

—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](#)

Chesapeake Bay Biofuels Summit Releases Recommendations – Video Blog

The [Chesapeake Bay Commission](#), at Gov. Rendell's request, held an invitation-only [Chesapeake Bay Biofuels Summit](#) in Harrisburg on September 4 as a follow-up to its [Biofuels and the Bay](#) report issued last year.

That earlier report concluded biofuels could lead to shifts in crop patterns and acreages that create an uncertain future for farmers and foresters and seriously worsen the overload of nutrients to rivers.

These activities in the Chesapeake Bay could bring about “the most profound changes to the region’s agricultural markets in the past hundred years.”

The report also concluded, “Handled correctly, biofuels have the potential to provide significant and permanent new income sources for farmers and foresters, while serving as a means to substantially reduce greenhouse gases and better manage agricultural nutrient loadings within the watershed.”

The Commission report makes a series of recommendations to mitigate the impacts of corn-based ethanol in the watershed, including: planting more riparian stream buffers, changing fertilization practices, promoting no-till farming, incorporating more organic wastes into the soil and establishing grassed waterways.

The PA Association of Conservation Districts has estimated \$10 million in additional annual funding is needed to successfully deal with mitigating the additional nutrient and sediment impacts of growing biofuel feedstock in Pennsylvania alone. (*See [Districts Have Role to Play In Energy Independence](#)*)

Watch these Video Blog entries from key officials involved in the Summit:

- **Video Blog:** [James Hubbard, MD House of Delegates, On Summit Objectives](#)
- **Video Blog:** [Ann Pesiri Swanson On Bay Biofuels Leadership](#)
- **Video Blog:** [Acting DEP Secretary John Hanger On Biofuels Opportunities](#)
- **Video Blog:** [Tom Richard, Penn State, On Status Of Biofuels Technology](#)

You can also watch many of the presentations and discussions from the Summit online through the websites of [Sen. Mike Brubaker](#) (R-Lancaster), Majority Chair of the Senate Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee, or [Sen. Mike Waugh](#) (R-York), a Pennsylvania member of the Chesapeake Bay Commission.



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A new set of recommendations were released at the Summit entitled, [Next Generation Biofuels: Taking the Policy Lead for the Nation](#), that are intended to guide future policy development throughout the watershed. They are the product of an eight-month research and policy development process lead by [a select Biofuels Advisory Panel](#).

"I firmly believe cellulosic ethanol could be to Pennsylvania and our neighboring states in the Chesapeake Bay watershed what corn-based ethanol has been to Iowa," said Gov. Rendell. "Our region was blessed with many of the natural resources we need to develop these next generation alternative fuels. Cellulosic ethanol relies on feedstocks like wood chips and wood fibers, switchgrass, municipal waste and agricultural waste -- all things that we have in abundance throughout the region.

"If managed properly, we can grow and cultivate cellulosic feedstocks in a way that's better for our environment. If we work together and follow the recommendations put forth in this report, we can see to it that the national movement towards next generation biofuels delivers the greatest economic potential to our region. That means more jobs, less of a dependence on foreign oil, cleaner water, and, ultimately, a stronger economy, " said Gov. Rendell.

The report offers three major areas of action for states in the bay watershed to take in order to capitalize on the transition from conventional biofuels to next generation alternatives, including taking measures to assure the production of a large, reliable and accessible supply of biomass feedstocks; adopting best management practices and planting the types of biomass feedstocks that could help improve water quality if grown in the right location; and ensuring that the proper infrastructure and marketing mechanisms are in place to spur development within the region.

The report also offers 20 recommendations -- 10 for the collective region and 10 for the states to each follow.

At the regional level, recommendations include coordinating state efforts to secure federal support for next generation biofuel development, discouraging the use of invasive species, encouraging the local or on-farm use of biomass products, and establishing regional frameworks and priorities for research and development, use and outreach.

Recommendations for individual states include establishing requirements and incentives for purchasing biofuels, using best management practices for growing and harvesting feedstocks, providing incentives for creating and implementing forest management plans, and supporting the sustainable production of next-generation feedstocks on abandoned or underutilized land.

"Pennsylvania has established itself as a leader in developing alternative fuels," said Acting Department of Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger. "Under Governor Rendell, we've made strategic investments to spur the in-state production of ethanol and biodiesel, established the first state-specific retail mandate for cellulosic ethanol, and made additional resources available through the Alternative Energy Investment Fund to attract even more growth in this industry."

"The growing interest in energy self reliance and energy security could mean tremendous growth for our agriculture industry," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff. "If we are able to manage biofuel development in the bay region correctly, we will have the potential to provide significant and permanent new income sources for farmers and foresters, while serving as a means to reduce greenhouse gases substantially and better manage agricultural nutrient loadings within watershed."

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Forest resources, including fast-growing trees developed on abandoned mine lands and other underutilized tracts, could also play a key role in development of cellulosic ethanol in the region.

"Pennsylvania's 17 million acres of forest are being considered as a source of biomass energy feedstocks for thermal energy and liquid transportation fuels," said Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis. "It is critically important that we manage this irreplaceable natural resource in a sustainable manner, so that the economic and environmental benefits of biofuels can be achieved while preserving the ecosystem, habitat, water quality, recreation, and aesthetic values that our forests provide. Economic and environmental sustainability are intertwined."

For more information on attendees and documents distributed at the event, visit the [Chesapeake Bay Biofuels Summit Materials webpage](#).

NewsClip: [Report: Chesapeake Watershed Set To Lead Cellulosic Biofuels Race](#)
[Rendell Urges Alternative Energy Production](#)
[Rendell Touts Economic, Environmental Potential of Biofuels](#)

Online Video

PA Environmental Council Short Film Selected For GreenFest Eco Film Festival

"[Philadelphia Riverfronts and Trails](#)," a five-minute television program produced by the [Pennsylvania Environmental Council](#), 3PPG and MiND tv, will be featured at the Eco Film Forum at the [GreenFest celebration](#) in Philadelphia on September 7 at 3:30.

As part of the [Sustainable Philadelphia series](#) now airing on MiND tv, "Philadelphia Riverfronts and Trails" is a look at the region's efforts to reconnect with the Delaware and Schuylkill rivers.

While shore-side activities like running and biking have long been popular, water based activities are luring Philadelphians into the river. Most recently, kayaking has become an urban recreation option.

[Hidden River Outfitters](#) and Schuylkill River Development Corporation lead tours along the Schuylkill, while the Pennsylvania Environmental Council will soon launch a water trail map and guide for the tidal portion of the Delaware River.

The Greenfest Philly 2008 Eco-Film Forum is curated by [Future Weather Productions](#). The event will feature provocative and entertaining shorts by regional filmmakers and environmental activists. "Philadelphia Riverfronts and Trails" will be shown during the 3:30 – 4:00 pm block on water issues, at the PhillyCarShare tent at 2nd and Pine.

In addition to the film, PEC will be an exhibitor at GreenFest. Attendees can stop by 2nd and South Street from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. to learn more about the Tidal Delaware Water Trail, a 56-mile trail map and guide for boaters, sailors and kayakers looking to experience the Delaware River.

For more information, visit the [GreenFest celebration website](#).

Online Video: Watch [Philadelphia Riverfronts and Trails](#) online.

Online EE Resource

PA Center for Environmental Education's Critter Quest PA Now Online

The [PA Center for Environmental Education](#) released a new online resource – [Critter Quest PA](#) -- to help educators and students understand and appreciate Pennsylvania's rich natural wildlife heritage.



Critter Quest PA was developed to help Pennsylvanians better understand and appreciate the natural diversity utilizing the latest GIS software to create an interactive, online mapping experience for users.

This tool uses data sets such as layers showing the state's rivers, watersheds, land cover and cities that can be overlaid by files showing the predicted habitat of the 468 mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and fish native to Pennsylvania.

The user literally selects the information that he wants to see displayed on his computer screen. Each new map is generated automatically by the online software, allowing the user to explore a seemingly endless variety of information in pursuit of an endless variety of questions:

Where can I find a bobcat or a mink or a flying squirrel? What's the relationship between human population density and the density of an endangered species? And (everybody's favorite question) what might be living in my own backyard?

The website is targeted for middle school students, children and adults alike will enjoy using this educational and fascinating resource to help Pennsylvania's wildlife resources come alive.

[Critter Quest PA](#) was funded by a grant by the Wild Resource Conservation Program and developed by the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education.

NewsClip: [Schools Introduce Students To Mother Nature On A One-On-One Basis](#)

On the Hill

On the Senate/House Agenda/Session Schedule/Bills Introduced

The Senate and House committee meeting schedules and floor Calendars are listed here--

Session Schedule

Here is the House and Senate fall voting schedule—

House

September 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, and 24

October 6, 7, and 8

November 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 24, and 25

Senate

September 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24

October 6, 7, 8

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November 20-21 (tribute to retiring members, certain nominations)

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

Calendars/Committees

The Senate and House committee meeting schedules and floor Calendars as they left them for summer recess--

Calendars

House (September 15): [House Bill 934](#) (Scavello-R-Monroe) authorizing counties to impose up to a \$4/ton solid waste management fee to support local recycling, anti-litter programs; [House Bill 44](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) banning the sale, installation and unsafe disposal of mercury thermostats; [House Resolution 546](#) (George-D-Clearfield) urging Congress to investigate gas and energy prices;; [House Resolution 712](#) (Hutchinson-R-Venango) re-establishing the Forestry Task Force; [House Resolution 719](#) (George-D-Clearfield) endorsing request for federal funding for PA river basin commissions.

[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 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 November 15 as “Pennsylvania GIS Day” and the week of November 11-17 as “National Geography Awareness Week.”

Senate: All bills on the Calendar were tabled before the summer break.

Committees

House: the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee holds a hearing on the removal of electric rate caps in Philadelphia; Joint House Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Game and Fisheries Committee hearing on deer farming in Hmmlstown; the Local Government Committee holds a hearing on [House Bill 1753](#) (Argall-R-Schuylkill) providing for grants to encourage inter-municipal cooperation.

Bills Introduced

This bill of interest was introduced this week—

Geologic Hazards: [House Bill 2759](#) (Petroni-D-Allegheny) regulation of geologically hazardous areas, including areas subject to landslides and sinkholes.

Gov. Rendell To Testify At House Hearing on Electric Rate Caps Expiring

For only the second time since he's been Governor, Gov. Rendell is scheduled appear before a legislative committee, this time to talk about issues surrounding the expiration of electric rate caps in most of the state in 2010.

The Governor will appear before the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee on September 9 in Philadelphia. The Majority Chair of the Committee is Rep. Camille George (D-Clearfield) and the Minority Chair is Rep. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango).

"PECO, Pennsylvania's largest utility, anticipates a 20 percent jump in electric-generation charges when its rate cap ends on January 1, 2011," Rep. George said. "PECO's 1.6 million customers already are struggling with energy costs, especially the almost 30,000 PECO customers who had electric service terminated in the first eight months of 2008."

In addition to Gov. Rendell, the other witnesses expected to testify include:

- Andrew Ott, senior vice president of markets, PJM Interconnections, a power wholesaler;
- Mark Crisson, CEO, American Public Power Association, representing more than 2,000 community-owned electric utilities;
- Liz Robinson, executive director of the non-profit Energy Coordinating Agency; and
- Curtis Jones Jr., Philadelphia City Council member.

"The Committee hearing will enable ratepayers to learn and participate in decisions that will affect their pocketbooks, lifestyles and economic futures," said Rep. George. "The political process created the scenario where household incomes have faltered as utility profits have soared, and those political decisions can be changed."

Rep. George said testimony from PJM Interconnections, which operates the world's largest wholesale electricity market from its headquarters near Valley Forge, should be captivating.

"On one hand you have a state Public Utility commissioner saying we must 'trust the marketplace' and lawmakers defending utility generation charges to ratepayers five times what it cost to produce power," Rep. George said. "On the other hand, you have the PUC filing a federal complaint over unjust and unreasonable prices, and state officials and even utilities describing the wholesale power market as broken, consumer unfriendly and fatally flawed.

"Somebody's playing games with the public trust," he said, noting that residential customers of five leading utilities are projected to pay at least \$1.55 billion more annually once the utility rate caps expire, and average electric costs are higher in Philadelphia than in the nation as a whole.

Rep. George has introduced [Special Session House Bill 54](#), which would extend electric-generation rate caps for at least two more years. Already approved by the House, is his [House Bill 2200](#), which would save consumers \$1.3 billion by 2012 through conservation and lower electric costs during peak usage periods when power is most expensive.

Pennsylvania utilities, representing more than 80 percent of the state's electric customers, their scheduled rate-cap expirations, and their projected rate increases are: PPL, December 31, 2009, 37 percent; Allegheny Energy, December 31, 2010, 63 percent;

FirstEnergy/Penelec, December 31, 2010, 50 percent; FirstEnergy/Met-Ed, December 31, 2010, 54 percent; PECO, December 31, 2010, 20 percent.

This is the fifth hearing the Committee has held on the electric rate cap issue.

NewsClip: [Penn State Study On Impact of Electric Rate Cap Expiration](#)
[PSU Researchers Gauge Pain Of Coming Electric Rate Hikes](#)

Other News

Coldwater Heritage Partnership Accepting Applications For Watershed Grants



The [Coldwater Heritage Partnership](#) is now accepting applications for the [Coldwater Conservation Grant Program](#) to protect and conserve the health of Pennsylvania's coldwater ecosystems.

Applications are due December 15.

The CHP is a cooperative effort of [Pennsylvania Council of Trout Unlimited](#), the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Fish and Boat Commission and the [Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds](#).

The Coldwater Heritage Partnership urges watershed groups, conservation districts, municipalities and local chapters of Trout Unlimited to apply.

The grants are designed to help develop conservation plans that identify the values and threats to the health of our coldwater ecosystems that have naturally reproducing trout. The collected information can be used as a catalyst for more comprehensive planning or for development of watershed improvements projects.

The Coldwater Heritage Partnership was formed to provide technical assistance and funding support for the evaluation, conservation and protection of Pennsylvania's coldwater streams.

The partnership will award grants averaging around \$5,000 to organizations to outline strategies that best conserve and protect our coldwater fisheries.

Besides offering grants, CHP works to: foster greater public understanding of watershed characteristics and how they affect coldwater ecosystems; identify special areas of concern, such as areas with exceptional water quality and high potential for impacts; and provide technical assistance and financial opportunities to organizations dedicated to protecting our coldwater ecosystems.

For more information, contact PATU Coldwater Resource Specialist Deborah Nardone at 814-359-5233, or visit the [Coldwater Heritage Partnership website](#).

September 24 Workshop To Explore Natural Gas Leasing In Potter County

Potter County farmers can learn about natural gas leasing opportunities from experts in the emerging field at an informational workshop to be held on September 24 in Coudersport, sponsored by the Department of Agriculture.

The workshop will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in the Coudersport High School auditorium.

The workshop will include speakers from the Department of Agriculture's Center for Farm Transitions, the Penn State University Dickinson School of Law's Center for

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Agricultural Law, and the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service and is sponsored by First Citizens National Bank of Mansfield.

"Pennsylvania farmers face many challenges, especially when it comes to profitability, making it essential that they be aware of the potential benefits and drawbacks of new opportunities," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff. "With the discovery of new drilling technology and the rising cost of fossil fuels, the natural gas rush in Pennsylvania is unfolding.

"Natural gas found in Pennsylvania and surrounding states has the potential to fulfill the entire nation's natural gas requirements for two years, and farmers must educate themselves about gas leasing to decide whether they want to take advantage of the opportunity."

The two-hour program will explore natural gas issues, including drilling and exploration, development on leased land, negotiating with gas companies and signing a lease.

Dennis Hall from the Center for Farm Transitions will discuss the benefits and risks associated with natural gas leasing as a profit enhancing strategy; Bob Mosso of First Citizens Bank will offer information regarding income and tax implications of signing a lease; Ross Pifer, director of Penn State's Ag Law Center, will share information about mineral rights leases; and Nathan Bennett of NRCS will focus on environmental concerns, including the well drilling process and ground water issues.

Attendance is free and registration is not required.

For more information about the workshop, contact Kathleen Campbell at 570-662-8534 or visit the [Center for Farm Transitions website](#) or call 1-877-475-2686.

Westmoreland District Sponsoring Sustainable Energy Field Day October 16

On October 16 the Westmoreland County Conservation District and other partners will hold a "[Sustainable Energy Field Day – Homeowners' How-To](#)" and will feature a free open house and special workshop sessions.

From the tried and true to the interesting and innovative, experts will present ways to make our homes, yards, and life more energy-efficient.

Topics to be covered are: how to do a home energy audit, what's new in home insulation, windows, and weatherization, tapping into loan programs for energy improvements, reducing phantom power users, alternative energy sources such as geothermal, microhydro, and solar, Energy Star appliance ratings, landscaping to save energy and water and pending energy legislation.

Sustainable Energy Field Day – Homeowners' How-To will also address the other big energy user in most people's lives – their vehicle.

Organizers plan to have some hybrid cars on display and will feature a thought-provoking workshop on the "H+T Affordability Index" – a measure of the true affordability of a house that factors in not only the purchase price but also the travel costs from the home's location to the places where the residents regularly commute for work, school, shopping, and social events.

Also planned is information on the pros and cons of the new idea of "hypermiling," which uses driving techniques to increase the number of miles a vehicle gets per gallon, and a display by "FossilFree Fuel," a business that helps people convert their vehicles to run on vegetable oil.

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The field day will be divided into workshops led by experts from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., and an open house from 2:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m.

Cost for workshop sessions (four of the participant's choice) is \$20, and includes lunch. Space for the workshops is limited and registration with pre-payment is required by October 3. Contact Christie at the Westmoreland Conservation District by calling 724-837-5271 ext. 210 or sending email to: christie@wcdpa.com.

The Open House is FREE and it is not necessary to register.

The Open House will feature exhibits of energy-saving products and services...tours of a green building, working solar array, wind turbine, and geothermal heating/cooling system...an opportunity to sit behind the wheel of a hybrid car...and the recycling of batteries and fluorescent lights. Refreshments and children's activities also will be available.

All of the day's events will be held at the Westmoreland Conservation District, GreenForge, and 214 Donohoe Road buildings -- all located adjacent to each other on Donohoe Road, Greensburg (just one mile from Westmoreland Mall/ U.S. Route 30).

The Sustainable Energy Field Day – Homeowners' How-To is sponsored by the Westmoreland Conservation District, with the support of Allegheny Power, GreenForge, The Home Depot, Penn State Cooperative Extension, Department of Environmental Protection, West Penn Power Sustainable Energy Fund, Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve at Saint Vincent College, and US Department of Agriculture Rural Development.

For more information, visit the [Sustainable Energy Field Day – Homeowners' How-To webpage](#).

DEP Soliciting Mine Reclamation Project Proposals in Elk County

The Department of Environmental Protection is inviting proposals for the reclamation of abandoned mine lands in Benazette Township, Elk County.

The project involves reclaiming over 40 acres of land and over 400,000 tons of grading. For more information, see the [PA Bulletin notice](#).

PA Recycling Markets Center Launches Products, Commodities GIS Tool

The [Pennsylvania Recycling Markets Center](#) this week announced the launch of the [Products and Commodities GIS Tool](#).

The purpose of the Products and Commodities GIS Tool is to connect the demand and supply sides of secondary, recycled commodity chains.

The Tool allows users to select and search facilities geographically and by material type. Through Google maps, the zoom feature illustrates markers while identifying facility locations and provides facility name, contact information, and driving directions.

"This GIS mapping tool will help our supermarket and convenience store members to locate farms and facilities that compost food waste. Many of our retailers are interested in composting and this capability would aid in such a transition. We look forward to offering a link to this service on our home page," said Annette Knapp, the [Pennsylvania Food Merchants Association's](#) Manager of Legislative Research.



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Searches are currently limited to organic materials but evolution to include other commodities and Pennsylvania recycled content products is underway. The RMC is targeting addition of recycled materials processing facilities and recycled content product manufacturers, regardless of the material(s) of interest.

Additionally, the RMC is actively negotiating website links to and from relevant stakeholder trade associations where business growth can be effected through use of the Tool. This supports diversion of additional materials for use in manufacturing or sale of the resulting recycled content products.

Development was supported in part by the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency through the [Institute for Local Self-Reliance](#) and the Department of Environmental Protection.

The online utility was completed with assistance from the [Institute of State and Regional Affairs](#) at Penn State Harrisburg.

For questions or assistance in using RMC's [Products and Commodities GIS Tool](#), or to have a facility added to the system, contact Melanie Morrison by sending email to: mmorison@parmc.org or call 717-948-6660.

EPA Proposes Borit Asbestos Site for Superfund List

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week proposed the addition of the Borit Asbestos Site in Ambler, Pa. to the Superfund National Priorities List.

The national priorities list is a national list of sites where hazardous contaminants could impact public health and/or the environment. NPL sites undergo a thorough investigation to determine the full nature and extent of contamination. EPA or the parties responsible for the contamination then address whatever risks the sites pose to human health and the environment.

Once a site has been proposed for inclusion to the NPL, there is a 60-day comment period. A final decision on listing the sites will be made after EPA has evaluated and responded to all the public comments in writing. Nationwide, EPA is proposing to add 11 sites to the Superfund list.

The Borit asbestos site was used to dispose of asbestos-containing material from the 1930s to the 1970s that came from a nearby asbestos-manufacturing plant. The site is divided into three parcels: an asbestos waste pile owned by Kane-Core Inc., a reservoir owned by [Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association](#) and a former park/playground owned by Whitpain Township.

The waste pile covers approximately two acres of the six-acre parcel, and is about 20 feet above the ground surface. The berm of the 15-acre reservoir was constructed of asbestos shingles, millboard and soil. Asbestos product waste, such as piping and tiles, is visible surrounding the reservoir and stream banks. The third disposal area, which covers about 11 acres, was a depression that was filled and leveled, and eventually used as a park/playground.

In the mid-1980s, the area was fenced due to asbestos contamination. The site is being considered for the NPL because of the potential exposure of the nearby residential population to airborne asbestos and asbestos contamination along the Wissahickon Creek.

For more information, see the [Federal Register Notice](#).

Carnegie Mellon Receives \$150,000 In EPA Brownfields Funding

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency this week awarded \$1.5 million for brownfields training, research and technical assistance grants, including \$150,000 to [Carnegie Mellon](#).

Carnegie Mellon University's [Western Pennsylvania Brownfield Center](#) helps to promote the value of underutilized sites in the region by acting as a regional resource to help communities and small businesses realize the inherent benefits of brownfields and eliminate redevelopment barriers.

The WPBC brings together a variety of stakeholders, including researchers, public officials, property owners, and developers, to uncover opportunities and strategies for continued development of the region's brownfields. Supported by the Small Business Administration, the WPBC applies academic research and decision-support tools to real-world problems facing public and private investors.

For more information, visit the [Western Pennsylvania Brownfield Center website](#).

DEP Climate Change Advisory Committee Holds First Meeting

The Department of Environmental Protection's [Climate Change Advisory Committee](#) held its first meeting this week to begin the process of developing Pennsylvania's first climate change action plan.

The Committee was established under the [Pennsylvania Climate Change Act](#) passed in July.

"Gov. Rendell believes Pennsylvania must have smart, effective policies that reduce global warming pollution and that protect our economy and environment," said Acting DEP Secretary John Hanger as he cited the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004, as well as the recently enacted \$650 million Alternative Energy Investment Fund and the Biofuels In-State Development Act.

"These measures were made possible with the support of the General Assembly and have helped us make progress in boosting the supply of cleaner and zero-emission sources of electricity, as well as transportation fuels that are produced at home and are better for the environment—accomplishments that will greatly inform our deliberations and the work of this Committee.

"The task now is to build on these policies and identify new ideas that reduce Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions and protect our economy. That includes carbon capture and sequestration—an issue on which the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has led—and the tremendous benefits energy efficiency and conservation can produce. [House Bill 2200](#) (George-D-Clearfield), now awaiting action in the Senate, can produce those benefits and make Pennsylvania a leader on electricity conservation."

Act 70 establishes a 21-member advisory committee that is charged with advising DEP on implementing the law, creating a report on potential climate change impacts and economic opportunities for the commonwealth, and developing an action plan to implement cost-effective strategies to reduce or offset the state's greenhouse gas emissions.

The state action plan will be renewed every three years.



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The Committee will also help DEP compile an annual inventory of the sources and amounts of global-warming pollution generated within the state. (See: [PEC Develops Climate Change Roadmap, Greenhouse Gas Inventory](#))

The Committee is comprised of six members appointed by the Governor, six by the Senate and six by the House of Representatives. The secretaries of the departments of Conservation and Natural Resources and Community and Economic Development and the chair of the Public Utility Commission are ex-officio voting members of the committee.

The PA Climate Change Act also will provide a means by which businesses and industries can voluntarily track greenhouse gas emissions, emissions reductions and offsets through a registry. The registry may provide economic benefits should emissions credit-trading protocols be implemented.

"The Climate Change Act sets in motion an in-depth process of studying and benchmarking current sources of greenhouse gas pollution, then creating an action plan to reduce those emissions through cost-effective strategies for businesses and consumers," said Acting Secretary Hanger. "This plan will help us to create new economic opportunities by advancing technologies like cellulosic ethanol, solar, wind, methane capture, geothermal and carbon capture and sequestration that hold tremendous potential for Pennsylvania's industries."

Addressing the threats of climate change is an opportunity, Acting Secretary Hanger said, but the state should not ignore the huge costs of inaction.

"So much of the world around us is dependent on a stable climate," said Acting Secretary Hanger. "As the effects of climate change increase, industries like agriculture and tourism could suffer, infrastructure systems may fail, ecosystems will face an increasing number of invasive species, and regions will be exposed to new diseases that may threaten the public health. We're looking to come up with the best thinking and the best approaches to solving this pressing problem."

In a related action, the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee will hold an [informational meeting September 24](#) on DCNR's Carbon Management Plan. (See [DCNR Carbon Management Advisory Group](#))

For more information, visit the [Climate Change Advisory Committee webpage](#).

Central PA Commuter Services Program Hits 10,000 Participants

[Commuter Services of South Central Pennsylvania](#) this week announced it has hit a milestone of 10,000 commuters in its confidential on-line ride matching database, double the number of commuters in that database at the end of 2007.

Commuter Services promotes alternatives to commuting alone to the estimated 830,000 commuters who live or work in Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Perry and York counties. Primary outreach is through employers in these counties, and all services are free.

Currently, about 60 percent of commuters seeking rideshares receive at least one potential match. Some may receive 10 or more matches, and match lists are routinely updated.

Whether or not they are looking for someone to share a ride, commuters can sign up in the database to be eligible for reimbursements for emergency rides home. That free program is extended to commuters who use options (from transit to carpools to biking) at least twice a week.

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More than 70 percent of the commuters in the database are a result of Commuter Services employer outreach activities and events. Others come from sources including media coverage, “Try Transit” and “Try Carpooling” road signs, Web site links and billboards.

Despite a recent dip in gasoline prices, Commuter Services has seen no reduced interest in its programs, which are funded through federal Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality dollars.

To get into the database to find potential commuting partners, commuters complete a ride matching application or [apply online](#) to provide some information about their trip. They receive lists of potential carpool partners as well as tips for successful ridesharing.

For more information, visit the [Commuter Services of South Central Pennsylvania website](#) or call 1-866-579-RIDE.

Free Workshops On PJM Electric Demand Response Programs

Industrial, institutional, governmental and large commercial electricity users are invited to attend a half-day workshop at one of six Southeast Pa. locations about the benefits of [PJM’s electricity demand response programs](#).

Demand response programs pay participants to reduce electricity use during times of high wholesale spot prices or transmission system congestion.

The workshops will be held--

- September 18: Best Western Concordville Inn, Routes 1 and 322, Concordville;
- September 19: Sheraton Great Valley, 707 E. Lancaster Pike (near Routes 202 and 30), Frazer;
- September 25: Holiday Inn Philadelphia Northeast, 3499 Street Road, Bensalem;
- September 26: Holiday Inn Fort Washington, 432 Pennsylvania Avenue (near Route 309 and Pa. Turnpike), Fort Washington;
- October 2: Courtyard by Marriott Valley Forge, 600 Campus Drive (near Routes 422 and 29), Collegeville; and
- October 3: Sheraton Philadelphia University City, 36th and Chestnut Streets, Philadelphia

The workshops are made possible by a grant from the [TRF Sustainable Development Fund](#) and are cosponsored by the [Main Line Chamber of Commerce](#).

Workshop content will cover the benefits of demand response programs offered by PJM Interconnection LLC (the wholesale power grid operator) and PECO Energy Company.

PJM paid out over \$48 million last year for energy demand response participation. Of that total, nearly \$12 million was paid for energy demand response in PECO Energy Co.’s territory.

The workshops will cover demand response programs in the energy and capacity markets. The workshops are strictly educational and will be presented from the end-user’s perspective. Attendees are under no obligation to enroll in any demand response program. All industrial, institutional, governmental and large commercial electricity users that are able to shift or shed at least 100 kW of demand are invited.

There is no charge to attend a workshop. All workshops will begin at 9:30 a.m. and will last about three hours, including ample time for questions and discussion. Seating is strictly limited, so advanced registration is required.

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Register by emailing name, affiliation and selected workshop location by sending email to: chris@pfaweb.org .

LED Traffic Signal Workshop for Municipalities In Greensburg September 30

The [Southwestern PA Commission](#) and the Department of Environmental Protection are sponsoring a workshop and [training session on LED lighting](#) for municipalities interested in reducing energy use on September 30.

The workshop will be held at the Donohoe Center, 214 Donohoe Road, Greensburg starting at 9:00 a.m.

Participants will learn about the energy and maintenance and benefits of LED technology, how to retrofit existing traffic lights with LED technology and talk with experts who have completed LED projects.

For more information, visit the [SPC LED Traffic Signals Project webpage](#) or contact Mary Brangan at 412-391-5590 ext. 315 or send email to: mbrangan@spcregion.org .

PPL Releases Phase-In Options For Residential, Small Business Electric Customers

After being approved by the Public Utility Commission, PPL this week released the first comprehensive information on its [optional phase-in program](#) aimed at helping residential and small business electric customers deal with cost increases when rate caps come off in 2010.

The phase-in program allows customers to make advance payments on their bills each month through 2008 and 2009. In addition to the payments, PPL Electric Utilities also adds 6 percent interest to customer accounts. The money paid by customers and the interest earned will then be used to offset a portion of customer electric bills in 2010 and 2011.

Instead of one large increase in 2010, customers will have smaller increases spread over several years. And because of the interest earned, customers will pay a little less overall over the life of the program than if customers do not participate.

All residential customers, except those in PPL's special OnTrack payment program, are eligible. Also eligible are small business customers on rate schedules GS-1, GS-3, GH-1R and GH-2(R), and street lighting customers on rate schedule SE. Payment and credit amounts are based on your average monthly electric use and rate schedule.

The [PPL Phase-In webpage](#) allows customers to log into their accounts and get the specific amount of their monthly phase-in payment based on their specific electric use. A four-bedroom all-electric home, for example, would have a payment of about \$14.40 per month.

For more information, visit the [PPL Phase-In webpage](#).

Most Electric, Natural Gas Customers Satisfied With Customer Service In 2007

The majority of electric and natural gas customers were satisfied with the way customer service representatives handled their calls in 2007, according to an annual report released this week by the Public Utility Commission.

The 2007 Customer Service Performance Report measures the customer-service performance of the state's major electric and natural gas companies. The report summarizes

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data from 2005, 2006 and 2007. It allows customers to see how well companies are responding to their questions and enables utilities to see how their level of service compares to other companies.

[The full report is available online.](#)

The data falls into two categories: company-reported performance information and customer survey results. The company-reported data measures telephone access to the companies, such as the percentage of calls that were abandoned by customers, calls answered within 30 seconds and received a busy signal. Calls in the "busy-out rate" represent those attempted calls that received a busy signal or message.

The report also measures how often companies failed to read meters, issue bills and promptly respond to customer disputes.

The customer surveys measure access to the company; employee courtesy and knowledge; promptness and timeliness of a response or visit; and satisfaction with the handling of the interaction. The utilities contracted with a common market research firm to conduct the surveys of their customers.

Company-reported highlights include:

- Access statistics improved for three electric distribution companies, but declined for three others. PPL Electric Co. reported an improvement in its percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds from 79 percent in 2006 to 83 percent in 2007. For the first time since 2003, Duquesne Light Co. dropped below 80 percent for calls answered within 30 seconds (83 percent in 2006 to 77 percent in 2007).
- Of the major EDCs, UGI Utilities Inc. showed the most significant improvement in access to its call centers in 2007. UGI also improved its call abandonment rate from 8 to 4 percent and improved its busy-out rate from 8 percent to 6 percent. However, UGI still shows the worst busy-out rate for the last three years for EDCs.
- Four of the natural gas distribution companies reported improved telephone access performance for 2007.
- Philadelphia Gas Works reported a significant increase (from 8 percent to 15 percent) in its call abandonment rate. PGW again reported the poorest telephone access performance among the major NGDCs. After showing steady improvement in the calls answered within 30 seconds (39 percent in 2004 to 52 percent in 2006), PGW reported a decline in 2007 to 42 percent.
- Only two EDCs and three NGDCs reported improved statistics regarding the number of residential disputes that did not receive a response within 30 days. Allegheny Power Co. decreased from 45 in 2006 to 18 in 2007 while PPL decreased from 297 in 2006 to 96 in 2007; Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania decreased from 109 in 2006 to 36 in 2007, Equitable Gas Co. decreased from 249 in 2006 to one in 2001 and PGW decreased from 596 in 2006 to 323 in 2007. One NGDC reported significantly higher numbers of disputes not responded to within 30 days/ Dominion Peoples reported an increase from 112 in 2006 to 2,229 in 2007.
- PGW again reduced the number of disputes not responded to within 30 days, dropping from 596 in 2006 to 323 in 2007.

Customer survey result highlights include:

- On average, 88 percent of EDC consumers reported they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the overall quality of service they received from their EDCs in 2007, slightly lower than the 90 percent in 2006.

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- PGW and Dominion Peoples reported the worst access statistics. Survey findings show PGW and Dominion Peoples customers were the least satisfied with the ease of reaching their company.
- National Fuel Gas Distribution Corp. is among the four NGDCs that reported answering more than 80 percent of calls within 30 seconds in 2007. 88 percent of NFG customers were either somewhat or very satisfied with the ease of reaching the company in 2007. On average, 81 percent of NGDC consumers reported they were either somewhat or very satisfied with the overall quality of service they received from their NGDCs last year, which is a slight improvement from 80 percent in 2006.

BioCycle Sponsors October Renewable Energy From Organics Recycling Conference

PA-based [BioCycle Magazine](#) will hold its annual [Conference on Renewable Energy From Organics Recycling](#) October 6-8 in Madison, WI.

The topics to be covered by the conferences include:

- Organics recycling and path to energy independence;
- Emerging technologies to produce bioenergy, biofuels;
- Anaerobic digestion systems for MSW organics;
- Connecting biopower to grids and gas pipelines;
- Feedstock, fuel supply assessment tools;
- Composting connections in a renewable energy framework;
- Farm digest trends, economics;
- Recovering energy from high strength wastewater;
- Regulatory, permitting perspectives; and
- Analyzing feedstocks for biogas production potential.

For more information, visit the [Conference on Renewable Energy From Organics Recycling webpage](#).

BioCycle will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2009 by holding the [BioCycle International Conference on Waste Diversion, Composting, Renewable Energy](#) April 27-30 in San Diego, CA. BioCycle is now soliciting papers for the 2009 Conference.

Game Commission Holds Game Land Public Tours To View Habitat Improvements

The Game Commission will highlight its efforts at ongoing habitat improvement initiatives during free public tours of [State Game Lands](#) between September 13 and October 19.

"State Game Land tours provide the opportunity for those who enjoy nature to come out and talk with our employees - the people who are directly responsible for managing and protecting these lands," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. "With autumn nearly here, these tours will provide a chance to see some of the best scenery the Commonwealth has to offer. These tours afford hunters and trappers and others who appreciate wildlife the opportunity to see how the Game Commission is spending hunting and furtaker license fees to acquire and manage these lands for wildlife."

Roe noted that staff shortages and limited financial resources forced a reduction in the number of State Game Land tours this year.

Information on the various tours is as follows:

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- **Lebanon County: September 13**, State Game Land 145, south of Mt. Gretna. At 9 a.m., tour participants will meet at the Game Commission parking lot on Pinch Road, just south of Mt. Gretna. Tour stops will showcase various types of habitat work and focus on management techniques used to improve the habitat for wildlife. Participants also will have the opportunity to view management techniques used for timber harvests, deer fencing, and wildlife food plots. An oak stand that was severely impacted by gypsy moths will be visited, as well as an area being managed for rabbits. The tour, which should conclude around noon, is free, open to the public and will be held rain or shine. Appropriate outdoor clothing is recommended. Agency staff will be available to answer questions. Directions from Mt. Gretna to the parking lot are: From Route 117 in the center of Mt. Gretna, turn onto Pinch Road and proceed south for one mile, then turn right into the parking lot at the Game Commission wooden sign.
- **McKean County: September 20**, State Game Land 62, between Mt Jewett and Ormsby, adjacent to Kinzua Bridge State Park. Tour participants should gather at 1 p.m. at the Game Commission booth at the Kinzua Bridge Park Fall Festival. From there the group will use their own vehicle to travel 1.5 miles to the McKean County SGL headquarters. The group will travel on some short walks and some short drives through SGL 62 to see food plots, warm season grasses, aspen cuts, timber harvests, fruit tree plantings, Pennsylvania Conservation Crew projects, the Kinzua Chapter of National Wild Turkey Federation projects and other habitat work done on this SGL. The tour will last about two hours, ending at the Game Commission Food and Cover headquarters, where equipment used to implement habitat improvements will be on display.
- **Luzerne/Wyoming counties: October 5**, State Game Land 57. Registration to be held from 7:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. at the headquarters building complex on SGL 57, Ricketts Station, Forkston Township, Wyoming County. Game Commission personnel will be on hand to explain various points of interest, including wildlife habitat improvement projects. Four-wheel-drive vehicles with high clearance are strongly recommended for this three-hour, 30-mile, self-guided driving tour. Directions: Take Route 487 north at the intersection of Route 118 and proceed 7.5 miles and turn onto a dirt road near SGL sign on right. Travel on dirt road one-tenth of a mile to a "Y" intersection and proceed left three-tenths of a mile to the headquarters complex. Each vehicle will be provided a map and brief explanation of wildlife management programs being carried out on this magnificent tract of public hunting land.
- **Bradford County: Sunday, October 5**, from 10:30 a.m. until 3 p.m. (rain or shine). This will be a 28-mile, self-guided, circular driving tour through State Game Lands 12 and 36, and will take about two hours to complete. The route will start at the SGL 12 parking lot on top of Wheelerville Mountain along Route 154 just south of Canton, Bradford County. Roads are passable for most vehicles. It will go along East to the Barkley cemetery area than down the hill to Laquin area turning west onto the railroad grade to Wheelerville. Once you reach Wheelerville you will come to a "T" which is SR 154 and the tour is over. You could go north along SR 154 to Canton, or south along SR 154 to Shunk and points south in Sullivan County. Since the tour goes by Sunfish Pond County Park, a picnic lunch may be the order of the day! The local

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history of the mountain and the Game Commission's refuge system is intriguing. A tour guide packet that is full of information and old Game Commission photographs will be given to each vehicle at the start of the tour.

- **Clearfield County: October 5**, State Game Land 331 (formerly known as SGL 93), which consists of 4,876.1 acres. Tour participants should meet beginning at 12:30 p.m. at the Pennsylvania Wildlife Habitat Unlimited (PWHU) headquarters along Route 255, five miles north of Interstate 80, Exit 101 in Huston Township. The tour group will leave promptly at 1 p.m. to travel onto SGL 331 from Showers Road and loop through the SGL ending at the Food and Cover Crew headquarters buildings around 4 p.m. Along the way, tour participants will see an unfenced timber sale, recently fenced timber sales, aspen regeneration and timber sales fenced several years ago. Game Commission staff and representatives from EXCO-North Coast Energy will be on-hand to discuss gas well development and related issues impacting management of SGL 331. The tour also will include stops at SGL 331 food plots, the small game management area, grafted apple trees, PWHU apple tree plantings and pruning, and the PWHU browse cuts. Equipment used to implement habitat improvement projects will be on display at the agency's headquarters. Refreshments will be available at the end of the tour.
- **Bedford/Blair counties: October 12**, from noon to 3 p.m., State Game Land 26, which encompasses 12,062 acres in a four-county area. This popular tour highlights mountainous terrain and fall foliage. The seven-mile, self-guided auto tour begins at the parking area on the northeast side of Route 869, between Pavia and Beaverdale, and concludes near the village of Blue Knob. Youngsters will enjoy the opportunity to locate and identify mounted wildlife specimens placed in their natural habitat along the drive. Game Commission personnel will be on hand to answer questions relating to Game Commission programs and activities.
- **Berks/Schuylkill counties: October 19**, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., State Game Land 110, which encompasses more than 10,000 acres of historical, scenic and recreational property in a two-county area. The nine-mile trip will begin at the agency's parking lot on Mountain Road, midway between the Shartlesville Exit of Interstate 78 and Route 61; and will exit onto Route 183, north of Strausstown. Game Commission Officers will be on hand to answer questions relating to Game Commission programs and activities.
- **Dauphin/Lebanon/Schuylkill counties: October 19**, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., State Game Land 211, which encompasses more than 44,000 acres in a three-county area. The tour will start at the Ellendale gate in Middle Paxton Township, Dauphin County, just northeast of Dauphin Borough. The 19-mile trip will be made along an abandoned railroad bed, and will end at Goldmine Road, southwest of Tower City, Schuylkill County. Game Commission personnel will be on hand to explain various points of interest, including wildlife habitat improvement projects.

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"Recognizing the benefit of the tours, the agency has maintained some tours," Roe said. "It was a difficult decision to scale back on the number of tours we offer this year. However, the agency's current financial situation required that we make tough choices."

During the 2006-07 fiscal year, Game Commission Food and Cover Corps and land managers were successful in reaching many set goals for habitat improvement on the many tracts of State Game Lands, and leased areas within the past year. Statewide, these teams planted 3,597 acres of grain and 2,095 acres of grasses and legumes to benefit wildlife.

There were 730 acres planted or converted to warm season grasses. About 2,307 acres of wildlife food plots were limed and 4,747 acres fertilized to improve wildlife food production; 17,200 acres were mowed to maintain high quality grasses and legumes and 1,220 acres of field and administrative road borders were cut to provide nesting and escape cover.

Wetland restoration work was completed on three State Game Lands sites and several locations across the state through the efforts of Food and Cover employees and various habitat partners.

There were 46,963 fruit trees pruned to improve production, and finally, 2,900 new nest boxes and 1,800 waterfowl nest structures were erected.

"Additionally, an integrated comprehensive State Game Lands planning initiative was undertaken to provide a more efficient wildlife habitat development program specific to each individual game lands complex, based on its existing habitat and infrastructure," said William Capouillez, Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management director. "The program initiative included a general State Game Lands planning template guideline and resulted in each region office drafting an initial plan using varied staff disciplines to include, foresters, biologists, land managers and Food and Cover Corps."

The Department of Labor and Industry, through the Pennsylvania Conservation Corps (P.C.C.) provided \$111,500 in funding and 10 work crews to assist with habitat projects such as planting seedlings, erecting stream bank and forest fencing, and planting warm season grasses. Crews also constructed storage buildings, painted and made repairs to Food and Cover Corps headquarters, constructed and installed gates, and painted and maintained game lands boundary lines.

The Game Commission's Howard Nursery in Centre County produced and distributed 1,688,300 tree and shrub seedlings for wildlife food and cover plantings, and 364,650 of the seedlings distributed were sold for \$71,523. Seedlings also were available for purchase by the general public during the 2007-08 season. The nursery propagated 37 species of important food and cover plants, including 773,850 deciduous trees and shrubs, and 914,450 evergreens. Native species continue to be added annually.

The Howard Nursery wood shop produced and shipped 5,305 bluebird/chickadee/wren boxes; 8,545 bluebird box kits; 645 wood duck boxes and kits; 379 squirrel, kestrel, barn owl and bat boxes; and almost 4,931 signs, backboards and bulletin boards for use on game lands and cooperative access properties. An additional 171 "non-standard" nesting devices, such as mallard and turkey rocket boxes also were produced. For the first time in 2008, a wide variety of wood products were made available for purchase by the general public on the agency's website.

"Maintaining optimum habitat diversity on our forested game lands is an important goal of our timber management program," Capouillez said. "There were 6,055 acres offered for bidding for commercial timber harvest operations during the past fiscal year."

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There were 1,605 acres treated with herbicide to remove ferns, striped maple, spicebush, and low quality beech brush hampering the establishment of more beneficial tree species. Contractors erected 8-foot-high woven wire fences around 258 acres of recently harvested habitat areas to protect the susceptible new growth from excessive browsing by deer. This was a notable decrease of 326 acres from the previous year.

"Also, our upland vegetation management machine was used to treat 193 acres by cutting and shearing advanced growth of woody vegetation so it could revert to an earlier successional, low ground cover, stage."

In 1919, the Game Commission was granted authority to purchase lands for the protection, propagation and management of game and wildlife, and to provide areas for public hunting and trapping. Since that time, the Game Commission has acquired more than 1.4 million acres in 65 of the state's 67 counties (Philadelphia and Delaware counties being the exceptions).

With few exceptions, State Game Lands were purchased using revenues from hunting and furtaker license sales; State Game Lands timber, coal, oil, gas and mineral operation revenues; the state's share of a federal excise tax on sporting arms and ammunition, known as the Pittman-Robertson Program; from Working Together for Wildlife artwork and patch sales; and from the Pennsylvania Waterfowl Management stamp and print sales.

Visit the Game Commission's [State Game Lands webpage](#) for more information.

Rabies Vaccination Program Underway In Western Pennsylvania

An annual program that [helps control rabies](#) in wild animals is underway in western Pennsylvania, Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff said this week.

The oral rabies vaccination baiting program covers all or parts of Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Crawford, Erie, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango, Washington and Westmoreland counties.

"Controlling the spread of rabies in wild animals is essential to human and domestic animal health," said Secretary Wolff. "The vaccination program has been an effective tool in minimizing the spread of rabies and it has reduced the number of reported cases by nearly 60 percent over the past five years."

Wildlife rabies accounts for more than 90 percent of the reported rabies cases in the United States, with raccoons accounting for more than half of this total. Although the primary focus is to vaccinate raccoons, other animals – including dogs, cats, cattle, horses, skunks and foxes – may also benefit from the program due to reduced exposure to raccoons infected with the rabies virus.

Since July, trained employees have spread bait sachets by hand in densely populated areas. On August 30, low-flying aircraft began dropping sachets in sparsely populated areas. The vaccine sachet is coated or placed inside fishmeal bait. When the raccoon punctures the sealed plastic package, the pink-colored vaccine is released into its mouth.

The vaccine contains only a small, non-infective portion of the rabies virus. The bait does not pose an immediate health risk to humans or pets, but anyone finding the bait should avoid handling it unless it is found where children or pets play. Bait can be moved or disposed of with gloves.

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Six agencies are partnering with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services for this program, including the state departments of Agriculture and Health, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, Erie County Health Department, Allegheny Health Department and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For more information about the [oral rabies vaccination baiting program](#), contact one of the following agencies: USDA Wildlife Services 1-866-487-3297, Department of Agriculture 717-783-9550, Department of Health Information Line 1-877-PA-HEALTH, Erie County Department of Health 814-451-6700 and Allegheny County Department of Health 412-687-2243.

Women's Health & The Environment Conference September 25 In Pittsburgh

[Women's Health & the Environment](#): New Science, New Solutions, a free conference sponsored by Teresa Heinz, The Heinz Endowments and Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, will be held at Pittsburgh's David L. Lawrence Convention Center on September 25.

Women's Health & the Environment: New Science, New Solutions will feature renowned environmental scientists, writers and activists from around the country who will share the newest science in three areas essential to health in our everyday lives: air, water, and food.

Experts also will address the health effects of personal care products that are supposed to enhance the quality of our lives. In addition to scientific data to support the way in which toxins in our environment affect our health, presenters also will provide proven solutions to create a healthier environment.

The conference will feature two keynote addresses. Nancy Nichols, journalist, editor, broadcaster and author of a recently published book, "Lake Effect," will provide the morning keynote address. Diane MacEachern, founder and president of [BigGreenPurse](#), the only website in the United States dedicated specifically to transforming women's environmental concerns into measurable improvements in the quality of their lives, will provide the closing keynote address.

In addition, there will be panel discussions featuring local and national experts who will speak about both the science and solutions on topics related to air, water, food and personal care products.

The conference begins with registration at 8:00 a.m. and concludes at 4:30 p.m. Individuals can register for the [Conference website](#).

PA Chamber Sponsors Regional Environmental Compliance Conferences

The PA Chamber of Business and Industry is sponsoring a series of [four Regional Environmental Compliance Conferences](#) in October and November covering a variety of environmental issues.

The conferences will be held October 16 in the Lehigh Valley, October 23 in Pittsburgh, October 28 in Camp Hill (near Harrisburg) and November 6 in Valley Forge.

Top experts in each issue area and staff from the Department of Environmental Protection will talk about the latest developments in residual waste, hazardous waste, air permitting, stormwater management and more.

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These conferences would be of interest to environmental directors and managers, plant managers, facility supervisors, EHS managers, economic development managers and many others.

CLE, ABIH, CSP and CHMM credits are available for attending this program.

For more information, visit the [PA Chamber events page](#) and locate the Regional Environmental Compliance Conference of interest by date.

Information about exhibits and sponsorships is also available by contacting Justin Shellenberger at 800-225-7224 ext. 5553 or by sending email to: jshellenberger@pachamber.org.

Spotlight

PSU Researchers: Global Warming Greatest In Past Decade

Researchers confirm that surface temperatures in the Northern Hemisphere were warmer over the last 10 years than any time during the last 1300 years, and, if the climate scientists include the somewhat controversial data derived from tree-ring records, the warming is anomalous for at least 1700 years.

"Some have argued that tree-ring data is unacceptable for this type of study," says Michael Mann, associate professor of meteorology and geosciences and director of [Penn State's Earth System Science Center](#). "Now we can eliminate tree rings and still have enough data from other so-called 'proxies' to derive a long-term Northern Hemisphere temperature record."

The proxies used by the researchers included information from marine and lake sediment cores, ice cores, coral cores and tree rings.

"We looked at a much expanded database and our methods are more sophisticated than those used previously," says Mann.

In the September 2 online edition of the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the researchers note, "Conclusions are less definitive for the Southern Hemisphere and globe, which we attribute to larger uncertainties arising from the sparser available proxy data in the Southern Hemisphere."

The research team included Mann; Ray Bradley, university distinguished professor, geosciences and director, Climate System Research Center, University of Massachusetts; Malcolm Hughes, regents' professor, and Fenbiao Ni, research associate, the Laboratory of Tree Ring Research, University of Arizona; Zhihua Zhang and Sonya Miller, research associates, meteorology, Penn State; and Scott Rutherford, assistant professor, environmental sciences, Roger Williams University.

The National Research Council suggested revisiting surface temperatures in their "Surface Temperature Reconstructions for the Last 2,000 Years," to include newer data and techniques and confirmed results of a 1990s paper by Mann and colleagues.

Results of this study without tree-ring data show that for the Northern Hemisphere, the last 10 years are likely unusually warm for not just the past 1,000 as reported in the 1990s paper and others, but for at least another 300 years going back to about A.D. 700 without using tree-ring data. The same conclusion holds back to A.D. 300 if the researchers include tree-ring data.



One of the reasons that including tree-ring data in these studies raises possible concerns is something called the "segment length curse." This "curse" occurs because trees put on rings every year, but older trees put on narrower rings. When tree ring researchers piece together tree-ring series from two trees, they must account for this factor in how they combine the later rings on one tree with the earlier rings on a younger tree. In the process, some information regarding long-term trends can be lost.

"Ten years ago, we could not simply eliminate all the tree-ring data from our network because we did not have enough other proxy climate records to piece together a reliable global record," says Mann. "With the considerably expanded networks of data now available, we can indeed obtain a reliable long-term record without using tree rings."

The new study shows that, with caveats, tree-ring data can be used, but that even without including that data, it is clear that the anomalous nature of recent warmth, which most scientists believe to be a result of human impacts on climate, is a reality.

The National Science Foundation, U.S. Department of Energy and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration supported this work.

Dr. Mann can be contacted by calling 814-863-4075 or sending email to: mann@psu.edu.

Feature

When Will We Learn What Is Troubling The Northeast's Bats?

by Joe Kosack

Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist
Game Commission

Game Commission bat biologists still have not found evidence that [White-Nose Syndrome](#) - responsible for killing tens of thousands of [cave bats](#) in New York and New England - has reached Pennsylvania. But, the deadly disorder is expected to once again turn the world of bats upside-down in the Northeast this winter.

Wildlife officials say that white-nose syndrome (WNS) is as mysterious today as when it first surfaced in a cave near Albany, New York, in 2006. Despite the coordinated efforts of an incredibly talented team of more than two dozen wildlife agencies, universities and institutions, WNS continues to baffle researchers who are trying to unravel the tangled mess cave bats now find themselves in. There are plenty of clues and few conclusions.

"We still don't know what causes WNS, where it came from, or if we can stop its spread to other states," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. "But, the Game Commission is committed to finding answers that will help wildlife managers better understand WNS and hopefully find ways to limit its impact."

WNS was named originally for the white fungus that grew on the muzzles of afflicted bats in New York. Whether the fungus is the cause or a symptom of WNS continues to be debated. Researchers have now isolated and genetically sequenced the



white fungus found on the muzzles of afflicted bats. They believe this fungus grows best in the cold, clammy caves and mines bats use as hibernacula, or hibernation sites.

"Our window to develop a response strategy to this threat is incredibly narrow, because we want to have a basic game plan in place before bats head into hibernation," said Lisa Williams, a Game Commission wildlife diversity biologist. "If White Nose appears in Pennsylvania this year, we'll be on the front line of the Syndrome's expansion. If it doesn't appear, we'll still be collecting baseline data on our bats and cave environments to help establish if they might be resistant or if the disorder is geographically isolated or climate sensitive."

In early June, researchers from eight universities, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service personnel, and biologists from across the country got together in Albany to discuss what has been learned to date about WNS. These discussions included developing hypotheses on what may be causing WNS and team-building to mount a coordinated response to this taxing enigma.

"We're networking to minimize the potential expansion of WNS and working together to determine what the cause may be," Williams said. "At the Albany meeting, we developed several hypotheses to try and find the cause of WNS."

Greg Turner, a Game Commission biologist who is leading Pennsylvania's WNS field investigation, summarized the hypotheses, which explore a variety of possibilities.

"Why do bats appear to be starving to death?" Turner questioned. "Is it that they're not putting on enough fat in the fall to make it through the winter, or is it that they are able to store enough fat, but something is happening to them while they are in hibernation that causes them to burn up body fat at a much quicker pace than normal? Is the fungus or some unknown pathogen directly causing the mortality, or are contaminants somehow involved by directly affecting either the bats or their food supply? Or is there some sort of combination of factors?"

Bats are a tremendous asset to wildlife communities and people. Collectively, they eat insects by the tons and spare Pennsylvanians from myriad backyard flying pests and crop-damage problems. Unfortunately, most people know more about elephants than they do bats. So misinformation about bats often overshadows the good they do and their importance in Pennsylvania's biodiversity.

Pennsylvania is in the unenviable position of being one of the next likely destinations for this troubling bat disorder that has spread to Connecticut, Massachusetts and Vermont since it was uncovered in New York. It already has been confirmed in a cave just 11 miles north of Pennsylvania.

Game Commission biologists consequently have been concentrating on monitoring summer roosts and maternity colonies and developing a strategy to assess the condition of bats heading into hibernacula this fall.

So far this summer, Game Commission biologists have checked the state's largest bat maternity colonies for both juvenile and adult mortality. Agency employees also have trapped bats with mist-nets at several locations throughout the state to check bats for abnormalities.

The fieldwork indicated there was no abnormal mortality at the maternity colonies. However, small white spots were found on the same bats' wing membranes when they were backlit with a flashlight.

"This is the first summer following documentation of a high mortality event and since wing membranes were not scrutinized to this degree in the past, exactly what the

white spots represent is open to discussion," Turner explained. 'Some researchers believe they may be the early stages of WNS. Others suggest they are the result of parasite bites. The jury's still out on that. But we're about 99 percent sure that bats spread WNS bat-to-bat, because it has appeared in gated hibernacula that haven't been visited by people for years. We also know none of the dead bats in the affected areas had rabies - they all were tested. After that, nothing is certain."

At the moment, everything seems relatively normal across Pennsylvania, with the exception of these small white wing spots, which may mean something - or may not. The good news is there wasn't significant summer mortality. The next hurdle will come when bats head underground to hibernate this fall.

The only way to identify WNS in bats currently is when they are thoroughly consumed by the disorder. Dead bats at the entrance to hibernacula, large numbers of bats flying during the day and leaving their hibernacula in midwinter, and white fungus on muzzle, ears, and wings are the primary signs.

Although a great deal of time and effort have been poured into coordinating WNS research and fieldwork at the state and regional level since spring, researchers are still in the dark about where it came from and how exactly it compromises a bat's health.

"Bats are starving to death and our job is to find out why," Turner said. "We are preparing to mount an aggressive campaign that will monitor the physical condition of bats from the time they enter hibernacula in the fall until they leave in the spring. Our plan is to select large hibernacula across Pennsylvania and check for abnormalities and dead bats. We'll use a small experienced party of three to check bats with fungus, dead bats, and for shifts in roosting or hibernating bats from deep within hibernacula to areas near entrances - a behavior documented in affected areas in New York and New England."

Efforts also will focus on the hibernating patterns of bats. Working with Dr. DeeAnn Reeder, a bat eco-physiologist at Bucknell University, Turner will try to uncover whether bats are heading into hibernation ill-prepared, or if there is a problem occurring during hibernation that causes premature depletion of a bat's energy reserves.

There's hope that bats can hang in there until wildlife managers can figure out a way to intervene or help. But the truth is there may not be a silver bullet for this bat disorder. Nature may have to run its course, like it currently is with Chronic Wasting Disease in elk and white-tailed deer.

Bat conservation is still in its infancy when comparing it to the time and money dedicated to managing deer, wild turkeys and waterfowl over the past 50 years. But to be fair, up until recently, most people didn't care about bats, because they didn't understand their importance as insect predators.

Attitudes are changing, however, because of outreach by the Game Commission and organizations such as Bat Conservation International. Technological advances - minute transmitters, night scopes, specialized traps - also have improved the ability of researchers to study bats.

One of the largest obstacles bats - and their wildlife managers - still must face is the lack of funding available to get the job done. Insufficient funding to manage non-hunted species has been a problem for decades. Although there is great cooperation among agencies and research institutions, a lack of funding has limited investigations into WNS. The problem is wildlife management dollars are always limited - more so now than ever - and agency budgets simply can't handle much more than routine management.

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"It's not that wildlife management agencies aren't concerned," explained Calvin W. DuBrock, Game Commission Bureau of Wildlife Management director. "Their budgets just aren't equipped to handle unexpected expenses and threats of this magnitude. Pennsylvania, like many of our neighboring states, is doing everything it can -within reason and budgetary restrictions - but if things get worse, we'll be hard-pressed to ramp up our efforts. The public can help [by making donations](#)."

"The upcoming winter will shed light on whether WNS has expanded to Pennsylvania," DuBrock said. "But for now, it is important to remember that all we have in Pennsylvania currently is great concern and suspicion. No significant numbers of dead bats have been found anywhere in the Commonwealth to date."

This fall, the Game Commission is asking the public to keep an eye on Pennsylvania's bats. It is not unusual to see bats hanging in odd places around buildings in September and October as they fatten up before hibernation. However, if you find multiple dead bats or you repeatedly find dead bats in a particular area, please report the incidents to the nearest Game Commission region office.

[Office phone numbers](#) are available on the agency's website. Throughout winter, if you see multiple bats flying outside caves from November through April - the annual hibernation period - please report this sighting to the Game Commission region office in your area.

For more information, visit the [Game Commission bat webpage](#) and go to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service website to learn more about the [White-Nose Syndrome](#).

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—

- **September 9**— [EPA Water Quality Trading Funding Proposals](#)
- **September 12**— [Wildlands Conservancy 2008 Ark Award Nominations](#)
- **September 12**— [Green Building Alliance Product Innovation Grants](#)
- **September 15**— [Vote for Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Contest Winner](#)
- **September 19**— [EPA Clean Air Excellence Awards](#)
- **September 20**— [Fish & Boat Commission Boating Facilities Grants](#)
- **September 21**— [EPA Clean Diesel Emerging Technology Grant](#)
- **September 24**— [Coca-Cola, NRC Recycling Bin Grants](#)
- **September 29**— [Friends of the Wissahickon Photo Contest](#)
- **September 30**— [DEP Recycling Performance Grants](#)
- **October 1**— [Eastern Brook Trout Habitat Grants](#)
- **October 3**— [NOAA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education Grants](#)
- **October 3**— [Lehigh Charles H. Nehf, Sr. Conservation Leadership Award](#)
- **October 15**— [PPL Project Earth Environmental Education Grants](#)
- **October 15**— [Tulpehocken and Quittapahilla Watersheds Grants](#)
- **October 20**— [Westinghouse Brighter Future School Grant Program](#)
- **October 20**— [DEP Coastal Zone Grant Applications](#)
- **October 31**— [PA Resources Council Lens On Litter Photo Contest](#)

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- **October 31**— [Chesapeake Bay Fund Nutrient, Sediment Reduction Grants](#)
- **November 30**— [PPL Green Building Certification Grants](#)
- **November 30**— [Sinnemahoning Watershed Grant Program](#)
- **December 15**—**NEW**. [Coldwater Partnership Watershed Restoration Grants](#)

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

Quick Clips

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

[John Hanger Sworn In As Acting DEP Secretary](#)
[Schools Introduce Students To Mother Nature On A One-On-One Basis](#)
[GreenSpace: A Mecca For Recyclers](#)
[No Build Dates For Coal-To-Oil Plant In Schuylkill](#)
[Is Ethanol Cleaner Than Traditional Gas?](#)
[PA Coal Region County Partially Switches To Gas](#)
[Energy Conservation Seminars Scheduled By SEDA-COG](#)
[New Green Building At Phipps Gets Another Major Grant](#)
[Conserving Energy May Be Answer To Avoiding Pipelines](#)
[Schuylkill County Agrees To 15-Year Energy Savings Deal With PPL](#)
[State Energy Fund Aids School Geothermal Heating System](#)
[Study: PA Will Lose Jobs When Electricity Rate Caps Expire](#)
[Editorial: Electricity Realities Ahead Require Conservation](#)
[Allegheny Energy Remains On Course With Power Line](#)
[Heating Oil Customers Advised To Go With Flow](#)
[Heating Oil Prices A Wild Card](#)
[Company Offers Bradford County \\$2.4 Million To Lease Gas Rights](#)
[Tour Highlights Cabot Natural Gas Wells in Wyoming County](#)
[Tire Plant Behemoth Disturbs Erie Area](#)
[State's Largest Waste Tire Pile No More](#)
[Penn State: Virgin Paper To Be Replaced By Recycled](#)
[West Pittston Cigarette Litter Campaign](#)
[Firms Save \\$52 Million in Energy, Water Use Reduction](#)
[Some Bugging Out Over Killer Wasps](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Rock Run Targeted As Stream To Restore Brook Trout](#)
[Mill Creek Gets Pristine Makeover](#)
[Watershed Project Rolls Out The Rain Barrels](#)
[Crickfest Stresses Importance Of Nature](#)
[State Taking Stock Of Water Use, Availability](#)
[Auction Releases Trout Sculptures Into New Waters](#)

[PA Approves Bill That Would Help Fund Wastewater Plant Upgrades](#)
[Pike County Water Resources Needs Assessment](#)
[Editorial: Plan Treats Water Like Key Resource](#)
[Editorial: Even More Than Energy, Clean Water Is Essential](#)
[State: Water Quality Data Faked in Lancaster](#)
[Review Panel Criticizes Great Lakes Health Study](#)

Regulations

The Department of Environmental Protection published notice that a General NPDES Permit is [available for wet weather overflow discharges](#).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – September 6, 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 final policy documents](#) on combined sewer overflows and CSO control plans (details below).

Final DEP ID: 385-2000-011. Pennsylvania Combined Sewer Overflow Policy. On March 1, 2002, the Department published a Combined Sewer Overflow Policy to assist in meeting the goals of controlling and eliminating CSO discharges, as practical, as well as to facilitate compliance among all CSO system permittees with State water quality standards through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permitting program. Substantive revisions were made to the policy to further enhance and support compliance with CSO and NPDES permit conditions among the regulated community.

Final DEP ID: 362-5512-004. Recognition of Cost Items Associated with Concurrent Act 537 and Combined Sewer Overflow Long Term Control Plan (LTCP) Planning. This document describes the treatment of costs in the calculation of Act 537 sewage facilities planning assistance grant when a LTCP has been made part of an Act 537 Official plan revision. It confirms that a LTCP, whose content responds to regulations enforced under the Federal Clean Water Act, may be part of a comprehensive Act 537 update revision document.

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

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

Calendar of 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](#)

- **September 9**— House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee hearing on the removal of electric rate caps. City Hall, Council Chambers, Philadelphia. 1:00.
- **September 9**—**CANCELLED**. [DEP Storage Tank Advisory Committee](#) meeting. The next scheduled meeting is set for December 9.
- **September 9-10**—[DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Best Western Grand Victorian Inn, Sayre.
- **September 10**— Joint House Agriculture and Rural Affairs and Game and Fisheries Committee hearing on deer farming. Mountain Ridge Whitetails, 1115 Dartmouth Rd., Hummelstown, Pa. 12:30.
- **September 10**—**CANCELLED**. [DEP Statewide Water Resources Committee](#) meeting. The next scheduled meeting is set for December 18.
- **September 11**— House Local Government Committee hearing on [House Bill 1753](#) (Argall-R-Schuylkill) providing for grants to encourage inter-municipal cooperation. Room G-50 Irvis Building. 10:00.
- **September 11**— [Susquehanna River Basin Commission](#) hearing [on several water resources projects](#). Bucknell University, Elaine Langone Center, Lewisburg. 1:00.
- **September 11**- [State Board for Certification of Water and Wastewater Systems Operators](#) will now meet on the 12th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **September 13**— [2008 Wild Resources Festival](#). [Tom Ridge Environmental Center](#), Presque Isle, Erie. 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **September 17**— Joint Senate [Agriculture and Rural Affairs](#) and [Environmental Resources and Energy](#) Committee hearing on nutrient credit trading ([Senate Bill 1493](#) (Vance-R-Cumberland)). Hearing Room 1, North Office Building. 9:15.
- **September 18**—**CANCELLED**. Joint Conservation Committee Sewage Management and Treatment Task Force. Penn Stater Conference Center, State College. 10:00.
- **September 19**—**CANCELLED**. DEP Potomac Water Resources Regional Committee meeting. ([See Act 220 Participation webpage](#)).
- **September 22**— Environmental Issues Forum presentation by U.S.G.S on emerging contaminants in PA Streams sponsored by the [Joint Conservation Committee](#). Room 205 Ryan Building. 12:00.
- **September 23**—[Governor’s Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **September 23**— Joint Legislative Budget and Finance Committee meeting on [Senate Resolution 195](#) (Brubaker-R-Lancaster) related to a review of the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program. Hearing Room 3, North Office Building. 10:00.
- **September 24**—**NEW**. Senate Game and Fisheries Committee hearing on powers and duties of deputy wildlife conservation officers with the Game Commission. Hearing Room 1, North Office Building. 9:30.

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- **September 24**— [Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee](#) informational meeting on carbon sequestration. Room 8E-A, East Wing. 9:15.
- **October 2**— [DEP Solar Work Group](#) meeting. Room 105, Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00. Contact: Libby Dodson, 717-772-8907 or send email to: ldodson@state.pa.us.
- **October 2**— PROP Organics Committee meeting. Tillotson Room, Tippie Alumni Center, Allegheny College. Meadville. 9:30.
- **October 18**— [Joint Conservation Committee](#) Sewage Management and Treatment Task Force. Penn Stater Conference Center, State College. 10:00.
- **October 23**— [Joint Conservation Committee](#) Legislative Forestry Task Force. Penn Stater Conference Center, State College. 10:00.

[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.

Stories Invited

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

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

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