

# — PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on  
Environmental  
Issues in  
Pennsylvania*

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Edited By David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

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[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

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## **REAP Conservation Tax Credit Passed, Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund Left Hanging**

It took more than a week after the Senate, House and the Governor declared a budget deal to put it in writing and the final result includes the REAP conservation tax credit, but not funding for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program. Other issues were pushed back to the fall.

In a big win for the environment, the House and Senate passed and sent to the Governor the [Resource Enhancement and Protection Act](#) (REAP) that gives farmers tax credits for installing conservation practices across the state. (*See separate article.*)

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and a coalition of more than 65 farm, environmental, business and sportsmens' groups supported REAP that will, when signed by Gov. Rendell, provide \$10 million in tax credits in its first year.

"We appreciate the steadfast commitment of REAP's sponsors to seeing this legislation through, and for their dedication to improving water quality while helping farmers make ends meet," said Matthew Ehrhart, Executive Director of CBF's Pennsylvania office. "They clearly understand that a healthy environment and healthy farms go hand in hand, and that REAP will make significant strides toward meeting Pennsylvania's obligations to reduce pollution going into our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay."

REAP is a bipartisan measure sponsored by Representatives Jerry Stern (R-Blair) and Peter Daley (D-Washington) and Senators Mike Waugh (R-York) and Michael O'Pake (D-Berks), along with 79 other co-sponsors.

REAP was included in [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) that made several other changes to the Tax Code.

Funding for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program was left hanging after an agreement between the Senate, House and Gov. Rendell to divert \$40 million from the Keystone Recreation, Parks and Conservation Fund fell apart under [pressure from environmental groups](#).

In response to the breakdown of the agreement, Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, said, "We spent \$50 million on HSCA (Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program) the last two years out of the Environmental Stewardship Fund – and nobody liked that either. The Governor requested \$50 million this year. We offered \$40 million – only to soon find out that DEP really only needs \$22 million. HSCA funding is now not contained anywhere in the budget. And there has not been one word from DEP as to the impact on those employees or the hazardous sites cleanups in the Commonwealth.

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“I do not believe it is our responsibility to revisit HSCA funding in the fall. The time is past. The budget is done. The legislature has essentially approved a two-year budget with agreement for no new taxes or fees. The Governor and House of Representatives did not keep their promise to fund HSCA. It is now incumbent upon the Governor and the Department of Environmental Protection to get creative and find the funding for HSCA somewhere within the \$27 billion budget we approved earlier today.”

But the issue will be revisited in the fall, since available funding for the program will run out in October, according to the Governor’s Budget Office.

The other major environmental issue pushed to the fall was Gov. Rendell’s Energy Independent Initiative. The General Assembly agreed to hold a special session starting September 17 to consider the issue. There was also a side agreement in principle to fund a \$60 million alternative energy program within the existing 2007-08 budget framework.

The Governor was successful in getting several parts of his energy proposal, including:

- [House Bill 1203](#) (Hornaman-D-Erie) making changes to the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, consistent with the Governor’s Energy Independence Initiative, was amended, passed by the Senate and House and signed into law by the Governor and is now Act 35; and
- [House Bill 1530](#) (Dermody-D-Allegheny) providing for long-term electric supplier contracts, was amended to narrow the focus to help major companies in Western Pennsylvania, passed by the House and Senate signed into law by the Governor as Act 36.

Gov. Rendell won another major victory in the budget with the passage of nearly \$1 billion in transit and highway/bridge funding.

The transportation funding plan was included in [House Bill 1590](#) (Markosek-D-Allegheny) and will provide \$532 million for highway and bridge repairs and \$414 million annually for mass transit systems through a series of new initiatives.

The plan involves increasing the existing Turnpike tolls by 25 percent by 2009 and by 3 percent each year thereafter and tolling I-80 to generate \$340 million annually to securitize bonds that would be used to provide highway and bridge construction and transit funding.

In addition, local tax options for supporting transit in Allegheny County were included: a tax of up to 10 percent on the retail sale by glass of liquor, malt and brewed beverages and/or a \$2 per day rental car tax.

Other budget highlights include:

- Up to \$25 million to be diverted from the Environmental Stewardship (Growing Greener) Fund to pay debt service on Growing Greener II bond issue;
- Extension of the Wild Resource Conservation tax check-off until January 1, 2010 (included in [Senate Bill 97](#));
- \$4.3 million increase in State Parks Operations funding;
- \$3 million increase in gypsy moth spraying;
- \$1.8 million increase in State Forests Operations funding;
- \$1.4 million increase in Heritage Park Grants;
- \$1 million increase in Stormwater Management funding;
- \$800,000 million cut in scrap tire cleanup;
- \$300,000 cut eliminating the Chesapeake Bay Education Program;

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- \$300,000 to fund Municipal Climate Changes Plans;
- \$240,000 loss of the earmark for the PA Senior Environment Corps and is now at the discretion of DEP;
- \$140,000 cut to county conservation district funding; and
- \$600,000 cut in Agricultural Research funding.

The bills implementing the budget agreement include:

- [House Bill 1286](#) (Evans-D-Philadelphia) General Fund budget bill, now Act 8A;
- [House Bill 1287](#) (D.Evans-D-Philadelphia) making appropriations from the State Gaming Fund, now Act 9A;
- [Senate Bill 798](#) (Armstrong-R-Lancaster) Capital Budget 2007-08 Itemization Act, now Act 43.
- [House Bill 1295](#) (Hanna-D-Clinton) Fiscal Code changes, restoring the State System of Higher Education allocation from the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund for fiscal year 2006-07 and including other budget implementing language for fiscal year 2007-08, now Act 40;
- [House Bill 1590](#) (Markosek-D-Allegheny) transportation funding for transit systems, highways and bridges was signed into law;
- [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) Tax Code changes including increasing film production tax credit, Education Improvement Credit, creating the Resource Enhancement and Protection tax credit and making changes to the Neighborhood Tax credit, last day for Governor's action July 29;
- [House Bill 842](#) (Prime Sponsor Withdrew) budget-related changes to the Education Code, last day for Governor's action July 29; and
- [House Bill 1631](#) (D.Evans-D-Philadelphia) capital projects to be funded from the State Gaming Fund – Pennsylvania Convention Center and the Penguins Arena, last day for Governor's action July 29.

**NewsClips:** [Cleanup Fund Abandoned, But Keystone Fund Saved](#)  
[2 Weeks Late, Rendell Signs \\$27.2 Billion Budget](#)  
[New Budget Brings Investments in Education, Health Care](#)  
[Senate Republicans Comment on Budget Passage](#)  
[Legislature Ends Budget Impasse](#)  
[State Budget Passes](#)  
[Rendell Expected to Sign \\$27.2 Billion Budget Today](#)  
[Finally A Budget in Place for PA](#)  
[\\$27.2 Billion Budget Sent to Rendell](#)  
[Finally, A Budget](#)  
[New I-80 Tolls, Turnpike Hike, OK'd for Road, Transit Fixes](#)  
[Senate Rejects House Smoking Ban](#)  
[Cleanup Funding Shelved for Budget's Sake](#)  
[Actor Gets Credit for Tax Break to Lure Film Makers](#)  
[House Passes Port Authority, Hockey Arena Measures](#)  
[Editorial: A Budget, A Ban?](#)

## \$10 Million REAP Conservation Tax Credit OK'd, Victory for Farmers, Clean Water

The General Assembly gave final approval to the [Resource Enhancement and Protection Act](#) (REAP) that gives farmers tax credits for installing conservation practices and sent the legislation on to the Governor for his action.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation and more than 65 environmental, sportsmen, agricultural groups, and businesses throughout the Commonwealth joined together in applauding the passing of REAP.

“We appreciate the steadfast commitment of REAP’s sponsors to seeing this legislation through, and for their dedication to improving water quality while helping farmers make ends meet,” said Matthew Ehrhart, Executive Director of CBF’s Pennsylvania office. “They clearly understand that a healthy environment and healthy farms go hand in hand, and that REAP will make significant strides toward meeting Pennsylvania’s obligations to reduce pollution going into our streams, rivers, and the Chesapeake Bay.”

REAP is a bipartisan measure sponsored by Representatives Jerry Stern (R-Blair) and Peter Daley (D-Washington) and Senators Mike Waugh (R-York) and Michael O’Pake (D-Berks), along with 79 other co-sponsors.

REAP was included in [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) that made several other changes to the Tax Code.

“REAP is one of the most important programs to benefit agriculture and water quality in Pennsylvania’s history,” said Rep. Jerry Stern. “This ground-breaking legislation will not only help our streams, but will also help the economic stability of Pennsylvania’s number one industry - agriculture.”

“As a member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, I understand the need to clean up our rivers and streams, and the role that agriculture can play in those efforts,” said REAP sponsor, Sen. Mike Waugh. “I also know farmers cannot do it alone. By enacting REAP we are giving our family farms a chance to improve their bottom line, while improving statewide water quality.”

“REAP uses proven technologies to enable farmers and businesses to work together to protect water quality and the health of our agricultural economy,” said Rep. Peter Daley. “It is an efficient, innovative solution, and it uses less bureaucracy to get the same job done.”

“Agriculture is Pennsylvania’s number one industry, with dairy farming leading the way. But the economic burdens farmers face are forcing many to sell their land and their farms,” said Sen. Michael O’Pake. “REAP is going to provide farmers, particularly dairy operations, with much needed assistance to install farm conservation practices that not only reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, but also increase farm productivity and reduce costs.”

REAP provides transferable state tax credits to Pennsylvania farmers who proactively plan and implement highly effective conservation practices to reduce runoff. Businesses that sponsor such conservation projects will also be eligible for corresponding tax credits. REAP will improve water quality and strengthen our agricultural communities and the economy statewide.



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The bill provides personal and business state tax credits ranging from 25 to 75 percent of the cost to install best management practices like barnyard improvements, riparian buffers, stream fencing and other practices. The development of manure management plans on farmlands, and forested buffers on non-farm lands, would also be eligible for credit.

Each farmer enrolled in the program is eligible for up to \$150,000 in tax credits which can be extended over a period of 15 years. There is no limit on amount of tax credits a business sponsoring projects on farms can be awarded.

“Agriculture generates \$4.8 billion in farm production each year, with dairy farms leading the way,” said Ehrhart. “By enacting REAP, the Governor and our legislators made significant strides toward cleaning up our rivers and streams, providing cleaner drinking water, and creating healthier, more financially productive farms.”

To learn more, visit [CBF’s REAP webpage](#).

### Outline of REAP Farm Conservation Tax Credit Application Process



The [Resource Enhancement and Protection Act](#) (REAP) Program will take effect in 90 days from the day Gov. Rendell signs the bill into law and will be administered by the [State Conservation Commission](#).

The Commission will develop the necessary tax credit application and set a deadline for applying for the credits this fiscal year, hopefully approvals will come in time for the spring construction season.

The law lays out a two-step application process for the tax credit— 1) a determination by the Commission the project is eligible so farmers know they will receive the tax credit before they begin work, and 2) the Department of Revenue formally issues the tax credit when the project is certified as complete to the Commission.

Applications for the REAP tax credit will be on a first-come, first-served basis, so potential applicants are encouraged to start to put together the plans and information they need now in order to apply by the deadline to be set by the Commission. The Commission will have 90 days to review the application to determine whether they are eligible for the tax credit.

Projects eligible for the tax credit include:

#### 75 Percent Tax Credit

- Development of a voluntary or mandatory nutrient management plan;
- Development of an agricultural erosion and sediment control plan or conservation plan;
- Design and implementation of best management practices necessary to abate stormwater runoff, loss of sediment, loss of nutrients and runoff of other pollutants from an animal concentration area;
- Design and implementation of best management practices necessary to restrict livestock access to streams if there is established and maintained a riparian forest buffer with a minimum width of 50 feet; or
- Establishment of a riparian forest buffer with a minimum width of 50 feet;

### 50 Percent Tax Credit

- Design and implementation of agricultural best management practices or the installation and use of equipment, provided that the best management practice or equipment is necessary to reduce existing sediment and nutrient pollution to surface waters for agricultural operation. Best management practices or equipment will be identified by the State Conservation Commission and may include manure storage systems, alternative uses for manure, filter strips, grassed waterways, management intensive grazing systems and no-till planting equipment; or
- Design and implementation of best management practices necessary to exclude livestock access to streams through fencing, stabilized crossings and improved water systems, if there is established and maintained a vegetated riparian or riparian forest buffer with a minimum width of 35 feet.

### 25 Percent Tax Credit

- After July 1, 2008 - remediation of legacy sediment if the legacy sediment is exposed and discharging or threatens to discharge into surface waters and the project meets the standards established by the Commission.

REAP was included in [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana).

To learn more as details develop, visit the [State Conservation Commission](#) webpage and [CBF's REAP webpage](#).

### Session Schedule

The Senate and House will return to voting session September 17. The Senate announced its fall session schedule:

September 17, 18, 19, 24, 25, 26  
October 1, 2, 3, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 29, 30  
November 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 27, 28  
December 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 12

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- Project Complete in First Phase of DRBC Stormwater Demonstration Project

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- Geosynthetic BMPs for Storm Water Management Workshop October 25
- Crawford Conservation Districts Hosts “Pasture Walk” on August 7
- PENNVEST Awards \$76 Million in Water, Wastewater Loans, Grants
- Waterworks Operators Conference Set for State College August 6-8
- U.S. Senators Casey, Specter Sponsor Bills to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- New CBF Report Says Climate Change Will Impact Region’s Natural Resources
- Indigo Technologies Recognized at Air & Waste Management Assn. Conference
- New Partnership Will Let Harrisburg Teens Explore Regional State Parks
- State Court Decision Puts Armstrong County Rail-Trail Back on Track
- Fish & Boat Commission Acts to Improve Access to Lake Erie Tributaries
- Toby Creek’s Bill Sabatose Elected President of Fish & Boat Commission
- Commissioner Judy Schwank Named President of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania
- Help Wanted: Chief Program Officer, Wildlands Conservancy

### Feature

- A Rocky Existence: The Woodrat in Pennsylvania, *By Joe Kosack, Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist, Game Commission*

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

## On the Hill

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### On the Governor’s Desk

The following bills reached the Governor’s Desk before summer recess...

**Budget Bills:** [House Bill 1286](#) (Evans-D-Philadelphia) General Fund budget bill, now Act 8A; [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) Tax Code changes including increasing film production tax credit, Education Improvement Credit, creating the Resource Enhancement and Protection tax credit and making changes to the Neighborhood Tax credit; [House Bill 842](#) (Prime Sponsor Withdrew) budget-related changes to the Education Code; [House Bill 1590](#) (Markosek-D-Allegheny) transportation funding for transit systems, highways and bridges; [House Bill 1287](#) (D.Evans-D-Philadelphia) making appropriations from the State Gaming Fund, now Act 9A.

**REAP Farm Conservation Tax Credit:** [Senate Bill 97](#) (D.White-R-Indiana) that includes the Resource Enhancement and Protection Act (REAP) that provides tax credits for installation of farm conservation practices, was sent to the Governor for his action.

**Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards:** [House Bill 1203](#) (Hornaman-D-Erie) making changes to the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act consistent with the Governor’s Energy Independence Initiative was amended, passed by the Senate and House and signed into law by the Governor and is now Act 35

**Electric Distribution:** [House Bill 1530](#) (Dermody-D-Allegheny) providing for long-term electric supplier contracts, was amended to narrow the focus to help major companies in

Western Pennsylvania, passed by the House and Senate and signed into law by the Governor as Act 36. **NewsClip:** [House Approves Long-Term Power Deals](#)

### **Senate/House Bills Moving/Bills Introduced**

Here's a summary of Senate and House bills moving before they adjourned for the summer...

#### **House**

**Appeal of Land Use Plans:** [House Bill 1329](#) (Kessler-D-Berks) further providing for the jurisdiction of common pleas court in reviewing challenges to land development ordinances and [House Bill 1330](#) (Kessler-D-Berks) also providing for appeals from land use resolutions and maps were reported out of the House Appropriations Committee, passed by the House and now goes to the Senate for action.

**Energy Assistance:** [House Resolution 122](#) (George-D-Clearfield) petitioning the President and Congress to increase funding for the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program was adopted by the House.

**Medical Sharps:** [House Bill 1320](#) (Siptroth-D-Monroe) establishing a program within DEP for the disposal of home-generated medical sharps was recommitted to House Appropriations Committee.

#### **Bills Introduced**

**Returnable Beverage Container Act:** [Senate Bill 1035](#) (Raffery-R-Montgomery) establishing the Returnable Beverage Container Act requiring mandatory deposits on certain beverage containers to fund the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund from unreclaimed deposits.

#### **Governor Signs “Historic” Transportation Funding Bill**

Gov. Rendell this week signed [House Bill 1590](#) (Markosek-D-Allegheny) into law that will make what he said were “historic investments” in Pennsylvania's bridges, roads and public transit systems — nearly \$1 billion in average, annual funding for transportation infrastructure and public transit.

"Transportation is a vital part of Pennsylvania's economy," Gov. Rendell said at a ceremonial bill signing at 69th Street Terminal. "Our economic future depends on having a safe, reliable network of roads, bridges and public transit systems, and we owe it to future generations to maintain this critical infrastructure so we can help communities and businesses continue to grow in the Keystone State.

"This 'public-public' partnership between PennDOT and the Pennsylvania Turnpike commission makes the vital investment of nearly \$1 billion annually in our transportation infrastructure without putting an undue burden on future generations."

The new measure, which delivers on the Governor's transportation priorities, will make, on average over the next 10 years, \$532 million available to fund bridge and road



repairs and \$414 million available to support the 73 public transit systems that provide more than 400 million rides a year to residents in all 67 counties.

"The bridge and road crisis has been building for decades," Gov. Rendell said. "Over the past four years, we have made record, annual state investments for the maintenance and construction of highways and bridges — \$2.37 billion in 2006-07 compared to \$1.78 billion in 2003-04 — but we could not keep up with our aging infrastructure, rising construction costs and dwindling federal resources.

"Despite our record investments in highways and bridges in the past four years, Pennsylvania has nearly 6,000 structurally deficient bridges — the highest number of any state — and more than 8,500 miles of roads that are in need of repair."

The new transportation funding law replaces a patchwork transit funding system with the new Public Transportation Trust Fund, which will draw resources from sales and other taxes, lottery proceeds and money from the Pennsylvania Turnpike Commission. The Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, or SEPTA, will receive 44.5 percent more in state operating assistance, which will eliminate the need for additional 20 percent fare hikes and service cuts in September.

"I am signing this legislation, in part, because as I traveled the state this spring, I saw first-hand the condition of our bridges and roads and met many residents who rely on public transit to get to jobs, medical appointments and shopping. In many areas, public transit is the glue that makes local economies strong, yet every year these agencies face budget shortfalls. Finally, we are providing a dedicated, predictable funding source to shore up public transit agencies.

Meeting a long-standing demand, the commonwealth will now be able to expand the Persons with Disabilities Rural Transportation Program to the 16 remaining counties: Armstrong, Butler, Cameron, Clarion, Delaware, Forest, Indiana, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Montour, Somerset, Susquehanna, Warren, Wayne, Westmoreland, and Wyoming counties. Welfare-to-work and Job Access Reverse Commute services also will be funded.

"With this new partnership, we at last have a long-term solution for funding to revive our public transportation, bridge and highway systems," Gov. Rendell said.

### **Budget Includes \$300,000 to Fund Local Climate Change Action Plans**

The state budget approved this week includes a \$300,000 line item in the Department of Environmental Protection for a grant program to help municipalities establish greenhouse gas action plans.

The funding is designed to implement [House Bill 334](#) (Vitali-D-Delaware) that is now pending in the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.

Under the bill, greenhouse gas inventories would establish how much greenhouse gas is produced by each sector of a community -- municipal, industrial, commercial, residential, etc. -- and provide a baseline against which to measure future greenhouse gas reduction efforts. The action plans would lay out strategies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions across those sectors, as well as specific targets to be reached.

"This \$300,000 appropriation will fund about 15 local climate change action plans," Rep. Vitali said. "I'm hoping this will serve as a pilot program and that the program will be greatly expanded in the future."

Rep. Vital said last year he helped his own community, Haverford Township, obtain a \$30,000 grant through the state Department of Community and Economic

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Development's Community Revitalization Program to establish a greenhouse gas action plan and inventory. Haverford Township is currently negotiating a contract with the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives for help with the project.

Rep. Vitali and Sen. Erickson (R-Delaware) are also working on legislation ([House Bill 110](#) and [Senate Bill 266](#)) to require the state of Pennsylvania to develop its own climate change action plan.

"Climate change is the most important environmental problem facing the planet," Rep. Vitali said. "It must be addressed at every level."

The budget also included a \$300,000 cut in funds for the Chesapeake Bay Education Program.

**Links:** [PA Environmental Council Unveils Stakeholder-Driven Climate Change Roadmap](#)  
[Governor Delays Climate Proposal, DCNR Continues Work on Carbon Strategy](#)

## Other News

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### Nominations Invited for Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards



environment, prevent pollution and save energy.

Applications are due October 15.

The award is open to any Pennsylvania business, governmental agency, educational institution, nonprofit organization, individual or farm that has created or participated in the development of a project that promotes environmental stewardship and economic development in the state.

"By turning environmental challenges into economic growth, Pennsylvania is creating new opportunities for its people and communities, while supporting a whole new generation of environmentally conscious citizens and businesses," Gov. Rendell said. "This award honors those who have worked so hard to improve the quality of life in Pennsylvania, as well as those who are helping to make clean energy the cornerstone of the commonwealth's new economy."

Eligible projects for the 2008 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence must have been completed between August 1, 2006, and July 31. The project categories for consideration include, but are not limited to: environmental technology innovation, pollution prevention and resource efficiency, community revitalization, environmental education and outreach, watershed stewardship, mine safety and clean energy innovations and environmental market development

Projects will be evaluated based on environmental protection, teamwork, public service, environmental education and outreach, pollution prevention, economic impact and innovative technology.

The award program is administered by the Department of Environmental Protection.

Nominations are now being accepted for the Governor's Environmental Excellence Awards to recognize efforts to protect the

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“Those honored by this award have helped make Pennsylvania a leader in inspiring innovative solutions to environmental protection challenges and economic development opportunities,” DEP Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty said.

Recipients of the 2008 Governor’s Award for Environmental Excellence will be presented with a unique award at a press event at the winner’s location. In addition, the winning projects will be showcased in numerous DEP publications and editorials and highlighted on the department’s website.

Applications are [available on DEP’s website](#).

[Past award winners are also available online](#). [Winners prior to 2004 are also available online](#).

### **American Water Environmental Grants Awarded for Watershed Projects**

Pennsylvania American Water announced the five recipients for its 2007 Environmental Grant Program this week who will share \$31,615 in grants.

The grantees include Berks County Conservation District, Hallstead Borough (Susquehanna County), Pennsylvania Environmental Council – Northeast Regional Council, South Park Township (Allegheny County) and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy.

The American Water Environmental Grant Program supports projects that protect or restore drinking water sources and surrounding watersheds. Recipients were chosen based on criteria ranging from need to community involvement to sustainability.

“We have been extremely pleased with the calibre of projects received in the last three years for this program. Across the state, there are organizations that are making a positive difference everyday in our watersheds,” said Kathy Pape, president, Pennsylvania American Water. “Through American Water’s Environmental Grant Program, we’re investing in these organizations and supporting the people behind their projects— individuals and groups who are looking to the future by improving the sustainability of our water resources today.”

The following is a summary of the five projects awarded grants—

**Berks County Conservation District:** Funding will be used to create an area demonstrating how to protect water sources and the organisms inhabiting them. Part of this includes a Stormwater Best Management Practices Interpretive Trail, presenting both traditional and innovative BMPs of stormwater run-off control. The self-guided trail will show examples of BMPs intended to demonstrate successful infiltration, reduction of peak volume, quality of stormwater reduction, and elimination of stormwater runoff.

**Hallstead Borough:** The Hallstead Park Bank Stabilization project was created by Hallstead Borough to restore Hallstead Park following the devastating floods in June 2006. Flooding of Salt Lick Creek washed away much of the park, including a pavilion, swings, basketball court, and green areas. The grant will be used to create an effective riparian buffer while stabilizing the creek bank, helping to prevent the park from being affected by future floods. The riparian buffer will consist of native wildflowers and plants, mature trees and shrubs along the creek bank and onto the park property.

**Pennsylvania Environmental Council – NE Regional Council:** To address illegal dumping and its impact on the environment, Pennsylvania Environmental Council teamed up with the Department of Environmental Protection to create the Cleanup Our American Lands and Streams program. Over the past two years, COALS has grown into a state-wide initiative of public and private partnership to clean up illegal dump sites and protect state watersheds. Grant money will help fund as many as eight COALS cleanups in Luzerne and Lackawanna counties scheduled for fall 2007. The cleanup and restoration of illegal dump sites benefit the residents of Luzerne and Lackawanna counties and those living downstream of the targeted watersheds.

**South Park Township:** The success of a clean-up effort three years ago has encouraged South Park Township to hold bi-annual clean-ups of its community's creek beds and banks. The grant will provide the tools needed for this year's clean-up and provide for the disposal of the trash and tires collected along Piney Fork Creek and Peters Creek.

**Western Pennsylvania Conservancy:** The grant awarded to the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy will support a riparian restoration and protection initiative, which will significantly reduce livestock access and agricultural runoff to streams.

The funds will help construct four miles of streambank fencing and to build four stabilized stream crossings in the Neshannock Creek and Big Run watersheds, which are part of the larger Shenango River watershed in northwestern Pennsylvania.

The streambank fencing will beneficially impact the quality of drinking-water source supply by excluding livestock from streams and riparian areas, reducing pollutants in the watershed. Improved source water quality will support survival of two endangered fish and several mussel species.

American Water launched the Environmental Grant Program in January 2005 in Pennsylvania. The success of the pilot program lead American Water to expand the program to include 13 states across the nation.

Pennsylvania American Water is the largest regulated water utility in the state providing quality water and/or wastewater services to over two million people in 373 communities across the state.

For more information on American Water, visit its [Environmental Stewardship webpage](#).

### **Know A Water Efficiency Leader? EPA Seeking Award Nominations**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is accepting nominations for the [2007 Water Efficiency Leader Awards](#) to recognize organizations and individuals that demonstrate leadership and innovation in water efficient- products and practices.

Nominations are being accepted until August 17. Winners will be chosen by a panel of national water experts and based on three criteria: leadership, innovation, and water saved.

"Ben Franklin said: 'We know the wealth of water when the well runs dry'." said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles. "EPA's WEL program taps into that wisdom and spreads the word about water efficiency leadership to protect precious resources and cut water waste."

The Water Efficiency Leader Awards help foster a nationwide ethic of water efficiency, which is critical to the growing U.S. economy and quality of life. Water and energy are closely linked. An example of this is that running a hot water faucet for five minutes consumes as much energy as using a 60-watt light bulb for 14 hours.

The importance of water efficiency also is reflected in WaterSense, a voluntary partnership begun by EPA to educate consumers about making smart water choices that save money and maintain high environmental standards without compromising performance., 2007. It is anticipated that the winners will be announced in late fall 2007.

For more information, visit the [2007 Water Efficiency Leader Awards webpage](#).

### **Project Complete in First Phase of DRBC Stormwater Demonstration Project**

The [Delaware River Basin Commission](#) this week celebrated the completion of the first phase of an ongoing effort to demonstrate how an older site can be transformed (or retrofitted) to properly handle stormwater, a continuing source of flooding and water quality impairment.

Participants in the ribbon cutting ceremony included DRBC Chair Cathy Curran Myers, Gov. Rendell's representative on the federal-interstate commission; Vice Chair Michele Putnam representing N.J. Gov. Jon Corzine; Second Vice Chair Mark Klotz representing N.Y. Gov. Eliot Spitzer, Harry Otto representing Del. Gov. Ruth Ann Minner, Lt. Col. Gwen Baker representing federal government member Brig. Gen. Todd Semonite, and DRBC Executive Director Carol Collier.

"The existing office building and five-acre site is representative of the land development practices of the 1970s with essentially no stormwater management except the immediate transport of runoff offsite through pipes or over paved surfaces," Collier said. "As a leader in water resource management, we felt it was appropriate for the DRBC to set a good example on how to control runoff and provide on-the-ground examples of different stormwater best management practices, or BMPs."

When the three-phase master plan is completed, the DRBC headquarters site will serve as a model demonstration of innovative methods and materials for stormwater management and use of runoff as a resource, while working with existing site conditions."

Funding for the construction of the first phase at the front entrance to the property was obtained through a federal Section 319(h) grant administered by the N.J. Department of Environmental Protection. The remaining phases must still be financed. When finished, there will be a bioretention swale (consisting of a soil bed planted with native vegetation located above an underdrained sand layer), a landscaped detention basin, pervious pavement to increase infiltration of storm water back into the ground, underground dry wells, an infiltration wetland, and a cistern to collect roof runoff.

Environmental goals desired in this retrofit project include:

- Increasing and restoring the site's ground water recharge capability (up to 100% of pre-development recharge);
- Reducing discharge of non point source pollutants from the site to a Delaware River tributary;
- Reducing the volume of stormwater runoff from two-year, ten-year, and 100-year storm events;

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- Installing as many NJDEP-approved non-structural measures, landscaping, drainage alterations, and water quality improvement devices as funds allow in order that the site can serve as a water management educational center; and
- Improving on-site management practices, such as reduced use of fertilizers, pesticides, and deicing materials.

“Retrofitting a site for stormwater management is more complicated than incorporating BMPs into the design of new construction,” Collier said. “We will be providing educational materials on cost, installation/maintenance, and environmental monitoring for each BMP in order to show relative effectiveness.”

The design team assisting DRBC is led by representatives from Princeton Hydro, LCC.(Ringoes, N.J.), Pickering, Corts & Summerson, Inc. (Newtown, Pa.), and Mark Shablin Landscape Contracting (Newtown, Pa.).

### **Crawford Conservation Districts Hosts “Pasture Walk” on August 7**

On August 7 the [Crawford County Conservation District](#) will host a “Pasture Walk” to showcase farm conservation practices.

Participants will see examples of farm conservation practices like fencing options, windmill technology, rotational grazing, a flout milking parlor waste system and more walking around the Troyer Farm near Guys Mills.

Financial support for this project was provided by the [Western Pennsylvania Watershed Program](#) and the Pennsylvania Grazing/Forage Lands Conservation Coalition.

There is no cost for the tour. For more information contact the Crawford County Conservation District at 814-763-5269.

### **Geosynthetic BMPs for Storm Water Management Workshop October 25**

The Central PA Section of the American Society of Civil Engineers and ACF Environmental are sponsoring a workshop on Geosynthetic BMP’s for Storm Water Management workshop October 25 at Harrisburg Area Community College.

In addition to providing CPESC professional development units, this program is a good preparation class for the CPESC Review Course and Exam.

[Download the workshop brochure](#) for more details and registration information or contact: Warren Cohn, CPESC PA Representative at 888-856-4505 or send email to: [wcohn@acfenvironmental.com](mailto:wcohn@acfenvironmental.com) .

### **PENNVEST Awards \$76 Million in Water, Wastewater Loans, Grants**

The [Pennsylvania Infrastructure Investment Authority](#) this week approved nearly \$76 million in loans and grants to improve water, wastewater systems.

Most of the money approved, \$72.1 million, is in the form of low-interest loans. Combined with \$3.7 million in grants, PENNVEST will fund 10 clean water projects in 9 counties.

The awards approved by PENNVEST range from a \$3.2 million loan to upgrade a sewage collection system and help create new jobs in Schuylkill County to an \$11 million loan and grant combination that will eliminate the contamination of a local stream by wildcat sewers in two Westmoreland County communities.

A list of loans and grants approved [is available online](#).

### **Waterworks Operators Conference Set for State College August 6-8**

The PA Water Works Operators' Association [will hold its annual conference](#) in State College on August 6-8 around the theme of “New Ideas & New Opportunities: Working With You Today to Meet the Challenges of Tomorrow.”

Workshop sessions and presentations will be held on a variety of topics including system security, maintenance, operations, energy efficiency, updates on new federal and state regulatory requirements and much more. There will also be plenty of networking opportunities.

Major General Jessica L. Wright, Adjutant General, Pennsylvania National Guard, will be a keynote speaker.

The [full conference agenda and registration forms](#) are available online.

### **U.S. Senators Casey, Specter Sponsor Bills to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

U.S. Senator Bob Casey announced this week he is co-sponsoring two federal bills that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and help limit natural resource damage to Pennsylvania from climate change. The legislation includes many of the recommendations made in the Pennsylvania Environmental Council's (PEC) [Climate Change Roadmap for Pennsylvania](#) released in June.



The Climate Change Roadmap for Pennsylvania includes a comprehensive inventory of greenhouse gas emissions in Pennsylvania, coupled with a sector-by-sector series of recommendations for reducing emissions that are causing global warming. These recommendations included establishing a national cap and trade program, advancing renewable energy and biofuel development, and promoting greater energy and fuel efficiency.

“We applaud Senator Casey and Senator Specter’s leadership on this issue” said Brian Hill, President & CEO of PEC. “Climate change will have a tremendous impact on public health, our economy, and overall quality of life in Pennsylvania. It’s imperative that we act decisively to stop global warming; our Senators’ support of legislation requiring mandatory reductions from multiple sources is a great step in the right direction.”

The Union of Concerned Scientists recently released a report on projected impacts to Pennsylvania if state, national, and world leaders fail to take immediate and decisive action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts include dramatic increases in the number of days exceeding 90 and even 100 degrees; additional challenges to dairy, livestock, and field and fruit crop farmers caused by heat stress, invasive species, and drought; and loss of recreational opportunities, particularly winter sports and fishing.

“The conclusion of the UCS and scientific community is clear, unless we achieve an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions within the next several decades, these impacts could be severe and fundamentally change life as we know it in Pennsylvania,” said Hill. “[Senate Bill 309](#) (the Sanders-Boxer Global Warming Pollution Reduction Act), endorsed by Senator Casey, would accomplish this level of emissions reduction by 2050, a

more aggressive approach that is consistent with our Climate Roadmap and the UCS Report.”

Pennsylvania is currently responsible for 1 percent of worldwide emissions of greenhouse gases, ranking our state among the top 25 nations in the world.

“Clearly the challenge to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is considerable, but so are the opportunities,” Hill said “Already our state has seen an influx of investment and job creation centered on renewable energy development. Federal legislation that mandates significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions is extremely important, and creates a level playing field for Pennsylvania.”

When he served as Pennsylvania State Treasurer, Senator Casey led the creation of the innovative Keystone Green Investment Strategy – which links economic development and environmental protection with specific consideration of climate risk and investment in sustainable energy development. PEC worked with then-Treasurer Casey and his staff on the development of the Strategy, which has already produced real dividends for our state.

PEC is currently engaged in a number of climate-related efforts in addition to the Roadmap. PEC is serving as facilitator for the statewide Carbon Management Advisory Group, which is identifying carbon sequestration opportunities in Pennsylvania, and working with several partners on a demonstration project that will use excess poultry manure as a soil amendment to abandoned mine land to grow switchgrass and high diversity native grass. This demonstration project will reduce nitrogen and phosphorus pollution in the Chesapeake Bay, help remediate an abandoned mine land site, and provide carbon sequestration and biofuel production.

Copies of the [Pennsylvania Climate Change Roadmap](#) are available online.

### **New CBF Report Says Climate Change Will Impact Region’s Natural Resources**



Global climate change is already damaging the region’s natural and cultural resources, according to a [new report from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#).

The report identifies current and future impacts to both our resources and local citizens, and identifies solutions that will slow that damage and improve the health of local rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay.

“Rising temperatures and sea level rise put citizens at risk, and threaten the health of local rivers, streams, and the Chesapeake Bay as well as the cultures and economies that depend on them,” said CBF President William C. Baker. “Unless our elected leaders act now, there will be dire consequences for the world we leave our children.”

To avoid the most catastrophic effects of global climate change, scientists estimate it will be necessary to reduce greenhouse gas emissions worldwide by 50-80 percent over the next 50 years. Achieving that reduction will require a variety of tools and technologies, some of which exist today while others are under development.

A study conducted by Yale University graduate students for CBF determined that implementation of agricultural conservation tools, already called for but not yet funded by the states and federal government, would sequester or balance out approximately 4.8 million metric tons of carbon dioxide annually over 15 years. That is the equivalent to the



carbon dioxide emissions from the entire residential electrical use of states like Delaware or Vermont.

“While certainly not a silver bullet for global climate change, these are vital tools that could be implemented today, generating significant benefits to both water quality and global climate change. All that is lacking is state and federal funding,” Baker said. “As Congress considers the 2007 Farm Bill, and as the region’s governors develop their budgets for next year, it is time to fully fund the agricultural conservation tools they committed to employ as part of the roadmap to restoring the Chesapeake Bay.”

Rising temperatures will dramatically increase urban heat related deaths according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Upstream, rising water temperatures will stress fish populations, including brook trout populations in Pennsylvania and smallmouth bass and sunfish populations in the Shenandoah River in Virginia. In the Bay, increasing temperatures will expand the dead zone and add additional stress to rockfish and other species. That stress affects the health of fish by changing feeding habits and making them more susceptible to disease.

Coastal land in the Chesapeake Bay region is especially vulnerable to sea level rise, as much as three to four feet is possible by the end of the century according to Bay scientists. Sea level rise, in conjunction with predicted increases in storm severity, threaten the existence of coastal communities around the Bay. In addition, thousands of acres of environmentally critical wetlands, which act as nurseries for fish and shellfish as well as critical filters that reduce pollution, are also at risk from rising water levels.

[The report is available online.](#)

### **Indigo Technologies Recognized at Air & Waste Management Assn. Conference**

The [Air & Waste Management Association](#) announced this week Indigo Technologies, LLC of Pittsburgh received the [J. Deane Sensenbaugh Environmental Technology Award](#) for outstanding achievement in the fields of air pollution control or waste management by a company or individual.

Established by the Association to recognize environmental professionals who serve as models for others to emulate, the [A&WMA’s Honors & Awards Program](#) acknowledges individuals and organizations for outstanding accomplishments in promoting a cleaner environment. The awards were made at the 100th annual conference in Pittsburgh.

“The Air & Waste Management Association is proud to recognize these deserving individuals and companies for their enthusiasm and commitment to the environment,” said Adrienne Carolla, A&WMA Executive Director. “Their work is a sign that true progress has been made on many fronts to preserve and protect our environment.”

Indigo Technologies, LLC was recognized for the development of the Indigo Agglomerator to reduce emissions of fine particulate matter (PM 2.5). The Indigo Agglomerator has been installed at six power stations worldwide, providing a significant improvement in electrostatic precipitator performance that has proven consistent over time and a wide range of coals.

The [Air & Waste Management Association](#) is a Pittsburgh-based nonprofit, nonpartisan professional organization that provides training, information, and networking opportunities to thousands of environmental professionals in 65 countries.

**Link:** [Air & Waste Management Assn. Workshop on New Source Review Compliance](#)

## **New Partnership Will Let Harrisburg Teens Explore Regional State Parks**

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the City of Harrisburg Department of Parks and Recreation are teaming up to provide 12 teenagers from the city the opportunity for outdoor adventures in nearby state parks July 23 – 27.

“Our state parks are often in more rural areas but people are concentrated in our urban areas,” DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis said. “Our partnership with the City of Harrisburg opens the door to a new opportunity to connect our state parks with urban youth.

“We hope an exciting outdoor adventure will not only make them repeat visitors, but will teach them about diversity in the natural world so as citizens they are lifelong stewards and make wise decisions about what our world looks like,” Secretary DiBerardinis said.

The participants range in age from 12 to 15 and are already involved in recreational programs in Harrisburg.

They will participate in the following activities:

- July 23, teambuilding, compass use/orienteering and hiking at Kings Gap Environmental Education Center in Cumberland County;
- July 24, fishing, fossil hunting and swimming at Little Buffalo State Park in Perry County;
- July 25, 6-mile hike from Kings Gap to Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Cumberland County, history and swimming;
- July 26, bicycling, stream survey and swimming at Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Cumberland County; and
- July 27, birding, kayaking, disc golf and swimming at Gifford Pinchot State Park in York County.

“All of the programs, with the exception of swimming, will include a ‘how to’ as well as an interpretive component,” Kings Gap Park Manager Scott Hackenburg said. “We intend to use our experiences with the first program as a model for our new efforts to make city residents more aware of the fun and learning available to them at nearby state parks.”

Efforts are underway to establish similar partnerships and programs in both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh.

Visit the DCNR [State Parks webpage](#) for more recreation ideas.

## **State Court Decision Puts Armstrong County Rail-Trail Back on Track**

The Superior Court of Pennsylvania has reversed a 2005 decision to allow the railbanking of the rail corridor for the Armstrong Trail. Adjacent property owners had filed a lawsuit against the [Allegheny Valley Land Trust](#) to try and prevent the work.

The court ruled that the trial court erred in its decision that Conrail had abandoned the rail corridor that comprises the Armstrong Trail. It also said numerous arguments advanced by the plaintiffs had “no merit.” The court has remanded the matter back to Judge Carson Brown for further action.

Allegheny Valley Land Trust and numerous supporters of the Armstrong Trail said Superior Court determined that the trust is a “qualified private organization” and is able to buy the property from the railroad and preserve the corridor for the resumption of future railroad service.

The court also determined Allegheny Valley Land Trust has met the necessary requirements to railbank the corridor and, as the Pennsylvania Supreme Court held in *Buffalo Township v. Jones*, no approval from the ICC or STB was necessary to accomplish the trail conversion.

The Allegheny Valley Land Trust, The Armstrong Rails to Trails Association and many other Armstrong Trail advocates now look forward to linking with other interested trails to establish one continuous trail from Lake Erie to Pittsburgh. This trail will be patterned after the 150-mile “Great Allegheny Passage” that connects Pittsburgh with Cumberland, Md., and the 180-mile C&O Canal Towpath to Washington, D.C. (*Reprinted from [DCNR’s Resource newsletter](#)*)

### **Fish & Boat Commission Acts to Improve Access to Lake Erie Tributaries**

Utilizing funds generated from the sale of the special Lake Erie fishing permits, the Fish and Boat Commission this week opted to move forward with two property rights acquisitions to improve access to popular Erie County steelhead trout fishing waters.

The first, a 1,885-linear-foot easement will provide access to Walnut Creek in Millcreek Township. The easement covers two contiguous parcels located between 38th Street and State Highway 832 (Sterrettania Road). One parcel will provide access to 1,000 linear feet on both sides of the creek. Another 885 feet will be along the south side of the creek.

The easements will be for public fishing, boating, riparian buffer and fisheries management and will include the stream corridor and extend at least 25 feet back from the top of the bank. An additional easement for parking along State Highway 832 and an existing trail are also part of the \$27,000 deal.

The second easement covers more than 1,400 linear feet of Elk Creek as it flows across property in Girard Township. The easement will be for public fishing, boating, riparian buffer and fisheries management and will include the stream corridor and extend at least 25 feet back from the top of the bank. The easement parcel is located between Routes 5 and 20, along Elk Park Road. This easement is being offered to the Commission for no fee by Mercyhurst College.

More information on actions taken by the Commission [is available online](#).

### **Toby Creek’s Bill Sabatose Elected President of Fish & Boat Commission**

Commissioners William J. Sabatose and Frederick P. Osifat were elected President and Vice President, respectively, of the Fish & Boat Commission at the board’s summer quarterly meeting this week in Harrisburg.

Commission President Sabatose, of Brockport, Jefferson County, comes from the Third Commissioner District, comprised of Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean and Potter counties. He was first appointed to the Commission on December 9, 1987, and he was reappointed in 1995 and in 2003.

Commissioner Sabatose has been a member of numerous conservation and sportsmen’s organizations. He served as President of the Toby Creek Watershed Association, Inc., where he led an effort to plant almost two million trees. He has done numerous studies of acid mine drainage in the Clarion River Basin and has worked with

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government agencies such as the Department of Environmental Protection to reduce acid mine drainage on both the Toby Creek and Clarion River watersheds.

His efforts to work with state legislators and state agencies has resulted in major revisions of both state and federal surface mine laws, especially those with respect to siltation and acid pollution of streams. Commissioner Sabatose has received numerous awards for these projects.

This is his third stint as president, having served in that capacity from July 1990 to July 1992 and from July 2002 to July 2003.

Commission Vice President Osifat is an ardent fly fisherman and has been active in several fishing and sportsmen's organizations over the years. He is currently a member of the Paradise Hunting and Fishing Club, Lehigh River Stocking Association, Northampton-Lehigh-Carbon Outdoor Sportsmen Association, and the Western Pocono Chapter of Trout Unlimited serving as Director.

Community interest has him serving on the Kline-Banks-McAdoo Regional Authority, Banks Township Municipal Authority, Tri-County (Carbon-Schuylkill-Luzerne) Airport Study Advisory Board, and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation Citizen Advisory Board. Commissioner Osifat presently is Director of the Office of Planning and Development for Carbon County and has been employed with the County since 1993. Commissioner Osifat, of Tresckow, resides in Commission District 7 comprised of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties.

The newly-elected officers will serve a one-year term.

For more information about current Commissioners, visit the [PFBC website](#).

### **Commissioner Judy Schwank Named President of 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania**

[10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania](#) has chosen Berks County Commissioner Chairwoman Judy Schwank as its new President and CEO.

"Judy's appointment comes at a critical time for 10,000 Friends, and we are delighted to appoint Judy to the helm," said Eric Menzer, Chairman of the Board of 10,000 Friends, and Vice-President of Wagman Construction, Inc., in York. "Her work as a County Commissioner, leading efforts for farmland preservation and smart growth in Berks County, and her leadership at the state level, as Chair of the State Planning Board, clearly give her the blend of experience, integrity and policy knowledge that will ensure the success of our mission."

"Judy's experience will be invaluable, especially with our Campaign to Renew Pennsylvania," said Menzer. "We're looking forward to her efforts to advance our goal to create a climate for systemic policy reform in Pennsylvania to improve government effectiveness, community quality of life and economic competitiveness."

"The experience I gained and the relationships I built in Berks County have afforded me the opportunity to provide leadership on the issues that really matter to Pennsylvania residents," said Schwank. "I'm looking forward to working with citizens, local and state officials, and civic and business leaders throughout the Commonwealth."

Schwank was elected to the Berks County Board of Commissioners in 1999 and re-elected in 2003. Prior to that, she served more than 18 years with the Pennsylvania State Cooperative Extension, and is a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University. As

President of 10,000 Friends, she succeeds Janet Milkman, who resigned in May 2007. Schwank will begin work January 2008.

### **Help Wanted: Chief Program Officer, Wildlands Conservancy**

The [Wildlands Conservancy](#) is seeking a chief program officer to be responsible for oversight and direction of four major program areas: land protection, river protection, environmental education and trail development, working in concert with the organization's strategic objectives.

The candidate should hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in environmental-resource management, or related area and have 5-10 years experience or equivalent combination, possessing expert knowledge of land-management conservation practices, trends and conservation science. Must have superb communication skills and grant-writing experience and be fiscally responsible in carrying out all duties.

Send resume to: CPO Search Committee, Wildlands Conservancy, 3701 Orchid Place, Emmaus, PA 18049 or for more information contact Chris Kocher, WC President, at [ckocher@wildlandspa.org](mailto:ckocher@wildlandspa.org)

## **Feature**

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### **A Rocky Existence: The Woodrat in Pennsylvania**

**By Joe Kosack**

**Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist  
Game Commission**

Most people live their lives without ever seeing an [Allegheny woodrat](#). And they probably are ok with that, with rats being rats and all that. But this rat isn't a "rat."

Woodrats are important to Pennsylvania, according to the Game Commission, and research is now underway to improve management of this state-listed threatened species.

"Woodrats, like bald eagles, are one of our best and last indicators of true wilderness," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. "They are confined to Pennsylvania's ridges, and, as those ridges are developed, woodrat communities often become ghost towns, historical markers of what once was. Most people won't miss them. In fact, most didn't even know that they were out there. But woodrats are significant. They are a species of greatest conservation concern that the Game Commission's Wildlife Action Plan has designated as in immediate need of assistance."

A three-year study, partially-funded by a Game Commission State Wildlife Grant, and being led by Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP), is attempting to shed light on the daily and seasonal movements of woodrats, a largely nocturnal member of the state's wildlife community that spends considerable time in subterranean settings. The fieldwork also will attempt to identify high-quality woodrat habitat on the Chestnut Ridge of the



Allegheny Mountains in Indiana and Westmoreland counties, and shed more light on woodrat demography, as well as ascertain whether providing food caches can bolster a woodrat population in decline. Work will include radio-telemetry, DNA profiling and mark-recapture trapping.

The wood rat shouldn't be confused with the Norway rat, the world's proverbial poster critter of filth that originated in northern China and now inhabits every continent - as well as every Pennsylvania county. At one time, woodrats were found in 41 Pennsylvania counties, but the 20th century's American Chestnut blight and gypsy moth invasion - also oriental imports - and substantial changes in land use have conspired to create huge habitat deficiencies and insurmountable barriers in the woodrat's world. Today, woodrats can be found in a couple dozen or so mountainous counties, and their population centers usually are surrounded by vast stretches of inhospitable and uninhabitable lands that they have little chance of traversing to reach other woodrat-friendly environs.

Woodrats, which live a relatively solitary existence, prefer rock outcroppings and cliffs, talus slopes, boulder-covered ridges, caves and mines. They generally are found at higher elevations and, according to Dr. Joseph Duchamp, who is leading IUP's research team in the field, the distribution of woodrat activity centers in the area where fieldwork is occurring surprised him somewhat.

"The way they have these pocket populations scattered throughout this slope, and the area covered by some of these specialized habitats was more than I expected," Duchamp explained. "We're eager to learn more about how these small populations interact and to determine if they're connected by subterranean passages."

Duchamp told of one adult male woodrat that was trapped over two consecutive nights and the surface distance between the trap sites was several hundred yards.

"He may have covered the distance on the surface placing himself at substantial risk, but it seems more likely that he picked his way through the corridors of a cave, which are found in this area, and are inhabited by woodrats," Duchamp said.

Once found on mountains throughout the state, woodrats - also occasionally called packrats - today are limited to certain rocky stretches of the Allegheny and Appalachian mountains. They're in trouble, and have been for some time. But some populations are at greater risk than others. The Allegheny woodrat has been a state-threatened species since June of 1983.

"Pennsylvania once had a solid woodrat population from Maryland to New York, but development and forest fragmentation have changed that," said Cal Butchkoski, Game Commission small mammals biologist. "They now are extirpated in New York, and also Connecticut. Increases in predators - such as domestic cats and dogs, as well as raccoons and foxes - also have played a role, as have changes in forest composition, and their susceptibility to raccoon roundworm. It's fair to say woodrats have been under siege for a long, long time."

Working under the Game Commission's State Wildlife Grants Program, which was created by and is subsidized by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the IUP research team, since mid-May, has been working to trap, tag and place telemetry collars on woodrats. The team is comprised of Dr. Duchamp and Dr. Jeff Larkin, assistant professor of conservation biology, and biologists Karen "Jamie" Paul, of Acme, and Mike Shank, of Clune; and graduate student Jennifer Hoffman, of Ventura, California. They work long days, and perform plenty of after-midnight telemetry work, and generally start the work day climbing the mountainside and scampering over the wet, slippery boulders to check box traps, which

are rebaited and set every evening before dark and checked at daybreak. Traps are disabled during daytime hours.

Although woodrats are in decline, particularly in Pennsylvania's northern tier and eastern counties, Duchamp reported that he's had little problem catching woodrats on both public and private grounds they have been trapping on Chestnut Ridge.

"We've been going to general areas that have records of active sites - although some records are 15 to 20 years old - and we found woodrats at or near every one of them," Duchamp said. "Some of the populations are very small, which would indicate that there is some amount of dispersal going on between nearby populations. I'm just surprised that we really haven't found an empty site yet, partly because this area is on the northwestern edge of the woodrat's range, and partly because the records we're using are pretty old."

The IUP researchers also will experiment by placing caches of acorns in activity centers in an effort to stimulate a population increase.

"Part of the woodrat decline has been linked to the American chestnut blight and gypsy moth deforestation," Duchamp said. "So we're going to see if supplying acorns to colonized areas that are relatively inaccessible to other wildlife will serve as a means of boosting the productivity and coax the population to grow."

Information about juvenile dispersal among the smaller populations that comprise a woodrat meta-population - a regional woodrat population covering the Alleghenies' Chestnut and Laurel ridges in Indiana and Westmoreland counties - is unclear.

"As we get more collars on young adult animals that disperse, we should learn more about how they are getting from one rock patch to another," Larkin said. "Are there specific corridors that they use? Are they moving underground? Is there overland movement? What's the chance it will be picked off by a predator? These are questions we hope to answer."

Upon completion of the study, IUP expects to deliver information and GIS images focusing on habitat features that may serve as dispersal corridors or barriers; a model for predicting woodrat meta-population viability and current information about the demography of Chestnut Ridge woodrat populations.

Woodrats are capable of dispersing a mile or two. On the Chestnut Ridge, where populations appear to be nowhere near as distressed as those fragmented in other parts of the state, Duchamp said, dispersal probably is a singular event done primarily by younger animals.

"We're hoping to catch them during their big move, so we can record their route, the time it takes and the distance they travel," Duchamp explained. "We'd like to better understand the probability of dispersal."

Butchkoski pointed out that woodrat dispersal in other areas of the Commonwealth takes generations for small movements that often end abruptly when dispersing woodrats encounter barriers or predators.

"Woodrats live on islands of rock," Butchkoski said. "They are tied to geology for denning sites and forest composition for food and cover. If they encounter trouble on one ridge, it becomes next to impossible for the colony to pick up stakes and move to the next ridge."

"It might take a woodrat population 20 to 50 years to shift 20 miles in reasonably good habitat. If the habitat isn't good, the woodrat has to cross a valley, or an interstate highway or suburbia - where there's no cover or food - but plenty of predators. It's like walking the plank."

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The Allegheny woodrat, like the opossum, is a living fossil. It has inhabited the rockier sections of the Mid-Atlantic States since the days of the woolly mammoth. Given its habitat preferences, the woodrat had its habitat market cornered for centuries upon centuries; few other creatures prefer to live on boulder-strewn ridges and talus slopes. But now, after thousands of years, this creature's existence is threatened.

"Greater than five percent of the world's breeding population of woodrats is found in Pennsylvania, which means the Commonwealth has a global responsibility to help protect and manage this species, holding onto both the woodrat's retreating northeastern range and the nuclei of healthy populations, including those on Chestnut Ridge," said Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management director. "But, big population centers have disappeared since the '70s, including those on the Blue Mountain, from Dauphin County east to the Lehigh River, and a veritable woodrat city near Kennerdell in Franklin County overlooking the Allegheny River. "

With a lifespan that is generally about 18 months, woodrats pretty much grow and go. Males usually have shorter lives - probably related to pitfalls of dispersal. Woodrats are active year-round, primarily vegetarian and seem to peacefully coexist among the rocks with timber rattlesnakes and copperheads. They have two to three litters of young, beginning in April.

For more information, visit the Game Commission's [Allegheny Woodrat webpage](#).

### Quick Clips

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

[Wildlife Federation Takes Global Warming to Outdoor Community](#)

[Here, Green Is the New White](#)

[It's Not Easy Being Green in Suburbs](#)

[Learning About Environmentally Sound Homesteading](#)

[Harnessing Wind Power is Not a Breeze](#)

[Volunteers Maintain Wildwood Park's Natural Beauty](#)

[Preparing for Delaware River Cleanup Day, July 25](#)

[High Cost for Free Parks](#)

[Fayette County Land Will be Preserved Open](#)

[Demands Collide in Power-Grid Plan](#)

[Landowners Against Power Line Plan](#)

[Editorial: Too Many Communities Forget Benefits of Outdoor Recreation](#)

[Lycoming Audubon Chapter Striving to Retore Purple Martin Population](#)

### Watershed NewsClips

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

[Higher Sewer Fees Ahead for Customers](#)

[Editorial: Bottled Up, Environmentally Conscious Should Play Taps](#)

[Op-Ed: Invest in Eco-Friendly Farming](#)

[Task Force Lists Ways to Thwart Flood Damage on Delaware](#)



[Dedicated Funding Sought to Fight Floods on Pennypack Options Abound in Hicks Creek Flooding Report](#)  
[Fishing Tires Out of River Is Helping Man Pay for College](#)  
[Preparing for Delaware River Cleanup Day, July 25](#)  
[Shocking Study in Shade Watersheds](#)  
[Bradford County Stream Stabilization Program a Success](#)  
[Removal of McCoy's Dam to Begin Soon in Spring Creek](#)  
[Some Presque Isle Beaches to Shut in August for Sand Replenishing](#)  
[EPA Extends Clean Water Act Deadlines for Animal Feeding Operations](#)  
[DEP Shoos Flies From Western PA Rivers](#)  
[Invasive Mussels Muscle Into State](#)  
[Editorial: Protect Lakes from Predators](#)  
[Fish and Fishermen Can Adapt to Shallower Streams](#)

## **Regulations**

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The Independent Regulatory Review Commission approved PUC regulations setting default electric service provider requirements after the caps come off electric rates in 2010.

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – July 21, 2007](#)

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

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

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

## **Technical Guidance & Permits**

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Gov. Rendell published Executive Order 2007-3 on [Commonwealth Automotive Fleet Efficiency](#). The Department of Environmental Protection published notice of its reorganization (*Pa Bulletin page 3440*).

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

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

## **Calendar of Upcoming Events**

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

- [Air & Waste Management Assn. Workshop on New Source Review Compliance](#)

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- **July 25** – DCNR [Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **August 2** – **RESCHEDULED**. August 2 DEP Delaware Regional Water Resources Committee has been rescheduled for August 29.
- **August 14** - The Delaware River Basin Commission will [hold a public hearing](#) on the proposed Flexible Flow Management Program for New York City Reservoirs. Trenton, NJ.
- **August 29** – DEP [Delaware Regional Water Resources Committee](#) meeting. Lake Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center, Route 6. (*Notice*)
- **September 27** – **RESCHEDULED**. DEP [Low-Level Waste Advisory Committee](#) meeting has been rescheduled to November 1, Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **October 13** – Schuylkill River Festival. Pottstown. Contact: Carolyn Brunschwyler, Montgomery County Community College, 610-718-1847, or send email to: [cbrunsch@mc3.edu](mailto:cbrunsch@mc3.edu)
- **October 23** – DEP [Nonpoint Source Liaison Workshop](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00. Contact: Steven Lathrop, 717-772-5618 or send email to: [slathrop@state.pa.us](mailto:slathrop@state.pa.us) .
- **February 22-23** – 2008 [Keystone Coldwater Conference](#). State College.

### [DEP Calendar of Events](#)

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

### [Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

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

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

## Helpful Web Links

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### [PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

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

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

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## Stories Invited

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Send your stories about environmental issues, programs and positive actions to *PA Environment Digest* - [DHess@CrisciAssociates.com](mailto:DHess@CrisciAssociates.com) or go to [www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com](http://www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com) .

## **PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates**

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