

—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](#)

Pennsylvania Will Be First to Benefit from Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Plan

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation told the [House Republican Policy Committee](#) investigating the cost of implementing the [Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy](#) that Pennsylvanians would be the first to benefit from cleaner water.

The hearing was co-chaired by Rep. Mike Fleck (R-Huntingdon) and Rep. Mike Turzai (R-Allegheny) and held at Juniata College in Huntingdon.

The Committee heard comments from the Department of Environmental Protection, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Pennsylvania Municipal Authorities Association, Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Pennsylvania Builders Association and local government officials.

“Pennsylvanians will be the first to benefit from making investments to meet our Chesapeake Bay obligations because it will be our streams and rivers that will be cleaner,” said [Matthew Ehrhart](#), Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Office Chesapeake Bay Foundation. “We will have cleaner, cheaper drinking water, improved recreation opportunities and quality of life, improved animal health on our farms, improved opportunities for tourism, and a legacy of clean water to pass on to our children and grandchildren.

“There have been numerous media reports in recent weeks focusing on the high costs to municipal wastewater treatment plants associated with complying with the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy. A legal challenge to some of these issues has been filed. The critical point that has received far less attention is that these permit limits are not arbitrary – they are clearly required by the Federal Clean Water Act.

“The cost of achieving compliance with these nutrient load reductions is high for all sectors,” said Ehrhart. “The most recent cost estimates for point source compliance ranges from \$620 million (PA DEP estimate) to \$1 billion (PMAA estimate). The cost for farmers to comply with the required reductions from agriculture is \$593 million (PA DEP). In 2005, DEP identified a gap of \$174.2 million annually between existing funding levels and the funding necessary to meet Tributary Strategy requirements for agriculture.

“The cuts in Conservation District and Department of Agriculture funding as proposed in the Governor’s budget request for this year will set back Pennsylvania’s ability to meet its Tributary Strategy requirements for agriculture. Conservation Districts should be funded with an additional \$10 million to ensure they are staffed, operational and



capable of delivering the technical assistance needed to help implement conservation practices,” said Ehrhart.

[A copy of CBF’s testimony is available online.](#)

Legislators and those presenting testimony agreed action is needed to cleanup Pennsylvania’s waterways flowing to the Chesapeake Bay, but all cited the need for the state to do its fair share to provide funding to lighten the burden on local sewer system ratepayers and farmers.

"The cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay is vital to the environment and the quality of life in central Pennsylvania; however, it shouldn't come at the expense of local governments and residents living in the watershed," said Rep. Fleck. "We have to find a better way to fund this project and look to the successful programs in Maryland and Virginia as examples. This hearing was a step in determining how the Legislature can help reduce expenses for those living within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed."

"The total cost estimate of the project to upgrade Huntingdon's Wastewater Treatment Plant now stands at \$19.5 million," said Kenneth Meyers, manager for the Borough of Huntingdon. "About a third of those costs can be attributed to compliance with the new Chesapeake Bay requirements. This amounts to an 87 percent increase for our average residential sewer customer. We feel that DEP has not done its job when it comes to the Chesapeake Bay Initiative. DEP officials knew full well the economic impact the Chesapeake Bay requirements would have on central Pennsylvania, but they did nothing about it. DEP has taken at least four to five years to develop its Chesapeake Bay strategy and has now given many treatment plants, including Huntingdon, less than half that amount of time to comply with the new regulations. All this time should have been spent attempting to develop sources of funding for the projects."

Rep. Kerry Benninghoff (R-Centre) agreed that the state has not developed the funding sources needed to meet the mandates. "It's not that state does not have the money, but rather that the Governor continues to allocate existing dollars to new pet projects," he said. "The department needs to maintain funding for programs to clean our waterways instead of diverting dollars to new department programs."

"As legislators, we have a responsibility to the people we represent to protect their quality of life," said Rep. Jerry Stern (R-Blair). "This includes the environment in which they live and their cost of living. Over the past six years, the governor has continued to take funds away from programs to fund his pet projects. This needs to stop. We are charged to be fiscal stewards of the people's money. State funds need to be spent on programs, such as the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, that best benefit the citizens of this Commonwealth."

Rep. Stern and a bipartisan group of Senate and House members, were successful in adding the new \$10 million [Resource Enhancement and Protection \(REAP\)](#) farm conservation tax credit program in this year’s state budget. The full \$10 million was committed to projects in the first 10 days the application period was open.

Rep. Scott Perry (R-Cumberland) said he was introducing legislation to aid with the cleanup of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, helping to ease the funding burden on taxpayers and local governments. His legislation includes appropriating \$750 million over 10 years to help local governments fund needed plant upgrades and \$250 million over five years to help fund agricultural best management practices to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff.

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"This legislation helps to remove the burden placed on local governments by this federal unfunded mandate agreed to by DEP," Rep. Perry said. "It is unrealistic to require municipalities located within the watershed to overhaul their plants and treatment programs without any type of assistance. The secretary of DEP agreed to these new requirements. The state is expected to have a surplus in funds. We have the money; the governor and his secretaries need to better prioritize the spending of that money."

"No one is denying the need for environmental cleanup of the watershed," Rep. Adam Harris (R-Juniata) said. "However, we have to take into account the cost this will have on middle-class families. If the state has mandated upgrades, they should shoulder some of the funding burden. This can be done without raising taxes or penalizing residents living in the watershed. We need to use the funds we have more efficiently."

This week's hearing was the first in a series of hearings on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

Video of the hearing [will be available online](#).

Video Blog: [Cleaning Up 15,000 Miles of Pennsylvania Streams](#)

Great PA Cleanup! Resource: New Safety Training CD Available From PennDOT



Thinking about organizing a litter cleanup for the [Great PA Cleanup!](#)? The Department of Transportation now has available an interactive CD that helps volunteers stay safe while they pick up litter.

[Beautify PA Safely](#) includes interactive lessons on how to: set up a highway work zone, what to do if a volunteer finds hazardous litter, what to wear so drivers are not distracted by clean up groups, how to identify invasive plants and basic first aid techniques.

To get your copy, call the PennDOT Agility Center at 717-705-1333.

Groups and event coordinators registering their cleanup events at the [Great PA Cleanup! website](#) will be eligible for free disposal space for the trash they pick up and to win thank you prizes from participating sponsors. Groups must register their events by April 11 to be eligible.

Last year, more than 139,000 volunteers from all 67 counties removed 7.4 million pounds of trash from roads, parks, schools, waterways, wildlife areas and communities.

The Great PA Cleanup! runs from April 19 to May 3.

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On the Hill

Session Schedule

The Senate and House will return to voting session the week of March 31.

You can watch the [Senate Floor Session](#) and [House Floor Session](#) live online.

On the Senate/House Agenda/Bills Introduced

The Senate and House published committee schedules for next week and floor Calendars for the week of March 31—

Calendars

House (March 31): [House Bill 1078](#) (Hanna-D-Clinton) establishing the Elk Damage Fund providing for deterrent fences for deer, bear and elk and payment of claims for elk damage; [House Resolution 546](#) (George-D-Clearfield) urging Congress to investigate gas and energy prices; [House Resolution 627](#) (George-D-Clearfield) urging federal government to provide more heating assistance funding; [House Bill 2233](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) extending grants under the Elm Street Program beyond the original five year term; [Special Session House Bill 13](#) (Bennington-R-Mifflin) amends the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act to provide for increased use of energy efficiency, extends the compliance period from 15 to 21 years and provides additional milestones for the use of alternative energy; [Special Session House Bill 16](#) (King-D-Bucks) establishing a State Energy Office; [Special Session House Bill 17](#) (McIlvaine Smith-D-Montgomery) excluding purchase price of hybrid electric vehicles from sales and use tax; [Special Session House Resolution 6](#) (Thomas-D-Philadelphia) designating the week of November 11-17 as “National Geography Awareness Week.”

Senate (March 31) [House Bill 1214](#) (Surra-D-Elk) changing the terms of Game Commissioners from eight to four years; [House Bill 1281](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) requiring municipalities to take steps to protect the Appalachian Trail; [House Bill 1329](#) (Kessler-D-Berks) further providing for appeals and challenges to zoning ordinances.

Committees

House: the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee holds an informational meeting on [Senate Bill 949](#) (Kasunic-D-Somerset) updating the Bituminous Coal Mine Safety Act; the Game and Fisheries Committee meets to consider [House Resolution 642](#) (Levdansky-D-Allegheny) directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to do an audit of the Game Commission’s Deer Management Program and holds a second meeting to hear the annual report of the Game Commission; the Local Government Committee meets to consider [House Bill 2266](#) (Steil-R-Bucks) requiring watershed based stormwater planning, [House Bill 2018](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) establishing a tax exempt property municipal assistance fund; the Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee on Information Technology meets to consider [House Bill 1304](#) (Fairchild-R-Mifflin) to establish a Geospatial Coordinating Council; the Tourism and Recreational Development Committee meets to consider [House Bill 2035](#) (Seip-D-Berks) establishing the Pennsylvania Heritage Area Development Program and [House Bill 2043](#) (Haluska-D-Cambria) establishing the Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicle Act.

Senate: the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee informational briefing on DCNR’s natural gas leasing policy; the Appropriations Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 1020](#) (Wonderling-R-Montgomery) updating the County Conservation District law, [House Bill 1589](#) (Evans-D-Philadelphia) Capital Budget for 2007-08.

Bills Introduced

These environmental bills of interest were introduced this week—

Utilities Tax Reduction: [House Bill 2236](#) (Saylor-R-York) reducing the Utilities Gross Receipts Tax.

Biofuels Incentive: [Senate Bill 1317](#) (Waugh-R-York) establishing the PA Farms to Fuels Initiatives Act to promote the production of bioenergy crops.

House Committee to Consider Audit of Deer Program, Game Commission Report

The House Game and Fisheries Committee will consider a resolution authorizing an audit of the state's Deer Management Program and hear the annual report of the Game Commission this week.

On Monday the Committee will consider [House Resolution 642](#) (Levdansky-D-Allegheny) which would direct the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to do an audit of the Game Commission's Deer Management Program.

On Thursday the Committee will hear a presentation on the Game Commission's annual report from [Executive Director Carl Roe](#).

The Majority Chair of the Committee is Rep. Edward Staback (D-Schuylkill) and the Minority Chair is Rep. Sam Rohrer (R-Berks).

Link: [Audubon PA Tells Committee Forests Are Still Degraded By Too Many Deer](#)

Informational Meeting on Deep Mine Safety Bill Set By House Committee

The House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee scheduled an informational meeting on Wednesday on legislation that would update the state's deep mine safety law.

[Senate Bill 949](#) (Kasunic-D-Somerset) was passed by the Senate in February and is now in the House Committee for action. The bill makes hundreds of changes in the Bituminous Coal Mine Safety Act, some designed to prevent accidents like the one that occurred in the [Quecreek Mine in 2002](#).

The Committee is scheduled to hear an overview of the legislation from Scott Roberts, Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management, and Joe Scaffoni, Director of the Bureau of Deep Mine Safety, both from the Department of Environmental Protection.

Rep. Bud George (D-Clearfield) serves as Majority Chair of the Committee and Rep. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) serves as Minority Chair.

Senate Environmental Committee Holds Session on DCNR Oil, Gas Leasing Policies

The Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee scheduled an informational meeting on Tuesday on oil and gas resource leasing policies by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

DCNR Secretary Michael DeBerardinis is expected to provide an overview of the agencies policies and the status of oil and gas leasing on state forest land.

Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), Majority Chair of the Committee, introduced [Senate Bill 1127](#) that would require the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources to hold a competitive public auction for oil and gas resources and take other steps to develop domestic energy resources.

Rep. Hutchinson (R-Venango) introduced similar legislation in the House—[Special Session House Bill 32](#).

Sen. Ray Musto (D-Luzerne) serves as Minority Chair of the Committee.

Link: [Joint Committee Releases Report on Oil and Gas Leasing Operations](#)

Other News

PEC, Nature Conservancy Call for Passage of Energy, Climate Change Bills

In a joint letter to members of the General Assembly this week, the [Pennsylvania Environmental Council](#) and [the Pennsylvania Chapter of The Nature Conservancy](#) called on members of the General Assembly to resolve their differences over renewable energy and climate change legislation and pass them quickly.

Both the Senate and House have now passed legislation to promote renewable energy – [Special Session Senate Bill 1](#) (MJ. White-R-Venango) is now in the House and [Special Session House Bill 1](#) (DePasquale-D-York) is now in the Senate. The House has also passed [House Bill 2200](#) (George-D-Clearfield) that calls on utilities to reduce the demand for electricity.

In addition, the House has passed [House Bill 110](#) (Vitali-D-Delaware) and the Senate has passed [Senate Bill 266](#) (Erickson-R-Delaware) requiring the development of a state climate change action plan.

Brian Hill, President & CEO of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and William Kunze, Director, Pennsylvania Chapter The Nature Conservancy, commended the Senate and House for advancing “groundbreaking” legislation on renewable energy and climate change.

The letter notes that both sets of legislation would implement recommendations of the stakeholder-driven [Climate Change Roadmap](#) PEC released last June and help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Both organizations said final energy legislation should include significant provisions on energy efficiency and demand side management, better targeting for funds going for pollution control technologies and provide a dedicate funding source for energy conservation, efficiency and alternative energy education and assistance programs that could not be funded with bond financing.

The complete text of the letter follows:

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) and the Pennsylvania Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, we wish to commend members of the General Assembly for advancing groundbreaking legislation for alternative energy development and energy efficiency initiatives.

Special Session Senate Bill 1, Special Session House Bill 1, and House Bill 2200 are significant steps toward a sustainable energy policy that will generate considerable economic returns for Pennsylvania, better ensure our ability to meet future energy needs while reducing demand, and ultimately save consumers money.



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Equally important, this legislation will help shrink greenhouse gas emissions in Pennsylvania – our state alone currently accounts for approximately 1 percent of worldwide emissions. This win-win scenario for our state matches the stakeholder-driven recommendations of the PEC Climate Change Roadmap, released last year.

As the General Assembly now begins to reconcile elements of these different bills, we wish to stress the following principles:

- Energy efficiency and demand side response – including the use of smart meter technology and strong incentives for more efficient buildings and appliances – are the most immediate and cost-effective means for addressing energy use and supply concerns. The framework provided by House Bill 2200, which establishes programmatic and targeted energy use reduction measures to accomplish these objectives, should be coupled with investment and made a part of any final energy policy adopted in Pennsylvania this year.
- If provisions relating to funding for pollution control projects are to remain in final legislation, this legislation should ensure environmental protection objectives beyond mere compliance with existing law. Both Special Session Senate Bill 1 and Special Session House Bill 1 provide funding for installation of pollution control technologies to help facilities comply with state and federal law. Given the substantial public investment made under these provisions, we believe that any such investment should be specifically targeted for units that achieve measurable, corresponding environmental benefits; for example, the removal and use of waste coal from abandoned mine land sites, or the attainment of measurable greenhouse gas emission reductions within Pennsylvania.
- A dedicated funding source should be identified for energy conservation, efficiency, and alternative source projects. We support the use of a substantial general revenue bond to fund these efforts and to take advantage of near-term opportunities. We also believe that a secure, long term funding source is needed to further encourage sustainable energy production and use – since bond funding cannot be used for anything other than capital projects, and additional important needs exist, such as research and education. Creating such a funding source would also signal to capital investment and related business interests that Pennsylvania’s firm commitment to advancing sound alternative and renewable energy opportunities is an enduring one. Pennsylvania needs to make as large an investment in these initiatives as possible to ensure we get the maximum benefits. In addition, some of this funding should be targeted to an ongoing education program, because changing the way people think about and use energy is key to success. We also look forward to future opportunities to assist in the implementation of these new and vitally important programs, to help ensure that alternative and renewable energy projects are carried out in an environmentally-sensitive and ecologically-sustainable manner.

We also strongly believe that any discussion of energy policy should go hand-in-hand with advancing bipartisan legislation to develop a climate change action plan for our state. Senate Bill 266 (introduced by Senator Erickson) and House Bill 110 (introduced by Representative Vitali) both passed their respective chambers last year with overwhelming support, but have not received further deliberation in 2008.

As we have emphasized since the release of PEC’s Climate Change Roadmap report last year, climate change will have a significant impact to our economy and overall quality of life. Given that Pennsylvania is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions

on an international scale, it is incumbent on our state to begin to meaningfully address this challenge through already-demonstrated policies and practices.

We again commend the General Assembly for leadership on these issues, and urge quick consideration and passage of comprehensive language that meets the above-detailed principles.

Penn State: Ensuring Food Security in a Changing Climate Workshop

A [Global Plant Stress Initiative Workshop](#) will be held from April 6-8, jointly hosted by Penn State, the University of Leeds, United Kingdom and the [Worldwide Universities Network](#) at University Park, Pa.

Climate change may limit global agricultural productivity and economic development by placing crops under stress due to rising temperatures and increased demand for water. Changing environmental conditions may also increase plant stress by intensifying plant pests and diseases.

At the workshop, international experts representing many different fields from climate modeling, through ecology, to plant biology and systems biology will address the challenges relating to plant stress, identify areas for potential collaboration and map out potential responses to this challenge.

Using the WUN framework, the researchers will meet to make real progress about how to meet the increasing need for food globally in the face of increasing risks to agricultural productivity from traditional farming techniques. The event will have three main themes: global climate change, agricultural productivity and plant stress, and the molecular basis of plant stress.

The goals of the workshop are to identify research and education projects eligible for seed funding from the WUN and establish a roadmap for future research and action. "Stress is very important in plant biology," said Jonathan Lynch, professor of plant nutrition at Penn State and workshop co-chair. "A plant is under stress if temperature is too high or too low, if there is too much water or too little of it, or there aren't enough nutrients. Most plants on earth are dealing with some type of stress."

The Worldwide Universities Network, formed in 2001, comprises leading universities in U.S., Canada, Europe, Australia and Asia that pool their resources and strengths to address topics of major significance, such as wireless technologies, poverty, environment and climate change, contemporary societies, spintronics and global health. The goal is for WUN partners to secure substantial support from government and industry to sustain one or more major global collaborative initiatives in this area.

In his research, Lynch focuses on solutions that are independent of infrastructure, education and additional investment.

"If you look at poor countries in east Africa, people live in remote places without electricity and have little contact with the outside world or even their own government," he said. "But if you can supply them with improved seeds that grow better in harsh conditions and produce more food, the women who plant and grow these crops will exchange the seeds with others, and over time a larger number of people will benefit."



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The Penn State researcher is currently working on nutrient-efficient seeds - for maize and common bean, the staple crops in east Africa - that will help plants grow with less nutrients and water.

"Climate change models suggest there will be an increase in temperature, and the main effect on plant growth is going to be increased demand for water," Lynch explained. "As the temperature rises gradually, plants will use up more water through transpiration." Lynch and his colleagues have identified certain root traits that help plants thrive in harsh conditions. He says breeders can select for these traits and develop crop varieties that will grow better in those harsh conditions.

"This has not happened before because the focus was always on maximizing yield when there are enough nutrients and water available to the plants. But what if there is no fertilizer and irrigation?" Lynch said.

The new approach, he adds, is getting attention in the United State and Europe. "People in the West are starting to get concerned because the cost of fertilizer is rising due to higher prices of oil," he notes.

Penn State is a founding member of the WUN partnership, which spans more than 3,000 students and scientists from 16 universities worldwide while tackling some of society's most pressing problems, fueled by more than \$40 million in research funds.

"WUN therefore is well suited to address an issue of the magnitude, scope, and complexity of plant stress," says Lynch. "Understanding the complex and highly variable effects of global change will require the concerted effort of international scientists to study the varying and localized effects around the world and to share that information with the people of developing solutions."

For more information, visit the [Global Plant Stress Initiative Workshop webpage](#) or contact Dr. Lynch by sending email to: jpl4@psu.edu or calling 814-863-2256.

Highmark Pittsburgh to Go Dark to Support Climate Change Effort

Part of Pittsburgh's city skyline, [Highmark's](#) Fifth Avenue Place and Penn Avenue Place facilities, will go dark from 8 to 9 p.m. on March 29 joining hundreds of other companies around the world in the [World Wildlife Fund's Earth Hour Initiative](#) by turning out the lights in its facilities to support environmental initiatives.

"At Highmark, we're committed to being an environmental leader because we know that creating a healthier environment also helps to create healthier communities and healthier people," said Byron Falchetti, president of Standard Property Corporation, the real estate subsidiary of Highmark. "Turning out our building lights for Earth Hour gives us the opportunity to show this commitment to the environment."

The facilities operate some 12,000 lights, which will be turned off for the hour. The prominent Highmark sign on the top of Fifth Avenue Place and the blue spire will also be turned off. Emergency lighting and lighting in occupied areas will be left on for the safety of employees, as well as retail patrons of Fifth Avenue Place. The facilities are home to approximately 5,000 Highmark employees as well as other office and retail tenants.

The Highmark facilities will join the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh, the Andy Warhol Museum and others locally to observe Earth Hour.



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More than 20 major cities have committed to join Earth Hour. Building and landmarks from around the globe, including Coca-Cola headquarters in Atlanta, Sears Tower in Chicago Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco and more, will be dark for the one hour on Saturday.

Highmark's commitment to environmental leadership includes a variety of sustainable, eco-friendly, green business projects that are aimed at creating a healthier environment and healthier people. These include the operation of a Silver LEED certified Data Center near Hershey, Pa., paper and utilities conservation initiatives and the use of certified green seal cleaning supplies in Highmark's facilities.

Susquehanna County Sawmill Cuts Fuel Costs \$35,854 Over Two Years

S & D Lumber of Hallstead, Susquehanna County, has saved \$35,854 over two years in the cost of diesel fuel and motor oil expenses by investing in a high-efficiency diesel generator.

The savings were the result of a [Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account](#) loan to finance an electronically controlled fuel injected diesel generator to provide power to its sawmill. The new generator replaced three inefficient diesel engines which had previously provided the power.

During the last two years, S & D has reported saving 9,264 gallons of diesel fuel and 529 gallons of motor oil, as well as reducing air emissions. S & D also increased its production and reduced downtime and maintenance costs.

These changes resulted in a savings of approximately \$35,854 in the two years since implementing their project. The company has achieved its projected payback timeframe and the savings have already paid for the cost of the project.

For more information, visit the [Small Business Pollution Prevention Assistance Account webpage](#) or contact Gene DelVecchio at 717 772-8951 or send e-mail to: gdelvecchi@state.pa.us.

DCED Helping PA Municipalities Cut Energy Costs

A small, state-supported change to traffic light technology will mean big savings for dozens of municipalities in north-central Pennsylvania, the Department of Community and Economic Development announced this week.

[SEDA-Council of Governments](#), a development agency serving 11 counties in north-central Pennsylvania, received a \$180,000 grant to help 60, mostly small and rural, municipalities cover the costs associated with having to convert 200 traffic lights to light emitting diode (LED), energy-savings technology.

LED devices require less maintenance, are more visible, and provide energy savings that should pay for the changeover within three years. The process is expected to be completed by mid-2009.

The grant, from Pennsylvania's [Shared Municipal Services Program](#) helps to promote cooperation among municipalities and encourages more efficient and effective delivery of municipal services. Since 2003, the program has awarded \$7.6 million.

For additional information on funding sources available to Pennsylvania communities, visit www.NewPA.com or call 1-866-466-3972.

Nearly \$1 in \$4 of Income Goes to Buy Energy

It is not just the poorest households who are struggling to pay their energy bills or who are affected by government energy policies, says [Americans for Balanced Energy Choices](#).

A new study reveals individuals and families making less than \$50,000 per year will pay 22 percent of their after-tax income for energy, double the burden of just a decade ago. That means 2.4 million households in Pennsylvania are using nearly \$1 of every \$4 in net earnings for energy, with energy costs now approaching the proportion for housing.

Poorest families suffer the most, using more than half (54 percent) of their after-tax income for transportation and personal energy, such as home heating and lighting. It is only when families earn more than \$50,000 a year that energy purchases become a manageable part of the family budget, dropping to just 9 percent of after-tax income.

Energy prices have increased almost 19 percent in the past year. To compound the household budget problem, food prices have gone up more in the past year than they have in nearly 20 years, including an 18 percent increase in milk prices and a more than 30 percent hike in egg prices.

"Part of the inflation in food costs is being attributed to encouragement of ethanol as an alternative fuel, which may be helping drive up prices for animal feed and some foods consumed by people," notes Joe Lucas, ABEC executive director. "This is an example of how energy policy can affect other parts of our economy and the family budget."

"That's why ABEC is fighting to keep coal a part of the mix of our energy resources. It is much more affordable as a source of electricity compared to natural gas or oil, which can cost much more to produce each kilowatt hour of electrical power."

Since 2001 the increases in the costs of fuels for electricity are: 201 percent for oil, 80 percent for natural gas and 48 percent for coal.

In Pennsylvania, more than half of the electricity (56 percent) is coal generated, compared to the national average of 50 percent, helping keep the state's average price of electricity per kilowatt hour at less than the national average.

For consumers, the increases in the costs of their energy sources since 2001 have been: 166 percent for heating oil, 123 percent for gasoline, 44 percent for natural gas and 27 percent for electricity.

"As we work for energy independence and environmental improvements, we should remember that electricity, produced mainly from domestic coal -- including coal from Pennsylvania -- has offered the most stable price over the past decade," Lucas noted. "One can only imagine what would happen to electricity prices and the total energy cost burden if ill-considered public policy drives unnecessary inflation in the cost of coal."

ABEC supports cleaner and more efficient coal technologies, with Lucas pointing out that the industry has reduced emissions by a third even though coal use has doubled during the past 30 years.

For more information, visit the [Americans for Balanced Energy Choices website](#).

Wildlife For Everyone Foundation Announces Tipton Run Stream Project

The [Wildlife For Everyone Endowment Foundation](#) has teamed up with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and PennDOT to implement a stream restoration project to restore a section of Tipton Run, Blair County.

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Severe storms in 2004 and 2006 began to severely erode the banks causing sediment to accumulate underneath the bridge. One landowner had lost 10 to 20 feet of the bank along with trees and shrubs.

Approximately 950 feet of stream channel has been restored to narrow the channel to its proper width. Construction also included five rock vanes and two long vanes to direct high water stream flow away from the banks.

The project had multiple benefits: decreasing sediment, decreasing bank erosion, thereby protecting property trees and shrubs, and improving habitat for birds and mammals. The improvement also made the stream more conducive for fish reproduction. The rock and log structures provide areas for many aquatic species.

The project is located near the town of Tipton in Blair County on SR 4021. In 1964 PennDOT relocated a portion of Tipton Run to accommodate a new roadway (SR 4021) and bridge.

More information visit the [Foundation's website](#).

Rachel Carson Forum Features “Hope for Polluted Waters” Documentary

The April 18 Rachel Carson Forum on Future of the Environment will feature the documentary, “[Hope for Polluted Waters](#)” with an introduction by Bucknell University Professor Carl Kirby.

Produced by WVIA TV, "Hope for Polluted Waters" tells the personal stories of volunteers working throughout the coal-mining regions of Pennsylvania to clean up pollution from abandoned coal mines.

Historic coal mining practices have polluted more than 4,600 miles of once pristine waterways, left more than 200,000 acres of land scarred and barren, and left communities with the burden.

While the problem seems overwhelming, and might make most people accept defeat - that's not what's happening in Pennsylvania. People are turning this problem around, and in many cases, returning life to streams that have been dead for more than 50 years.

The film takes the viewer from the eastern anthracite region to the western and north-central bituminous regions to explore the challenges people face when treating AMD.

The story focuses on the people themselves; their passions, frustrations, challenges and ultimately their triumphs over pollution. Dedication drives these individuals - whose goal is a better future. These are the stories this documentary shares.

The showing will take place from noon-1 p.m., April 18 in the Second Floor Auditorium of the Rachel Carson State Office Building, Harrisburg.

The Rachel Carson Forum on Future of the Environment is a monthly mid-day speaker/film series that seeks to stimulate discussion of important environmental and sustainable development issues.

The Department of Environmental Protection, Office of Policy, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Office of Conservation Science, and the Pennsylvania Environmental Resource Consortium are organizing this series.



For more information on the screening, contact Marcus Kohl at 717-787-4686 or send email to: mkohl@state.pa.us .

Link: [Hope for Polluted Waters Premier Attracts 250 at Bucknell](#)

Volunteers Sought to Help Monitor for Invasive Zebra & Quagga Mussels

Pennsylvania Sea Grant, Mansfield University and the Army Corps of Engineers are offering a special training session for volunteers interested in joining the Pennsylvania [Zebra and Quagga Mussel Monitoring Network](#).



The meeting will be held on May 17 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Mansfield University of Pennsylvania, Mansfield, Pa.

Volunteers will be asked to visit a high risk location, such as a public boat launch or downstream from a known source of mussels, and report the presence or absence of mussels each month of the warm season (until about October). No prior experience is needed - just an interest in protecting our local waterways. All materials including a DVD training video and monitoring manual will be provided.

Why is monitoring important? Zebra and quagga mussels can cause great harm to the economy, aquatic ecosystems, and native clam and mussel populations. Zebra mussels have shown-up in the Finger Lakes Region of New York and more recently in the Cowanesque Lake in Tioga County, Pennsylvania.

Since their discovery in the lake last May, Pennsylvania Sea Grant has been working with the Army Corps to alert visitors to take precautions to reduce the risk of transporting the zebras to new locations.

Only a few of Pennsylvania's 12,000 lakes and 84,000 miles of streams are infested with invasive mussels. The Pennsylvania Zebra and Quagga Monitoring Network is sponsored by the Department of Environmental Protection and Pennsylvania Sea Grant, with the assistance of a host of partners, to help slow the spread of invasive mussels in the Commonwealth's rivers, streams and lakes.

Monitors are needed so that water users may be alerted to take proper prevention measures; whenever invasive mussels are found at a new location, an alarm is sounded so appropriate steps can be taken - for example - to warn visitors and recreational boaters leaving an infested location to properly clean equipment and gear.

Zebra mussels have been present in the Great Lakes since the mid-1980s when they were introduced by freighters that had filled their ballast tanks with infested water in Eastern Europe. Since then, zebra mussels have been transported to many other waterways in the United States and have caused environmental havoc and millions of dollars in property damage.

Adult zebra mussels are small clam-like animals that can grow to about two-inches long. As the name suggests, most have a zebra-striped pattern on the shell. However, some have faint bands. Microscopic larval zebra mussels, called veligers, are free floating for the first month of life before they attach to hard surfaces.

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Zebra mussels are capable of harming native mussels and disrupting food chains by devouring the algae (microscopic aquatic plants) that support native mussels and fish. They can also clog utility pipes and industrial water intakes. In North America, zebra mussels have few predators and multiply very rapidly. Because zebra and quagga mussels are mobile and are transported in many ways, they have great potential to proliferate.

There is a very good chance that zebra mussels hitch-hiked a lift into the Cowanesque Lake attached to a boat or trailer that visited an infested lake before launching. Adult zebra mussels can stick to the hull of a boat or any hard underwater surface.

A boat moving from one body of water to another may also carry larval veligers which can't be seen by the naked eye. Veligers can survive and be transported in standing water found in the live well, bilge, boat decking, trailer frame, or a marine toilet.

Invasive mussels can also settle on any hard surface and rapidly reduce the inside diameter of an intake pipe or fill in the spaces in an outboard motor, blocking the flow of air or water. This can ultimately cause the motor to overheat.

Boaters, anglers, water-skiers, scuba divers, and canoeists are urged to take the following precautions to help prevent the spread zebra mussels and other aquatic invasive species:

- While boating, avoid traveling through aquatic plants;
- Before leaving a body of water, remove all visible plants, fish, animals, and mud. Drain all water from the boat, trailer and all other fishing and boating equipment before leaving the water body;
- Before traveling to a new body of water, use a power washer to clean your boat and trailer. Alternatively, allow the boat, trailer, and other gear to thoroughly dry for a minimum of five days; and
- Always dispose of unused bait in a trash can. Do not release live bait into the wild.

To register for the workshop, send an e-mail with your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address to: Ann Faulds, Pennsylvania Sea Grant, afaulds@psu.edu or you can mail to Ann Faulds, 1350 Edgmont Avenue, Suite 2570, Chester, PA 19013 or call 215-806-0894. Lunch will be provided.

For questions or more information, visit the [Monitoring Network webpage](#) or contact Ann Faulds, 215-806-0894, or send email to: afaulds@psu.edu.

First Opening Day of Trout Season Online Video Teaser



Watch the Fish and Boat Commission's [online video teaser](#) for the first opening day of trout season on March 29 for counties in the Southeast. The second opening day is April 12 for the remainder of the state. For more, visit the [PA Trout Season webpage](#).

Water Researcher Dr. Conrad Volz to Speak in McKean County April 7

The McKean County Conservation District and Penn State Cooperative Extension are sponsoring a special presentation by Dr. Conrad Volz, scientific director of the Center for Healthy Environments and Communities, on April 7 in Bradford, Pa.

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The event will start at 6:00 p.m. at the Rice Auditorium, in Room 107 of Fisher Hall at UPB in Bradford.

Dr. Conrad Volz will give a presentation entitled, “Estrogenicity Levels in Three Rivers Fish are Correlated with High Densities of Sewer Overflows”

Dr. Volz’s research last year revealed high levels of mercury and selenium in channel catfish at Kittaning and high levels of estrogen in fish in the Allegheny River near Pittsburgh. Dr. Volz is studying the effect of sewage in the river and the presence of estrogen, antibiotics, and other material.

Dr. Volz said human waste containing drugs for hormone replacement therapy and birth control is getting into the river, as are estrogen-mimicking chemicals such as laundry detergents and plastics. “We know these chemicals are having an effect on fish,” he said. “There’s an increase in the level of estrogen in their bodies, and many male fish are developing eggs in their testes.”

Local Extension Educator, Jim Clark, and McKean Conservation District Watershed Specialist, Heather McKean, are very interested in Volz’s work. They have met with Dr. Volz and have offered to arrange a “control site” for his study in McKean County.

To register for the April 7 presentation at UPB, please contact the Penn State Extension Office in Smethport at 814-887-5613.

WPC's Allegheny River Sojourn Promises a Weekend of Scenery and Discovery

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is proud to be hosting the annual [Allegheny River Sojourn](#) on June 21-22 through the federally designated wild and scenic portion of the Allegheny River in Tionesta, Pa.

The trip will encompass 21 river miles over a span of two days. The first day will be 13 miles, with the starting point just below the Tidioute Borough Access point (Tidioute) and will end at Eagle Rock Motel (Tionesta). The second day will be an 8 mile excursion from Eagle Rock Motel (Tionesta) to the Village Canoe Access point (President).

All participants will receive safety training and instructions prior to departure. Registration fees include canoe rental and hauling, personal transportation to and from Eagle Rock Motel, guided environmental tours, food, beverages, snacks, and custom 2008 sojourn tee shirts.

Individuals must provide their own overnight accommodations. Registration: \$80.00 for 2 days & \$50.00 for 1 day. The first 80 registrants will be accepted, so RSVP Today! RSVP must be received by May 30.

For more information and to register online, visit the [Allegheny River Sojourn webpage](#) or to RSVP, contact Scott Millberg by phone 724-459-0953 X 104 or send e-mail to: smillberg@paconserve.org.

PA American Water Works Assn. Sponsors Pump and Seal Course

The [PA American Water Works Association](#) is sponsoring a Pump and Seal Course Training Course on April 10 in Harrisburg.

This is a unique opportunity for hands-on training in centrifugal pump disassembly, troubleshooting and reassembly at the Harrisburg Bureau of Water facility. The workshop is worth two continuing education credits.

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For more information contact Diane Cox, 717-774-8870 or send email to: dianecox@paawwa.org .

Poster Contest Highlights International Compost Awareness Week May 3-10

To help celebrate [International Compost Awareness Week](#) (May 3-10), the U.S. Composting Council (USCC) invites entries to its annual poster contest which this year has a theme of “The Possibilities Are Endless – Compost!”

International Compost Awareness Week focuses on broadening the understanding of compost use and promotes awareness of composting. Globally, it is an opportunity to show that innovative programs and successful efforts have improved community sustainability and promote the use of renewable resources in landscaping, horticulture and agriculture.

U.S. sponsors include: Coca Cola, Chinet, Starbucks, Chick fil-A, Stopwaste.org, A-1 Organics, BioBag, Garick Corp., BioCycle, Composting News, Resource Recycling, Reotemp Instruments, MSW Management, Filtrexx, Gore Cover Systems, WeCare Organics, St. Louis Composting, Synagro and Waste Handling Equipment News.

For more information, visit the [International Compost Awareness Week webpage](#).

Volunteers Needed for Waste Collection Event in Allegheny County

The [Southwestern Pennsylvania Household Hazardous Waste Task Force](#) is looking for volunteers to help staff a household hazardous waste collection event on April 26, at Settlers Cabin Park Wave Pool.

Volunteer tasks include traffic counting, directing traffic, taking surveys, handing out educational literature and checking materials in trunks. No volunteers will be asked to handle hazardous materials or unload vehicles.

Volunteers may work a full-day shift, 7 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., or half-day shifts, 7 to 11:30 a.m. or 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Lunch, beverages and a T-shirt will be provided. Every volunteer also receives a \$10 gift card, free disposal of up to five gallons of household hazardous waste, and a chance to win items donated by local organizations.

The event is co-sponsored by the Allegheny County Health Department. The Task Force is administered by the [Pennsylvania Resources Council](#).

Please contact the Health Department’s Recycling Officer Joy Smallwood at 412-578-8390 or send email to: jsmallwood@achd.net to volunteer.

Funding Still Available for Underground Heating Oil Tank Cleanup

The Department of Environmental Protection this week announced there was still grant money available for the current fiscal year to assist tank owners with costs of taking corrective action in response to heating oil tank leaks.

The funding is available through the [Heating Oil Tank Cleanup Reimbursement Grant Program](#).

Grants are available for tank owners who have underground storage tanks with a capacity of 3,000 gallons or less used for storing heating oil for consumption on the premises where stored to assist with costs of taking corrective action in response to a release. The release must have occurred on or after January 30, 1998.

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Typical eligible corrective action costs include excavating, emptying, cleaning, removing, transporting and disposing of a leaking storage tank; excavating contaminated soil; transporting and disposing of wastes; and restoring disturbed or contaminated areas by backfilling, grading and revegetating. Costs associated with the removal of non-leaking storage tanks and releases from storage tanks located in underground areas such as basements or cellars are not eligible for reimbursement.

The reimbursement is limited to the actual costs of corrective action or \$4,000, whichever is less. However, a \$1,000 deductible must be paid first by the tank owner. The reimbursement and deductible apply on a per tank basis.

For more information, contact the Storage Tanks Cleanup Program in Harrisburg at 717-783-9475, contact the Environmental Cleanup Program in your local DEP regional office, or send email to: tankcleanup@dep.state.pa.us .

EPA Assistance Center Hosts Grant Workshop for Small, Disadvantaged Businesses

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency mid-Atlantic region's Business Assistance Center is hosting the eighth annual workshop for small and disadvantaged businesses on April 22 in Philadelphia to help prepare competitive proposals for an upcoming [Small Business Innovation Research \(SBIR\) solicitation](#).

Each year, EPA makes monetary awards through the SBIR program to small, high-tech firms to develop and commercialize cutting-edge environmental technologies. The workshop will provide practical, useful information on the program including writing winning proposals, commercialization and sources of local assistance.

For more information, contact Kelly Wylam, Ben Franklin Technology Partners, by calling 717-948-4318 or send email to: info@innovationpartnership.net .

April is Children & Nature Awareness Month

The [Children and Nature Network](#) is helping to celebrate April as "Children & Nature Awareness Month."

A growing network of individuals, organizations and agencies are helping to spread the word about the importance of providing opportunities for all children to experience frequent, regular play and exploration in natural outdoor settings.

Children today are far less likely than past generations to spend time playing outside, and a growing body of research says children are paying a high price for that lack. Childhood obesity, inattentiveness, diminished creativity and depression are just a few of the problems linked to what author Richard Louv has dubbed "nature deficit disorder" in his best-selling book *Last Child in the Woods*.

"Getting kids outdoors more, riding bikes, running, swimming—and, especially, experiencing nature directly—could serve as an antidote to much of what ails the young," says Louv. This month, a new edition of *Last Child in the Woods* is being released, now with an added Field Guide offering 100 Actions that families and communities can take.

C&NN President Cheryl Charles says, "We've an opportunity and a responsibility to right the balance in children's everyday lives. Children who play outdoors in natural areas on a regular basis are happier, healthier, smarter, more cooperative and more self-confident. This issue is touching a chord of common sense and a movement to reconnect children and nature is burgeoning worldwide."

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In fact, a shift already has begun. Since C&NN was established early in 2006, children and nature initiatives have emerged from coast to coast and continent to continent.

"There is much more to be done to achieve this healthy change in children's daily lives," says Charles, "and Children & Nature Awareness Month is an important way to build momentum for this movement that is so critical to the health and well-being of our children and their future."

For more information, visit the [Children and Nature Network website](#).

Link: [No Child Left Inside](#)

Harrisburg Peregrine Falcon Lays First Three Eggs of Season



Just after 7 a.m. March 22, the first egg of the 2008 season was delivered to the [Peregrine falcons](#) nesting on the 15th floor ledge of the Rachel Carson State Office Building, then shortly thereafter two more.

Typically, the female lays an egg at one to two day intervals. In each of the last two years, she has produced a "clutch" of five eggs.

A pair of nesting falcons can also be seen on the [Gulf Tower in Pittsburgh](#), sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Watch these annual rites of Spring online!

Grasslands for Wildlife Workshop Set for April 5

A [Grasslands for Wildlife Workshop](#) will be held at the Lehigh Valley Zoo on April 5 to learn what steps landowners can take to promote grassland habitat for wildlife.

The workshop is sponsored by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Lehigh Valley Greenways Grasslands Partnership and is being hosted by the Lehigh Valley Zoo and the Wildlands Conservancy.

Barn owls, songbirds, gamebirds, butterflies and many other grassland wildlife are disappearing at an alarming rate due to rapid development and the loss of field habitat.

Presentations will include land preservation by the Wildlands Conservancy, the Game Commission's Barn Owl initiative, grassland wildlife by Pennsylvania Audubon, American Kestrel nesting box project, warm-season grasses as biofuel by Agri-Dynamics, grasslands projects at Grand Central Sanitary Landfill and the Lehigh Gap Nature Center and a tour of the grasslands project at Trexler Nature Preserve.

There will also be an exhibit on Cavity Nesters of Northampton County with a live Barn Owl and American Kestrel.

There is a \$10 cost for the workshop, which includes refreshments and lunch.

Registration is required. To register and for more information contact the Wildlands Conservancy at 610-965-4397 ext. 10.

Director Selected for Penn State Agriculture and Environmental Center

Kristen Saacke Blunk has been appointed director of the newly established [Agriculture and Environment Science and Policy Center](#) in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences.

As director, Blunk will be charged with engaging Penn State's wide range of expertise in agriculture and environmental sciences to help decision makers in state and local government, trade associations, the private sector and citizens' groups throughout Pennsylvania and the Middle Atlantic region address environmental issues as they impact and are impacted by agriculture.

During the next three to five years, the center's priority will be on air and water quality issues associated with livestock.

Blunk previously served as an extension associate with Penn State Cooperative Extension's Nutrient and Water Policy program. She has extensive experience in wetlands and watershed management and pollution prevention, working with the Penn State Cooperative Wetlands Center and community-based watershed organizations, including the ClearWater Conservancy of Central Pennsylvania Inc. and the Penns Valley Conservation Association.

Prior to joining Penn State, Saacke Blunk managed the pollution-prevention assistance program in Tennessee and worked in the private sector in support of water quality projects for industries and municipalities in the southeastern United States. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Virginia Tech and a master's degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Science from Penn State.

The Agriculture and Environment Science and Policy Center is located at 206 Armsby Building, University Park, PA 16802. For more information, call 814-863-8756 or visit the [Agriculture and Environment Science and Policy Center webpage](#).

Spotlight

Seasonal Wetlands Threatened By Anonymity

Beneath the leafy canopy of the Central Appalachians lie some of the forest's most prized and mysterious wetlands.

Disguised as large, shallow pools to the untrained observer, these seasonal bodies of water fill in the springtime and are ideal breeding grounds for salamanders and frogs, which are in steep decline around the world.

“When we think of threats to the Central Appalachians, many of us are concerned with energy extraction, deforestation and stream impacts, but often lost in the protection efforts are vernal pools,” says Anne Barrett, the Conservancy’s South Mountain landscape director. In addition to being strongholds for amphibians, the pool complexes may serve as filters for underground water systems that flow through caves and limestone formations into our streams and rivers.

According to scientists, inch for inch, vernal pools may be one of the most productive habitats in the Northeast. Unfortunately, these pools are dry for much of the year, and most people don’t realize that they are critical habitat and legally protected wetlands.



Vernal Pool, South Mountain

“They might be easy to overlook, but vernal pools are wetlands—and they need to be protected as such,” adds Ron Ramsey, the chapter’s director of government relations. “Because identifying these special places can be a challenge, it’s important to promote greater awareness of their characteristics and appreciation for the habitat they provide.”

Barrett explains that stronger protections are a priority for the chapter because the Appalachians contain Pennsylvania’s two most extensive and highest-quality vernal pool complexes. The Conservancy has identified more than 500 pools throughout South Mountain and in the Minsi Lake Corridor. It is now helping local landowners identify these seasonal wetlands and better understand their significance within the ecosystem in order to abate threats from increasing development, logging and mining.

“Because South Mountain is so close to major population centers, such as Baltimore, Washington and Harrisburg, there is tremendous demand for the land,” says Barrett. “It also is prime real estate for sand and gravel-mining activities—all of which can collapse the pool system by contaminating the water quality or by filling in the pool depressions.”

In order to save these fragile wetlands, the Conservancy’s focus has been to identify where they are and to combine its own protection efforts with an initiative to educate landowners on how to recognize a vernal pool even in the dry season.

The Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program has completed the first part of this approach by compiling a statewide inventory of Pennsylvania’s vernal pools. Barrett and other Conservancy staff are now working with the state and local partners to provide better wetlands education through demonstration sites like the Conservancy’s new Kings Gap Vernal Pool Preserve, near Carlisle.

Reprinted with permission from [Penn’s Woods](#), The Nature Conservancy [Pennsylvania Chapter](#).

Link: [Seasonal Pools Registry for Pennsylvania](#)

Environmental Heritage

Two New Historical Markers Approved on Environmental Topics

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission approved 43 new state historical markers this week commemorating a variety of people and events making significant contributions to the state’s history, including two related to the environment--

- PA Game Commission Genesis -- Erie -- In 1890 in Corry, Pa, a meeting of businessmen and conservationists, concerned about waning wildlife and game populations, led to the establishment of the Pennsylvania Game Commission five years later.
- Joshua Merrill -- Erie -- A renowned oil chemist, Merrill is responsible for scientific breakthroughs in oil production techniques that have had worldwide significance. The results of his work fueled the industrial revolution.

The familiar, blue-with-gold-lettering signs tell the story of people and events, like Betsy Ross' contribution to the Revolutionary War effort as a woman and a Quaker, to a Philadelphia mayor who championed historic preservation and urban renewal, to an

amusement park and recreational haven serving coal miners, and to the woman who popularized gospel music.

There are over 30 historical markers that commemorate people and events in Pennsylvania's environmental history. For a partial list visit [Explore PA History](#) and the [Pennsylvanians and the Environment webpage](#).

Most recently markers recognizing the events surrounding the 2002 Queecreek Mine Rescue and the 1948 Donora Smog disaster were added to the list.

"State historical markers serve to inform people of the fascinating history of our state," said PHMC Executive Director Barbara Franco. "Travelers seek out the markers and often use them as an opportunity to learn more about the subjects they tell about."

The plaques are nominated by the general public and approved by the commission on an annual basis. Once approved, local communities plan public ceremonies to unveil the markers.

For more information, visit the [Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program webpage](#).

Link: [Pennsylvania's Environmental Heritage](#)
[Remembering March 28, 1979 – Three Mile Island](#)

Opinion

Path Dependence and Green Infrastructure

By Dr. Arthur Holst
Philadelphia Water Department

Path dependence refers to economic decisions that depend on past decisions rather than current conditions. This happens because a fundamental pre-existing factor in those decisions is the underlying structure supporting their utility. Thus, only outcomes that work with the underlying structure can be effectively implemented.

As the United States moves toward green energy systems, it is important to remember that the infrastructure we build now will 'lock-in' future generations to the path or paths we choose.

Path dependence is often associated with market examples such as the standard railway gauge, QWERTY keyboard and use of Microsoft Windows in the 1990's. But path dependence also has a great impact on public infrastructure. Such cases are distinctly different than market examples, because there is no competition for a prevailing structure.

The government deliberately makes a decision from the beginning to implement one kind of structure precisely to avoid competing paths. When the government spends millions of dollars on gigantic infrastructure projects, the private sector is 'locked-in' to the project's underlying structure if it wants to make any use of that resource.

Thus, the government is taking two big risks. First, they must assume that the project will be used in such a way and to such an extent as predicted. Second, because of limited access to information, they risk the chance that their structure may not be most efficient. If the project is establishing a pivotal piece of infrastructure, any misapprehensions could be disastrous.

When infrastructure is built, but cannot be used the way it was built to be used, the cost is a gigantic loss to the entire society.

Furthermore, whatever green infrastructure is built in the coming years will lock the U.S. economy in to a path-dependent relationship with that infrastructure. The issue with this situation is not in utilizing the capacity of that infrastructure, but in supplying the resources required to support it.

Biofuels are a promising source of green energy. They are produced from a number of resources, but ethanol—one of the leading biofuels—is produced from corn. Ethanol emits much less greenhouse gas and poisonous gas emissions than fossil fuels.

Corn is easy to grow and ethanol is becoming easier to produce as research moves forward, so it would make sense that the U.S. is leaning towards this solution to the brown fuel issue.

Controversy has been raised over the net energy output that ethanol offers, but how would this affect the U.S. in the context of path dependency?

If the U.S. builds infrastructure around this resource as opposed to fossil fuels, we would be locked in to using this infrastructure for the production and distribution of ethanol. We assume that ethanol will be used as much as we predict, and that it is our most efficient option.

If the supply of ethanol increases enough to supply the U.S. economy, then surely it will be utilized. But consider the effects of producing that much ethanol.

Many farms would have to start producing ridiculous amounts of corn for ethanol. Corn requires heavy inputs of fertilizer and water as compared to other biofuel crops. Furthermore, it takes about 207 gallons of water to create one liter of ethanol, while it only takes less than half a gallon of water to produce a liter of gasoline at a petroleum refinery.

The increased production ethanol will definitely overextend stressed water aquifers in many farming areas, and the large increase in runoff from the fertilizer will have dire affects on the safety of our water resources.

Governments cannot see the future. But it is important to weigh all aspects before building a highly path-dependent system. Infrastructure in place is a sunk cost, regardless of how it is used from then onward.

We should not simply focus on being greener when building environmentally-sensitive infrastructure. Efficiency is such a comprehensive term, it must be considered from all sides.

Dr. Arthur Holst is Government Affairs Manager for the Philadelphia Water Department. He can be contacted by sending email to: Arthur.Holst@phila.gov or by calling 215-685-6143.

Grants & Awards

This section gives you a heads up on upcoming deadlines for grants and financial assistance as well as nominations for awards and other recognition programs. **NEW** means from last week—

- **March 31**—[DEP Stormwater Management Administration Grants](#)
- **March 31** – PAEP [Karl Mason Environmental Award](#).
- **March 31**—[DEP Host Municipality Inspector Grants](#)
- **March 31**—[Pa CleanWays Litter Hawk Youth Award Program](#)

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- **April 1**— [Write On! Wetlands Challenge Student Competition](#)
- **April 2** – [WREN Water Resources Education Project Grants](#)
- **April 4**— [Schuylkill River Heritage Area Mini-Grants](#)
- **April 11**— [PA American Water Environmental Grant Program](#)
- **April 25**— DCNR [Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grants](#)
- **May 1**— [PA CleanWays’ Sue Wiseman Student Scholarship](#)
- **May 2**— [Friend of the Lehigh River Awards](#)
- **May 2**—[DCNR Volunteer Forest Firefighter Grants](#)
- **May 16**—[DEP Growing Greener Watershed, Flood Protection Grants](#)
- **May 20** – PennVEST [Infrastructure Loans/Grants for April 15 Meeting.](#)
- **June 16**— [Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Contest](#)
- **June 20**— DEP [Section 902 Recycling Development Grants](#)
- [RC&D Grants for Improving Livestock Operations](#)
- **September 20**— [Fish & Boat Commission Boating Facilities Grants](#)

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

Quick Clips

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

[Utilities, Agencies Blast Cut to Heating Assistance Funds](#)
[ILHEAP Energy Assistance Program Sees \\$13 Million Surplus](#)
[Plan to Hold \\$13 Million in LIHEAP Aid Draws Fire](#)
[Two Allegheny Firms Win PA Environmental Honors](#)
[DEP Honors Radon Employees for Outstanding Work](#)
[Borough of Media Works to Banish Cigarette Butts](#)
[Landfill Operators Got to Court Over Refund](#)
[Johnstown Gets First Green Building](#)
[House of Umoja Launches Green Campaign](#)
[PSU W-B Touts Environment With Building](#)
[Will Housing Slump Save Open Space?](#)
[Proposed PPL Rate Hike Gets Bigger](#)
[Op-Ed: How to End Twin Problems From Oil and Air Pollution – Nuclear Power](#)
[Op-Ed: Nuclear Industry Hasn’t Answered Waste and Cost Questions](#)
[E85 Could Catch on if Availability Picks Up](#)
[Op-Ed: Coal and Nuclear Offer Energy Choices](#)
[Electricity Price Caps May Go On](#)
[Students Work on Solar-Powered Kart](#)
[Forum to Look at Ways to Promote Plastics Recycling](#)
[DEP Provides \\$1 Million to Support York Project](#)
[Advisory Council to Review Natural Area Zone Plans](#)
[Weather Plays Factor in Declining Deer Harvest](#)
[Deer Debate Lingers](#)
[Susquehanna Student Takes Part in Deer Conservation Project](#)
[Harrisburg Peregrine Falcon Lays First Egg of Season](#)

[Editorial: Wildlife Refuge is Good Idea](#)

[Nature's Navigator: Promised Land](#)

[Outdoors: Magazine Gives Williamsport, Carlisle Top Marks](#)

[Meeting Aims to Map Future of Area Trails in Cambria County](#)

[Council Poised to Put Hold on New Billboards](#)

[Editorial: Pittsburgh Council is Right to Go Slow on Digital Billboards](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Raising Trout Casts a Wide Net Across Learning](#)

[Lancaster Conservation District Holds Annual Awards Banquet](#)

[Yough is River of the Year](#)

[Youghiogheny Named '08 River of the Year](#)

[Youghiogheny Named River of the Year](#)

[Fishin' the Wissahickon](#)

[Watershed Groups Plan for Busy Season of Stream Improvements](#)

[Teen Raises Money for Clean Water in Developing Nations](#)

[Editorial: EPA Needs to Sharpen Pencil in Dealing With Stream Pollution](#)

[Lakes' Oxygen Levels Vary By Season](#)

[Op-Ed: Keeping Delaware River Reservoirs In Balance](#)

[Abandoned Mine Near Hawk Run to Be Reclaimed](#)

[Join In The Stream, Street and Rail-Trail Cleanup](#)

[Deer Creek Cleanup Planned](#)

[Daniel Rubin: Urban Angler Touts Schuylkill River](#)

[\\$1 Million to Help Mitigate Flooding](#)

[Lycoming County Meets Bay Cleanup Head-On](#)

[Lycoming Commissioner Makes a Case for the County at Bay Hearing](#)

[Chesapeake Bay Cleanup Cost Shows No Sign of Going Down](#)

[Congressman Offers Hope for Bay Cleanup Funding Relief](#)

[Is Sewer Plant Upgrade Even Necessary?](#)

[Editorial: Missing Deadlines to Save the Bay](#)

[Farmers Doing Their Part With Chesapeake Bay Cleanup](#)

[Northumberland Conservation District Holds Awards Banquet](#)

[Lycoming Conservation District Honors Long-Time Members](#)

Regulations

The Department of Environmental Protection [published notice](#) of proposed 2008 NOx budget trading program set-asides and a [proposed 8-hour ozone nonattainment area plan](#) for Greene County. The Game Commission [published the final regulations](#) for the agricultural damage depredation permit program.

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – March 29, 2008](#)

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 two guidance documents for public comment, one on evaluating underground storage tank liners and the other concerning changes to a mine operator's business organization. DEP also gave notice of [proposed bond rates](#) for mine openings and boreholes. Details are below:

Draft: DEP ID: 257-3120-001. [Evaluation of Underground Storage Tank Liners](#). Both State and Federal regulations require that internally-lined underground storage tanks with no other means of corrosion protection, be inspected 10 years after the lining installation and re-evaluated every 5 years thereafter. Comments due: April 28.

Draft: DEP ID: 562-2000-703. [Changes to Licenses, Bonds and Permits](#). This document provides guidance to both Department of Environmental Protection personnel and mine operators concerning what documents or information need to be submitted and the necessary actions to be taken in the event of changes to a mining company's type of business organization, its ownership or its officers. Comments due: April 28.

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

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- **March 31**—**NEW**. Senate Appropriations Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 1020](#) (Wonderling-R-Montgomery) updating the County Conservation District law, [House Bill 1589](#) (Evans-D-Philadelphia) Capital Budget for 2007-08. Room 461. 12:30.
- **March 31**—House Game and Fisheries Committee meets to consider [House Resolution 642](#) (Levdansky-D-Allegheny) directing the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to do an audit of the Game Commission's Deer Management Program. Room G-50 Irvis Building. 12:30.
- **March 31**—**NEW**. House Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee on Information Technology meets to consider [House Bill 1304](#) (Fairchild-R-Mifflin) to establish a Geospatial Coordinating Council. Room 121 East Wing. Off the Floor.

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- **April 1**—Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee informational briefing on DCNR’s natural gas leasing policy. Room 8E-B. 10:30.
- **April 1**—House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee meets to consider [House Bill 2035](#) (Seip-D-Berks) establishing the Pennsylvania Heritage Area Development Program and [House Bill 2043](#) (Haluska-D-Cambria) establishing the Snowmobile and All-Terrain Vehicle Act. Room 205 Ryan Building. 9:00.
- **April 1**—**NEW**. House Local Government Committee meeting to consider [House Bill 2266](#) (Steil-R-Bucks) requiring watershed based stormwater planning, [House Bill 2018](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) establishing a tax exempt property municipal assistance fund. . Room G-50 Irvis Building. 9:00.
- **April 1**— [DEP Environmental Justice Advisory Board](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 8:30.
- **April 1-2**— The Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry 2008 [Environmental Regulations & Technologies Conference](#). Eden Resort Inn & Suites, Lancaster.
- **April 2**—House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee informational meeting on [Senate Bill 949](#) (Kasunic-D-Somerset) updating the Bituminous Coal Mine Safety Act. Room 140. 9:00.
- **April 3**—House Game and Fisheries Committee meets to hear the annual report of the Game Commission. G-50 Irvis Building. 9:00.
- **April 9**—**CANCELLED**. [DEP Water Resources Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Next scheduled meeting is July 9.
- **April 10**— House Transportation Committee hearing on diesel truck idling. Room G-50 Irvis Building. 9:30.
- **April 10**—House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee hearing on [House Bill 2347](#) (Kessler-D-Berks) establishing the Organic Agriculture Development Act. Oley Valley Fair Centre, Oley, Pa. 1:00.
- **April 14**—[PA Infrastructure Investment Authority](#) meeting. Dixon University Center, 2986 N. Second St., Harrisburg. 10:00.
- **April 15**—PA Infrastructure Investment Authority meeting. (*notice*)
- **April 15**—**NEW**. [Environmental Quality Board meeting](#). Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:00.
- **April 15**—**NEW**. [DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 11:00.
- **April 17**— Sewage Task Force, [Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee](#) meeting. Penn Stater, State College. 10:00.
- **April 18**—PEC [Water Trail Working Session Conference](#).
- **April 18**—DEP [Coal and Clay Mine Subsidence Insurance Board](#) meeting. 10th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **April 19**— Protecting Our Headwaters Streams and Wetlands-What You Can Do. Cedar Crest College, Allentown. 10:00-3:00. Contact: Barbara Benson, 610-282-33611 or send email to: barbarabenson@bensonsails.com .
- **April 30**—House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee hearing on [House Bill 1908](#) (Rohrer-R-Berks) relating to liability for opening private lands to recreation. Patton Volunteer Fire Company, Patton. 10:00.
- **May 13-15**—[PA Water/Wastewater Association](#) annual conference. Valley Forge.
- **May 28**— [Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards Program](#). Pittsburgh.

[DEP Calendar of Events](#)

[Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

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

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

You can watch the [Senate Floor Session](#) and [House Floor Session](#) live online.

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Stories Invited

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

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