what to test, measure, and observe based on the time and equipment you have available. All data is welcome. Later, to enter the information collected, go back to the website and click on the "Snapshot Participation" box, and then on "database."

Within 30 days after collecting the information you should enter your findings into the database. DEP will use your data to develop a summary report, which will be posted on the same website at a later date.

If you have questions, or do not have access to a computer to print the forms, contact the Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Program at 717-772-5807.

Have fun, be safe, and remember to always get landowner permission before entering private property.

West Branch Susquehanna River AMD Restoration Project Symposium Set

On May 6 & 7 the West Branch Susquehanna Watershed Task Force will hold a symposium in State College to discuss cooperative efforts to deal with acid mine drainage problems across the entire watershed area in Northcentral Pennsylvania.

The West Branch of the Susquehanna River drains more than 4.4 million acres with some of the worst mine discharges in the Commonwealth.

The West Branch Task Force is inviting individuals, nonprofit groups, local governments, farmers, anglers, hunters and anyone else interested in taking positive steps to restore the river and its tributaries to the symposium.

The Symposium will feature a keynote address by DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty and remarks by Dr. Douglas Austen, Executive Director of the Fish & Boat Commission and DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis and many other partners on the Task Force.

For more information contact Amy Wolfe, Trout Unlimited, at 570-726-3118 or awolfe@tu.org

Attached to this webpage is the registration form for the event and a brochure on the West Branch Task Force Project.

Kettle Creek Landowner Stewardship Workshop April 2

The Kettle Creek Watershed Association, Trout Unlimited and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation are holding their third annual Kettle Creek Landowner Stewardship Workshop on April 2 in Germania.

The program will feature presentations on keeping drinking water safe, permitting and the landowner, fish habitat enhancement, benefits of stream bank maintenance, maintaining roads and driveways and acid mine drainage in the watershed.

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For more information contact Amidea Daniel at 570-726-3118 or email adaniel@tu.org.

A brochure for the workshop is attached to this webpage.

The Chesapeake Club Shows How to Adopt a “Chesapeake Lifestyle”

A new program launched in the Washington, D.C. area is taking a holistic view of educating people on what they can do for the environment by adopting a “Chesapeake Lifestyle.”

[The Chesapeake Club](#) is a online magazine for showing how to entertain, decorate, maintain your lawn, tour and cook in ways that protect the Chesapeake Bay and take advantage of its resources.

The food section provides the basics on cooking crab, has lots of recipes and guides to restaurants that are part of the Chesapeake Club.

Tips on yard care emphasize using few nutrients and planting native species.

There’s even a guide to decorating tips and entertaining and good spots for day trips around the Bay.

The Chesapeake Bay Program, a collaboration between the states in the Bay drainage area and the Federal Government, help fund and organize the Chesapeake Club.

NewsClip: [Ad Campaign Offers Homeowners Food for Thought](#)

Investigating Watershed Issues: Supporting Student Research - April 14 Program

Join the [Slippery Rock Watershed Coalition](#), professionals in the fields of mine reclamation and ecosystem recovery, educators and watershed organizations for an evening showcasing student research at [Westminster College](#) on April 14.

Students from local colleges and universities are invited to present their research, projects and discoveries relating to water quality, biology, environmental education, soil science and ecosystem recovery to professors, organizations, professionals and their peers.

This exciting opportunity will provide valuable experience and encourage the networking of students and potential employers.

The deadline for proposals is March 18. (A proposal form is attached to this webpage.)

For more information call Will Taylor at 724-794-6011 or email: wilbutaylor@state.pa.us .

DEP Will Not Accept Land Recycling Requests for Cleanups on Agricultural Land

Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen McGinty this week issued a statement to “clarify” DEP procedures under the state’s Land Recycling Program saying DEP will not accept remediation reports submitted for properties formerly used as agricultural or orchard land and slated for development.

Secretary McGinty noted in a statement that in Act 2, Section 102 (1), the legislature stressed the importance of these measures so the Commonwealth could better protect against the “needless development of prime farmland, open-space areas and

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natural areas and reduce public costs for installing new water, sewer and highway infrastructure.”

DEP also noted the law further states: “The elimination of public health and environmental hazards on existing commercial and industrial land across this Commonwealth is vital to their use and reuse as sources of employment, housing, recreation and open-space areas.”

The department also clarified that the remediation standards and testing protocols articulated in Act 2 will be used in determining if formerly contaminated farmland properties have been made safe for development.

Since the department will not review any Act 2 documents associated with these proposed developments, DEP said the liability relief afforded by Act 2 will not be provided.

Visit the [Land Recycling webpage](#) for more general information on the program.

NewsClip: [Land Recycling Changes to Preserve Farmland, Open Space](#)

Reminders: Shades of Green Nominations Due, April 7 Building Solutions Summit

Just a reminder, the [Shades of Green Leadership nominations](#) are due to the Green Building Alliance in Pittsburgh by March 10.

The Shades of Green Leadership Award is designed to highlight the efforts of a distinctive person or team within the built environment who: Demonstrates a visionary impact on the greening of Greater Pittsburgh; Possesses proven leadership skills that exhibit creativity and innovative results; Diligently partners with others in the region to facilitate positive change; and Consistently influences others to improve the environment.

A total of four awards will be given in the areas of: Business (individual award); Non-Profit and Education (individual award); Public Works (individual award); and Green Initiative (team award).

Smart building owners and developers around the country are constructing and operating environmentally-responsible buildings, which equates to improved performance and multiple bottom-line benefits.

The Green Building Alliance's second annual [Building Solutions Summit](#) is targeted towards those building owners, developers, facility managers, brokers, and financiers who desire to gain a competitive advantage from high-performance green building strategies.

This half-day, multi-session event features first-class business and development leaders who will reveal proven approaches and techniques to maximize building operations and gain healthier, more satisfied occupants.

Forest Lands Beautification Program Cleans Up 33 Dumps, 287 Tons of Trash

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources this week said nearly 287 tons of trash and other debris were removed during 33 cleanups on state forest and parklands in 2004 as part of Pennsylvania's Forest Lands Beautification Program.

[PA CleanWays](#), DCNR's cleanup partner under the program, organized volunteers to perform most of the cleanups.

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In 2004, 343 volunteers spent 1,723 hours - the equivalent of more than 10 solid weekends - removing tires, appliances, household trash and other debris from state forests and parks. Many volunteers also monitor cleaned sites to ensure that dumping does not reoccur, an approach that reduces subsequent dumping. Cleaned sites have had few reoccurrences of dumping.

More than 4,800 tires, 125 tons of scrap, 20 tons of concrete and more than 141 tons of debris were pulled from illegal dumpsites during 2004 cleanups.

Contractors were hired for cleanups at sites where the terrain, quantity or weight of discarded materials required the use of cranes or other heavy equipment. Forestry personnel cleaned several other sites. Scrap metal, appliances, tires and other materials were recycled after each cleanup. The remaining waste was properly disposed.

To date, more than 300 illegal dumpsites have been identified throughout Pennsylvania. Since the program's inception, 248 sites have been cleaned through the efforts of more than 2,400 volunteers. These cleanups have resulted in the removal of more than 2,900 tons of household trash, 27,900 tires, 400 tons of scrap metal and 600 tons of concrete.

Gov. Rendell proposed to eliminate funding for the Forest Lands Beautification Program in his 2005-06 budget request.

To join a cleanup team or for more information, call toll-free 1-877-7PA FOREST (1-877-772-3673) or visit the [Forest Lands Beautification Program website](#).

EPA Recognizes Limerick Township For Environmental Performance

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week presented the Limerick Township Municipal Authority, Montgomery County, with a [regional award for excellence](#) in operation and maintenance of its wastewater treatment facility.

The award honored the staff involved in the day-to-day operations of the facility, and recognizes local officials for their commitment to maintain and protect their community's environment. The authority is receiving the award in the "small-advanced" category, which consists of facilities that treat more less than one million gallons of sewage per day.

EPA reviews data and inspects the facilities to determine the winners of this award. Award recipients are selected for their performance in complying with wastewater discharge permits, maintenance management, laboratory practices, personnel training, and public awareness needs.

EPA said the management and staff of the wastewater treatment plant are to be congratulated for their professionalism and determination. EPA said it's evident that the staff involved in the day-to-day operations of the facility are highly trained and devoted to the environment.

Display at Philadelphia Flower Show Highlights Native Species

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's exhibit at the 2005 Philadelphia Flower Show will [feature native plants in a coastal seashore garden](#). Visitors will see unique plants that are unlike those from any previous EPA exhibit.

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EPA also provides tips for landscaping with native species in other environments as well (see links below).

The [2005 Philadelphia Flower Show](#) “America the Beautiful” will run from March 6 through March 13 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center, 12th & Arch Streets.

“EPA’s Flower Show exhibit is an excellent environmental education activity, helping the public to better appreciate the beauty and value of native plants and the natural ecosystems specific to this region,” says Donald S. Welsh, U.S. EPA mid-Atlantic regional administrator.

Landscaping in coastal areas can be challenging.

Poor soil, dry conditions, wind, and salt spray limit the number of plants that will grow on these sites. When selecting plants for coastal landscapes, it is important to keep in mind the rugged conditions and exposure to the ocean, and consider using native plants that can tolerate that environment.

For example, blue rug juniper (*Juniperus horizontalis*) is an excellent groundcover and northern bayberry (*Myrica pensylvanica*) is a shrub with high wildlife value -- providing food for birds and wildlife. Some unusual perennials including Eastern prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia humifusa*) and Rattlesnake master (*Eryngium yuccifolium*) are well adapted to this environment and add architectural interest to the landscape.

Proper selection of plants and site preparation are basic to the success of any coastal landscape. In areas sheltered by other plants or in the lee of structures, the choice of plant material is much greater. EPA is also showcasing some native plants that although not indigenous to coastal areas, will grow in this environment, for example *Lewisia cotyledon* and several bulbs including *Dichelostemma ida-maia*. Even if not long-lived, they surprise and delight visitors to the garden.

EPA developed some tips on coastal landscaping that gardeners by the sea may want to try: Native plants grown in a coastal setting are best adapted to certain climatic conditions; Poor soil conditions such as sandy or saturated soil; Areas with sharp or poor drainage; Salt Spray; Dry Conditions; Windy weather.

Once established, fewer resources are needed to maintain the health of native plants-- Require less frequent watering; Not as vulnerable to diseases and pests; Reduce use of fertilizers and pesticides; Provide better wildlife food and habitat; Native plants create habitat for native wildlife; Provide food for wildlife; Create shelter for native wildlife.

EPA recommends choosing native plants instead of exotic and invasive plant species for several reasons. Invasive plants can out-compete native plants for nutrients and water; Invasives require more maintenance than native plants; and Invasive plants often carry pests that can harm native plants.

Additional tips for [beneficial landscaping in urban and suburban settings](#) are available on EPA’s website.

Environmentally friendly gardening is a way of designing and maintaining beautiful yards, gardens, and larger landscapes to reduce harm to the environment, save time and money with lower maintenance, and have healthier places to work and play.

Also visit the [integrated pest management webpage](#) for suggestions on natural defenses from pests.

New Report Shows Bioenergy Could Increase Farm Profits by \$5 Billion

The Biotechnology Industry Organization this week released news of two special reports saying new policies to promote biofuels made from ethanol and other crop residues could increase farm profits \$5 billion nationwide.

The first report, "[Growing Energy: How Biofuels Can Help End America's Oil Dependence](#)," says biofuels -- typically ethanol from grain and crop residues -- could help reduce America's dependence on foreign oil while adding \$5 billion annually to farm profits by 2025 if production commitments are made now. The report was issued by the nonprofit National Resources Defense Council

The second report, "[25 by 25: Agriculture's Role in Ensuring U.S. Energy Independence](#)" by the Ag Energy Working Group of the Energy Future Coalition, shows how America's farmers can contribute 25 percent of the total energy consumed in the United States by 2025 and not at the expense of producing abundant, safe and affordable food and feed. The group comprises a blue- ribbon panel of farmers, educators, co-op directors, and members of a broad range of agriculture associations.

For more information visit the [BIO's Industrial and Environmental webpage](#)

Think Spring

Watch the Peregrine Falcon Nest Online Video Starting March 7

From the Department of Environmental Protection [Falconwire](#) this week: The new male has become much more comfortable with his new surroundings on the Peregrine Falcon nest on the Rachel Carson Building in Harrisburg.

At this point he and the female appear to be a fully bonded pair. We have learned from his band code that he was banded on the Walt Whitman Bridge in Philadelphia on May 19, 2003.

Over the next several weeks there will be many ranging male peregrines discovering established nest sites in their travels. Some may be inclined to challenge established males at these sites.

This young male may have to defend the ledge. If unsuccessful, he could be displaced by a stronger more experienced male (tiercel).

The popular [online live streaming video](#) will be activated March 7 to allow worldwide viewers to watch Harrisburg's pair of peregrine falcons start another nesting season.



Look for Migrating Birds Coming to A Location Near You

March winds and snow may still be howling, but a blizzard of another kind is moving in and out of the Pennsylvania Game Commission's Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area in Lebanon County.

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One of the many signs of spring's approach are the arrival of tens of thousands of snow geese at Middle Creek.

Migratory birds such as robins, grackles and blackbirds are returning to Pennsylvania. Now, the snow geese are coming.

This past weekend, an estimated 115,000 snow geese and 4,500 tundra swans were at Middle Creek. The birds can be observed working the fields for food and resting on the large impoundment.



Snow geese migrate north from states south of Pennsylvania to the eastern Arctic region in spring. 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 700,000.

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

Since its creation in the 1970s, Middle Creek, also known as State Game Lands 46, in Lebanon and Lancaster counties just south of Kleinfeltersville, has become a critically important migratory bird stopover and staging area. The 6,000-acre property also contains a 400-acre lake and a wide variety of waterfowl-friendly potholes, ponds and wetlands.

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.

On weekends, Middle Creek draws a considerable number of spectators who come to see waterfowl. 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.

Visitors planning to see waterfowl up-close should bring a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope. Sometimes the birds will feed quite near roads. If you encounter a bird close to the road, approach slowly and keep noise to a minimum. However, do not go beyond the "no entry" signs.

Visitors should keep in mind that these are estimates and the numbers can change quickly, and the birds also may fly off to feed during the day.

Middle Creek's visitor center, which houses a large wildlife exhibit, is a good first-stop for newcomers. Located just off Hopeland Road near the lake's western shore, the visitor center 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.

In addition to snows and tundras, Middle Creek offers other wildlife viewing

opportunities. Canada geese can be found throughout the area. Black ducks, mallards and shovelers cruise the impoundments along with many other ducks. Northern harriers, or marsh hawks, patrol the fields. A pair of bald eagles hang out along the southern shore and eastern end of the lake. Bluebirds also are very busy inspecting roadside bluebird boxes for the upcoming nesting season.

The Game Commission is posting periodic updates about Middle Creek's snow goose and tundra swans numbers on its [Watchable Wildlife webpage](#).

For more tips on seasonal birdwatching around Pennsylvania, visit the [Audubon Society chapters directory webpage](#).

(courtesy of the Pennsylvania Game Commission)

A Springtime Adventure: Vernal Pools

By [Kate Brandes](#), Environmental Scientist, [Wildlands Conservancy](#)

Water resources in our area range from streams and rivers to ponds and wetlands of all sizes. In the spring, vernal pools are one of the most unusual and interesting water resources.

Vernal pools are temporary pondings of snow melt and spring rain that collect in depressions throughout the forest (hence the name “vernal,” which is derived from the Latin word for spring). In our area, these pools are usually in woodlands and generally dry up in the summer. The trees that surround the pools are essential for shading the water and reducing evaporation. Forest vegetation controls silt runoff into the pools, which could otherwise be harmful to the breeding activities that occur within the pools.

The pools serve as breeding grounds primarily for amphibians – some, such as wood frogs and mole salamanders, breed nowhere else. In the first mild days of spring, sometimes as early as late February or early March, small, brown frogs with black masks, called wood frogs, seek out vernal pools to mate. Wood frogs don’t croak, but rather quack like a duck. Hundreds of wood frogs may seem to converge on a vernal

pool overnight. Wood frogs are unusual among amphibians in that they conduct their rituals of courtship and mating in broad daylight

Mole salamanders (which include the spotted, Jefferson, and marbled salamanders) get their names from spending much of their lives in burrows on the forest floor. The spotted mole salamander is the most widespread and common around this area. It averages six to eight inches long; it is blue-black with a dozen or more large, lemon-yellow-to-orange spots on its back. Although they hide for most of the year, in the spring, on certain rainy nights, the spotted salamanders make their way to the same vernal pool from which they came. “Some ponds attract hundreds, even thousands, of salamanders, and they stream to water like commuters into a train station.” The salamanders return to the forest floor in a matter of a few days. The eggs produce larvae



3 Seasonal Views of the Same Vernal Pond

which must develop into adults and begin their lives as terrestrial animals before the pools dry.

Fairy shrimp or “sea monkeys” are small crustaceans that spend their entire lives (no more than a few weeks) in vernal pools. Eggs may hatch in the late winter or early spring, with adults growing to a size of about one inch. These shrimp drop eggs, which remain dormant in the sediment for months – even years – until the pond refills (DCNR, 2000).

Despite their importance to these unique species, not many people know much about vernal pools in Pennsylvania. Because they are visible generally only in the spring (unless it's a very wet year, like this one), they are easily overlooked and, therefore, easily destroyed. One can only guess how the spotted salamander might feel upon discovering that the wet woodlot it once migrated to season after season has now been paved. Volunteer programs are being developed, often using high school biology classes, to locate and map the pools. The first step in protecting these valuable habitats is generating a greater awareness of where they are.

This spring, I'm planning to embark on an adventure or two in which I will listen for the “quack” of the masked wood frogs to lead me to some local vernal pools. I hope that if I check often enough, I'll catch at least a glimpse of fairy shrimp and spotted salamanders. What could be a more fun and exciting springtime venture?

For more information visit the [Vernal Pool Association](#) and read a special article in [Keystone Wildnotes](#) from the Wild Resources Conservation Fund on the creatures inhabiting vernal ponds.

Watershed Feature

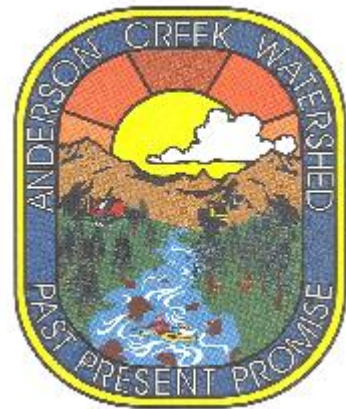
The Chemistry of Saving Anderson Creek

What began as a project by a high school chemistry teacher and his students to document water quality has developed, six years later, into a watershed association supported by dozens of partners with one goal—saving [Anderson Creek](#).

“I always had a desire to see [Anderson Creek](#) cleaned up because it flows into the Susquehanna River and then into the Chesapeake Bay,” said now retired chemistry teacher Malcolm Barnes. “In the beginning, I talked to Trout Unlimited and would take some samples with school kids, that’s how we got started.”

“Now, I meet people like I did the other day on the street in Curwensville who came up to me and said, ‘I don’t know of anyone else who’s doing something to help the stream,’ and he gave me \$100,” said Barnes.

Barnes serves as president of the Anderson Creek Watershed Association that last year received a \$52,000 319 grant to do a complete assessment of the watershed. The Association has also taken on stream dosing and other projects to help educate the community about the problems and potential of Anderson Creek.



Download the Special Photo Feature attached to this webpage see Anderson Creek volunteers in action

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“The watershed is unique in several ways,” said Mark Killar from the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy’s [Watershed Assistance Center](#) which is doing the assessment for Anderson Creek.

“The western half of the watershed was extensively mined for clay, but they ran into coal in many places and it was left a mess,” said Killar. “Discharges from the clay mines resulted in high levels of aluminum in the water and the water has a low pH from the coal.”

But, Killar explained, “the stream has a beautiful habitat, riparian zones and the in-stream cover is wonderful. If we could knock down the aluminum and raise the pH, we could bring the stream back to life.”

The watershed assessment will help the Association identify the priority discharges needing treatment and target future reclamation efforts when it’s completed later this year.

“We have 30 different water sampling sites that volunteers monitor monthly,” said Barnes. “We haven’t missed a month this winter.”

Part of the watershed assessment involved installing 12 water weirs to measure stream and abandoned mine discharge flows in Anderson Creek and its major tributaries to fill in the gaps from earlier water sampling efforts.

“Members of EASI (the [Clearfield County Senior Environment Corps](#)) helped install the weirs and with the water sampling,” said Barnes. “Their training really helped us.”

“One of our biggest jobs is public awareness,” explained Barnes. “We have to get the point across that water quality isn’t only important for itself-- it’s not just for the fish, but it’s also for drinking water.”

Anderson Creek feeds the DuBois water reservoir and serves as a backup water supply itself in times of drought.

One of the Association’s projects with the DuBois Watershed Commission and several townships involved putting up signs around the DuBois reservoir identifying it as a water supply area. The project was funded with a grant from the League of Women Voter’s [Water Resources Education Network](#).

The Association also recently put posters in several stores in Curwensville with pictures showing how they are sampling water in the creek and where.

The Association’s early projects involved limestone dosing of two tributaries to Anderson Creek—Bigler Run and Kratzer Run. Dosing involves spreading limestone in and near the streams that will slowly dissolve over the course of a year to improve the pH of the water.

“The dosing helped improve water quality a lot, along with putting in a sewage plant on Kratzer Run,” said Barnes. “But it’s a temporary step.”

“What we hope to do is get some of the coal miners here interested in re-mining the old areas where there is still coal so they can reclaim those areas,” said Barnes. “If the Association can get the money for the limestone needed to treat the areas during reclamation, the miners can take the coal and any clay out.”

Barnes said an important part of their success has been developing a good network of partners.

“EASI, Janie French ([Canaan Valley Institute](#)), the [Clearfield County Conservation District](#), Old Towne Sportsman’s Club, Central Counties Sportsmen,

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Curwensville Borough, [Susquehanna River Basin Commission](#) and the [Rails to Trails Association](#) have all helped us,” said Barnes. “Businesses like [Jim’s Sports Shop](#) also helped by donating a rod and reel we are raffling off to raise money.”

“Before the Association, the attitude was the stream was so far gone it wasn’t worth cleaning it up,” said Killar. “Now the assessment is showing that it’s on the edge and could be brought back.”

Barnes summed up attitude toward his students and the Association this way, “I didn’t want the kids to go through what I did. I want to help things get better.” He pointed with pride to one of his students, who at age 63, is finishing up her Associates Degree in Chemistry, with a little tutoring from Barnes.

With people like Malcolm Barnes inspiring their students and their community to care about their watershed, the phrase “better living through chemistry” suddenly has a whole new meaning!

For more information, contact Malcolm Barnes, President of the Anderson Creek Watershed Association email: macandbetty@pennswoods.net or write PO Box 53, Curwensville, PA 16833 or call 814-236-2885.

Digest Photo Gallery

Contribute Your Photographs to the Digest Gallery

We’ve had a number of requests to list the special photographs we’ve featured in past issues of the PA Environment Digest, so we’re doing just that with this issue.

We welcome your photographs anytime to show off the beauty of Pennsylvania and want to thank again those who already contributed their photos.

We also include a link to our [2005 Improve Your Habitat Calendar](#) that includes photos from all over Pennsylvania.

Enjoy!

[Towanda Overlook](#)

[PA Grand Canyon Overlook](#)

[Fall in the Grand Canyon](#)

[Fall Reflected in a State College Pond](#)

[Fall at Chickees Point, Lancaster County](#)

[Fall at Susquehannock State Park](#)

[Fall at Harrisburg](#)

[River Fog at Sunbury](#)

[Fall at Liverpool](#)

[Winter in Wildwood Sanctuary](#)

[Environmental Desktop Collage](#)

[Mingo Creek in Winter, Washington County](#)

[Turtle Pond Caddisfly Under Ice](#)

[January Fog Lifting on the Delaware River](#)

[Susquehanna River Ice](#)

[Spring Creek, Dauphin County](#)

Quick Clips

[Furniture recycling: manufacturers embrace C2C design](#)
[Carbon County Natural Areas Inventory Complete](#)
[Berwick Could Save \\$1 Million on Treatment Costs With New Technology](#)
[Gas May Hit \\$2.50 a Gallon](#)
[New Law Promotes Methane Gas Well Drilling](#)
[Rendell Pushes Mass Transit Bailout](#)
[Engineer Believes Hybrid Vehicles Will Gain Ground](#)
[Open Space, or Open Season?](#)
[Suburban Renewal](#)
[Editorial: PPL's Responsible Move](#)
[Bethlehem Museum Moves Ahead on Land Recycling Site](#)

Watershed NewsClips

[POWR Insurance Sharing Program Renewed for 2005](#)
[Harvesting Iron Oxide](#)
[Controlling Stormwater with Sense](#)
[Blackleggs Creek Watershed Association Annual Meeting](#)
[Duncannon seeks to preserve watershed](#)

Regulations

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission will meet on March 10 to consider regulations on explosives and Coal and Clay Mine Subsidence Insurance rule changes.

Regulation No. 2461 Environmental Quality Board #7-394: [Storage, Handling and Use of Explosives \(Final-Omit\)](#)

Regulation No. 2392 Coal and Clay Mine Subsidence Insurance Board #7-389: Mine Subsidence Fund

The [Delaware River Basin Commission](#) will meet on [March 16](#) to consider changes to water quality criteria for the lower Delaware and other topics.

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – March 5, 2005](#)

Comment Deadlines: [Regulations](#) [Technical Guidance](#)

[Copies of Proposed Regulations](#) [Status of Regulations, 6-Month Calendar](#)

Technical Guidance & Permits

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The Department of Environmental Protection [published notice of several final and draft changes](#) to policy guidance this week related to coal mining, operator certification and drinking water permits—

Final: DEP ID: 562-4100-301. Compliance/Enforcement Procedures. This document defines the procedures to be utilized by Department staff for taking enforcement actions on coal and industrial mineral mining sites.

Final: DEP ID: 562-4180-306. Coal Civil Penalties. This document defines the procedures to be utilized by Department staff for taking civil penalty actions on coal mining sites.

Draft: DEP ID: 383-2300-001. Pennsylvania's Interim Program for Operator Certification. The guidance and procedures contained in this document provide direction to the Department and the State Board for Certification of Water and Wastewater Systems Operators to implement the Water and Wastewater Systems Operators' Certification Act. Comments due April 4.

Draft: DEP ID: 383-2000-108. Construction and Operation Permits Guidance. The guidance and procedures contained in this document provide direction to Department staff for implementing permit issuance and tracking activities under the safe drinking water management programs. Comments due April 4.

[For copies of Draft Technical Guidance](#) [For copies of Final Technical Guidance](#)

Calendar of Upcoming Events

- **March 7** – Policy & Integration Subcommittee of [Statewide Water Resources Committee](#) meeting. Contact: Susan K. Weaver, 717-783-8055 or email: suweaver@state.pa.us
- **March 9** – Senate Budget Hearing on DEP
- **March 9** - [On-Farm Composting Workshop Set](#), Lackawanna County
- **March 9** – [DEP Water Resources Committee meeting cancelled](#).
- **March 10** – Independent Regulatory Review Commission meeting to consider explosives and mine subsidence regulations.
- **March 11** – Critical Water Planning Subcommittee of [Statewide Water Resources Committee](#) meets. Contact: Susan K. Weaver, 717-783-8055 or email: suweaver@state.pa.us
- **March 14** – House Commerce Committee meets to consider [House Bill 612](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) authorizing PennVest to fund projects designed to increase security in drinking water systems.
- **March 14** – [Joint Conservation Committee](#) Environmental Issues Forum presentation by Dr. Harold Schobert, The Energy Institute at Penn State on using coal as jet fuel.
- **March 15** - Senate Environmental Resources Committee confirmation hearing on the Bernard A. Labuskes, Jr. nomination to the Environmental Hearing Board.

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- **March 15** – (cancelled) Environmental Quality Board meeting
- **March 15** – Senate Local Government Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 291](#) (Cont-R-Bucks) authorizing joint municipal planning in watersheds.
- **March 17** – [Statewide Water Resources Committee](#) meeting. Contact: Susan K. Weaver, 717-783-8055 or email: suweaver@state.pa.us
- **April 5** – [Fifth Goddard Forum: Putting the Market to Work for Conservation](#). Harrisburg.
- **April 10-16** – [National Environmental Education Week](#).
- **May 6-7** - West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Symposium - Location: Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, State College, PA Contact: Amy Wolfe at 570-726-3118 or awolfe@tu.org

[DEP Calendar of Events](#)

[Watershed Events](#)

(courtesy [PA Organizations for Watersheds & Rivers](#))

[Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

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

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

Helpful Web Links

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

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

Contributions Invited

Send your stories about environmental issues, programs and positive actions to **PA Environment Digest** - DHess@HolstonCrisci.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 Holston & Crisci and the public. Holston & Crisci is a Harrisburg-based government and public affairs firm whose clients include Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations. For more information on Holston & Crisci call 717-234-1716.

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