

-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](#)

PA Groups Call for Targeted Farm Conservation Help From 2008 Farm Bill

Farm and environmental groups from Pennsylvania participated in a listening session this week by the U.S. Natural Resource Conservation Service on setting spending priorities for the new funding provided in the 2008 Farm Bill for farm conservation in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.

The Department of Agriculture, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, PA Farm Bureau, Grange and the PA Association of Conservation Districts all provided comments and were remarkably similar in their recommendations.

Department of Agriculture

Secretary of Agriculture Dennis Wolff said

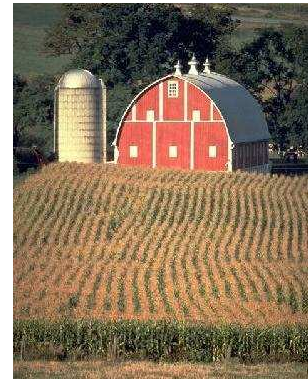
Pennsylvania's [Chesapeake Bay Compliance Plan](#) requires the removal of 25 million pounds of nutrient pollution farmlands in the watershed and that farmers need assistance to meet this goal.

“At present, the majority of Pennsylvania agriculture operations do not have comprehensive nutrient management programs and do not have access to state funds that make wide-sweeping conservation improvements possible,” said Secretary Wolff. “When utilizing new Chesapeake Bay funding, we must strive to achieve a minimum baseline compliance, and direct this new funding to farms that have not previously had support in instituting conservation measures.”

Pennsylvania's new 2008-09 budget that started July 1 provided over \$1.2 billion in water infrastructure funding, including for wastewater plant upgrades, but provided no additional funding for farm conservation, in fact, it included some cuts. (See [PA Fair Share for Clean Water website](#).)

Secretary Wolff reviewed the accomplishments of Pennsylvania's compliance efforts to date and recommended four overall funding priorities—

- **Streamside Buffers:** Streamside buffers can protect these and other sites from the effects of flooding, drought, pollution and soil erosion. Farms are among the most critical places to ensure that streamside buffers are in place, since farm soil is a resource that must be protected from flooding and drought and because farms must have nutrient management strategies in place to avoid damage to nearby water sources.
- **Cover Crops:** Additional cover crop acreage will provide additional means of protecting the bay as well as the soil resources in the bay region. But many farmers require assistance when developing plans to plant cover crops for the first time. When farmers make the financial investment to plant these new crops, we must ensure that



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they receive the necessary guidance to help them do so in the most effective manner possible.

- **No-Till, Land Stabilization:** Federal dollars should continue to target the problem of soil erosion and to support current programs that do so. Pennsylvania has invested tremendous time and financial resources in our farmland preservation program, but to truly preserve farmland we must also protect it from damages due to erosion and improper nutrient management
- **Nutrient Management Planning:** Pennsylvania has substantial need for additional technical assistance and nutrient management planning and implementation assistance in order to ensure that programs are deliverable statewide and in a timely and efficient manner.

He said livestock stream exclusion and riparian buffers, continuous no-till and implementation of comprehensive nutrient management plans, including feed management when appropriate, should all be priority farm conservation practices.

Secretary Wolff also suggested funneling the new funding through existing programs saying, “I believe that this new funding should be channeled through the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program in each state, with separate record keeping and prioritization from other EQIP funds. New funding should support on-the-ground practices located on working farmlands in order to result in a direct reduction of nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment loadings.”

Technical assistance to farmers to design and install farm conservation practices is vital to meeting Bay nutrient reduction goals he said.

“I recommend that a portion of each year’s allocation be used towards expenses for Technical Service Providers to ensure that funds are able to result in program delivery on the ground as quickly and efficiently as possible,” said Secretary Wolff. “Conservation planning relies on availability of technical assistance, and is a first step in using these new funds effectively. Along with program delivery, communication and messaging to farmers regarding emerging conservation practices and planting techniques is needed to ensure that farmers can implement new and more effective conservation techniques soon after they become available.”

Secretary Wolf concluded his remarks by thanking U.S. Senator Bob Casey and Congressman Tim Holden for the role they played in helping to secure additional federal funding for Chesapeake Bay programs.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Matt Ehrhart, Pennsylvania Director of the [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#), said the federal funding earmarked for the Bay Watershed could reduce nitrogen pollution by as much as 40 million pounds annually, if targeted properly.

Ehrhart called for the Chesapeake Bay funding to be channeled through the USDA NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program in each state, with separate record keeping from other EQIP funds. The funding should support on-the-ground practices located on “working” lands which will result in a direct reduction of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loadings.

The Chesapeake Bay funds, Ehrhart said, must be supplemental to the EQIP and other program dollars available to farmers in the watershed, not simply displace them.

Ehrhart recommended the majority of the funding go to those practices that have been identified in each state as providing the most effective water quality protection for the least cost, and there should be an annual review to inventory whether an acceleration of the

actual on-the-ground implementation has or has not occurred, including assessment of practices under contract versus practices completed.

PA Farm Bureau

The [Pennsylvania Farm Bureau](#) told NRCS additional funding for Chesapeake Bay water quality improvement projects provided under the 2008 Farm Bill should be directed at fortifying existing agricultural conservation programs in Pennsylvania.

"Given the degree of effort and program development that has already taken place so far in Pennsylvania, we think it would be a serious mistake for additional monies to be used for creation or development of programs that radically deviate from Pennsylvania's existing programs," said PFB Natural Resources Director Jennifer Harry.

Harry noted that programs in Pennsylvania are sound and have stepped up to the plate to improve water quality within the Bay watershed and that any limitations in effectiveness of existing programs are due to a lack of funding.

She also cautioned against over-funding of conservation programs that seriously reduce farm productivity.

"While nutrient and sediment loading problems exist in agricultural areas in the Bay watershed, programs that take productive farmland out of production will make it significantly more difficult for farm families to keep their farms economically viable. Widespread conversion of farms to non-farm use will create a new set of problems for management of nutrient and sediment loadings in the Bay watershed," added Harry.

In addition, Harry pointed to an area where PA Farm Bureau thinks there is a glaring shortage of quality assistance that can be provided through Farm Bill funding as part of Chesapeake Bay water improvement efforts.

"There needs to be a significant increase in the number of technical personnel and improved technical assistance available to Pennsylvania farmers for development and implementation of agricultural best management practices. Many farm families understand what generally needs to be done to reduce nutrient and sediment runoff, but they do not adequately understand how to do it in a manner that is both environmentally effective and economically feasible. Increasing and improving the availability of technical assistance can pay big dividends in helping farmers manage environmental quality and economic efficiency on their farms," concluded Harry.

Online Interview: [Agriculture and Chesapeake Bay Health](#)

PA Conservation Districts

Larry Kehl, President of the [PA Association of Conservation Districts](#), told the NRCS that districts provide the technical assistance farmers need to implement nutrient and sediment reduction projects and are vital to meeting Chesapeake Bay cleanup goals.

"As we strive to meet water quality goals through nutrient and sediment management, we believe the USDA should take a comprehensive approach toward water quality improvements," said Kehl. "These improvements must be highly effective, cost efficient, and easily implemented.

"A good example of this type of approach would be a statewide cover crop and no-till program. We already know that over 50 percent of Pennsylvania farmers utilize no-till because they understand the many financial and environmental benefits of cover crops and no-till planting. Promotion of a more comprehensive program would greatly increase nutrient reductions and would be a cost savings to the agricultural community.

"To date, according to EPA calculations, Pennsylvania farmers have already greatly reduced their agricultural nitrogen load to the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. More than

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5,000 farms in Pennsylvania have nutrient management plans,” said Kehl. “Many of these farmers consulted with conservation districts to achieve nutrient reductions. It is our belief that technical assistance provided by conservation districts has been a key component in improving water quality and successfully reducing the nutrient and sediment load going into the Bay. PACD recommends that the USDA target funding specifically for technical assistance and Technical Service Providers. This would greatly enhance the implementation of conservation practices.”

Kehl explained that conservation districts are familiar with and promote a number of federal nutrient reduction programs, like EQIP, CREP and farmland preservation. He recommended the new funding be targeted through these existing programs.

“Finally, PACD recommends that USDA allocate funding according to the size of the watershed in each state in the Chesapeake Bay region,” said Kehl. “Pennsylvania has the largest landmass in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Consequently, USDA should allocate Chesapeake Bay funding on a per acre basis in order to be cost-effective and efficient.”

PA State Grange

George B. Wolff spoke on behalf of the [Grange in Pennsylvania](#) and expressed their concerns and needs as they apply to the federal Farm Bill and funding of the Chesapeake Bay Provisions. He outlined five priorities to the NRCS--

- **Land Cover:** "It is vitally important to keep cover on the land, thus reducing soil erosion and at the same time, holding and stabilizing the nutrients in the soil reducing volatilization and loss due to water solubility," Wolff said.
- **Nutrient Plans:** "We believe there is a great need to fund development of conservation and nutrient management plans for land owners." He added, "We remind you that conservation districts have the confidence of land owners, but need extra staffing. Their efforts, combined with private contractors who also need funding, are the developers of soil and nutrient management plans. There is also a need to help land owners pay to install the practices recommended," Wolff explained.
- **Soil, Feed, Manure Testing:** "We believe that soil, feed and manure tests are an absolute necessity since soil tests are the basis of the correct application of nutrients for the growing crop...Feed tests should be the basis for a balanced nutritional feeding program...and manure tests tell what nutrients are actually in the manure."
- **Precision Agriculture:** Mr. Wolff spoke about new practices that the Grange feels should be required. "One of these practices," he said, "is precision agriculture which utilizes yield monitors in harvesting equipment which can indicate where there are low yields in a field which will require special soil tests, and then the use of computerized fertilizer spreading equipment, that will be able to apply NPK in varying amounts in different parts of the field, as indicated by soil tests."
- **Legacy Sediment:** "Agriculture has greatly reduced soil loss through the increased use of no-till cover crops and generally improved conservation practices," Wolff said.

“However, new knowledge has recently been uncovered indicating that the movement of legacy sediment trapped behind abandoned mill ponds, which generations ago provided energy for saw mills, feed and flour mills and wool mills, is suspected to be a large and direct contributor of sediment to the Bay, along with the nutrients attached to that sediment. We believe that further investigation and effort to manage this previously unknown source of contaminants should be investigated, and efforts to manage that contribution be established and funded.”

NewsClip: [Agriculture and Chesapeake Bay Health](#)

DEP Announces Strategy for Using Federal Abandoned Mine Reclamation Funds

The Department of Environmental Protection announced this week it plans to direct the full amount allowed by the federal government to develop and operate mine drainage treatment systems that are needed to protect thousands of miles of streams, according to Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty.



Secretary McGinty also said the Commonwealth has already established an account dedicated to finance the permanent maintenance costs for these treatment facilities and will commit additional funds annually. The department has already deposited \$2 million into the account and expects to contribute another \$2 million this year.

Pennsylvania is expected to receive up to \$1.5 billion over the next 15 years from the federal Abandoned Mine Lands Fund. That was reauthorized at the end of 2006.

(12/18/06 Pa Environment Digest)

"Acid mine drainage impairs 4,600 miles of rivers and streams in Pennsylvania and is one of the most widespread and expensive water pollution challenges we face," said Secretary McGinty. "The reauthorization of the Abandoned Mine Lands fund will allow us to support the outstanding efforts of local watershed groups to build new treatment facilities that will bring dead streams back to life, and it will also ensure that we have sufficient resources to fund the long-term operation, maintenance and replacement of new and existing treatment facilities unless special circumstances prevent us from doing so."

Pennsylvania's long-term plans for addressing abandoned mine problems are outlined in a [position paper DEP released](#) with its announcement.

The paper details how the state will allocate the estimated \$1.4 billion it expects to receive over the next 15 years as part of the 2006 reauthorization of the federal Abandoned Mine Lands fund. It also provides the framework for how the funds will be distributed through grants and construction contracts for the design, construction, operation, maintenance and replacement of facilities to treat mine discharges.

Under the reauthorization, Pennsylvania may commit up to 30 percent of its annual appropriation to treat abandoned mine drainage.

The process to decide the annual amount to be set aside for treatment of mine drainage will be open for public comment.

In preparing the paper, DEP conducted a series of town hall meetings with state and local elected officials, environmental and watershed groups, the mining industry, businesses, and economic development organizations to update the commonwealth's long-term mine reclamation goals to take full advantage of the anticipated funds.

"The need for continued funds to build mine drainage treatment facilities was a clear theme in the comments we received during our town hall meetings," said Secretary McGinty. "Beyond the obvious impacts on aquatic life, polluted streams cost the commonwealth millions of dollars in lost recreation and tourism opportunities and increase costs for industrial, commercial and residential water users."

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"The reauthorization of the federal AML fund gives us a unique opportunity to ensure significant and long-term funding for the development, operation and replacement of mine drainage treatment facilities."

The Abandoned Mine Lands fund was created in 1977 and directs money to states to reclaim historic abandoned mines. The program is funded by a tax on the coal mining industry.

Pennsylvania is home to thousands of acidic discharges and seeps formed from a chemical reaction between air, water and coal in abandoned mines.

More than 250 passive treatment systems have been constructed with public funds to treat an estimated 36 billion gallons of acid mine drainage each year. Ongoing operation, maintenance and replacement costs vary depending on the volume of water and the severity of the chemical composition of each discharge.

However, Pennsylvania still has approximately 180,000 acres of unmarked mine openings, unstable cliffs, water-filled pits and abandoned equipment and buildings left over from when mining was largely unregulated prior to 1977.

More than 2 billion tons of waste coal sits in piles that dot the state's landscape, and some 4,600 miles of rivers and streams are polluted or degraded by acid mine drainage.

For more information, visit DEP's [Abandoned Mines webpage](#).

Spotlight

6th Anniversary of Quecreek Mine Rescue Features Visitor Center Groundbreaking

The [Quecreek Mine Rescue Foundation](#) will host a groundbreaking ceremony for a new visitors' center on July 26 to help celebrate the 6th anniversary of the 2002 rescue of nine miners trapped in the Quecreek Mine in Somerset County, Pa.

"With more than 10,000 visitors every year to the rescue site, we were just getting overwhelmed. The new visitors' center will help us tell the story of the Quecreek miracle," said Bill Arnold, President of the Quecreek Mine Rescue Foundation.

"This is a working farm and we used our own storage building to display the rescue capsule, drill bit and other equipment used in the rescue."

The photo pictures the mine rescue site at Quecreek during rescue operations.

The new visitors' center will be housed in a 2,400 square foot building to be constructed overlooking the mine rescue site. It will include educational display areas and other typical visitor center amenities.

The building will incorporate parts of the Sipesville Fire Hall where mine families waited for news during the rescue. Several doors, the outside columns and oak flooring were salvaged from the building before it was torn down to make way for a new fire hall.

"Incorporating parts of the old Sipesville Fire Hall we thought was important to help preserving the history of the mine rescue and to recognize the important role the fire company played," said Arnold. "It's also another way to remember the lows and highs the families experienced during the rescue."



“We want to thank all those who contributed their labor, materials, equipment or their donations to help build the visitors center. So far we’ve raised about half of the \$200,000 needed to finish the building,” said Arnold. “We certainly welcome participation in this unique project from those who believe, as we do, that the Quecreek mine rescue was a miracle.”

On July 24, 2002 miners broke through into an abandoned, water-filled mine flooding the Quecreek Mine with over 50 million gallons of water. Nine miners scrambled to safety, but nine were trapped in a pocket of air in the dark, cold, water-filled mine. They were rescued four days later through the combined efforts of state and federal mine rescue agencies and hundreds of workers and volunteers.

In 2006 the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission officially recognized the mine rescue site as part of the state Historical Marker Program erecting a blue and gold historic marker at the Arnold Farm.

Last year the General Assembly passed the Mine Families First Act to put into law the policies Gov. Mark Schweiker adopted to keep mine families involved in accidents informed of the progress of rescue operations before the media.

This week, Gov. Rendell signed into law the first update to the Bituminous Coal Mine Safety Act in 45 years, prompted in part by the lessons learned from the Quecreek Mine Rescue.

The anniversary celebration will begin at 9:00 a.m. at the mine rescue site located at 151 Haupt Road, Somerset, Pa.

The first part of the program will feature a flag ceremony followed by music performed by local artists and brief remarks by local and state dignitaries. The groundbreaking ceremony will begin about 10:00 a.m.

Several of the miners rescued at Quecreek and their families will be participating in the celebration. In addition, there will be a silent auction for the two copies of the hardcover book “Our Story: 77 Hours That Tested Our Friendship and Our Faith,” autographed by all nine miners and Gov. Mark Schweiker. Two other autographed copies will be put up for bid shortly on EBay.

The Quecreek Mine Rescue Foundation is a non-profit charitable organization that relies on support from the public to educate the public about the rescue and to maintain and operate the mine rescue visitors’ area.

Contact the Quecreek Mine Rescue Foundation by writing: 151 Haupt Road, Somerset, PA 15501, calling 814-445-4876 or visiting the [Quecreek Mine Rescue Foundation website](#).

Online Video Features

Experts Answer Questions on PA’s New Natural Gas Drilling Rush

Learn how new drilling technology and rising fuel prices are driving the natural gas rush in Pennsylvania's Marcellus Shale—a 6,000 foot deep rock formation which has the potential to fuel the entire country for two full years.

This one-hour call-in program aired originally on WPSU-TV in State College on May 22 and offered viewers objective and reliable advice about: natural gas exploration and drilling on leased land, Lease negotiations and addenda and financial, environmental, and infrastructure impacts.

Online Video: [PA's Natural Gas Rush](#)

For more information, visit the special [WPSU PA Gas Rush webpage](#).

NewsClip: [DCNR to Lease 74,000 Acres of Forest for Natural Gas Drilling](#)
[Court Asked to Support Ordinances Regulating Natural Gas Drilling](#)
[Editorial: Taxpayers Deserve Severance Tax on Gas Extractions](#)

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

See you in September! The House returns to voting session on September 15. The Senate returns to voting session on September 16.

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 mitigating the impact of lifting the cap on electric rates.

Senate: the Urban Affairs and Housing Committee holds a hearing on [Senate Bill 1291](#) (Rhoades-R-Schuylkill) promoting blight reclamation in Pottsville.

Bills Introduced

The following bill of interest was introduced this week—

Nutrient Credit Trading: [House Bill 2717](#) (DePasquale-D-York) creating a Nutrient Credit Trading Bank and trading program. (*This bill is part of the [PA Fair Share for Clean Water Plan](#).*)

Clean and Green Hearing Touches on Wind Farms, Natural Gas Drilling

The House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee this week held a public hearing on issues surrounding the state’s [Clean and Green program](#) which provides farmers property tax assessment reductions for permanently preserving farmland.

Specifically, the Committee heard comments on several pieces of legislation including: [House Bill 656](#) (Bastian-R-Somerset) that would allow Clean and Green participants to exclude the portion of a preserved farm dedicated to a wind farm from the program, [House Bill 667](#) (Sonney-R-Erie) amending the provisions relating to the removal of special tax treatment under the Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act and [House Bill 1960](#) (Hershey-R-Chester) reimbursing municipalities for property tax revenue lost if 10 percent or more of assessed value was under the Farmland and Forest Land Assessment Act.

Rep. Mike Hanna (D-Clinton) serves as Chair of the Committee and Rep. Art Hershey (R-Chester) serves as Minority Chair.

Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff said the Clean and Green Program is critical to the financial health of farmers because it makes property taxes affordable and as a result keeps farmers farming.

He expressed concerns about mini-estates that can qualify for the preferential assessment program, saying that was not the intent of the law. He also said his agency is working with counties to develop a uniform approach to handling natural gas drilling rights in the Marcellus Shale formation that farmers are leasing to provide additional income.

Secretary Wolff said the tax rollback provisions of the Clean and Green Program are triggered only when there is a “material alternation” of the land surface, not when a lease is signed, except in Allegheny County.

[John Bell](#), Governmental Affairs Counsel for the PA Farm Bureau said his organization strongly supports the Clean and Green Program and identified several areas of the law for clarification—

- Allowance for gas and oil leasing and exploration: prescribe in statute the legal position reflected in regulations before 2001, which recognizes that use of Clean and Green land for gas or oil extraction is authorized under the Act and that no tax consequences will befall a Clean and Green landowner who authorizes or conducts gas or oil well drilling or extraction activities on his or her land;

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- Classification of lands that are part of working farms: consider enacting provisions to give clearer statutory guidance to county officials in their analysis and determination of how to classify working farms under the Act;
- Providing more constant application of assessment values; and
- Allowance for alternative energy development. Legislation such as House Bill 656 impose limited and more financially manageable tax consequences for the use of Clean and Green lands for development of wind-powered energy generation.

[Kristen Goshorn](#), County Commissioners Association of PA, said the only source of revenue for counties were property taxes and recommended the General Assembly offset the tax exemptions they grant with funding.

[Dr. Marc McDill and Dr. Mike Jacobson](#), Penn State School of Forest Resources, said any changes to the Clean and Green Program should be done carefully to benefit both farmland and forest land owners. Among other changes, they recommended—

- Only update Clean and Green assessed values when a re-assessment is done for the entire county;
- Another relatively simple change would be to place a cap on Clean and Green assessed values at some fixed percentage - say 50 percent - of fair market value;
- Additional reductions should be applied for having an approved management plan, being "Green Certified," or for having a conservation easement on the property;
- To address the "mini-estate" problem, increase the minimum acreage for being in the program, for example to 20 acres rather than 10; and
- Apply a single, low tax rate, such as one dollar per acre per year, to all forested properties in the program.

Other witnesses providing testimony were: [Louis D'Amico](#), Executive Director of the Independent Oil and Gas Association of PA, [Robert Hume](#), Octorara Area School District, Chester County and [Eric A. Brown](#), Chief Assessor Wyoming County.

House Environmental Committee Sets Hearing on Expiring Electric Rate Caps

On July 22 the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee will hold a hearing in Monroeville on mitigating the impacts of electric rate caps that are due to expire in 2010.

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

Tentatively scheduled to testify are: Tyrone Christy, commissioner, Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission; Ray Landis, advocacy manager, AARP-Pennsylvania; Terrance Fitzpatrick, general counsel, Electric Power Generation Association; David Hughes, executive director, Citizen Power; and Jay Apt, executive director, Carnegie Mellon Electricity Center.

"Unless Pennsylvania acts forcefully, the 700,000 customers of Allegheny Energy will be paying 63 percent more for power come January 1, 2011," said Rep. George. "The 63-percent increase is a conservative projection, and Pennsylvania needs to take action now to avoid this job- and family-destroying nightmare."

"Pennsylvania's electric deregulation scheme of 1996 has proven to be a hoax on consumers," said Rep. George, one of only 28 House members to vote against

deregulation. "States that did not deregulate are enjoying cheaper power prices, and many states that were snookered into deregulation are now back-pedaling furiously."

Rep. George said Pennsylvania at the very least should consider extending the rate caps on electric generation. The rate caps were approved as part of a deal that has seen electric customers pay \$12 billion in stranded costs for utilities' uncompetitive plants in deregulated markets.

"Utility profits are surging, and no one should be hoodwinked to believe that any utility will be at risk from policies that protect the Commonwealth's businesses and citizens," Rep. George said. "In less than 30 months, homeowners could pay \$1.55 billion more -- and \$2.5 billion more for commercial customers -- than what they are paying today for electricity."

Pennsylvania utilities, representing more than 80 percent of the state's electric customers, their scheduled rate-cap expirations, and their projected rate increases are: Allegheny Energy, December 31, 2010, 63 percent; PPL, December 31, 2009, 37 percent; FirstEnergy/Penelec, December 31, 2010, 50 percent; FirstEnergy/Met-Ed, December 31, 2010, 54 percent; and PECO, December 31, 2010, 8 percent.

"Areas of Pennsylvania where the rate cap expired have seen electricity charges jump by as much as 130 percent virtually overnight," Rep. George said. "The end of rate caps in deregulated states resulted in traumatic increases, including 72 percent in Maryland, 59 percent in Delaware and 82 percent in Texas."

Rep. George, whose [Special Session House Bill 54](#) would extend electric-generation rate caps for at least two more years, said he is requesting subpoena power for additional hearings to be scheduled across the state.

"It is outrageous to allow double-digit rate increases when many utilities are showing record profits, competition remains a myth and consumers are being bludgeoned by high food and energy prices," Rep. George said. "The hearing will focus on the situation confronting us and what needs to be done before the rate increases hit."

The hearing will be held from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. July 22 at the Comfort Inn Conference Center, 699 Rodi Road, Monroeville.

Senate Committee To Hold Hearing on Neighborhood Blight Reclamation

The Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee will hold a public hearing July 22 on the proposed Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act-- [Senate Bill 1291](#) (Rhoades-R-Schuylkill)—in Pottsville.

Sen. John Pippy (R-Allegheny) serves as Majority Chair and Sen. Shirley Kitchen (D-Philadelphia) serves as Minority Chair.

The Committee is scheduled to hear from representatives of the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency, the Pennsylvania State Association of Boroughs, the Pennsylvania Bankers Association, and Schuylkill Community Action.

The Neighborhood Blight Reclamation and Revitalization Act would expedite the process of prosecuting owners of blighted properties and give municipalities the authority to go after the financial assets of negligent owners. The bill would also clarify the identity of property owners and hold them responsible for the municipal costs to secure, remediate or demolish blighted structures.

"This hearing will be held in Pottsville, but blight is not restricted to urban areas. It is a serious problem in communities across Pennsylvania," Sen. Rhoades said. "It

depresses property values and promotes crime. My legislation will hold landlords accountable for the costs that blight places on our communities."

The bill is part of a legislative package introduced earlier this year by Sen. Rhoades, Sen. Pippy and other legislators aimed at helping municipalities prevent blight and remediate abandoned properties.

"Combating blight isn't easy. It's a lingering problem with no quick solutions. But there are steps we can take, and we should do everything we can to provide communities with the tools to reclaim their neighborhoods," said Sen. Pippy.

The hearing will take place July 22 at 10 a.m. at the Schuylkill County Courthouse, 401 N. Second Street, Pottsville.

Other News

PROP Announces Winners of 2008 Waste Watchers Awards

The [Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania](#), [Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association](#) and the [Keystone Chapter of the Solid Waste Association of North America](#) announced the winners of the 2008 Waste Watchers Awards this week to recognize Pennsylvania's most outstanding recycling programs/projects.

This year nearly 50 municipalities, counties, private businesses, individuals and community organizations are being recognized for going above and beyond what is mandated under Act 101 for their communities or programs.

The Waste Watcher awards are given to recycling, waste reduction, reuse and composting programs in Pennsylvania that have exhibited exemplary performance.

In addition to the regular awards, four award winners have been recognized for extraordinary efforts in 2007. These special award winners have distinguished themselves by involving youth in recycling, creating jobs (especially for special needs employees) and for diverting higher amounts of materials in special collections.

These special Award winners are: the Fairview Township School District, Greene ARC, the Associates from the Milesburg CCDA Waters Manufacturing Facility and the combined efforts of Alliance Landfill, Apex Waste Services and Beach Lake Transfer Station.

Act 101 – the Municipal Waste Planning, Recycling and Waste Reduction Act – will soon celebrate its 20th anniversary and has helped generate significant economic and environmental benefits.

Recycling has become a billion dollar industry in Pennsylvania. With each passing year, there is a steady increase in the amount of collected recyclables and the number of jobs created by the industry.

Recycling has saved precious resources and energy, limited greenhouse emissions and other air and water pollutants. This growth and success is the result of a serious commitment to recycling by individuals, businesses, government and the recycling industry like these award winners.

The 2008 Waste Watchers Award Winners by County are--

Adams County - Gettysburg College along with the United Way of Adams County

Beaver County - CENTRIA

Blair County - Roaring Spring Paper Products

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Bucks County - Waste Management of PA along with the Newspapers in Education Dept. of the Bucks County Courier Times and the Intelligencer Newspapers

Centre County Associates from CCDA Waters Manufacturing Facility (Coca-Cola)- Special Award Winner, Benjamin's Catering, Boy Scouts of America Venturing Crew # 333, Boy Scouts of America Troop # 367, Centre County Solid Waste Authority, Centre Region COG – Brooks Parker, Elly Engle, Harris Township, Penn State University, Penn State Dept of Crop and Soil Sciences, Room Doctor Furniture Co., SRI International, The Art Alliance of Central PA, The Borough of State College, Webster's Bookstore Café

Clinton County - Clinton County Solid Waste Authority

Columbia County - Town of Bloomsburg

Dauphin County - Mack Trucks- Packaging Team

Erie County - Fairview Township School District – Special Award Winner, Waste Management of Erie along with- Borough of Edinboro, Borough of Union City, City of Erie, Fairview Township, Harborcreek Township, Lawrence Park Township, Millcreek Township, Summit Township, Washington Township

Greene County - Greene ARC – Special Award Winner

Lackawanna and Wayne Counties - Alliance Landfill along with Apex Waste Services and Beach Lake Transfer Station – Special Award Winner

Lancaster County - Agri Marketing Inc, dba USA Gypsum, Lancaster Cty SWA

Lehigh County - City of Allentown- Bureau of Recycling & Solid Waste

Lehigh & Northampton - Bethlehem Recycling Bureau

Luzerne County - Luzerne County Solid Waste Management

Montgomery County - Upper Merion Townships "Good Neighbor Recycling Awards Program"

Northampton County - Just Born Inc.- Green Team

Wayne County - State Correctional Institute at Waymart

Westmoreland County - Levin Furniture

[A description of each winner is available online](#) (Excel Spreadsheet format).

For more information, visit the [Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania website](#).

Recycling Workshop Schedule Announced for Blair County

The [Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania](#), in conjunction with the Blair County Intermunicipal Relations Committee, announced an aggressive marketing campaign, “Reduce, Reuse, Recycle...Repeat” designed to educate the residents of Blair County about curbside recycling.

Educators, retailers, manufacturers and other business owners are being invited to attend specialized workshops that focus on how to properly recycle in their business setting.

Both at home and at the office, Blair County residents in the City of Altoona, Logan Township, as well as Tyrone and Hollidaysburg boroughs are all mandated by the Department of Environmental Protection to recycle.

The workshops are designed to educate business people how to comply with DEP regulations in order to improve recycling rates in the county. Workshop attendees will receive a specialized brochure that will pinpoint exactly what they need to know for proper (and simple to implement) recycling in their workplace.

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In addition to workshops, PROP and the IRC are developing a residential brochure that will be arriving in mandated community mailboxes later in July. This customized brochure will provide curbside recycling schedules for each mandated community as well as specific tips on what can be recycled.

In 2006 a program audit by the DEP concluded that compliance and performance in Altoona, Logan Township, Tyrone and Hollidaysburg boroughs were poor. The DEP made a number of recommendations to the IRC to address the shortcomings, including the need for an extensive and comprehensive public relations/education campaign.

The IRC partnered with PROP in the spring to develop the campaign, with the first workshop being held for schools July 9. Educators from Altoona, Altoona Central Catholic, Bishop Guilfoyle and Hollidaysburg attended the session.

The complete workshop schedule is below--

- Commercial & Institutional Workshop, August 8. This workshop focuses on office recycling, and will also discuss the elements of all commercial and institutional recycling. Penn State Devorris Downtown Center, 1431 Twelfth Avenue, Altoona starting at 10:30 a.m.;
- Commercial & Institutional Workshop, August 11. Tyrone Borough Building, 1100 Logan Avenue, Tyrone starting at 10:30 a.m.;
- Commercial & Institutional Workshop, August 12. Hollidaysburg Borough Building, 401 Blair Street, Hollidaysburg starting at 10:30 a.m.; and
- Commercial & Institutional Workshop, August 13. Giant Eagle Market, Logantown Centre, Community Room, Logan Valley Mall starting at 1:30 p.m.; and
- Apartment/Multi-Family Workshop, August 15. Community Room, Eleventh Street Tower, Altoona starting at 10:30 a.m.

For more information on recycling in Pennsylvania, visit the [Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania website](#)

Voluntary Conservation Agreements Protect Globally Significant Watershed

Three landowners along [French Creek](#) have permanently protected their property for future generations and improved the likelihood that one of the most biologically diverse streams in the northeastern United States will continue to thrive.

They accomplished this by entering their land into voluntary conservation agreements with the [Western Pennsylvania Conservancy](#).

A voluntary conservation agreement is a legal document that limits future development of a property. These agreements are tailored to specific features of the property and the interests of the landowner. The easements, which are perpetual and used exclusively for conservation purposes, are held by a qualified conservation organization or public agency.

These three voluntary conservation agreements ensure that almost two miles of French Creek frontage will be permanently protected. Additionally, each easement provides special protection for 300 feet immediately adjacent to the creek.

This area, called a riparian buffer, has been zoned as “Highest Protection” allowing no activity other than research, education and passive recreation (e.g. hiking, fishing, bird watching) in this area. Riparian buffers provide a variety of ecological services such as



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improving water quality by filtering runoff, protecting stream banks from eroding, keeping water cool by shading the stream, and by providing habitat for a variety of terrestrial and aquatic life important to these stream ecosystems.

“French Creek represents the very best of our region not only because of its exceptional water quality, but in the way like-minded organizations and individuals came together with a common goal that it remains that way,” said WPC Associate Vice President, Land Conservation and Stewardship, Greg Socha.

“The permanent protection of three more tracts of land bordering French Creek is a win for all who care about the watershed,” said John Tautin, president of French Creek Valley Conservancy. “We are grateful to all of our partners who made it happen: the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, The Nature Conservancy, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Game Commission the Fish and Boat Commission, private donors, and especially the three caring landowners.”

The voluntary conservation agreements prohibit subdivision, dredging of French Creek, and timbering within the highest protection area. The properties encompass portions of three counties and include:

- 47.8 acres in Erie County that hosts almost a mile of frontage along the West Branch of French Creek. The easement agreed to by landowners Jack and Patricia Pfadt protects bottomland and floodplain forests along the creek.
- 84 acres in Mercer County from landowner Steve Jackson includes one-fifth of a mile of frontage along French Creek. Three associated plant species found on this property are recognized by the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program as Communities of Special Conservation Concern and considered rare in Pennsylvania.
- 45 acres in Crawford County that fronts both French Creek and Mohawk Run and is adjacent to the Erie National Wildlife Refuge. The owners, Bob and Lesa Cranmer have also agreed to allow public access which includes a trail to the creek for canoe access, as well as parking and primitive camping.

“As a landowner I viewed the program as a way to ‘give back’ for all of the enjoyment I receive from our wonderful Pennsylvania landscape,” said landowner Bob Cranmer. “It is also a vehicle through which I can do my part in passing on a clean, green, environment to my children and future generations. The French Creek watershed is an historic national treasure. I am proud to have helped preserve it, and aided others to enjoy it.”

In addition to support from individual WPC donors, the project received funding from The Nature Conservancy, which has identified French Creek as "one of the last great places in the United States."

Funding was provided by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service through Landowner Incentive Program grant I-1-1, administered jointly through the Game Commission and Fish and Boat Commission. LIP provides federal cost-share to acquire voluntary conservation agreements that protect habitats that host species of greatest conservation need, as identified in the Fish and Boat Commission’s [Wildlife Action Plan](#).

In the French Creek Watershed this especially includes fish and mussels. This program is administered by the Game Commission and the Fish and Boat Commission.

A common interest in protecting one of the most important waterways in the northeast led to the creation in 2007 of the French Creek Joint Venture. The goal of the Joint Venture is to leverage the strengths of the three organizations, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, French Creek Valley Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy, to work

with willing private landowners to conserve key floodplain and riparian zones that provide protection for water quality and the many species that thrive in French Creek.

“We are proud to work with our partners and these conservation-minded landowners to protect such an important freshwater resource as French Creek,” said The Nature Conservancy’s Director of Conservation Operations, Todd Sampsell. “The Nature Conservancy works globally on the most important areas for biodiversity, and our work through the French Creek Joint Venture is a great example of how we can leverage local partnerships to dramatically increase the scope and pace of conservation over what could be accomplished by any individual organization.”

For nearly 40 years, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has worked to conserve French Creek and its watershed, one of the most diverse streams in the northeastern U.S. and a globally significant watershed.

In November 1969, WPC first protected a rich wetland harboring rare plants along Hubble Run known as Wattsburg Fen Natural Area. WPC continues to accomplish its goals through land purchases and voluntary conservation agreements with private landowners along the creek.

Each year, WPC plants and maintains community gardens and greening projects throughout Western Pennsylvania. In 2007, WPC partnered with more than 5,300 volunteers and dozens of community organizations to plant 140 gardens in 19 western Pennsylvania counties.

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

DRBC Votes Additional Protections for Lower Delaware Water Quality

[Delaware River Basin Commission](#) this week voted to permanently designate the Lower Delaware as Significant Resource Waters under [DRBC’s Special Protection Waters](#) program, according to Executive Director Carol R. Collier.

The unanimous action establishes numeric values for existing water quality in the 76-mile-long stretch of river extending from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area downstream to the head of tide at Trenton, N.J.

It also expands coverage of the DRBC’s SPW anti-degradation regulations to include the entire 197-mile non-tidal Delaware River from Hancock, N.Y. south to Trenton.

“This permanent designation clearly demonstrates the DRBC’s long-term objective of keeping our clean water clean by ensuring that future discharges to the Lower Delaware will have no measurable change on existing high water quality,” Collier said. “We believe this action, along with the previous SPW designations, establishes the longest stretch of anti-degradation policy on any river in the nation.”

SPW program is designed to prevent degradation in streams and rivers considered to have exceptionally high scenic, recreational, ecological, and/or water supply values through stricter control of wastewater discharges and reporting requirements.

The initial SPW regulations adopted in 1992 focused on controlling point (or end-of-pipe) sources of pollution to maintain existing high water quality. In 1994, the regulations were amended to add language dealing with the complex issue of non-point source pollutants that are found in runoff, especially after heavy rains.

The July 16 rulemaking decision has been years in the making, beginning with the efforts leading up to President Bill Clinton signing legislation into law adding key

segments of the Lower Delaware and selected tributaries to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System in November 2000.

This federal designation was followed in April 2001 with a petition from the Delaware Riverkeeper Network to classify the Lower Delaware as Special Protection Waters.

Extensive data were collected from 2000 through 2004, which confirmed that existing water quality in this stretch of river exceeded most state and federal standards, and an eligibility report was issued by DRBC in August 2004.

The Lower Delaware has been temporarily classified as Significant Resource Waters by DRBC since January 2005, making it subject to all SPW regulations except those that stipulate the use of numeric values for existing water quality.

The temporary designation was made pending a determination of the numeric values, evaluation of options for implementing the rule, consideration of rule clarifications needed to ensure the program's uniform application in all areas of the basin that drain to SPW, and rulemaking to adopt the amendments to DRBC's Water Quality Regulations that are needed to fully implement the program.

As adopted, the rule requires new or expanding facilities to demonstrate that their discharges will not cause measurable change to existing water quality.

In response to concerns raised during the public comment period, the adopted rulemaking clarified language, in particular relating to the circumstances under which wastewater facilities must employ nondischarge alternatives or natural treatment technologies and how they must demonstrate that they will cause no measurable change.

It was noted at the July 16 meeting that the clarifications were consistent with the overall goal of "no measurable change except to natural conditions" and with provisions applicable to already designated SPW areas upstream of the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area.

The commission plans to hold informational workshops explaining the rulemaking later this year, but the dates and locations have yet to be determined.

For more information, visit the [DRBC's Special Protection Waters webpage](#).

NewsClips: [Lower Stretch of Delaware River Gets Protection Status](#)
[Delaware River Gets Special Protections](#)
[DRBC Moves to Protect Delaware River](#)
[Delaware River States Agree to Water Cooling Plan](#)
[Editorial: Help Keep the Delaware Clean](#)

150 Join in Western Pennsylvania Conservancy Allegheny River Sojourn

Recently, staff from the [Western Pennsylvania Conservancy](#) helped more than 150 canoeists enjoy the river on a two-day Allegheny River Sojourn.

The Western Pennsylvania Conservancy has a longstanding history of studying and conserving the Allegheny River that dates back to the 1960s and includes conservation of nearly 20,000 acres of its islands, shorelines and surrounding land.

A bald eagle created a wonderful start to the event by catching a fish on the river's edge as the



sojourners assembled. “Practically after launching, we bent down and picked up northern riffleshell mussels, a federally endangered species,” said Jason E. Farabaugh, who attended the sojourn with his family.

WPC's Freshwater Conservation Program has coordinated seven previous sojourns, all of which were along the Clarion River, but this year decided to explore the Allegheny.

"The Allegheny River has been called a paddler's dream, offering sections of changing currents followed by quiet, still waters on the back channels of undisturbed islands," said WPC's Senior Director of Freshwater Conservation Nick Pinizzotto. "The weather cooperated for the most part, and canoeists were able to experience the Allegheny River at its cleanest and most natural state."

Participants passed through dramatic hardwood forest valleys and discovered undisturbed islands that are sanctuaries for wildlife. In 1984, Congress designated seven National Forest islands between Buckaloons and Tionesta as part of the National Wilderness Preservation System. The sojourn passed one of these islands, Baker Island, and two other islands along the way.

Participants explored and learned about the Allegheny's underwater communities. The Allegheny River is one of Pennsylvania's richest waterways for freshwater mussels, with exceptional populations of the federally endangered clubshell and northern riffleshell mussels living there.

The sojourn began in Tidioute, Warren County, and traveled to Tionesta, Forest County. WPC provided a camping site as an option for those who wished to be outdoors as much as possible. The group continued on from Tionesta and paddled to President, Pa.

Together with its members and partners, WPC hopes to continue to conserve and restore the Allegheny River, so that present and future generations can enjoy this natural treasure.

400 Participate in Wildlands Conservancy 2008 Lehigh River Sojourn

Bald eagles, ospreys, snapping turtles, and great blue herons demonstrated firsthand lessons to students, ranging in ages 8-70 years old, about the importance of preserving natural habitats during this year's Lehigh River Sojourn.

From the fast moving water of the Lehigh Gorge to the meandering river in the metro-wilderness of the Lehigh Valley, this five-day journey brought Sojourners closer to nature through whitewater rafting, canoeing, and kayaking.



The event raised over \$24,000 for the programs and services of [Wildlands Conservancy](#).

During the Sojourn, numerous lessons were learned through education presentations provided by local organizations, musical entertainment, and self-discovery.

Presentations varied from information on the importance of conservation, to a tour of the new America on Wheels Transportation Museum, to the presentation of the Friends of the Lehigh River awards at Tri Boro Sportsman Club, to a classic rock concert featuring Air Product's corporate band The Difference. Local government officials join the

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Sojourners on the river along with employees from local business including C.F. Martin & Co., Conectiv Energy, Lafarge North America, and Lehigh Valley Hospital.

“I brought my teenage son and two other teenage boys - they all had a great time. The accommodations and archeological/historical lessons were beyond our expectations. We saw a bald eagle, a sight we will always remember. A fun and great learning experience for all. It kept the kids away from X-Box and gave them appreciation for the Lehigh River,” comments Julie Salinas, environmental coordinator at Conectiv Energy.

Over the course of the five days, Sojourners were guided down the river by experienced safety guides provided by Northeast PA Kayaking School and the Lehigh Valley Canoe Club, meals were provided by local restaurants and caterers, and accommodations were organized through local municipalities and associations.

“The collaboration of over 50 organizations is what makes the Sojourn such a success,” exclaims Christopher Kocher, president of Wildlands Conservancy, “The strong partnerships that Wildlands Conservancy has with these enthusiastic groups allows us to organize an enjoyable and educational trip for each participant.”

The 2008 Lehigh River Sojourn sponsors are: C.F. Martin & Co., Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Conectiv Energy, Lafarge North America, Northeast PA Kayaking School, Jim Thorpe River Adventures, Cramp 911, Panther Creek Partners, Pocono Whitewater Adventures, PPL Corporation, Valley Preferred, America on Wheels Transportation Museum, Bennett Automotive Group, Eastern Industries, Inc., Nestle Waters North America, Inc., Nestor’s Sporting Goods, Northampton Borough Municipal Authority, Pretreatment Information Exchange and Witt’s Tree Service.

For information on the 2008 Lehigh River Sojourn, please contact Elizabeth McKinney, Development Manager Wildlands Conservancy, at 610-965-4397, ext. 26.

Eastern Brook Trout Habitat Grant Proposals Requested



The [Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture–Fish Habitat Partnership](#) is requesting project proposals that conserve habitats which support healthy, productive populations of brook trout or enhances and restores habitats that have historically sustained brook trout populations.

Applications must be received by October 1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service federal funds, available to support the National Fish Habitat Action Plan will be used to assist in funding top ranked proposals. Therefore it’s important that proposed projects be developed in coordination with the nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Resource Office.

Please be aware the final funding amount and time of availability is unknown at this time. However, applicants will be notified of your project’s ranking score and funding status as that information becomes available.

Proposals should range from approximately \$10,000 to \$50,000 in a grant request and must have a minimum of a 1:1 match from other sources.

These funds can only be used for on-the-ground habitat conservation and improvement projects and related design and monitoring activities. They can not be used for acquisition in fee or easement.

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Each successful application must contain the following items: project proposal using the application form, FONS database form, letter of support from State Fishery Management Agency, and photograph release form.

Ranking criteria by which all proposals will be scored and all forms and instructions can be found at the [Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture–Fish Habitat Partnership website](#).

Send completed application packets to: Callie McMunigal, Appalachian Partnership Coordinator, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 400 E Main St., White Sulphur Springs, WV 24986.

For more detailed information, please contact the nearest U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fisheries Resource Office or Callie McMunigal at 304-536-4760.

Workshops Help Applicants Apply for Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education Grants

The NOAA Chesapeake Bay Office will hold [summer workshops](#) for organizations wishing to apply for the 2009 Chesapeake [Bay Watershed Education and Training \(B-WET\) grants](#).

The deadline for applications is October 3.

The workshops (and two webinars for those who cannot make the in-person workshops) offer tips on putting together a successful application, and will be held in Maryland, Virginia and Washington DC locations.

The highly competitive B-WET project funding program will provide hands-on watershed education and also gives students a meaningful watershed education experience before finishing high school.

For program and workshop information, visit the [Bay Watershed Education and Training \(B-WET\) grants webpage](#).

SRBC Issues Water Availability Study for Deer Creek Watershed, York County

The [Susquehanna River Basin Commission](#) this week released a study projecting water use demands on [Deer Creek Watershed](#) in York County, Pa and Harford County, Md. through the year 2025.

The population of this rapidly developing bi-state watershed is projected to undergo another 24 percent increase by the year 2025. The increase is currently fueled by growth and development around Shrewsbury in York County, Pennsylvania, and Bel Air in Harford County, Maryland, and will be further intensified by the military base realignment plan for Aberdeen Proving Ground.

“The Commission’s overall conclusion is that there are limits to the water resources in Deer Creek, particularly in summer and early fall when flows are normally at their lowest,” said SRBC Maryland Commissioner Dr. Robert Summers, Deputy Secretary, Maryland Department of the Environment. “The projected growth and urbanization likely to be realized over the next 20 years in the Deer Creek Watershed will only add to current water availability problems and stresses on aquatic resources.”

In the 171-square-mile watershed, water is used largely for domestic, commercial, industrial and agricultural purposes. In light of the projected growth and development, SRBC evaluated a number of factors to determine potential conflicts over future water availability, including the region’s geology, precipitation intake and natural losses (such as

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evaporation), percentage of groundwater and surface water contributing to Deer Creek, and frequency of and impacts from past drought events.

SRBC Executive Director Paul Swartz said, “Based on existing and projected water demands versus availability, it is not prudent for communities in and around the watershed to rely on Deer Creek as a stand-alone water supply source. Instead, they should look to the creek as part of a conjunctive system, where multiple sources are combined to meet the area’s water needs.”

In light of the growing water needs and concerns over availability, SRBC presented a number of recommendations in the Deer Creek study, including:

- Continue collecting reported water use data;
- Monitor tributary flows and groundwater levels in high demand and sensitive areas;
- Implement stormwater management to maintain aquifer recharge and base flows;
- Encourage water conservation;
- Develop site-specific use standards to enhance the protection of all streams in the Deer Creek Watershed; and
- Compile information on seasons and hydrologic conditions associated with recreational needs.

Swartz said, “In addition to serving interests in and around the Deer Creek Watershed, SRBC will use the findings from this study to shape our own regulatory and planning decisions affecting this watershed.”

For more information, visit the [Deer Creek Watershed Study webpage](#).

Friends of the Wissahickon Seeking Volunteers for Sustainable Trails Initiative

Throughout July, August, and September, the [Friends of the Wissahickon](#) will be working on the Early Implementation phase of their [Sustainable Trails Initiative](#).

STI is a three-phased, multi-year project to make the 57 miles of National Recreation Trails in the Wissahickon a physically and socially sustainable system that works for all park users.

The project is being organized by the Friends of the Wissahickon in partnership with the Fairmount Park Commission and project consultants from the International Mountain Bicycling Association Trail Solutions Team.

The Early Implementation Trail entails complete reconstruction, partial re-routing, and replanting of one mile of the lower trail on the East (Chestnut Hill) side of Wissahickon Creek between Bells Mills Road and Thomas Mill Road (the covered bridge). (Full implementation would involve 4-5 miles of trail.)

In conjunction with work on the trail itself and planting along the trail corridor, prototypes of the new trail blazing, signage, and information kiosks will be installed. In addition, a handicap accessible parking place will be created in the lot opposite the trailhead and a handicap accessible trail section from Bells Mills Road to the Pavilion will be improved.

Volunteers are needed and must register with Volunteer Coordinator Kevin Groves at 215-247-0417 or by sending email to: groves@fow.org.

For more information, visit the [Sustainable Trails Initiative webpage](#).

Delaware Highlands Conservancy Publishes Guide to Local Farm Markets

The [Delaware Highlands Conservancy](#) announced the publication of Shop Local, Save Land, a guide to local farms and farmers' markets in Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties.

The guide is an excellent resource for residents and visitors who desire fresh and healthy foods and enjoy visiting the beautiful and abundant agricultural resources of the three-county area. The attractive, easy-to-use brochure lists farms, farmers' markets and farm stands that produce and sell local agricultural products. It includes a keyed map for easy navigation.

"Farming families have passed their way of life on through generations that have worked their land and sustained our community by providing fresh and healthy produce, meats and dairy products," says Delaware Highlands Conservancy Executive Director Sue Currier. "But that way of life—and the land that makes it possible—has become threatened. When working the land is no longer a viable economic choice, local farmers are often forced to make land use decisions that will ultimately change the area's rural character.

"We saw a need for a complete list of producers and growers of local produce, and we are delighted by the publication of the 2008 Shop Local, Save Land guide," says Currier. "Next year's book will grow to include local artisans, nurseries, garden shops, small businesses, and restaurants that offer locally grown and produced products to the public."

The Delaware Highlands Conservancy—a local land trust working with willing landowners to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Upper Delaware River watershed—is pleased to support our local farms and farmlands, so that farming remains a vibrant and vital part of our local economy.

Since 1994, the Conservancy has made tremendous progress in conserving the forests, farms and waters of Pike and Wayne counties, in PA, and Sullivan and Delaware counties in NY. At the core of the Conservancy's important work are individual landowners seeking to protect the land they own and love.

The Conservancy's primary land protection tool is a conservation easement, a voluntary but legally binding agreement between a landowner and a land trust to protect all, or some, of their property's natural—or conservation—value.

Shop Local, Save Land was produced in association with the Wayne County Library, W Design and Heron's Eye Communications, with generous support from the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau, the John and Helen Villaume Foundation, the Wayne County Community Foundation and an anonymous donor. The guide is printed on recycled fiber manufactured using biogas energy.

Production of Shop Local, Save Land is a two-phase project. Next year, the Conservancy and Wayne County Library plan to build on the success of the current publication by producing a more comprehensive book that includes listings and advertisements for local business, activities and events related to local agriculture, in addition to even more listings of farms and markets.

Complimentary copies of Shop Local, Save Land are being distributed at many fine shops, restaurants and lodging facilities within the three-county area that the guide services, or may be found at the Delaware Highlands Conservancy office at 508 River Street, in Hawley.

To get your copy of the 2008 Shop Local, Save Land guide or to be included in next year's more comprehensive book, visit the Delaware Highlands Conservancy website or by sending email to: info@delawarehighlands.org or calling 570-226-3164.

Majority of Trout Anglers Satisfied With Fishing Experience

The overwhelming majority of Pennsylvania trout anglers were satisfied with their trout fishing experiences in Pennsylvania in 2007, according to [survey results](#) released this week by the Fish and Boat Commission.

According to the survey, 84 percent of surveyed anglers enjoyed their trout fishing experiences in 2007. Only 13 percent were dissatisfied, most indicating they were somewhat dissatisfied.

Ratings of the overall performance of the Commission among trout anglers were also positive: 74 percent of trout anglers giving the Commission a rating of excellent or good.

“This is the first time in recent years that the Fish and Boat Commission has executed a comprehensive, statewide survey of trout anglers,” said PFBC Director of Fisheries Leroy Young. “It’s exciting to see how the public views our programs and how we can take those views into account as we develop our new trout management plan.”

The results of the study also indicated that a very large number of trout anglers, 92 percent, are satisfied with current trout fishing regulations and 65 percent support the two opening days.

When choosing a location to fish for trout, the top-ranked consideration is that the location is stocked with trout (50 percent say it is very important). The majority of Pennsylvania trout anglers who fish at least half the time for stocked trout (63 percent) support the current management approach of stocking fewer, but larger trout.

The study, conducted by Virginia-based Responsive Management, entailed a telephone survey of 1,562 licensed Pennsylvania anglers ages 16 and older who fished for trout in 2007. The sample of trout anglers consisted of anglers who had purchased either a Combination Trout-Salmon/Lake Erie Permit or a Trout-Salmon Stamp.

[A copy of the survey results are available online.](#)

Susquehanna River Water Trail Recognized as National Recreation Trail

In honor of National Trails Day and the 40th anniversary of the National Trails System, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dirk Kempthorne recently designated 24 trails in 16 states as National Recreational Trails, including the middle and lower sections of the [Susquehanna River Water Trail](#).

“One of my priorities at Interior is to reconnect American families to nature,” said Secretary Kempthorne. “The National Trails System, including these additions, provides an excellent link to the outdoors, particularly for children. National Recreation Trails exemplify partnerships and are providing a path to fitness and stewardship for Americans of all ages.”

The Middle and Lower Sections of Susquehanna River Water Trail, from Sunbury to the Maryland border, was one of only two National Recreation Trails designated this year in Pennsylvania.

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This portion of the Susquehanna River Water Trail, which is a 103-mile part of the larger 440 mile long Susquehanna Greenway in Pennsylvania, is one of only three water trails in the state to achieve National Recreation Trail status and joins a statewide NRT network of 51 trails totaling more than 1500 miles.

The [Susquehanna Greenway Partnership](#), on behalf of the [Susquehanna River Trail Association](#) and the Lancaster – York Heritage Region, spearheaded the effort to seek recognition of the water trail as a National Recreation Trail.

The Middle Section of the Susquehanna River Water Trail, from Sunbury / Northumberland to Harrisburg, was the first water trail in Pennsylvania, established in 1996, and is managed by the Susquehanna River Trail Association.

In cooperation with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resource's Bureau of Forestry, this segment of water trail has a network of 21 island campsites, and exciting features such as the Wade Island Heron Rookery, one of the most important nesting sites for the Great Egret in the state.

[A map and guide](#) is available for the water trail at local retailers and outfitters.

[National Recreation Trails](#) are components of the National Trails System and recognize already existing trails that connect people to resources and improve their quality of life. The program is jointly administered by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the U.S. Forest Service in conjunction with other federal and nonprofit partners, notably American Trails.

These new additions become part of a national network of more than 1,000 trails encompassing more than 12,000 miles.

For information on this and other water trails in Pennsylvania, visit the Fish and Boat Commission's [Pennsylvania Water Trails webpage](#).

Pennsylvania Sea Grant Program Elevated to Institutional Level

The National Sea Grant College Program, part of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, has designated Penn State University's Behrend College campus in Erie as the Institutional [Sea Grant Program for Pennsylvania](#).

Since its establishment as a small Sea Grant project in 1998, Pennsylvania Sea Grant has been on a steady path toward this significant designation. The program's new designation as an Institutional Program marks the last step before designation as a full Sea Grant College Program.

Pennsylvania Sea Grant has a history of strong partnerships in the state and has already created relevant programs within the northwest region of Pennsylvania, the Lake Erie shoreline, and the Delaware River watershed. The program is also extending efforts into the Susquehanna River watershed.

The Penn State University system was awarded the designation of Institutional Sea Grant Program based on a record of excellent performance in promoting the ecological and economic sustainability of Pennsylvania's coastal resources and the Lake Erie watershed through science-based research, education, and community outreach.

Among its many achievements, Pennsylvania Sea Grant has chaired the Seaway Trail Pennsylvania Steering Committee since 2003. As a result of the committee's work, the Seaway Trail received National Scenic Byway designation from the Federal Highway Administration.

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This designation made the trail eligible for tourism-related economic development projects along this corridor including \$310,752 in federal funding to develop interpretive panels. In addition, more than \$330,000 was secured for footpath construction.

For more information, visit the [PA Sea Grant website](#).

DEP Awards \$2 Million Grant to 3 Rivers Wet Weather Project

The Department of Environmental Protection this week announced it has awarded a \$2 million grant to [3 Rivers Wet Weather Inc.](#) to foster regionalization of municipal sewage collector systems among communities served by the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority to more efficiently maintain and operate those systems.

“Pennsylvania is facing nearly \$20 billion in unmet infrastructure investment needs, a large portion of which must be applied to our aging and deteriorating wastewater systems,” said Cathy Curran Myers, DEP Deputy Secretary for Water Management. “This is too large a financial burden for ratepayers to bear, and while we’ve made new investments in these critical systems available, more work needs to be done and we must begin looking at alternatives to simply upgrading each and every facility.”

“Regionalizing the 83 different sewer collection systems in the ALCOSAN service area will result in cost effective operation and maintenance of the systems and will effectively prioritize needed capital improvements,” said Myers. “With 4,000 miles of sewers serving more than a million people, it is essential to region’s economy and quality of life that the infrastructure be well maintained and reliable.”

With the \$2 million grant from DEP, 3 Rivers Wet Weather will develop a database that includes asset, resource and financial information from the 82 suburban municipalities. The information can then be used by the municipalities to develop strategies and alternatives to regionalize municipal sewage collection systems and produce a regionalization plan.

The grant-funded work will build on the earlier efforts by 3 Rivers Wet Weather in 2002 to survey and map manholes and develop and implement a flow monitoring system. 3 Rivers Wet Weather was formed in 1998 to help communities address the issue of untreated sewage and stormwater overflowing into the region's waterways during wet weather. Such overflows affect Allegheny County’s primary source of drinking water and make water unacceptable for recreational contact.

Combined sewers, or those designed to carry wastewater and stormwater, were originally constructed to overflow during storms to prevent treatment facilities from being overwhelmed.

Separate sanitary sewers were designed to carry wastewater and stormwater in separate systems, but because these systems are typically older and in poorer condition, stormwater is allowed to enter the system through breaks in the sewer lines. During periods of wet weather, stormwater inundates the sanitary lines, mixes with sewage, and overflows into area rivers, streams and basements.

There are 21 combined sewer communities in the ALCOSAN service area—the largest being the City of Pittsburgh—and 54 with separate sewer systems. Eight communities are served by both types of systems.

Wet-weather overflows resulting from combined and separate sewer systems are now illegal under state and federal water quality laws.

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In 2004, DEP and Allegheny County Health Department negotiated consent orders and agreements with 80 of the municipalities and associated sewer authorities in the ALCOSAN service area. The three remaining municipalities are expected to be under agreement by the end of this year.

The agreements outline the steps necessary for communities to begin upgrading the sewerage infrastructure, limiting combined sewer overflows, and eliminating separate sewer overflows.

Cooperation and regionalization are themes that have emerged during recent public meetings held across Pennsylvania by members of the [Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#).

NewsClips: [Local Group Gets \\$2 Million for Sewer Systems](#)
[State Grant to Aid Municipal Cooperation on Sewer Upgrade](#)

PennVEST Announces \$64 Million in Water Infrastructure Investments

The PA Infrastructure Investment Authority this week gave its approval to \$63.8 million in low-interest loans and grants for 20 drinking water and wastewater projects in 16 counties.

In addition to noting the importance of this week's projects to improving Pennsylvania's water resources, Gov. Rendell acknowledged the 20th anniversary of the PennVEST program.

"The four and a half billion dollars in affordable financing that this program has awarded to over two thousand projects since its inception 20 years ago has significantly improved the quality of Pennsylvania's water systems and the well-being of its citizens," Gov. Rendell said. "PennVEST represents an important part of Pennsylvania's environmental improvement and economic development efforts.

"The PennVEST Board continues its commitment to residents with the approval of \$59.9 million in low-interest loans and \$4 million in grants to fund 20 clean water projects."

The awards range from a \$67,415 loan to alleviate public health problems in Mercer County caused by leaking septic systems to an \$8.4 million loan and \$1.2 million grant to construct more than 14 miles of sewer collection and transmission lines and other facilities that will eliminate raw sewage discharges into streams and groundwater in Mifflin County.

[A complete list of grant/loan awards is available online.](#)

DCNR Announces Competitive Bid for Natural Gas Leases on State Forest Lands

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis this week announced that the department will hold a [lease sale for subsurface oil and gas rights](#) on 18 tracts totaling 74,023 acres in the Loyalsock, Tiadaghton and Tioga state forests in Tioga and Lycoming counties.

"This lease sale is part of the policy announced earlier this year to focus on medium and deep gas drilling to limit the impact on the surface and on other uses of the forest," Secretary DiBerardinis said. "We chose the tracts of land after extensive environmental reviews to protect the health of the forest now and in the future.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

"Given the enormity of the nation's energy demand, making less than an additional 4 percent of our state forest available for drilling is a reasonable decision that protects our forest ecosystem and helps meet energy demands," Secretary DiBerardinis said.

DCNR will receive sealed bids for leases on each of the 18 tracts from pre-qualified bidders until 2 p.m. on Sept. 3. A list of bidders and the award decisions will be posted on DCNR's Web site within 24 hours.

A lease is awarded to the highest bidder based on the amount of the first year's land rental. A lease covers annual land rental amounts and possible royalties to be paid based on the volume of gas extracted.

"Only a small portion of the total acreage will be used for well site location," Secretary DiBerardinis said. "For each tract, we have identified the number of well pads that are allowed, and we encourage the use of existing roads. There are portions of the tracts that cannot be developed on the surface to protect wild or natural areas, ecosystems, water bodies, recreational opportunities, or visual impacts from vistas and trails. A comprehensive environmental review is conducted by DCNR as part of the lease sale planning process. Additional environmental reviews are done at the time of well permitting."

Lease sales are developed by first receiving nominations for the acreage from gas companies. Gas companies are required to submit competitive bids for the offered state forest acreage. Highest responsible bidders may then be issued contracts. DCNR retains ownership and complete control of the land.

The primary term of the lease is a 10-year period, which may be extended by production from the lease. A gas well may produce for several decades or more.

Revenues generated from a lease sale go to the Oil and Gas Lease Fund, which by law must be used for conservation and recreation programs. The fund has been used to obtain the mineral rights to parts of the state forest where DCNR did not own them, to purchase the acreage for eight state parks and to expand 31 other state parks.

This lease sale responds to increased interest in the Marcellus Shale formation; a deep resource thought to contain large quantities of natural gas stretching from New York through Pennsylvania and into West Virginia. In Pennsylvania, the formation reaches the northern tier as far east as Wayne County and as far south and west as Somerset County and the Pittsburgh area. New technology and increased gas prices have made it possible to recover the hard-to-reach fuel.

Since 1947, the department has held 72 lease sales, the last of which was in 2002. Currently, about 207,000 acres of the 2.1-million-acre state forest are under lease for gas production, with about 650 wells in production.

For more information, visit [DCNR's Oil and Gas Lease webpage](#).

NewsClip: [DCNR to Lease 74,000 Acres of Forest for Natural Gas Drilling](#)
[Court Asked to Support Ordinances Regulating Natural Gas Drilling](#)
[Editorial: Taxpayers Deserve Severance Tax on Gas Extractions](#)

Sustainable Energy Fund, PPL Announce Small Business Lighting Retrofit Rebate

The [Sustainable Energy Fund](#) and PPL Electric Utilities are co-sponsoring the [Small Business Lighting Retrofit Rebate Program](#), a new financial rebate program to help small business owners ease the expense of implementing energy-efficiency measures in their shops or stores.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

The deadline for submitting applications is August 29.

If a company or business has less than 100 employees, has operated at the same location as a PPL Electric Utilities customer for at least three years, and has a good-standing credit history with PPL Electric Utilities, it may be eligible to apply to SEF for this lighting rebate program.

Lighting retrofits are one of the best ways a business can realize energy savings for the future. Lighting upgrades generate solid kWh savings, have straight-forward calculations, and cost less than larger energy efficiency measures. Qualified project applicants must use [Energy Star qualified products](#).

“SEF is pleased to partner with PPL Electric Utilities to offer a rebate for businesses that want to upgrade their lighting systems,” says Jennifer Hopkins, president of SEF. “This rebate will help offset the immediate expense while the energy savings will benefit the company into the future.”

Only one rebate is available per business entity name for a project that will cost at least \$5,000. For eligible projects which cost between \$5,000 and \$10,000, at the completion of the project, a business owner will receive a rebate based on 20 percent of the project’s total cost.

In this rebate program there is a cap of \$2,000 per business. A Small Business Lighting Retrofit Application must be filled out and submitted to SEF to confirm eligibility.

After the work is completed SEF requires business owners to submit documentation of the scope of work, proof of purchase of all installed energy efficient products, and a copy of the electrical certification report. The rebate will be paid after you submit documentation to SEF that all program requirements have been met.

An electrical energy audit will be conducted on a random sampling of completed projects. This will not be at the expense of any business owner.

For more information and an application, visit the [Small Business Lighting Retrofit Rebate Program webpage](#), send email to jmarakovits@theseef.org or call 610- 264-4440 ext. 15 with questions.

PUC OKs Rate Cap Removal Consumer Education Plans for 4 Companies

The Public Utility Commission this week gave final approval of consumer-education plans related to electric rate cap removal and price increase mitigation for West Penn Power Company, Citizens' Electric Company, Wellsboro Electric Company, and PPL Electric Utilities Corporation.

The plans were required to include eight specific Energy Education Standards and propose appropriate budget levels and cost recovery mechanism. The intention is to prepare Pennsylvanians for removal of electric rate caps and to make informed decisions regarding their own levels of electric use.

Each plan is posted to the [PUC's website for review](#).

Pollution Prevention, Energy Efficiency Grants Available From DEP

The Department of Environmental Protection [this week announced](#) it is now accepting applications for the [Small Business Advantage Grant Program](#) for pollution prevention and energy efficiency projects.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

The deadline for applications is August 29.

Small Business Advantage provides up to 50 percent matching grants, to a maximum of \$7,500, to enable a small business in this Commonwealth to adopt or acquire equipment or processes that result in energy efficiency or pollution prevention. An eligible applicant must be a for-profit small business owner whose business or facility is located within this Commonwealth. Most small businesses are eligible, including manufacturers, retailers, service providers, mining businesses and agricultural concerns.

Eligible projects must save the business at least 15 percent annually in energy or pollution related expenses.

The Department will begin accepting applications on July 21.

To download an application package and more information, visit the DEP [Small Business Advantage Grant Program webpage](#) or contact Dave Barnes, Office of Energy and Technology Deployment, Small Business Ombudsman's Office, at 717-783-8411 or send email to: epadvantagegrant@state.pa.us.

Applicants can also contact the [Environmental Management Assistance Program](#) or call 877-ASK-EMAP.

Keystone Fund, Growing Greener Help Protect Lehigh Valley Greenways

In a former factory town still associated with steel production, the [Bethlehem Greenway](#) is linking urban areas to forests and open spaces.

On June 4, Mayor John Callahan announced that Bethlehem City closed on a \$1.9 million deal to acquire 28 acres of land from Norfolk Southern. The land encompasses an abandoned rail yard, which extends south and east from Hill-to-Hill Bridge. It is intended for use as a three mile pedestrian and biking trail.

DCNR administered \$600,000 of Keystone and Growing Greener funds for the acquisition.

"This grant will help provide for the long term conservation and creation of safe open space in a dense urban section of Bethlehem where opportunities for land protection and recreational areas are limited," said DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis. "This greenway and trail effort is about connecting people to local green space, and providing a transportation alternative between South Bethlehem and the downtown area," he added.

The existing dirt path will be paved, allowing it serve as both a leisure site and a functional non-motorized transportation route.

"The greenway is much more than a park and recreation project," Callahan said. "It is also a project of economic and cultural renaissance in Bethlehem."

Increased pedestrian traffic on the trail will serve to boost the local economy as visitors are drawn to the Lehigh Valley area.

"It is more than a Rail Trail. It's very close to the Bethlehem Steel Site so that gives us an opportunity to tell the history of the city," said Darlene Heller, Director of Planning & Zoning for Bethlehem City.

"There are opportunities to create places to display art. And, there are economic developments," she added. "An old Bethlehem Steel parking lot was replaced with new town homes. Without the greenway being there, they probably wouldn't have been built at that site."

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DCNR's involvement does not end with the recent land acquisition, however. The Department has pledged \$250,000 in the form of a Keystone grant toward the creating a master plan to further develop the trail.

The first development phase involves the section running from Union Station to Taylor Street. Grading, paving and seeding the area will take two years.

The second development phase will focus on the area between Taylor Street and Saucon Park. The construction should be complete by 2011 if funds are in place by then. Other grant money will go toward developing skate park along the trail. DCNR has donated \$200,000 of the \$400,000 total project costs using Keystone money. The skate park will include streetscape equipment, lighting and fencing.

This is a Lehigh Valley Greenways project aiming to create state and local partnerships to protect and connect urban spaces and green areas. With this project, Bethlehem continues on the path toward striking a balance between community revitalization and land conservation.

Visit DCNR's [Greenways and Trails webpage](#) for more information.

Written by Emily Weir, who is currently serving as an intern in the DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation's planning, outreach and technical support division.

Reprinted from [DCNR's Resource newsletter](#).

ClearWater Conservancy Receives \$10,000 Grant From Dominion

The [Dominion Foundation](#) has given a \$10,000 grant to [ClearWater Conservancy](#) whose mission is to promote the conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania.

The grant will help the group to conserve Scrub Oak Shrubland Barrens habitat in central Pennsylvania by conserving existing barrens and by restoring historic barrens. Without conservation, numerous acres of Scrub Oak Shrubland barrens will be lost or compromised by habitat conversion and land development.

Scrub Oak Shrubland barrens support 15 species of special concern and many high-priority species. The location, condition, and restoration potential of its current and historic extent in central Pennsylvania is unknown.

ClearWater has many objectives to accomplish its goal to conserve this habitat. At the project's end, the group hopes to implement "proactive conservation actions including land acquisition or easement of barrens parcels from interested landowners, habitat management and restoration, and landowner education."

The grant was made through the Dominion Foundation, which is dedicated to the economic, physical and social health of the communities served by Dominion companies.

For more information, visit the [Dominion Foundation](#) and [ClearWater Conservancy](#) websites.

Outdoor Task Force Submits Findings, Recommendations to Governor

The 16-member task force named to develop key recommendations to strengthen the bond between citizens and the natural world is proposing the establishment of a [Governor's Commission on People and Outdoor Connections](#), among other recommendations submitted this week in its 40-page report to Gov. Rendell.

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The Governor named the task force last summer after hosting a two-day conference in March 2007 that studied the trends, ideas and solutions relating to the growing disconnect between citizens and the outdoors.

The group was led by co-chairs Doug Austen, executive director of the Fish and Boat Commission, and Caren Glotfelty, director of the environmental program for The Heinz Endowments.

"We knew we had an important, yet challenging task: to come together as a diverse group and, within a short period of time, develop ideas and recommendations on a topic that affects the future well-being of this state," said Austen.

Glotfelty said the task force members look forward to continuing their leadership role through discussions with the governor, other elected officials and community leaders. "We are proud of what the task force has accomplished, and we look forward to making the case for a new commission so that it can begin to act on the ideas and recommendations in this report," said Glotfelty.

The report summarizes the findings of the conference and the five public gatherings that followed last spring and summer. More than 500 people provided input and ideas, which were then formulated into key themes and recommendations by the task force.

In addition to the recommendation of a commission, the task force suggested 42 other action items worthy of further pursuit by the commission, government agencies, organizations, businesses and educational institutions.

"We knew the Outdoor Conference was only the start of the work to address the trends that show citizens, and especially children, no longer spend as much time connecting with the outdoors," said Michael DiBerardinis, secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, whose agency was charged by the governor to oversee the conference and post-conference activities. "This report helps to continue the conversation about how to protect and enhance those connections, and in the process build good stewards of our natural resources. I congratulate the task force for its commitment and service and a job well-done."

Other members of the task force were: Kathleen Paul, director, Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education; H. Eric Martin, owner, Wilderness Voyageurs; Gary San Julian, professor of wildlife resources, Pennsylvania State University; Bob Griffith, executive director, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society; Richard Butler, executive director, Three Rivers Rowing Association; Carl Roe, executive director, Pennsylvania Game Commission; Mark McLaughlin, director, Shavers Creek Environmental Center; Matt Ehrhart, Pennsylvania executive director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation; Ben Moyer, journalist and author, Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association; Beth Olanoff, policy director, Pennsylvania Department of Education; Allison Topper, executive director, Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity; Lori McKean, assistant director for programs, U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers National Historic Site; Lee Steadman, director of arts and humanities, Stairways Behavioral Health; and Fran Rodriguez, chief of staff for Rep. P. Michael Sturla

For more information, visit the [Governor's Commission on People and Outdoor Connections webpage](#).

Game Commission Seeks Citizen Advisory Committee Volunteers

The Game Commission is calling for nominations of citizens willing to participate in one of five [Citizen Advisory Committees](#) to help gather input related to the deer management goal of reducing deer-human conflict in five Wildlife Management Units in 2009.

Those WMUs identified for next year are: WMU 1A, which consists of all of Mercer and Lawrence counties and parts of Crawford, Venango, Butler and Beaver counties; WMU 2E, comprising parts of Jefferson, Indiana, Clearfield and Cambria counties; WMU 3A, comprising parts of McKean, Potter, Tioga and Bradford counties; WMU 4A, comprising parts of Blair, Huntingdon, Bedford, Fulton and Franklin counties; and WMU 5B, which consist of part of Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Lebanon, Berks, York, Lancaster and Chester counties.

Nominations are due September 15.

All nominations will be compiled and presented to the Governor's Office of Administration Bureau of Management Consulting, who will interview potential candidates, make final selections of participants and facilitate the meetings. The Game Commission does not participate in the selection process, and there is no guarantee that any nominee will be selected or even contacted for an interview.

"Citizens will serve as representatives of specific stakeholder groups and work with other stakeholders to provide a deer population recommendation for each WMU," said Carl G. Roe, Game Commission executive director. "CAC recommendations then will be considered by Game Commission personnel - along with indicators of deer health, forest habitat health and deer population trends - when making deer management recommendations to the Board of Game Commissioners.

"We are looking for nominees that are fair and open-minded; have good interpersonal skills; are not holding office in organizations related to the stakeholder group they are seeking to represent; and are willing to collect input from members of the stakeholder group they represent outside of formal Citizen Advisory Committee meetings."

Roe noted that the Board of Commissioners retains the authority to make final deer management decisions. "The purpose of the CACs is to gather input related to the deer management goal of reducing deer-human conflict," Roe said.

The objectives of CACs include providing an opportunity for the Game Commission to understand stakeholder values regarding deer management; an opportunity for stakeholders to interact with one another; an opportunity for stakeholders to have direct input concerning deer management goals that ultimately affect all Pennsylvanians; and an opportunity for the Game Commission to inform stakeholders on the mission of the Game Commission, complexities of deer management, and the importance of proper management.

Stakeholder groups needing representation in all CACs, except where noted, are: sportsmen-resident; sportsman-nonresident (WMUs 3A and 4A CAC only); business-direct impact (such as taxidermists and processors); business-indirect impact (such as sporting goods stores, hotels or restaurants); forest industry; rural non-farm landowner; homeowners in developed areas; highway safety agent; public land owner; conservationist; agriculture-nurseries/orchards; and agriculture-livestock/cash crops.

With the exception of the non-resident sportsmen in WMUs 3A and 4A, nominees must live in the WMU in which they apply and must complete a CAC Nomination Form to be considered.

Visit the Game Commission's [Citizen Advisory Committees webpage](#) to download a nomination form or contact the Game Commission at 717-787-5529.

Fish and Boat Commission Leadership Elected, Trout Rules Modified

The Fish and Boat Commission this week voted to allow anglers to fish in lakes and ponds approved as [year-round trout waters](#) without possessing a trout/salmon permit, as long as anglers are not fishing for trout or salmon. Commissioners also voted to open 31 additional approved trout waters to year-round fishing.

The changes to the lake and pond regulations were made after several individuals submitted public comments noting that anglers often fish these waters for species other than trout. Both changes will take effect January 1, 2009.

At the start of the meeting, Commissioners Leonard L. Lichvar and Thomas C. Shetterly were elected President and Vice President, respectively, of the PFBC. New Commissioner Norman Gavlick, of Kingston, was also introduced. He was appointed by Gov. Rendell to serve as the Seventh District Commissioner.

In other action, the Commission voted to add regulations to further restrict the interstate sale, introduction and transportation of fish susceptible to the infectious disease viral hemorrhagic septicemia, or VHS.

Outdoor enthusiasts in Erie County will have more opportunities to fish, boat, and hike with the Commission action to approve a cooperative agreement with North East Township that commits \$43,000 for the acquisition of an access easement located on 20-mile Creek, a popular steelhead fishing location.

The Commission also:

- Approved restrictions on nighttime fishing on a section of Walnut Creek, Erie County;
- Adopted amendments to Fish and Boat Code Section 63.8 (Longbows, Crossbows, Spears, and Gigs) to allow catfish to be harvested in all Commonwealth waters by longbows and arrows, not just the Delaware River;
- Adopted a [statement of policy on wind power](#); and
- Approved the publication of notice of proposed rulemaking to remove smallmouth buffalo, longhead darter, and channel darter from the threatened species list and river redhorse and longnose gar from the candidate species list.

The complete agenda is available at the [Fish and Boat Commission website](#).

Vote for the Winner of the Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Contest

The U.S. Environmental Protection Aging Initiative, in partnership with Generations United and the Rachel Carson Council Inc., invites the public to vote for their favorite submissions for the [Second Annual Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder](#) Intergenerational Poetry, Essay and Photography Contest.

The deadline for voting is September 15 and the winners will be announced in October.

A panel of judges has selected the finalists in four categories: photography, essay, poetry, or mixed media (photography and a poem or essay). Finalists were selected based on originality, creativity, use of an intergenerational team, and ability to capture a sense of wonder.

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

Pennsylvania's Rachel Carson is considered to be the founder of the contemporary environmental movement through her landmark book, "*Silent Spring*." Using the title of another of Carson's books, "The Sense of Wonder," the contest sought submissions "that best express the 'Sense of Wonder' that you feel when observing the sea, the night sky, forests, birds, wildlife, and all that is beautiful to your eyes."

"Through this contest, we are encouraging the youngest and oldest among us to recognize wonders and beauty of the natural world," said EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson.

"This contest is a wonderful tool for connecting people across generations using an intergenerational approach to think about and dream about the world around us. We're proud to co-sponsor such a unique program in honor of an American heroine," said Donna Butts, executive director of Generations United.

The contest's intergenerational approach reflects Carson's efforts through her writing to have adults share with children a sense of wonder about nature and help them discover its joys.

More information and to vote, visit the [Second Annual Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder webpage](#). And visit the [Rachel Carson Homestead website](#) to learn more about this extraordinary Pennsylvanian.

Amanda Stein Wildlands Conservancy Director of Land Conservation and Planning

[Wildlands Conservancy](#) announced this week Amanda Stein as the new Director of Land Conservation and Planning.

Stein joined the Conservancy's team with an extensive background in the environmental conservation field. Stein has previously worked at New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Department of Environmental Conservation as a Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator; and Parks and Recreation Activity Specialist at the New York State Office of Parks.

"We are very fortunate to have Mandi as part of our management team and look forward to the land conservation and planning department growing to new levels," says Scott J. Cope, chief program officer. "In her relatively short tenure with us she continues to work strategically, demonstrate her passion for conservation, and easily recognizes the critical issues we face on a daily basis and offers keen responses."

In her new role, Stein will manage the land conservation program by working collaboratively with local organizations, landowners, corporations, donors, and government agencies to generate interest in securing public and private support for conservation priorities.

She will develop and implement conservation strategies to raise legal interest in land protection and be responsible for obtaining funding through grants and contracts.

Spotlight

Conservation Groups Join Chorus of Voices Calling for End of Oil Speculation

Oil market speculation is dramatically driving up oil prices and giving consumers a major pain at the pump, environmental groups said this week [in a letter to Congress](#).

PA Environment Digest – Crisci Associates

The 14 groups are urging Congress to adopt policies that will rein in oil speculation, restore accountability in the oil commodity markets, and give Americans better choices to help reduce energy costs across the board.

The groups include: Alaska Wilderness League, Defenders of Wildlife, Earthjustice, Environment America, Gulf Coast Environmental Defense, Friends of the Earth, League of Conservation Voters, National Audubon Society, LegaSea, Sierra Club, The Wilderness Society, Pacific Environment, Public Citizen, Planning and Conservation League.

"Americans need real relief, not recycled rhetoric," said Robert Dewey, vice president for government relations at [Defenders of Wildlife](#). "More oil drilling on America's coastlines and pristine lands won't save Americans money - even the Bush Administration admits that. What we need is to rein in the rampant oil speculation that's driven prices through the roof."

Last month, Gerry Ramm, an Inland Oil Company senior executive, testified before Congress that "excessive speculation on energy trading facilities is the fuel that is driving this runaway train in crude oil prices."

Over the past 20 years, the number of speculators who trade oil on paper has tripled. These speculators buy up large amounts of oil and sell it back to each other over and over again - a single barrel of oil may be traded over 20 times before it is actually used. The resulting inflated oil prices end up penalizing drivers at the gas pump.

Closing the so-called "Enron Loophole" and other sweetheart deals for speculators could dramatically reduce the price drivers are paying at the pump, today's letter states. Americans want to see this solution implemented now - over the past week alone, well over one million Americans have contacted Congress to request immediate action to reduce oil price speculation.

"Addressing the problem of oil speculation is a far better deal for the American public than trading away our coasts and other special places to help further pad the profits of Big Oil," said Dewey. "Congress will be considering legislation to tackle oil speculation as early as this week, and we're urging our members and activists to voice their support for addressing the issue along with the million-plus Americans who have done so already."

Online Video: [Stop Oil Speculators Now](#)

Link: [Stop Oil Speculators, Send Congress An S.O.S.](#)

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—

- **August 1**—[NFWF Delaware Estuary Watershed Grants Program](#)
- **August 1**—[NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Grants](#)
- **August 4**—[Start Submitting REAP Farm Conservation Tax Credit Applications](#)
- **August 29**—[DEP Local Government Greenhouse Gas Reduction Grants](#)
- **August 29**—**NEW.** [DEP Small Business Advantage Grant Program](#)

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- **August 29**—[EPA Water Efficiency Leaders Awards](#)
- **August 29**—**NEW**. [PPL Territory Small Business Lighting Energy Efficiency Rebate](#)
- **First Come, First Served**-- [DEP \\$500 Hybrid Electric Vehicle Rebate](#)
- **September 9**— [EPA Water Quality Trading Funding Proposals](#)
- **September 12**—[Green Building Alliance Product Innovation Grants](#)
- **September 15**—**NEW**. [Vote for Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Contest Winner](#)
- **September 20**— [Fish & Boat Commission Boating Facilities Grants](#)
- **September 24**— [Coca-Cola, NRC Recycling Bin Grants](#)
- **October 1**—**NEW**. [Eastern Brook Trout Habitat Grants](#)
- **October 3**—**NEW**. [NOAA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education Grants](#)
- **October 15**—[PPL Project Earth Environmental Education Grants](#)
- **October 31**—[PA Resources Council Lens On Litter Photo Contest](#)

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

Quick Clips

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

[William D. Lange, Former Member State Conservation Commission, Passes](#)
[Keystone Central School District's Environmental Center in Doubt](#)
[Green Home Only Natural for Science Teacher](#)
[Adopt-A-Highway Volunteers Remove Litter](#)
[Editorial: Legislature Must Act to Enable County Recycling Programs](#)
[Editorial: County Recycling Programs Shorted](#)
[Lebanon GLRA Gives a Hoot About Saving Owls](#)
[CPA Group's Leader Thinks, Acts Green](#)
[Officials Seek Regional Land Planning](#)
[Bird Atlas Update Shows Positives](#)
[Audubon Campers Get to Know Animals on Their Home Turf](#)
[Sjolander to Remain Meadville Market Master](#)
[DCNR Deer Management Strategy](#)
[Exelon to Slash Greenhouse Gases by 2020](#)
[Rethinking the Workweek](#)
[PPL Offers Sustainable Lighting Rebates for Businesses](#)
[Clearfield Planners Get Behind Geothermal Proposal](#)
[Another Dentist Uses DEP Loan Program to Reduce Energy Costs](#)
[Governors Talk of Moving Beyond Corn-Based Ethanol](#)
[Will Hybrids Doom Small Repair Shops?](#)
[Truckers Hope Green Options Save Green in Wallet](#)
[PA Turns Its Eyes Toward the Sun for Energy](#)
[Duquesne University Using Nightly Ice to Cool Campus](#)
[Op-Ed: Allowing Choice Keeps Electric Rates Down](#)
[Court Asked to Support Local Ordinances Regulating Natural Gas Drilling](#)
[Editorial: Taxpayers Deserve Severance Tax on Gas Extractions](#)
[Editorial: State's New Energy Act Responds to Soaring Prices](#)

[Asphalt Costs Soar, Communities Rethink Paving Projects](#)
[Rendell Says Infrastructure Repair Up to Governors](#)
[Editorial: Rising Oil Prices Could Reverse Sprawl in Suburbs](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Editorial: Help Needed With Bay Cleanup](#)
[Duck Habitat Disappearing](#)
[Will It Be Swatara Creek or River?](#)
[Lower Stretch of Delaware River Gets Protection Status](#)
[Delaware River Gets Special Protections](#)
[DRBC Moves to Protect Delaware River](#)
[Delaware River States Agree to Water Cooling Plan](#)
[Editorial: Help Keep the Delaware Clean](#)
[Luzerne Flood Authority May Create Nonprofit for River Activities](#)
[Mission Done: Mussels Return to Brady's Bend](#)
[Future of Trout in State Begins Monday](#)
[Mine Water Problems in Palo Alto Go Unanswered](#)
[Solar Panels, Plants on Roof](#)
[Local Group Gets \\$2 Million for Sewer Systems](#)
[State Grant to Aid Municipal Cooperation on Sewer Upgrade](#)

Regulations

No new regulations were published this week. [Pennsylvania Bulletin – July 19, 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 notice](#) of Nutrient and Sediment Credit Trading activity.

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

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- **NEW.** [Revised Schedule of meetings for DEP Solid Waste Advisory Committee, Recycling Fund Advisory Committee.](#)
- **July 22**—[Governor’s Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **July 22**—**CANCELLED.** House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee hearing on lifeguards at State Parks. Room 140. 1:00.
- **July 22**—**NEW.** House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee hearing on electric price volatility. Comfort Inn, Pittsburgh. 1:00.
- **July 22**—**NEW.** Senate Urban Affairs and Housing Committee hearing on [Senate Bill 1291](#) (Rhoades-R-Schuylkill) promoting blight reclamation. Schuylkill County Court House, Pottsville. 10:00.
- **July 22**—DEP [Water Resource Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 1:00.
- **July 24**—[DEP Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board](#) meeting. DEP Pottsville Office, 5 West Laurel Blvd., Pottsville. 1:00.
- **July 24**—**CANCELLED.** [DEP Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Next scheduled meeting is September 18.
- **July 30**—**NEW.** House Republican Policy Committee hearing on electric rate caps and energy conservation. Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown. 11:00.
- **August 4**—**CANCELLED.** DEP Ohio Water Resources Regional Committee meeting. ([See Act 220 Participation webpage](#)).
- **August 5**—**CANCELLED.** DEP Great Lakes Water Resources Regional Committee meeting. ([See Act 220 Participation webpage](#)).
- **August 7**—[Governor’s Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **August 7**—DEP Solar Work Group meeting. Second Floor Auditorium, Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00. Contact: Libby Dodson, 717-772-8907 or send email to: ldodson@state.pa.us.
- **August 11**—**CANCELLED.** DEP Lower Susquehanna Water Resources Regional Committee meeting. ([See Act 220 Participation webpage](#)).
- **August 20**—**CANCELLED.** DEP Upper/Middle Susquehanna Water Resources Regional Committee meeting. ([See Act 220 Participation webpage](#)).
- **September 3**—[Governor’s Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **September 4**—DEP Solar Work Group meeting. Second Floor Auditorium, Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00. Contact: Libby Dodson, 717-772-8907 or send email to: ldodson@state.pa.us.
- **September 9-10**—**NEW.** [DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Best Western Grand Victorian Inn, Sayre.

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- **September 11- Location Change.** [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 18**—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 23**—[Governor’s Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.

[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.

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