

# -PA ——— Environment Digest

*An Update on  
Environmental  
Issues in  
Pennsylvania*

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Edited By David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

December 17, 2007

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## Senate Passes Alternative Energy Investment, Biodiesel Mandate Bills

In the final hours of the 2007 session, the Senate overwhelmingly passed a \$650 million initiative to promote the development of alternative sources of energy and add funding for low-income heating assistance and energy conservation programs.

Senators also passed two bills expanding the state's Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant Program and creating a mandate for biodiesel, after adding a per-gallon production incentive program.

"The challenge was to establish a framework that allows Pennsylvania be aggressive in the development and use of alternative energy, while being responsible with taxpayer dollars. This measure achieves that," said Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. "This is an historic investment in alternative energy in Pennsylvania that will boost use of alternative and renewable energy, and eventually reduce traditional energy consumption."

[Online audio comments by Sen. White.](#)

Gov. Rendell said the Senate initiative, passed by an overwhelming bipartisan vote of 44 to 5, was "at best, modest progress."

"The action in the Senate this week was helpful in that it was action," Gov. Rendell said. "The bill approved by the Senate creates an investment fund of \$250 million. Not only is this far short of the \$850 million I proposed, it would make Pennsylvania's clean energy fund smaller than the \$300 million fund created by Rhode Island, a State with nine percent of our population."

The Governor also said he would veto any renewable fuels proposal that did not include an ethanol mandate.

[Special Session Senate Bill 1](#), the Alternative Energy Investment Act includes:

- \$250 million to provide:
  - Loans to businesses and loans or grants to counties, municipalities and school districts for clean energy projects, as well as loans and grants to businesses that support alternative energy production through the Commonwealth Financing Authority. (\$210 million)
  - Pollution control technology grants for small coal-fired power plants to comply with new state and federal regulations. (\$25 million)
  - Support for research and development of alternative energy technologies, and venture capital for Pennsylvania start-up businesses to develop or expand



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alternative and renewable energy technologies through the Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority. (\$15 million)

- \$130 million for tax credits to increase alternative energy production;
- \$100 million for consumer grants, loans, rebates and reimbursements of up to 25 percent of the purchase and installation price for energy conservation projects;
- \$100 million to boost funding of the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP);
- \$50 million to provide loans, grants and rebates of up to 35 percent of the purchase and installation costs of solar and solar photovoltaic panels;
- \$15 million for rebates for the purchase of hybrid vehicles; and
- \$5 million in loans for energy efficiency projects in low-income households.

The programs would be funded by earmarking revenue from the Utilities Gross Receipts Tax.

[Special Session Senate Bill 22](#) (Tomlinson-R-Bucks) would make changes to the state's Alternative Fuels Incentive Fund, which is aimed at reducing air pollution and reducing the state's dependency on foreign oil. It would increase the reimbursement to producers of alternative fuels from 5 cents to 10 cents per gallon up to 12.5 million gallons annually.

The bill also includes a specific biodiesel production incentive of 75 cents per gallon, up to \$7 million annually.

The legislation establishes a three-year matching grant program-- up to 50 percent of costs and a \$5,000 maximum-- to install nitrogen tire inflation systems.

The bill would also reduce the amount of money in the fund that can be used for administrative expenses from 2 percent to 1 percent and expand the fund's rebate program to authorize rebates for consumers who purchase biodiesel or other alternative fuels vehicles.

The Senate passed the bill 40-9.

[Special Session Senate Bill 36](#) (MJ.White-R-Venango) Biodiesel Study and Production Incentive Act, which will trigger mandates for the use of biodiesel based on biodiesel fuel production capacity for production sold to distributors in Pennsylvania

The Senate passed the bill 42-7.

The Senate Environmental Resources and Energy, Special Session Energy Policies and Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committees held six hearings on different aspects of the Governor's Energy Independence Proposal during 2007.

In June, the House passed and sent to the Senate [House Bill 1200](#) (DePasquale-D-York) establishing an \$850 million alternative fuels investment grant and loan program under the PA Energy Development Authority as proposed by Gov. Rendell, but without a funding source. [House Bill 1201](#) (George-D-Clearfield) that would provide funding for the program through a special fee on the bills of electric customers has been in the House Rules Committee since September 26..

The House also passed [House Bill 1202](#) (Gerber-D-Montgomery) in June requiring transportation fuels to have renewable content as proposed by the Governor.

The House Environmental Resources and Energy and Consumer Affairs Committees held one hearing and two informational meetings on the Governor's proposals during 2007.

**NewsClip:** [Senate Approves \\$650 Million Alternative Energy Bill](#)  
[Biofuel Gets Boost in 75-Cent Subsidy](#)

[Senate Sends Energy Plan to House](#)  
[Senate's Compromise Provides Incentives for Cleaner Energy](#)  
[Rendell Not Satisfied With Senate Energy Bill](#)  
[Rendell Says Energy Bill Falls Short](#)  
[Will Senate Energy Bill Make It With Rendell?](#)

## House OKs Senate Bill to Fund Hazardous Site Cleanups, Going to Governor



Citing the need to prevent the shutdown of the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program, the House this week put aside partisan bickering and approved a Senate proposal to fund the Program and sent it to the Governor before adjourning for the year.

[Senate Bill 1100](#) (Pileggi-R-Delaware) provides \$17 million for the Hazardous Sites Program for the remainder of this year. It earmarks \$40 million out of the state Capital Stock and Franchise Tax for the following three fiscal years. The bill does not affect the Senate GOP commitment to phase out this

tax by the end of 2010.

"I will sign the bill, but it is a bad way of doing business," Gov. Rendell said after presiding at the lighting of the Capitol Christmas tree. "If we open the floodgates and allow people to spend money in the middle of the [fiscal] year without a revenue source, it would be a terrible precedent."

Interestingly the next day, Budget Secretary Michael Masch predicted the current fiscal year would end with a \$157 million surplus and that the Rendell Administration would ask for a mid-year \$40 million in supplemental funding, over and above the surplus, for the departments of Education and Public Welfare.

"Senator Pileggi and I introduced Senate Bill 1100 to avert the furlough of HSCA-related employees and provide certainty for funding for the next four years – and to do it without the \$50 million tax increase proposed by the governor," said Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee. "I want to thank the House members in my district who reached across party lines to ensure this critical funding bill reached the governor in a timely fashion."

"This went down to the wire, but we're pleased that the House and Senate came to an agreement that enabled this critical legislation to be sent to the Governor's desk for his signature," said Brian Hill, President of Pennsylvania Environmental Council.

"We're also pleased that the agreement is more than just a one-year fix -- people who live near these hazardous sites need to know that efforts are ongoing to address these problems, and the Department of Environmental Protection can't run an effective program if they see the money running out," Hill said.

"We would have preferred that long term funding be identified to support this Program, but at least this legislation puts the Program on solid ground for the next few years," Hill said. "We're also pleased that funding wasn't taken from other environmental programs to handle the hazardous sites program, as had been proposed recently. Hopefully the General Assembly can agree on a long-term dedicated funding source so that we don't have the lingering concern about the long-term viability of this crucial Program."

House Majority Leader Bill DeWeese (D-Greene) said. "Ideally we would have passed our House Democratic plan and worked to create a permanent funding solution for

HSCA in the context of the 2008-2009 budget negotiations, but the stall tactics of the House Republicans last night took away the luxury of time. We were forced to revert to the Senate's original proposal in order to get HSCA funding on the Governor's desk before the end of the year, so we reached across the aisle and took the bipartisan step of bringing the Senate's plan up on the floor."

House Minority Leader Sam Smith (R-Jefferson) commented, "Despite objections from some, this hazardous sites cleanup funding bill provides the needed funding without raising taxes. This issue never should have arisen to the level of a crisis, but regardless, thanks to Representatives Petri and Harper, we are able to fully fund HSCA for several years without a tax increase, and without cutting any other state programs."

Gov. Rendell said he would sign the legislation.

**NewsClips:** [Lawmakers Poised to Fund Pollution Cleanup Program](#)  
[Lawmakers Find Funds to Continue Hazardous Waste Cleanup](#)  
[House Rescues Cleanup Program](#)  
[Editorial: Funding Waste Cleanup](#)  
[Hazardous Site Funding OK'd](#)

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- Help Wanted: Parks and Forest Foundation Bookkeeper

**Spotlight**

- Family Budget Burden for Energy Costs is on the Rise

## Grants & Awards

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## On the Hill

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### Session Schedule

The Senate and House will return to voting session January 14, 2008.

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

### On the Senate/House Agenda

The Senate and House has these bills scheduled for committee or on their calendars for action—

### Calendars

**House (January 1):** [House Resolution 506](#) (George-D-Clearfield) directing DEP and the PUC to evaluate measures to manage the transition from electricity price caps and to minimize the impact on residential customers.

**Senate (January 14):** [Senate Bill 497](#) (Robbins-R-Mercer) limiting the liability of landowners making property available for recreational purposes.

### On the Governor's Desk

**Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund:** [Senate Bill 1100](#) (Pileggi-R-Delaware) that would provide a dedicated source of funding for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Program was passed by the House without amendment (after considerable debate) and now goes to the Governor for his signature. (*see separate article*)

The bill takes \$17 million from legislative accounts to fund the program for the remainder of this fiscal year and earmarks \$40 million in revenues from the Capital Stock and Franchise Tax annually through fiscal year 2010-11.

**Environmental Covenants:** The House concurs in Senate amendments to [House Bill 43](#) (Rubley-R-Chester), establishing uniform environmental covenants for brownfield sites, and now goes to the Governor for action.

### Senate/House Bills Moving/Bills Introduced

The following bills and resolutions moved in the Senate and House this week—

### Senate

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**Alternative Energy Investment:** [Special Session Senate Bill 1](#) (MJ.White-R-Venango), the Alternative Energy Investment Act, was amended to carve \$50 million out of \$200 million for alternative energy tax credits that could be used for rebates for certain solar projects, and \$15 million from that tax credit pot for hybrid car rebates and directed a one-time \$5 million appropriation to the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency for loans to low-income homeowners to make their homes more energy efficient. It was passed by the Senate 44 to 5 and now goes to the House for consideration. (*see separate article*)

**Biodiesel Mandate:** [Special Session Senate Bill 36](#) (MJ.White-R-Venango) Biodiesel Study and Production Incentive Act, which will trigger mandates for the use of biodiesel based on biodiesel fuel production capacity for production sold to distributors in Pennsylvania, was amended and reported from the Senate Appropriations Committee and passed the Senate 42 to 7. (*see separate article*)

**AFIG Incentives:** [Special Session Senate Bill 22](#) (Tomlinson-R-Bucks) increasing the reimbursement for alternative vehicle fuels from five to ten cents per gallon was amended and reported from the Senate Appropriations Committee and passed the Senate 40 to 9. (*see separate article*)

**Coal Miner’s Day:** [House Resolution 410](#) (DeWeese-D-Greene) that would designate December 19 “Coal Miner’s Day” was passed by the Senate.

**Deep Mine Safety Legislation:** Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango) announced she and Sen. Richard Kasunic (D-Somerset) have been working with the United Mine Workers and the PA Coal Association to do a comprehensive re-write of Pennsylvania’s deep mine safety law prompted by events surrounding the Quecreek Mine Rescue in 2002. They hoped to have the 300-page bill done for consideration prior to the holiday, but said they would be introducing it in January.

**Tire Pile Recycling:** [Senate Bill 1050](#) (Baker-R-Luzerne) transferring \$3 million to a new Used Tire Pile Remediation Account from the Recycling Fund was referred to Senate Appropriations Committee.

### House

**Appalachian Trail:** [House Bill 1281](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) requiring municipalities to protect the Appalachian Trail was passed by the House 169 to 22 and now moves to the Senate for consideration.

**Green Building Credits:** [Special Session House Bill 5](#) (M.Smith-D-Montgomery) establishing a High-Performance Green Building Tax Credit Program was passed by the House and goes to the Senate for consideration.

**Radon Awareness Month:** [House Resolution 513](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) designating January as “Radon Awareness Month” was adopted by the House.

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**Great Lakes Compact:** [House Bill 1705](#) (Harkins-D-Erie) adopting the Great Lakes Compact concerning water withdrawals was reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee and then referred to the House Appropriations Committee. (*see separate article*)

**\$850 Million Energy Plan:** [Special Session House Bill 1](#) (DePasquale-D-York) providing for a \$850 million bond issue to fund energy projects through the Energy Development Authority, without a funding source, was amended and reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, then was re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

**Green Buildings:** [Special Session House Bill 4](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) requiring buildings constructed with state funds to meet green building standards was amended and reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, then re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

**State Energy Office:** [Special Session House Bill 16](#) (King-D-Bucks) establishing an independent State Energy Office was amended and reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, then re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

**State Energy Office:** [Special Session House Bill 36](#) (George-D-Clearfield) establishing a State Energy Office was referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

**Solar Energy Requirement Increase:** [Special Session House Bill 13](#) (Bennington-D-Allegheny) amending the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard amending Tier III requirements to include energy efficiency and conservation was reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, then re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee. Rep. George announced the Committee will be holding hearings on this legislation next year.

**Smart Meters:** [Special Session House Bill 38](#) (Freeman-R-Lehigh) requiring electric distribution companies to install smart electric meters was reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, then re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

**Electric Price Transition:** [House Resolution 506](#) (George-D-Clearfield) directing DEP and the PUC to evaluate measures to manage the transition from electricity price caps and to minimize the impact on residential customers was reported from the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee and is now on the House Calendar for action.

**Development Moratorium:** [House Bill 904](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh) authorizing local temporary development moratoriums was amended again this week and reported from the House Local Government Committee and then referred to House Appropriations Committee.

**Theft of Scrap:** House Commerce Committee amended and reported out [House Bill 1742](#) (Pashinski-D-Luzerne) increasing penalties for theft of scrap processors and then referred to House Appropriations Committee.

**EcoTerrorism:** [House Bill 379](#) (Cutler-R-Lancaster) making changes to ecoterrorism penalties was amended and reported out by the House Agriculture Committee.

**Municipalities Planning Code:** the House Local Government Committee reported out [House Bill 749](#) (Boyd-R-Lancaster) amending the Municipalities Planning Code relating to zoning implementation agreements and [House Bill 866](#) (Kauffman-R-Cumberland) amending the Municipalities Planning Code further providing for contents of subdivision and land development ordinances, which were both referred to House Appropriations Committee. [House Bill 1812](#) (Gillespie-R-York) amending the Municipalities Planning Code further providing for contiguous municipalities was passed over.

### **Bills Introduced**

**Stormwater Permitting:** [House Bill 2128](#) (Reichley-R-Berks) requires DEP to develop a streamlined process for issuing stormwater NPDES permits.

### **House Environmental Committee Approves Great Lakes Compact Bill**

The House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee this week approved legislation adopting the Great Lakes Compact on water withdrawals from the portion of Pennsylvania draining into Lake Erie.

[House Bill 1705](#) (Harkins-D-Erie) was then referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

“House Bill 1705 and the Great Lakes Compact are a significant step forward in ensuring the

long-term protection of the Great Lakes, a critical economic and community asset to northwestern Pennsylvania,” said Brian Hill, President and CEO of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. “The long-standing bipartisan support for this collaborative agreement by both Governors Ridge and Rendell, as well as members of the General Assembly, demonstrates its significance to Pennsylvania.”

Under Governors Tom Ridge and Ed Rendell, Pennsylvania negotiated with other Great Lake states, two Canadian Provinces, and representatives from business and industry, agriculture, environmental organizations, and other interests to establish the Great Lakes Compact.

This multi-state agreement creates a unified structure among the Great Lakes states for management of future water withdrawals outside of the Great Lakes basin. Hill said such withdrawals represent “a significant threat as southern and western states already view the Great Lakes as key to their future community and economic development needs.”

In addition, the Great Lakes Compact encourages state adoption of conservation and efficiency measures to help maintain the vitality of the Basin’s water supply resource-based qualities.



Presque Isle, Erie



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Working with environmental, business and citizen representatives in the Lake Erie portion of Pennsylvania, PEC helped educate the community about the Compact and generate support.

“Lake Erie may be the most vulnerable of all the Great Lakes to disruption because it has the smallest water volume and shallowest average depth,” noted Hill. “Even if water is withdrawn from Lake Superior north of Wisconsin, the water level will drop throughout the interconnected Great Lakes system. This could greatly disrupt the Erie harbor and all docks along the shore, significantly harming fish and other aquatic species in Lake Erie. It would be both an ecological and an economic calamity.”

For the Great Lakes Compact to become operational, it must be ratified by all eight states within the Great Lakes Basin and approved by the U.S. Congress. To date, Illinois and Minnesota have already ratified the Great Lakes Compact, and legislation is pending in several other Great Lakes States.

“There is strong support for this legislation in both chambers of the General Assembly, and from both sides of aisle; we urge the House to quickly take up House Bill 1705 in January to ensure the long-term protection of one of our most unique and valuable natural resources,” said Hill.

The Committee is chaired by Rep. Bud George (D-Clearfield) and Rep. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) serves as Minority Chair.

### **\$850 Million Alternative Energy Program, Smart Meters OK'd By House Committee**

The House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee this week approved a variety of Special Session Energy bills, including the Governor's proposed \$850 million alternative energy investment program. The bills include:

- [Special Session House Bill 1](#) (DePasquale-D-York) providing \$850 million bond issue to fund energy projects through the Energy Development Authority, without a funding source, was amended;
- [Special Session House Bill 4](#) (Rublely-R-Chester) requiring building constructed with state funds to meet green building standards was amended;
- [Special Session House Bill 16](#) (King-D-Bucks) establishing an independent State Energy Office was amended;
- [House Resolution 506](#) (George-D-Clearfield) directing DEP and the PUC to evaluate measures to manage the transition from electricity caps and to minimize the impact on residential customers;
- [Special Session House Bill 13](#) (Bennington-D-Allegheny) amending the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard amending Tier III requirements to include energy efficiency and conservation; and
- [Special Session House Bill 38](#) (Freeman-R-Lehigh) requiring electric distribution companies to install smart electric meters.

"Among the legislation is my House Resolution 506 directing the state Public Utility Commission and Department of Environmental Protection to advise the House on strategies to counter electric-generation rate increases," said Rep. George (D-Clearfield), Chair of the Committee. "Pennsylvania cannot afford to free-fall directly from rate caps to rate shock.

"Unless we take steps immediately, we'll be popping our bank accounts and our economy instead of champagne corks on New Year's Day to pay for steeply higher electric

rates. Energy prices already are untenable for many citizens. In two years, they will be disastrous."

All the bills, except House Resolution 506, were referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

The Committee is chaired by Rep. Bud George (D-Clearfield) and Rep. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango) serves as Minority Chair.

### **Freeman Bill to Allow Moratoriums on Development Approved by Committee**

[House Bill 904](#) (Freeman-D-Lehigh), allowing municipalities to declare temporary moratoriums on development while they rewrite their land-use ordinances, was reported out of the House Local Government Committee this week

Rep. Bob Freeman serves as chairman of the Committee.

"When a community becomes overwhelmed with new development proposals, many municipalities discover that their current land-use ordinances are outdated or inadequate to deal with the consequences of rapid development," Rep. Freeman said. "This legislation would provide communities with a temporary 'time out' so local officials can enact appropriate land-use ordinances to better manage and guide growth."



The bill would give municipalities the authority to place a temporary moratorium on development within their boundaries for a limited amount of time while they are in the process of rewriting their land-use ordinances to better cope with development. Land-use ordinances could include a comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, or subdivision and land development ordinance.

In the past, municipalities were able to impose temporary moratoriums on development. However, a 2001 state Supreme Court ruling struck down the use of temporary moratoriums by municipalities because there was no basis in law for them. Under House Bill 904, municipalities would have the statutory authority they need under the Municipalities Planning Code to be able to use this effective growth-management tool.

"The consequences of poorly planned development can be seen in eastern Pennsylvania," Rep. Freeman said. "It leads to increased traffic congestion, the loss of farmland and open space, dangerous storm-water runoff problems, and it drastically alters the quality of life in the communities it impacts. Allowing municipalities to take a step back and reexamine their land-use ordinances would help officials ensure sustainable growth and reduce the problems that come along with out-of-control sprawl."

The bill was then referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

## **Other News**

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### **Meetings on REAP Farm Conservation Tax Credit Program During Farm Show**

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Farmers can learn more about the [Resource Enhancement and Protection](#) tax credit program at two separate meetings that will be hosted by the State Conservation Commission during the 2008 Pennsylvania Farm Show.

The meetings will be held January 8 and 10, from 10 a.m. to noon in the Pennsylvania Room in the Farm Show Complex & Expo Center in Harrisburg.

"Farmers may not be sure if their operations qualify for REAP tax credits or how to apply, so they can bring all questions to this informational meeting to learn more about the program," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff. "With increased production and energy costs, farmers need to explore all available options to keep their businesses profitable and REAP provides another tool to help do that."

The Resource Enhancement and Protection program, administered by the State Conservation Commission, encourages farmers to use conservation best management practices to reduce erosion and sedimentation impacting Pennsylvania's streams and watersheds.

Guidelines and application packets will be available during the week of the Farm Show at the Department of Agriculture booth on the Main Floor of the Farm Show Complex & Expo Center.

Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis and must be postmarked after December 26. Applications delivered in person will not be accepted prior to January 2 at 8 a.m.

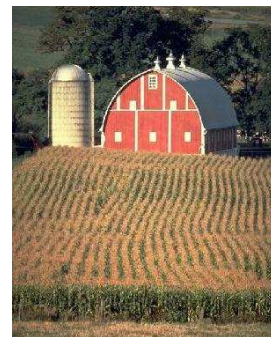
For more information about the program or for information about attending the educational meetings, contact program administrator Mary Bender at 717-787-8821 or send e-mail to: [mabender@state.pa.us](mailto:mabender@state.pa.us), or visit the [REAP webpage](#).

### **Federal Farm Bill Contains Historic Funding for Conservation, Chesapeake Bay**

The U.S. Senate and House have both passed different versions of the 2007 Farm Bill that include historic levels of funding for conservation and Chesapeake Bay cleanup that must now be reconciled.

"Both the House and Senate versions of the federal Farm Bill, while not yet reconciled, provide unprecedented levels of new conservation funding that will help the region's farmers significantly improve water quality," said Doug Siglin, Federal Affairs Director for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. "The Senate legislation contains a special Chesapeake Bay watershed program that will provide \$165 million in technical and financial assistance for farmers to improve water quality in local streams and rivers and the Bay itself. It also includes a strengthened Conservation Stewardship Program that will reward the best farming conservation practices in our region and across the nation. We commend and thank Senators Casey and Specter for their effective work to ensure passage of this important legislation."

"Over the next few weeks, Senate negotiators will be working to reconcile the Senate bill with the House version, which also contains a dedicated program for Chesapeake Bay farmers to improve water quality as well as significant increases to other important conservation programs. We look forward to working with Senate and House



negotiators to ensure that the final bill promotes water quality improvements in the Chesapeake Bay watershed to the greatest possible degree, and to working closely with USDA and the region's farmers to meet the conservation goals that we all share.”

For more information, visit the [CBF Federal Farm Bill webpage](#).

### Penalty Settlement Provides \$9 Million to Cleanup, Protect Wissahickon Watershed



Autumn in the Wissahickon Creek.

A settlement of water quality violations by Merck and Co., Inc. in Montgomery County has yielded \$9 million in environmental projects to cleanup and protect the [Wissahickon watershed](#).

Merck has agreed to pay \$4.5 million for environmental projects that will be directed to the [Whitemarsh Foundation](#) to purchase and preserve approximately 100 acres of undeveloped land within the highly urbanized Wissahickon watershed.

Known as the Erdenheim Farm Angus Tract, the land will be maintained as open space and the settlement terms require that public access be maintained in the future; that 10 acres of the property be designated as wetlands, wet meadow or open water; and that the entire tract be protected from development.

Merck will contribute another \$4.5 million to the Wissahickon watershed, providing funds to restore watershed features on both the Natural Lands Trust and Angus tracts of Erdenheim Farm; develop a drinking water early warning system for the city's Queen Lane plant in cooperation with the Philadelphia Water Department; purchase and install an automated dissolved oxygen control at the Upper Gwynedd sewage treatment plant; and implement a variety of practices to improve the Wissahickon Creek's water quality.

The funds were provided as a result of a penalty settlement with Merck by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Environmental Protection resulted in a total of \$20 million in environmental projects and penalties.

Under the agreement, Merck will pay \$4.5 million to DEP, \$4.5 million to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and invest \$10 million for the plant upgrades. The company will also pay fines of \$750,000 to DEP for violating Pennsylvania's Clean Streams Law, Solid Waste Management Act and Safe Drinking Water Act; \$750,000 to the EPA; and \$75,000 to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

In June 2006, Merck released potassium thiocyanate into the local sewer system. The compound passed through the disinfection process at Upper Gwynedd Township's sewage treatment facility where it combined with chlorine and formed a cyanide compound.

The discharge made its way into the Wissahickon Creek, where it killed more than 1,000 fish, then into the Schuylkill River where it impacted drinking water operations and water recreation in Philadelphia for several days.

**NewsClip:** [Merck to Pay \\$20 Million for Wissahickon Pollution](#)  
[\\$20 Million Settlement Reach in Merck Spill](#)  
[Fish Kill to Cost Merck \\$20 Million](#)

### Save the Date: PA Rural Water Assn. Annual Conference April 1-4

The [Pennsylvania Rural Water Association](#) will host its [annual conference](#) on April 1-4 at The Penn Stater Conference Center in State College.

The conference will offer 42 water and wastewater classes, more than 120 industry exhibitors, and many special events including the PRWA Tribute to Excellence Awards Banquet.

The 2008 Annual Conference is also a celebration of PRWA's 20th Anniversary. Displays throughout the week will highlight the progress of the association and the industry.

Water and wastewater operators, managers, and board members are encouraged to attend the full week of classes and events which will provide a unique opportunity to learn from fellow water and wastewater professionals in Pennsylvania.

Registration information is available online at the [PRWA website](#) or by calling 800-653-PRWA.

### Record Number of Farms Preserved in Pennsylvania in 2007

Pennsylvania continued protecting valuable farmland this week by permanently preserving 51 more farms under its nationally recognized Farmland Preservation Program. In all, a record 351 farms were preserved in 2007.

Pennsylvania leads the nation in the number of farms and acres preserved. Since the program began in 1988, a total of 377,910 acres on 3,339 farms have been protected.



"With the additional 51 farms preserved by the Farmland Preservation Board today, Pennsylvania continues to set a national standard for farmland preservation," said Agriculture Secretary Dennis Wolff. "By protecting farmland for future generations, we are strengthening our state's agricultural industry and keeping production agriculture alive and vital in the commonwealth."

"Looking ahead, we expect another good year for preservation in 2008 as we celebrate the program's 20th anniversary," said Secretary Wolff. "We anticipate reaching the 3,500 farm and 400,000 acre milestones."

The farms preserved this week are located in 21 counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Cambria, Chester, Crawford, Cumberland, Dauphin, Erie, Franklin, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Luzerne, Lycoming, Monroe, Northampton, Northumberland, Schuylkill, Union and York. Currently, 57 of Pennsylvania's 67 counties participate in the program.

The state's farmland preservation program works through the Pennsylvania Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Program, which was developed 19 years ago to help slow the loss of prime farmland to non-agricultural uses. The program enables state, county and local governments to purchase conservation easements, also called development rights, from owners of quality farmland.

For more information, visit the [Department of Agriculture website](#).

### PPL Permanently Protects 3,500 Acres Along Lower Susquehanna River

[PPL Corporation](#) will transfer about 3,500 acres of company-owned land to the [Lancaster County Conservancy](#) along the lower Susquehanna River as part of a broad public-private initiative that will preserve and protect this valuable land while enhancing its benefits.

The company will sell the land for \$5 million to the Conservancy, then donate the \$5 million to the new owner as part of a sustainable endowment fund that will be used to maintain and enhance the land for public enjoyment. PPL also will provide additional ongoing support to the endowment fund.

The majority of the money being paid to PPL for the land will come from the [Community Conservation Partnerships Grant Program](#) administered by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

The land is in Lancaster and York counties near PPL's Holtwood hydroelectric plant. It will be managed by a coalition led by the Lancaster County Conservancy. Other partners key to making the project happen include the Lancaster York Heritage Region, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, The Conservation Fund, and the counties of Lancaster and York.

"As a corporation, PPL has a strong commitment to the environment and to the communities where we do business," said William H. Spence, PPL's executive vice president and chief operating officer. "We're pleased to play a key role in making sure this beautiful land will be preserved and will always be available for public use and enjoyment."

"The Susquehanna River is a terrific source of recreational opportunities that allow Pennsylvanians and visitors alike to get outdoors, be active and appreciate its natural beauty," DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis said. "This land transfer will protect a great regional asset that is important to the stewardship of our natural resources, a thriving economy, tourism and quality of life in an area facing growing development pressure."

"The Lancaster County Conservancy currently has over 3,340 acres already under protection, which leaves us well-positioned to manage these additional PPL lands, protecting wildlife habitats and ecosystems for the continued use and enjoyment of the public for recreation and study," said Ralph H. Goodno, president and chief executive officer of the Lancaster County Conservancy. "We are extremely grateful to both Lancaster and York counties for their financial support of this important project. We are also grateful for the high value attributed to conservation by our communities, who understand how directly the protection of natural lands and resources impacts our quality of life."

"This partnership is a historic opportunity to conserve and celebrate our region's most spectacular natural lands and recreation areas and bring new economic benefits to our communities through heritage and outdoor tourism," said Mark Platts, president of the Lancaster-York Heritage Region. "These lands and facilities are key attractions along the 400-mile-long Susquehanna River Water Trail, and their permanent preservation helps build the Susquehanna Greenway as a special place for the public to use and enjoy and to treasure always."

"Protecting these unique lands ensures that current and future generations will be able to enjoy the rich history, world-class waterway and many recreational opportunities of the Susquehanna River," said Larry Selzer, president and chief executive officer of The Conservation Fund. "We applaud PPL for its vision and leadership and are proud to have been a part of this remarkable partnership that continues the region's legacy of conservation."

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The agreement requires the approval of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which regulates PPL's operation of the Holtwood hydroelectric plant. PPL will enter into a long-term lease-back from the owner to maintain and operate the public recreation facilities on the land, including two campgrounds and other facilities, in cooperation with the partners.

The Holtwood plant has been producing clean, reliable hydroelectric energy for nearly a century. Since 2005, PPL has been considering an expansion of the plant, including improvements to the migratory fish passage facility and construction of a new 125-megawatt hydroelectric generating plant adjacent to the existing plant along the Lancaster County shore. A final decision on whether to pursue this expansion is expected soon.

**NewsClip:** [Sweeping Land Deal Will Keep Susquehanna River Gorge Green](#)

### DCNR Advisory Council Makes Recommendations on Trails, Greenways

A new report by the [Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council](#) to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources said trails and greenways programs should be better coordinated between agencies and that DCNR should be a one-stop information source for trails.

The report also recommended prioritizing grant awards for trails and greenways to better reflect trails policies, more marketing of trails in outdoor recreation programs and expansion of trail maintenance and DCNR staff dealing with trails.

DCNR was recognized for making significant improvements in trail and greenway activities in the last few years.

[A copy of the report is available online.](#)

For more information, contact Kurt Leitholf, Executive Director CNRAC at 717-705-0031 or send email to: [kleitholf@state.pa.us](mailto:kleitholf@state.pa.us) . Also visit DCNR [Trails and Greenways webpage](#).

### New PCEE Environmental Ed Connections Newsletter Now Online

The [December EE Connections](#), the environmental education newsletter published by the [Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education](#), is now available online.

No matter where you live in Pennsylvania, a facility providing environmental education is located nearby. The [Pennsylvania EE Facilities Guide](#), accessible through PCEE's website, connects you with parks, nature centers, arboretums and natural resource centers in every corner of the commonwealth.

Is your EE facility missing from the directory? Simply fill out the Facility Directory [Data Submission Form](#) to have it listed!

Other major stories in this month's EE Connections include:

**General News:** Earth Force Winners of the 2007 Governor's Award Announced, GBA Receives Grant to Continue 'Green Building Product Initiative,' 'Ask EPA,' Global Warming Solutions for America;

**K-12 News:** RiverQuest Offers School Programs, Environmental Challenge Education Program, Children's Painting Competition on the Environment, 'Build Green Schools,'

'Be the Change, Share the Story' School Video Contest, 'Penguins on Thin Ice;'

**Higher Education:** PA Campuses Receive Green Power Awards, Duquesne University Offers MBA Emphasizing Sustainability, Top Ten Green Campuses, Beyond Grey Pinstripes 2007, 'Climate Change and Higher Education' Webcast;

**Professional Development:** December Visiting Scientist, Tree Planting Training in Southeast Pennsylvania, Save the Date: PASA's 2008 'Farming for the Future' Conference, Save the Date: PAEE's 2008 Conference;

**Grants/Awards:** Watershed Mini-Grant, 2008 Parks and Forest Award Nominations, Pennsylvania Conservation Corps Grants, U.S. Composting Council Poster Contest, EPA Environmental Education Grant, Pay It Forward Mini-Grants.

Contributions welcome! The Center receives news and information from a variety of sources across Pennsylvania and beyond. We appreciate all of the organizations, agencies and individuals who provide EE services and share their relevant information.

If you would like to contribute to future issues of EE Connections, please submit your article before the 15th of the month. Articles should be of statewide interest and are subject to space availability.

Share EE Connections! If you know of others who would appreciate receiving EE Connections, please complete the [on-line form](#) or call 724-738-9020.

To see all of the resources available, visit the [Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education](#) website.

### **PUC to Utilities: Help Consumers to “Prepare Now” for Costs of Winter Heating**

The Public Utility Commission this week urged electric and natural gas utilities to take extra steps to help consumers to “[Prepare Now](#)” for the higher costs of winter heating.

“As indicated each year by our annual Cold Weather Survey, thousands of Pennsylvania citizens will be without utility service as cold weather sets in,” said the letter signed by Commission Chairman Wendell F. Holland. “With that in mind, we are calling on utilities to join us again in working to help consumers to ‘Prepare Now’ for winter’s higher utility costs.”

The Commission’s annual Cold Weather Survey assesses the number of households without heat-related service as of December 1. As part of the survey, the PUC requires natural gas and electric utilities to check residential properties where service has been shut off. Contact is attempted through both telephone calls and in-person visits to the homes. The 2007 survey results will be available December 17.

In a December 11, 2007, letter sent to electric and natural gas utilities under its jurisdiction, the PUC asked the utilities to join the PUC in reaching out and educating consumers. The Commission’s “Prepare Now” outreach campaign appeals to consumers on limited or fixed incomes to call their utility about special programs such as Customer Assistance Programs and Low Income Usage Reduction Programs to help heat their homes and pay their energy bills.



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The letter also stresses the importance of the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program and the impact the program has on helping low-income consumers restore and maintain service.

“Unfortunately, many of our utility consumers who need help the most remain unaware of the programs available to help them restore and maintain utility service,” the letter said. “Just as we at the PUC will be reminding consumers who call us about the availability of such programs, we ask all utilities to double their efforts to make sure that every customer facing termination receives notice of the programs available and the information they need to sign up.”

This marks the fifth winter in which the Commission is urging consumers to “Prepare Now.” The message is simple: “Prepare Now” for higher energy costs this winter. Learn about changes in the law related to utility shut-offs and know your rights. Save money by learning how to conserve energy. Heat your home safely.

Visit the PUC’s [Prepare Now webpage](#) or call the PUC at 1-800-782-1110.

Budget billing and special programs can help all customers manage their bill. Budget billing allows consumers to pay similar amounts each month. While the overall amount due at the end of the season remains the same, the amount due is spread out over a greater period of time rather spiking during the winter months. This plan makes the amount due more predictable and affordable.

The letter also reminds the utilities of their responsibilities under the state’s utility termination and reconnection law, also known as Chapter 14. The “Prepare Now” campaign urges customers to know their rights and how regulated electric, water and major natural gas utilities must handle cash deposits; reconnection of service; termination of service; payment arrangements; and the filing of termination complaints by residential customers.

The PUC has consumer outreach specialists who provide utility education and outreach to consumers. The outreach team reaches out to consumers by regularly traveling throughout the state conducting or participating in workshop events, free seminars and roundtable discussions and community fairs.

During those events, plain language materials and literature designed to education consumers about assistance programs and their rights are handed out. Materials include information on Chapter 14, available low-income programs and tips on how to “Prepare Now” for winter.

For more information on hosting a PUC consumer outreach specialist at a community event, please call 717-787-5722.

### **PPL Electric Utilities Gives Away 65,000 Energy-Saving Light Bulbs, So Far**

PPL Electric Utilities announced this week they have already given away more than 65,000 fluorescent light bulbs to 32,500 customers as part of its [E-Power initiative](#).

These bulbs alone will prevent more than 21,500 tons of greenhouse gas emissions during their lifetime. That’s the equivalent of planting more than 5,000 acres of trees or removing more than 3,500 cars from the road each year. The savings for these 30,000 customers will total nearly \$3 million over the life of the bulbs.

The company plans to give out an additional 55,000 compact fluorescent light bulbs as part of the program.

“Conservation is one of the best and easiest ways to reduce electric bills,” said David G. DeCampli, president of PPL Electric Utilities. “With the expected increase in electricity prices when price caps end in January 2010, conservation measures will make even more sense for our customers.

“That’s what our e-power program is about, and it’s what the [Energy Star program](#) has been about for more than a decade,” he said.

DeCampli said PPL Electric Utilities will promote the benefits of Energy Star-qualified products, which saved consumers \$14 billion in energy costs in 2006, according to estimates from the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, which oversee the Energy Star program.

The Energy Star label can be found on more than 50 different categories of products. These products typically use about 10 percent to 30 percent less energy than standard models.

The company launched a campaign to promote Energy Star-qualified compact fluorescent light bulbs and an online energy audit tool this fall, offering two energy-efficient light bulbs to the first 60,000 residential customers who complete a home profile through the company’s [Energy Analyzer](#).

“The Energy Analyzer and compact fluorescent light bulb program are just the beginning of our efforts to help customers use electricity wisely,” DeCampli said. “We’re also developing new energy-efficiency programs and investing in technology that will support additional pricing options for customers.”

For example, he said, the company plans to offer a time-of-use pricing option to residential customers in 2010. Such an option would allow customers to save by shifting electricity use to times when generation supply is less expensive to purchase.

“We’ll be looking for additional opportunities to reach out to customers in the next few years to promote energy efficiency,” DeCampli said. “Electricity is a precious commodity, and we all benefit when we use it wisely.”

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Department of Energy estimate that with Energy Star, the typical family could save up to 30 percent or more on their energy costs by making energy-efficient improvements.

By saving energy, customers can also help limit greenhouse gas emissions and the need for new power lines and power plants, DeCampli said. And by limiting usage during times of peak demand, they can help to lower electricity prices for all customers by helping to ensure that the most expensive power plants remain idle.

### **DEP Advantage Grants Help Small Businesses Conserve Energy, Reduce Expenses**

The Department of Environmental Protection announced the award of 48 [Small Business Advantage Grants](#) to small businesses totaling \$300,000 to reduce energy costs and prevent pollution.

The Small Business Advantage Grants program provides a 50-percent match of up to \$7,500 for equipment or processes that reduce energy consumption, promote pollution prevention, and increase profitability. Examples include high-efficiency heating and cooling systems, motion sensors that shut off lights when rooms are empty, and auxiliary power units that allow long-haul truckers to turn off engines during layovers and still have heat and electricity.

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A complete list of [grants awarded is available online](#). Since 2004 almost \$3.5 million has been awarded through 662 grants across the state.

For more information, visit the [Small Business Advantage Grant Program webpage](#)

### Green Building Alliance Announces \$448,000 in Product Innovation Grants

Green Building Alliance this week announced a total of \$448,000 in [Green Building Product Innovation Grants](#) for seven projects that seek to develop and introduce new and enhanced green building products.

Awarded through a competitive selection process, GBA's Product Innovation Grants will expedite the commercialization of new building products within the fast growing green building market. The green building product market is estimated to be worth \$30 to \$40 billion annually by 2010.

"The green market represents a significant economic opportunity for western Pennsylvania and the entire commonwealth, which ranks 2nd in the country in the number of LEED certified buildings. Our Product Innovation Grant projects include collaboration between private sector companies and university teams located within Pennsylvania," said Rebecca Flora, Executive Director of Green Building Alliance.

Seven grants were awarded from 23 proposals received by the Green Building Alliance on the inaugural round of Product Innovation Grants. Recipients include:

- \$100,000 for Ductmate GreenSeam II product development, which will significantly reduce duct leakage; a project of Ductmate Industries and the University of Pittsburgh;
- \$100,000 to environmentally and economically assess the production and field performance of insulated concrete forms, in order to most effectively manufacture and deploy this construction product; a project of Tegrant Corporation and the University of Pittsburgh;
- \$81,564 for improved production of pigment as a byproduct of the treatment of coal mine drainage in western Pennsylvania; a project of Iron Oxide Recovery, Hedin Environmental, and the University of Pittsburgh;
- \$81,062 for development of a process simulator for green product decision-making; a project of Burt Hill and Penn State University; and
- \$45,736 for sustainable, affordable, low-temperature water system to heat and cool a neighborhood of buildings; a project of Geothermal Energy Systems and Carnegie Mellon University.

Two \$20,000 Proof-of-Concept grants were awarded for the development of a superlattice solar cell prototype; a project of Villanova University and low energy luminous surfaces: residential lighting using Ceelite LEC technology; a project of Drexel University.

"We solicited Product Innovation Grant proposals in early August 2007 from established Pennsylvania companies looking to develop innovative green building products or green existing product lines or processes, from start-up Pennsylvania companies looking to enter the green building product marketplace, and from Pennsylvania university researchers and teams developing innovative green building products and the processes to produce them," explained Aurora Sharrard, Ph.D., GBA Research Manager and project director of the Product Innovation Grants. "We're very pleased with the initial response and look forward to the next round of submissions."

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Proposals are assessed based on the criteria of green building leadership, technical merit, commercialization plan viability, partnership resources, and potential market impact.

Grant award decisions are made at the discretion of GBA on the advice of the Product Innovation Grant Review Committee, which is comprised of individuals with a variety of relevant experience, expertise, and background, including consultants, manufacturers, investors, economic development stakeholders, and academic researchers. Participation on the Review Committee is kept confidential.

Funding for GBA's Green Building Products Initiative, under which the Product Innovation Grants are awarded, is due in part to the following funders: Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Ben Franklin Technology Development Authority, The Heinz Endowments and the Richard King Mellon Foundation.

A Request for Proposals for the second round of Product Innovation Grants will be distributed in early January, with final proposals due March 10, 2008. For submission information, visit the [Green Building Products Initiative webpage](#).

### **Automated Online Application Process for Waste Hauler Authorizations**

A new [online application system](#) for waste hauler authorizations is expected to improve processing times and better ensure that haulers comply with state laws designed to protect the public's health and safety, and the environment.

The automated system, which is now online, provides the state's 6,200 waste haulers with a convenient and efficient way to register the approximately 32,000 vehicles they operate.

"This paperless system increases the convenience for waste haulers and improves the efficiency of DEP's operation by reducing the amount of paper we process by hand," said Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty. "The new system allows for applications to be submitted through our website at any time, any day."

The new web-based application system allows haulers to start, save and submit applications for Act 90 authorizations electronically. A valid credit card, charge card or debit card is necessary to utilize the advantages of the web-based system.

In developing the system, DEP worked closely with the waste industry over the past year and incorporated a number of their suggestions into the final version of the system. Several waste haulers participated in a test run to ensure the system met their expectations and was user-friendly.

"This online application system will provide a model for other programs within DEP and, possibly, for government agencies across Pennsylvania," Secretary McGinty said.

Waste haulers are regulated under the Waste Transportation Safety Act (Act 90 of 2002). Municipal and residual waste haulers using waste disposal and processing facilities in Pennsylvania must first obtain written authorization to use those facilities from DEP.

Vehicles without valid waste hauler authorization stickers may not use waste disposal and processing facilities in the Commonwealth.

For more information, visit DEP's [Waste Transportation webpage](#).

### **Allegheny County PA CleanWays Chapter Adopts New Name**

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“[PA CleanWays of Allegheny County, Inc.](#),” an affiliate of PA CleanWays” is a bit of a mouthful... and all too often abbreviated to PA CleanWays, which created more confusion with the state PA CleanWays organization.

To resolve the dilemma, the Allegheny county affiliate of PA CleanWays resolved to modify its name and logo to highlight its service area.

Executive Director Mary W. Wilson notes, “While our mission and services continue to be directly in line with the state organization, it is critical that our constituents understand exactly who we are and that we are work only within this county. The new name and logo reflect that focus more clearly. The cleaner distinction between the county affiliate and statewide umbrella organization helps to delineate each organization’s scope of work and function.”

Because the Allegheny County organization has a staff, it is deemed an “affiliate” of the state network. Volunteer-only county groups are called “chapters”.

During the 2007 season alone, Allegheny CleanWays volunteers and partners removed over 20.75 tons of debris, 550 tires and nearly 3 tons of scrap metal and 47 bags of recyclables from local riverbanks, greenways, hillsides and vacant lots. Engaging residents is critical to the mission of Allegheny CleanWays. With just one full time employee and a part-time contracted staff person, they rely on volunteers to do much of the work. In 2007 alone, over 450 volunteers worked to collect the debris listed above.

The organization empowers other groups as well by providing training to community cleanup coordinators, and distributing equipment for community litter collections. This year alone, Allegheny CleanWays distributed cleanup supplies from PennDOT to 47 community groups. Of those reporting their results, nearly 1800 volunteers had collected approximately 75 tons of litter in their respective communities around the county.

[Allegheny CleanWays](#) always welcomes community alerts to illegal dumps sites or invitations to help with community litter collections. To reach them for more information about volunteering, cleanup coordinator training, or other programs, contact them at 412-381-1301 or send email to: [pacw\\_ac@hotmail.com](mailto:pacw_ac@hotmail.com) .

### PROP Offers Advanced Composting Course in March

The [Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania](#) will offer a [new class March 6](#) that focuses on aerated static piles for composting at the Montgomery County Extension Office in Collegeville.

The course was developed for experienced composters (municipal, farm, non-profit or for-profit) who would like to expand beyond the basics of leaf and yard waste composting into food residuals, manures, and other challenging materials.

The complete announcement [is available online](#). The [registration form](#) is also available online.

Please note that this is an advanced course and is not intended for those who are mainly interested in home scale composting.

For more information, contact the course coordinator Cary Oshins by sending email to: [caryoshins@hotmail.com](mailto:caryoshins@hotmail.com) or call 484-547-1521.

For questions about the PROP Certification Program, contact Amy M. Carlotto Zuckett, M.Ed, Education Director PROP, PO Box 25, Stadium Road, Bellwood, PA 16617, call 814-742-7777 or send email to: [azuckett@proprecycles.org](mailto:azuckett@proprecycles.org) .

## Help Wanted: Parks and Forest Foundation Bookkeeper

The [Pa Parks and Forests Foundation](#) is seeking a part time book keeper—about 15 hours or so a week—for this Harrisburg-based non-profit organization.

For information, contact Marci Mowery by sending email to: [mmowery-ppff@pa.net](mailto:mmowery-ppff@pa.net) .

## Spotlight

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### Family Budget Burden for Energy Costs is on the Rise

Family budgets are increasingly strained by energy costs, some to the breaking point, a new report reveals. The results produce a sound argument for the continuation of coal as the backbone of Pennsylvania's energy policy, says Americans for Balanced Energy Choices.

ABEC points to the study showing individuals and families making less than \$30,000 per year now pay nearly \$1 of every \$5 in their after-tax income for energy. As much as 47 percent of after-tax income is devoted to transportation and personal energy use by the poorest families.

The energy cost burden on families has doubled in the past decade. Now, only when total income exceeds \$50,000 a year, do energy purchases fall to a more manageable (8 percent) factor in the family budget.

ABEC notes that coal is a significant player in helping control electricity cost inflation, while other energy costs more than doubled. In Pennsylvania, more than half of the electricity (56 percent) is coal generated.

"You must give coal credit for easing the effects of skyrocketing energy costs," said Joe Lucas, ABEC executive director. "Many families already are sacrificing to pay for their energy needs, and for lots of people it threatens to be a budget buster. That's why it's essential to keep coal in the energy mix as an efficient, affordable energy source in the future."

The ABEC study estimates that in the past decade, electric rates increased 26 percent compared to increases of 104 percent for gasoline, 125 percent for heating oil and 67 percent for natural gas across the United States.

"Taking a wrong turn on our energy policies will, even if it is inadvertent, seriously hurt many Pennsylvanians," Lucas added. "There simply is a point where individuals and families can no longer balance the essentials of food, housing, healthcare and energy costs with their take home pay."

There are 2 million Pennsylvanians who are age 65 or older. Especially at risk are those senior Pennsylvanians living on fixed incomes as well as the working poor and middle class wage earners, according to Lucas.

"As we work for energy independence and environmental improvements, we should remember that electricity, produced mainly from domestic coal, has offered the most stable price trend over the past decade," Lucas said.

To see a full copy of the report, go to the [America's Power website](#).

**NewsClip:** [Op-Ed: Put Coal in Their Stocking](#)

## Grants & Awards

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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—

- **December 31** – Fish & Boat Commission [Sportfishing/Aquatic Ed Grants](#)
- **December 31**— [Nominations for Green Chemistry Challenge Awards](#)
- **January 1** – Environ. Concerns [Schoolyard Wetland Habitat Grants](#)
- **January 4** – [PA Conservation Corps Grants](#).
- **January 15**— [National Wetlands Awards Program Nominations](#)
- **February 1** – PA Land Trust Assn. [Government Leadership Award Nominations](#).
- **February 8** – [PA American Water Watershed Art Contest](#)
- **February 19** – PennVEST [Infrastructure Loans/Grants for April 15 Meeting](#).
- **February 22**— [Allegheny County Global Warming Poster Contest](#)
- **March 31** – PAEP [Karl Mason Environmental Award](#).
- **April 2** – [WREN Water Resources Education Project Grants](#)

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

## Quick Clips

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

[Eco Edits of the Season: How Do They Stack Up?](#)

[Editorial: Global Warming Skeptics Ignore Arctic Melt](#)

[Editorial: Global Hot Air- Earth's Non-Problem](#)

[Editorial: Need More Smart Thinking on the Environment at Local Level](#)

[DEP Issues Permit for Berks County Landfill Expansion](#)

[DEP Clears Way for Reopening of Pine Grove Landfill](#)

[State to Help Families Restore Heat](#)

[Getting Green for Going Green](#)

[Geisinger Going Green With Expansion](#)

[Circling Pittsburgh's Regent Square](#)

[Got Manure? Bessie Could Be Our Ticket to Energy Independence](#)

[Ag Experts Talk Straight About Ethanol](#)

[Some Still Bullish on Corn-Based Fuel](#)

[A Solar Pioneer's Passion Still Burns Brightly](#)

[Solar Powered Shop Puts Him in Print](#)

[Millersville Switches to LEDs](#)

[Juniata County Switches to LEDs](#)

[Officials Backpedal on PA Cancer Study](#)

[Pennsylvania Key to Saving Birds on WatchList](#)

[Op-Ed: Save Our Birds](#)

[Editorial: Audubon's Annual Bird Count Takes Wing](#)

[Editorial: Better Land Use Would Benefit State's Declining Bird Species](#)

[Op-Ed: Electric Deregulation Has Winners and Losers](#)  
[US Senate to Rework Ambitious Energy Bill](#)  
[Editorial: State Spared a Double Whammy as Power Corridor is Put on Hold](#)  
[Editorial: PA Leader in Farm Preservation](#)  
[Christmas Gifts Plentiful for Nature Lovers](#)  
[Increase Seen in ATV Injuries](#)  
[Army Corps to Remove Radioactive Soil From Nuclear Site](#)

## **Watershed NewsClips**

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

[New Fish Ladder to be Installed Alongside Schuylkill Dam](#)  
[Grant to Help Restore Stream in Centre County](#)  
[West Branch Sewer Customers Face Sewage Hike](#)  
[Carlisle May Seek Break From Bay Rules](#)

## **Regulations**

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The Independent Regulatory Review Commission issued comments on [proposed odor management regulations](#) by the State Conservation Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection published an updated list of certified emission reduction credits (*Pa Bulletin 6598*) and notice of companies certified to perform radon-related activities (*Pa Bulletin 6608*).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – December 15, 2007](#)

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

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

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

## **Technical Guidance & Permits**

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The Department of Environmental Protection [published draft guidance](#) on financial assurance and bond adjustments for mine sites with post-mining discharges for comment.

DEP ID: 563-2504-450. Financial Assurance and Bond Adjustments for Mine Sites with Postmining Discharges. This document sets forth how the bond requirement provisions specified in the Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act, The Clean Streams Law, the Coal Refuse Disposal Control Act and the Noncoal Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act and their implementing regulations are to be implemented for sites with a postmining discharge. Comments due: January 14.

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



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

## Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- [DEP No-Cost Internet Training for Environmental Remediation](#)
- **February 22-23** – 2008 [Keystone Coldwater Conference](#). State College.
- **March 28**— Lehigh Valley Watershed Conference and Shad Symposium. Holiday Inn, Fogelsville.

### [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.

## Helpful Web Links

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

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

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

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

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

## Stories Invited

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

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### **Supporting Member PA Outdoor Writers Association**

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*PA Environment Digest* is a supporting member of the [Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association](#).