

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Holston & Crisci

January 23, 2006

The General Assembly Returns to Work

Members of the Senate and House return to session in Harrisburg January 23, but where do environmental issues stand among school property tax relief, eminent domain reform, installing a cap on state spending, a minimum wage increase, lobbying reform, fixes to the Gaming Law and more?

Members are also anticipating the Governor's budget address the first full week in February that will certainly be a difficult one with rising Medicaid and Welfare costs and folks will be watching for another round of proposed cuts in the budgets for environmental agencies.

Here's a quick rundown on some key environmental bills and issues pending in and around the General Assembly.

Recycling Fee: [House Bill 1902](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) eliminating the sunset date on the \$2/ton Recycling Fee and requiring Recycling Performance Grants to be used for local recycling and waste reduction efforts. On the House Calendar for action.

Environmental Education: [Senate Bill 410](#) (MJ White-R-Venango) to establish the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education in law. Tabled in the House.

California Car Standards: [House Bill 2141](#) (Geist-R-Blair) which would prohibit the Department of Environmental Protection from adopting the current California vehicle emission standards is in the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee with a hearing set for February 8. The Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee held a [hearing on the issue in December](#).



Got Milk? DEP Secretary Kathleen McGinty tries her hand at milking at the 2006 Farm Show in this photo from DEP's newly reorganized [Secretary's Scrapbook website feature](#).

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Open Space Preservation: [House Bill 87](#) (Steil-R-Bucks) further authorizing local governments to preserve open space through the waiver of certain service fees. On the Senate Calendar for action.

Sewer/Water Connection Funding: [House Bill 1108](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) would establish the Water and Wasterwater Connection Funding Program within PennVEST. In the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.

Eminent Domain: There are [four bills in the Senate and House](#) making changes to the Eminent Domain Code in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Kelo* -- [Senate Bill 881](#) (Piccola-R-Dauphin) and [Senate Bill 897](#) (Brightbill-R-Lebanon) both now on the House Calendar for action and [House Bill 2019](#) (Grell-R-Cumberland) is in the Senate State Government Committee and [House Bill 2054](#) (Grell-R-Cumberland) is on the Senate Calendar for action.

Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy: [Senate Resolution 207](#) (Vance-R-Cumberland) urging DEP to place a nine month moratorium on implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy is set to be considered by the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee on January 24. Both the Senate and House environmental committees [held hearings on the Strategy last September](#).

The Department of Environmental Protection has also convened a Bay Tributary Strategy Steering Committee to help work on implementation issues and [Water Quality Credit Trading rules](#) with all groups involved in the issue.

Farmers First Agenda: The Senate Agriculture Committee [held a hearing in October](#) on proposals to deal with excess manure produced by livestock operations as part of a “Farmers First Agenda” promoted by Senators Waugh (R-York) and Wenger (R-Lancaster) where the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other groups testified. The Committee is expected to consider legislation on this topic this year.

Adopt-A-River Program: [House Bill 1051](#) (Sturla-D-Lancaster) establishing the Adopt-a-River Program in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Tabled in the House.

Uniform Environmental Covenants: [House Bill 1249](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) would establish uniform language in covenants relating to the cleanup of brownfield sites to protect the integrity of cleanup methods and ensure ongoing monitoring responsibilities. The House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee held a [hearing on the legislation in September](#).

Deep Mine Safety: [Senate Bill 949](#) (Kasunic-D-Somerset) making improvements to the Bituminous Coal Mine Act deep mine safety law to help deal with concerns raised by the Quecreek Mine Accident in 2002 and other issues is set to have a hearing January 31 in the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee. The companion bill-- [House Bill 2229](#) (Bastian-R-Somerset) is pending in the House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee.

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Federal Reclamation Fund: [House Resolution 382](#) a concurrent resolution urging Congress to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund is in the Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee which is set to consider the resolution on January 24.

Forestry Task Force: [Senate Resolution 137](#) (Madigan-R-Bradford) re-establishing the Forestry Task Force supported by the Joint Legislative Air & Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee. In the House Rules Committee.

Mercury Issue: The Department of Environmental Protection, working with the [Mercury Rule Work Group](#), is developing a Pennsylvania-only rule to reduce mercury emissions from power plants that would be more stringent than the federal rule that just went into effect and which would reduce mercury emissions by 86 percent. [Three of the four chairs](#) of the Senate and House environmental committees have expressed concerns about DEP's approach. DEP should present the Work Group with its draft rule in February.

Energy Policy: The House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee has been holding a series of informational meetings on energy issues, the next are scheduled for January 25 and February 14. The Committee is expected to consider several pieces of legislation on energy issues as a result of the comments received.

Session Schedule

The House and Senate return to session on January 23 and will be in for the next four weeks, excluding Groundhog Day on February 2.

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- Northern Saw-Whet Owl Banding Project Completes 9th Year

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On the Hill

On the Senate, House Agenda

The Senate and House Environmental Resources and Energy Committees both have meetings set for the week of January 23 and there are several environmental bills on the Senate and House calendars. Here's the rundown...

Calendars

The House starts the week with these bills on their Calendar-- [House Bill 2067](#) setting limits on state spending through a constitutional amendment; [House Bill 1902](#) eliminating the sunset date on the \$2/ton Recycling Fee and requiring Recycling Performance Grants to be used for local recycling and waste reduction efforts; [Senate Bill 640](#) claims for taxes, water, lighting fee exclusions for donations of property; and [Senate Bill 881](#) and [Senate Bill 897](#) making changes to the Eminent Domain Code in response to the Supreme Court's *Kelo* decision.

On the Senate Calendar is [House Bill 2054](#) that makes changes to the Eminent Domain Code in response to the *Kelo* decision, [House Bill 893](#) changing procedures for shutting off water for nonpayment of sewage bills and [House Bill 87](#) (Steil-R-Bucks) further authorizing local governments to preserve open space through the waiver of certain service fees.

Committees

Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee meets January 24 to consider the re-appointment of Michael L. Krancer to the Environmental Hearing Board and [Senate Resolution 207](#) urging DEP to place a nine month moratorium on implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy and [House Resolution 382](#) urging Congress to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund and the Appropriations Committee meets to consider [House Bill 1114](#) (Yudichak-D-Luzerne) expanding waste tire recycling program.

House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee holds an informational meeting January 25 on [energy policy](#). The agenda includes Dr. Alan Scaroni, Director of the Energy Institute at Penn State University regarding energy research and development, Rosemary McAvoy of the Renewable Energies Council discussing alternative fuels and Christopher Lynch, Director, [Environmental Management Services](#) of the Small Business Development Center at the Wharton School regarding energy efficiency in small businesses.

Senate Environmental Committee Opens New Webpage

The Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee opened a [new webpage](#) this week that contains information from recent public hearings, testimony, letters sent by the Committee and other useful environmental links.

The webpage is maintained by Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), Majority Chair of the Committee.

In Other News

Exelon, Schuylkill River Heritage Area Set Up Fund for Schuylkill Watershed

The [Schuylkill River Heritage Area](#) is partnering with Exelon Nuclear to oversee a new Schuylkill River Restoration Fund that will provide funding for watershed projects. Exelon Nuclear has allotted nearly \$160,000 for the new Fund.

The fund is part of a demonstration project for the water diversion program at Exelon Nuclear's Limerick Generating Station and is under the purview of the Delaware River Basin Commission.

Money from the fund is expected to be available this year. Exelon and the Schuylkill River Heritage Area hope other corporations will also contribute to the fund in the future. Grant guidelines are being developed at this time.

As part of Limerick's water diversion program, Exelon Nuclear pumps water daily from various water sources in order to operate the plant to minimize environmental impact.

With the consent of the Commission, Exelon Nuclear is implementing a water supply demonstration at the station involving water supplied from various sources to lessen withdraws of water from the Delaware River. According to the October 2004 DRBC permit language which created the fund, Exelon's annual contribution to the fund is based on the amount of water that is not required to be pumped from the Delaware River to support the Limerick Generating Station's cooling water needs during the demonstration project currently set to expire no later than December 31, 2008.

The demonstration, and the associated fund, is part of Exelon's commitment to improve the Schuylkill River and show that changes in water supplies will not adversely affect the river. The Schuylkill River Heritage Area will oversee the fund, providing the money to organizations seeking to undertake such projects as repairing eroded stream banks or restoring polluted waterways.



Left to Right: Carol Collier, Delaware River Basin Commission; Kurt Zwinkl, Schuylkill River Heritage Area; Ron DeGregorio, Exelon Nuclear; Cathy Curran Myers, Deputy Secretary DEP; Rep. Tom Quigley; Ron Downie, Schuylkill River Heritage Area

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“We will be looking to provide funding for projects that improve or monitor water quality in the Schuylkill River watershed,” said Kurt Zwinkl, executive director for the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. “The Schuylkill River is a source of drinking water for over one million people. Our mission is to improve water quality in the Heritage Area and we are pleased to participate in this partnership.”

“It is unique for a corporation to take steps to ensure that water quality is being addressed,” he said. “By creating the fund they will also raise public awareness of the continued need to address water quality in the area.”

“The Delaware River Basin Commission is very pleased by today's announcement that the Schuylkill River Heritage Area is Exelon's choice to manage and administer the Restoration Fund,” DRBC Executive Director Carol R. Collier said. “I look forward to working with SRHA as it moves ahead to distribute the funds to support projects that will promote restoration and water management goals in the Schuylkill River Watershed.”

Exelon Nuclear Vice President Ron DeGregorio said, “As a safe, clean and reliable energy producer, our environmental goals are aligned with those of the Schuylkill River Heritage Area. At Limerick Generating Station, we focus on continuously reducing our environmental impacts and strengthening our stewardship of the environment. We believe the Schuylkill River Heritage Area is an ideal partner to make this initiative a success.”

Groups interested in applying for the grant may visit the [Schuylkill River Heritage Area website](#), call 484-945-0200 or send email to info@schuylkillriver.org.

NewsClip: [New Fund Will Help Improve Schuylkill River Water Quality](#)

DEP Simplifies Water Use Registration Process

The Department of Environmental Protection this week announced a [simplified system for water-use registration](#) under Pennsylvania Water Resources Planning Act.

The new, single-step registration includes the elimination of pre-registration and the opportunity for registrants to request a map to help identify source locations more easily.

The act requires public water supply agencies, hydropower facilities and individuals who withdraw or use more than 10,000 gallons of water per day over any 30-day period to register their withdrawal and use. Users of fewer than 10,000 gallons per day are encouraged to register voluntarily to help DEP get the complete water resources picture.

Individual homes, which typically use less than 300 gallons per day, would not be required to register.

Under Act 220, DEP must develop a State Water Plan by 2008. The plan has not been updated in more than 25 years, and it does not indicate which areas have critical water needs.

For more information, visit the [Act 220 Water Resources webpage](#).

Community Energy Project Expanding in Northwest

The [Meadville Community Energy Project](#) announced this week it was expanding its activities in Crawford, Erie, and surrounding counties and changed its name to “The Commonwealth Community Energy Project.”

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Since 1997, the Meadville Community Energy Project has served the Crawford County area by promoting sustainable energy in the service of community economic revitalization. These efforts have been highly successful and accomplished through the stewardship of Allegheny College and its Center for Economic and Environmental Development.

The Energy Project advances the efficient use of energy through community partnerships that stimulate the economy, improve social equity, and benefit the environment. The project grew out of a series of Allegheny College seminars in which students investigated the role of energy consumption in the local economy.

Current programs include Home Energy Ratings (to help homeowners and landlords identify the most cost-effective home improvements), the Home Energy Loan Program (4 percent loans up to \$10,000 for energy improvements), and Congregations & Energy (assisting religious congregations with managing energy costs).

While originally focused on Meadville, most Energy Project programs now encompass Crawford and Erie Counties. The Project, as the only certified home energy rater in northwestern Pennsylvania, has conducted Home Energy Ratings as far away as Waynesburg and Clarion. It is currently working with Penn State's University Park campus to develop a community energy program for Centre County.

The organization also recently became affiliated with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council in anticipation of expanded work throughout the Commonwealth.

"We're very excited to be affiliated with two such outstanding partners as the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Allegheny College," said Kathy Greely, director of the Energy Project. "We'll be maintaining our roots in local partnerships while reaching out to replicate our successes over a broader region."

"As one of the original advisory board members for the Energy Project, I know that it has been extremely effective in Northwest Pennsylvania," said Brian Hill, Pennsylvania Environmental Council Interim President & CEO. "Our new partnership provides an opportunity to replicate the program in interested communities throughout the Commonwealth. Allegheny College and the staff of the Energy Project should be applauded for creating such an innovative program."

The office for the Commonwealth Community Energy Project will remain at Allegheny College, which will provide office support for the organization and faculty and student participation in developing and implementing programs.

"The Meadville Community Energy Project was one of the first initiatives supported through our Center for Economic and Environmental Development, and it has been successful in providing real benefits to both the local and college communities," said Linda C. DeMeritt, Dean of Allegheny College. "We are pleased that it has flourished and now forged a new affiliation with the Pennsylvania Environmental Council, and I am confident that the organization, under the leadership of Kathy Greely, will be effective in expanding its programs. This is good for Allegheny, the Energy Project, and sustainable energy initiatives throughout Pennsylvania."

For more information, visit the [Community Energy Project webpage](#) or contact Kathy Greely at 814-332-2986.

Visit the [Professional Services Directory](#) and [Events Calendar](#)

Sustainable Energy Fund Of Central Eastern PA Has Board Openings

The [Sustainable Energy Fund](#) headquartered in Allentown, SEF [is seeking talented, experienced and passionate professionals](#) who live or work in the 29-county area comprising the PPL rate territory to fill a series of SEF board seats that will be vacated over the next 12 months as the result of term expirations

SEF is a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of renewable and clean energy technologies and energy conservation. The fund seeks to promote, facilitate and partner with companies, organizations and ventures that manufacture, distribute, install or are end-users of renewable energy, advanced clean energy, energy-conserving products and technologies that generate electricity using renewable energy sources.

For more information see the [SEF position announcement](#).

Pennsylvania Receives Mine Safety Education Grant

U.S. Senators Arlen Specter and Rick Santorum this week announced that the Department of Labor's Mine Safety and Health Administration has awarded a \$495,284 grant to provide mine safety and health training education to miners in Pennsylvania.

"The accidents at the Sago and Quecreek mines have brought to national attention the need for enhanced safety measures to protect miners from the inherent hazards of their jobs," said Senator Specter. "This funding will provide Pennsylvania miners with proper training and tools necessary to prevent future hazards."

"Given the recent tragedy at the Sago Mine in West Virginia and the Quecreek Mine rescue in Somerset County in 2002, we are all well aware of the dangers associated with mining," said Senator Santorum. "As the grandson of a coal miner, I understand the hazards and health risks that a coal miner faces. This funding will play a vital role in keeping our Pennsylvania miners safe and healthy, and nothing is more important than that."

The funds will be used to provide federally mandated training and retraining to miners working at coal, metal and nonmetal mines. Each grantee will tailor the program to meet its state miners' individual needs.

Senator Specter will hold a hearing on the Sago Mine incident on January 23 in his Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education. Senator Santorum recently sent a letter to the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee to formally request hearings dedicated to a comprehensive analysis of coal mine safety and how it can be improved.

NewsClip: [IUP, DEP Partner to Digitize Old Mine Maps](#)
[IUP Helps Launch Mine Safety Effort](#)
[DEP, IUP Unveil Digital Imaging Camera for Mine Maps](#)
[MSHA Proposes Higher Mine Safety Penalties](#)

Cool Roofs Workshop Set for February 7 in Southeast

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Region 3 is sponsoring a [cool roofs workshop](#) on February 7 at PECO's Headquarters in Philadelphia.

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The workshop addresses the environmental, economic, and structural benefits of cool roofs for low-slope roofs. All who can benefit from knowing about cool roof technology are welcome to attend.

For registration information and to view the agenda, please see the [Cool Roofs Workshop webpage](#).

Center for Rural PA Awards Grants for Energy, Sewage, Other Projects

The Center for Rural Pennsylvania, chaired by Sen. Gordner (R-Columbia), announced the award of their 2006 grants to a dozen different projects and will shortly announce the opening of its 2007 application round.

Projects included a protocol for determining the feasibility of installing wind energy facilities in rural communities, rural drinking water quality and a study of failing septic systems.

[A list of all projects funded is available online.](#)

For more information about the 2007 grant solicitation or to receive a copy, call the Center at 717-787-9555 or visit the [Center for Rural PA website](#).

Growing No-till Farming in PA Through the No-Till Alliance

The Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance, a coalition dedicated to promoting the economic and environmental benefits of no-till farming, will hold its next meeting on March 15 in State College at the Ramada Conference Center.

This year's theme is "No-Till: Agronomically Superior, Economically Sound, Environmentally Safe." Keynote speakers for this event include Don Reicosky from USDA-ARS in Morris, Minnesota, and Bill Curran, Penn State Weed Management Specialist, who will address critical soil and weed management issues in the quest for continuous no-till systems.

Breakout sessions will focus on no-till alfalfa and grass forages, keys to successfully transitioning to no-till, and a question-and-answer session with board members of the PA No-Till Alliance.

The formation meeting of the Pennsylvania No-Till Alliance was held in Spring Mills, Centre County in on March 4 of last year. The people who attended included farmers, conservation district staff, farm organizations, supporting state, federal and local agencies, educational institutions and private-sector businesses.

The idea at that time was to bring together an "alliance" of farmers that would join together to create an interest in improving soil and water quality as well as yields through the promotion of no-till crop production systems within the Commonwealth.

The formation of the Alliance was the result of a great collaborative effort, and it continues to be a producer-driven organization with strong agency support. The Alliance Board of Directors has met regularly to plan future activities and the development of organizational materials such as: a logo, a brochure, fact sheets, display boards, and several media presentations.

All Board members have been engaged in promoting no-till and the Alliance; a first-ever "Ask the Expert" tent was set up for Ag Progress Days, which was a complete success. Alliance members have given input publicly regarding sediment and nutrient

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management issues related to the Farm Bill and Pennsylvania agriculture, as well as initiated activities between regional no-till groups across the state.

Participation in the Alliance is open to farmers and all those supporting no-till agriculture in the public and private sectors.

Registration for the March 15 event is \$30 until March 3rd and \$40 at the door. Registration forms should be submitted to: Capital RC&D, 108-109 Church Hall, 777 West Harrisburg Pike, Middletown, PA 17057. Call Susan Parry, Coordinator, at 717-948-6633 for brochures or send email to: susan.parry@pa.usda.gov.

For program information call Sjoerd Duiker, 814-863-7637.

Article By Sjoerd Duiker, Penn State Cooperative Extension, and Susan Parry, Capital RC&D

Pittsburgh Voyager Holds Teacher Training Workshops in February and March

[Pittsburgh Voyager](#), a river-based non-profit environmental education center in downtown Pittsburgh will be holding three teacher training workshops in February and March.

The workshops are sponsored by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and other non-profit agencies.

● **February 25 and March 4:** Voyager will present “Tale of Two Rivers,” a 2-day workshop in conjunction with Pittsburgh Zoo & PPG Aquarium. The workshop compares the Allegheny and Amazon Rivers.

Participants explore living and non-living features of through tours, presentations, discussions, and a field study. Participate in inquiry-based classroom activities that will make these vital ecosystems come alive for students. Investigate conservation issues facing endangered wildlife. A course project completed by participants will help to convey the biodiversity and ecological importance of these two river systems.

This workshop is worth 22.5 hours of Act 48 teacher continuing education.

● **March 11:** Voyager teams up with Creek Connections of Allegheny College to present “Rivers of Time,” a 1-day workshop. Participants will think like geologists for this daylong voyage into the river valleys of Pittsburgh, while delineating watersheds, interpreting topographic maps, and investigating the secrets held by sediments.

This workshop is worth 7.5 hours of Act 48 teacher continuing education.

● **March 18 and 25:** Voyager joins with the Carnegie Science Center to present “Project WET: Healthy Waters, Healthy Life,” a 2-day workshop. Examine the physical properties and environmental issues of water through field studies onboard Pittsburgh Voyager and on shore at Carnegie Science Center.

Utilizing Project WET (Water Education for Teachers) curriculum guide, participants will gain firsthand experience with water sampling techniques while studying the health of local rivers and the life in them. Through tours, speakers, and activities, explore the water treatment process and local water issues.

A course project completed by participants will include an outlined "skeleton" unit plan that connects content with hands-on Project WET activities to help address Environment and Ecology standards. This workshop includes a Project WET manual, and is worth 22.5 hours of Act 48 teacher continuing education.

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The workshops are most applicable to teachers of grades 4-9, but are open to any teacher interested. For more information, visit the [Pittsburgh Voyager workshops webpage](#) or call 412-231-2712.

DCNR Accepting Grant Applications for Heritage Parks Program

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [announced it will accept](#) applications for the [Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program](#) through May 19.

It is the intent of the Program to create a system of State designated Heritage Areas that preserve and interpret the significant contributions that various regions of this Commonwealth have made to the rich heritage of Pennsylvania and the United States.

The historic, cultural, natural, scenic and recreational resources within a Heritage Area are inventoried, preserved, enhanced and promoted as a strategy to enhance regional economic development through the attraction of tourists, creation of new jobs, stimulation of small business growth, and the promotion of public and private investment opportunities.

There are currently 12 designated State Heritage Areas including the Allegheny Ridge Heritage Area, the Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, the Endless Mountains Heritage Region, the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority, the Lancaster-York Heritage Region, the Lincoln Highway Heritage Corridor, the Lumber Heritage Region, the National Road Heritage Corridor, the Oil Heritage Region, Pennsylvania Route 6 Heritage Corridor, the Rivers of Steel Heritage Area and the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor.

More information, visit the [Pennsylvania Heritage Areas Program webpage](#).

Public Comment Period Extended for Proposed Manure Hauler Regulations

The Department of Agriculture has [extended the public comment period](#) for the proposed [commercial manure haulers and brokers regulations](#). The deadline for comment is now February 16.

The Commercial Manure Hauler and Broker Certification Law (Act 49 of 2004) requires all owners and employees of commercial haulers, applicators or brokers to be certified by the Department of Agriculture. The law also provides new requirements for concentrated animal operations and concentrated animal feeding operations.

The Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with Penn State's Cooperative Extension Service, has developed a certification program for haulers and brokers. [Training will be available for individuals seeking certification](#) as a Hauler 3 or Broker 1 or 2.

For more information, visit the [Commercial Manure Hauler and Broker Certification webpage](#) or contact the Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Plant Industry at 717-787-3568 or 717-772- 5218.

Visit the [Professional Services Directory](#) and [Events Calendar](#)

New Community Greening Award From Keep PA Beautiful Alliance

The [Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Alliance](#) is sponsoring a Community Greening Award this year to recognize individuals, groups, local governments and businesses who care for public space plantings that beautify their communities.

Site nominations will be accepted through June 30.

A panel of evaluators will visit each nominated site during the summer and review them for the variety of plants, horticultural practices, use of space and maintenance.

The Community Greening Award project partners include the [Pennsylvania Resources Council](#) and the [Pennsylvania Horticultural Society](#).

For more information [download the Nomination Form](#).

Nominations Now Being Accepted for the 2006 Karl Mason Award



The Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals is now accepting nominations for its [annual Karl Mason Award](#). The deadline for nominations is February 28.

Karl Mason served the Department of Health from 1952 until his death in 1966. He was regarded as the Commonwealth's first environmental administrator. The Award was created to commemorate his vision of a strong, well-managed environmental program.

Two awards will be granted, one for outstanding environmental project by a group or company and the second for environmental work or project by an individual.

For more information, visit the [Karl Mason Award webpage](#).

Hunters Reminded to Submit Deer Harvest Reports to Game Commission

Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Carl Roe reminded hunters this week they must complete and submit their Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) report cards either by mail or through the agency's website by February 7.

Under DMAP, all hunters are required to submit a report card, even if the hunter did not take a deer. This is being done so the Game Commission can measure the effectiveness of the program.

For more information, visit the [DMAP webpage](#).

Feature

Northern Saw-Whet Owl Banding Project Completes 9th Year

November 30 of last year marked the end of the ninth year of the [Northern Saw-whet Owl](#) banding project sponsored by the [Ned Smith Center for Nature and the Arts](#) that has resulted in banding 490 owls at three different stations.

Several members of the Appalachian Audubon Society are either licensed banders or [volunteers in this effort](#).



Photo from
Dr. Karl Kleiner's website

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This is probably the most ambitious [Saw-whet Owl banding project](#) in North America, in terms of personnel, with 18 licensed banders and 80 volunteers working at three sites. Other stations regularly capture more owls than this project.

The sites are: Hidden Valley in western Schuylkill county, on the property of the Hidden Valley Golf Course; Small Valley, in northern Dauphin County, on the property of the Hemlock Girl Scout Council's camp; and [King's Gap Environmental Education Training Center](#), in southern Cumberland County.

The banders and volunteers annually log 5,000-6,000 person-hours in a season.

The Northern Saw-whet Owl is the species depicted on Pennsylvania's original conservation license plate. The license plate rendering of the owl is nearly life size. The purpose of the project is to learn more about this mysterious owl's migration, abundance and ecology.

Until a few years ago, we knew that their breeding range stretched across Alaska and Canada, south through the Rockies to Mexico, and down the Appalachians as far south as the mountains of North Carolina. The project has given us a better idea of their migration route, especially through the Appalachian Mountains, a route that was essentially unknown until the 1990's.

For each of the last nine years, the Ned Smith Center's team of trained researchers and volunteers have captured hundreds of Saw-whet Owls. The owls were harmlessly banded, measured, aged, had their sex determined, and were then released. All of this information is archived and used in research.

The Ned Smith Center's five-year average is about 450 Saw-whets per year. A tape-recording of the Saw-whet's call lures the owls into almost invisible mist nets, from which volunteers gently extract them for examination and banding.

The slender, lightweight leg band that is placed on the captured owl's leg is provided by the federal Bird Banding Laboratory, and is stamped with sequential numbers.

If another group of banders recaptures a banded owl, or if a banded owl is found dead by a member of the general public, the band number is reported to the Bird Banding Laboratory. The federal Bird Banding Laboratory notifies the original bander that one of the owls they banded has been recaptured, and provides the date and location of recapture.

Additionally, at the King's Gap facility, selected owls are fitted with tiny radio transmitters weighing less than a penny, which allow for tracking of the owls during daylight, to determine stopover behavior, habitat and roost site selection. Certain owls are selected for DNA studies, conducted by [Dr. Karl Kleiner](#) of York College of Pennsylvania, who is comparing Saw-whet genetics from across North America.

Banded owls recaptured by the Ned Smith project team have been determined to have been originally banded in Canada, across the eastern United States, and in the upper Midwestern and southern states of the U.S., as well as at several other banding stations in Pennsylvania. Some owls are recaptured a few years after the original banding date.

Along with the many people-hours devoted to this project by Appalachian Audubon Society members, the Appalachian Audubon Society has donated funds designed for the Northern Saw-whet Owl project.

Anyone interested in monetarily assisting with the project can help by ["adopting" an owl.](#)

Owl adoptions make great gifts! Owl adoptions are the major source of funding for the replacement of very expensive equipment needed for this project.

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With an owl adoption, the adopter receives a certificate with the owl's picture, the band number, the date it was captured and released and other pertinent information. This certificate is suitable for framing.

If this bird is recaptured by another banding station, or in a year subsequent to the banding year, the adopter is notified by mail, telling where and when the owl was recaptured.

All funds raised through adoption are for the sole use of the owl-banding project. Information on adopting an owl can be found at the [Ned Smith Center website](#) or by calling 717-692-3369.

This article was written by Carl Juris and originally appeared in the January 2006 issue of the King Fisher Courier newsletter of the Appalachian Audubon Society, President Ramsay Koury, send email to: rkoury123@aol.com or call 717-761-1871.

Visit the [Audubon PA website](#) for more information on birding and habitat issues in Pennsylvania.

Quick Clips

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

[Citizen Science Part of Birding Tradition](#)

[Bird Count Fans Crow](#)

[Bird Count Drums Up Magnificent Birds](#)

[DEP-Dentists Work to Reduce Mercury Exposure](#)

[Editorial: Alternative Energy from the Farm](#)

[Program Offers Gas Money to Car Poolers](#)

[Solar Panels Will Light Cancer Center Offices](#)

[158,000 Tires Gone from Starr Tire Pile](#)

[Montgomery County Earmarks \\$4 Million for Farmland Preservation](#)

[Montour Trail Users Await Building of Bridge](#)

[Clarion-Toby Trail Reaches Agreement with Railroad](#)

[Franklin County Mason-Dixon Land Use Dilemma](#)

[Brownfield Sprouts Produce Firm](#)

[Sago Mine Disaster Pushes PA Mine Safety Legislation](#)

[IUP, DEP Partner to Digitize Old Mine Maps](#)

[IUP Helps Launch Mine Safety Effort](#)

[MSHA Proposes Higher Mine Safety Penalties](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Environmentalism Aiming to Put Rivers Back on Course](#)

[Editorial: Water Management Concerns Everyone](#)

[New Fund Will Help Improve Schuylkill River Water Quality](#)

[Impact of Invasive Species on Watersheds](#)

[Robinson Run Watershed Receives \\$70,000 Grant](#)
[Editorial: Saucon Creek Needs Better Protection](#)
[Developing Schoolyard Habitats](#)
[Flood Protection Grant Announced for Luzerne County](#)
[Spring Creek Sewer Plan on Tap for Meetings](#)
[Fish & Boat Commission Commits Funds to Lake Erie Property Acquisition](#)
[EPA Awards Grant to PA Wetlands Program](#)
[Fulton County Conservation Districts Celebrates 60 Years of Service](#)

Regulations

The Department of Agriculture has [extended the public comment period](#) for the proposed [commercial manure haulers and brokers regulations](#). The Independent Regulatory Review Commission gave formal notice of approval of proposed changes to Hazardous Waste Regulations by the Environmental Quality Board (7-393).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – January 21, 2006](#)

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

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

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

Technical Guidance & Permits

No new guidance document changes were published this week.

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

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- [DEP's Annual schedule of board and advisory committee meetings for 2006](#)
- [No Cost Environmental Training Courses Online January/February](#)
- **January 23** – Senate Appropriations Committee meets to consider [House Bill 1114](#) (Yudichak-D-Luzerne) expanding waste tire recycling program.

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- **January 23** – Mid-Atlantic Renewable Energy Coalition presents Judy Wicks, founder White Dog Café, on Local Living Economics, 3:00, Glasbern Inn, Fogelsville. Info: Julie Thomases, jthomases@yahoo.com
- **January 24** – Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee meets to consider the re-appointment of Michael L. Krancer to the Environmental Hearing Board and [Senate Resolution 207](#) (Vance-R-Cumberland) urging DEP to place a nine month moratorium on implementation of the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy and [House Resolution 382](#) (Frankel-D-Allegheny) urging Congress to reauthorize the Abandoned Mine Reclamation Fund in Room 8E-A, 9:30.
- **January 25** – House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee informational meeting on [energy policy](#). The agenda includes Dr. Alan Scaroni, Director of the Energy Institute at Penn State University regarding energy research and development, Rosemary McAvoy of the Renewable Energies Council discussing alternative fuels and Christopher Lynch, Director, [Environmental Management Services](#) of the Small Business Development Center at the Wharton School regarding energy efficiency in small businesses. North Office Building, Hearing Room 1. 9:00.
- **January 25** – [DCNR Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00 a.m.
- **January 31** – Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee hearing on legislation modernizing Pennsylvania’s deep mine safety law and [Senate Bill 949](#) (Kasuni-D-Somerset). Room 8-EA Capitol Building. 9:00.
- **January 31** – DEP [Statewide Water Resources](#), Critical Water Planning Area Subcommittee meeting. 12th Floor, Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00.
- **February 8** – House Environmental Resources & Energy Committee will hold a public hearing on [House Bill 2141](#) (Geist-R-Blair) and adopting the California vehicle emission standards for Pennsylvania. North Office Building, Hearing Room 1. 9:00.

[DEP Calendar of Events](#)

[Watershed Events](#)

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

[Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

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

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

Helpful Web Links

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

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

[DCNR Resource Magazine](#) [DCNR Press Releases](#)

[Fish & Boat Commission Press Releases](#) [Game Commission Press Releases](#)

Stories Invited

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

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

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