

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Crisci Associates

January 8, 2007

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

Senate, House Elect Leadership, Still Must Name Committee Chairs, Members

The Senate unanimously elected Sen. Joe Scarnati (R-Jefferson) as President Pro Tempore and the House, with considerably more political theater, elected Philadelphia Republican Dennis O'Brien Speaker, the candidate of the House Democrats who hold a majority in that body.

The word "reform" was in everyone's comments as the House and Senate formally opened their 2007-08 legislative session.

The Senate adopted a set of operating rules that promotes more open consideration of amendments and legislation as it moves through the process there. The House adopted temporary rules with the promise of forming a bipartisan panel to study what additional rule changes are needed to make their process more open.

Among the changes adopted by the Senate were:

- Session times will be limited to between 8 a.m. and 11 p.m.;
- Amendments will be posted to the Internet before being offered on the Senate floor (following a House practice);
- The Senate will wait at least six hours before voting on an amended bill or a conference committee report;
- All roll call votes will be posted on the Internet as soon as possible after a vote, but always within 24 hours of a vote;
- Committee votes on bills will be posted on the Internet within 48 hours of the vote; and
- An updated fiscal note will be prepared if a bill is amended after consideration by the Senate Appropriations Committee, if the amendment has a fiscal impact.

Both Chambers have work to do to appoint Committee chairs and members, although Senate Republicans appointed their [Committee chairs in December](#).

Government "reform" and providing more property tax relief seemed to be common themes this week in the Senate and House and Gov. Rendell looks toward his own inauguration on January 16 and his second term.

On property tax relief, Gov. Rendell joined House Majority Leader Bill DeWeese in saying he now favors a plan that would use "most" of an increase in revenues from an expanded state Sales Tax to pay for additional property tax relief.

On the environment, Gov. Rendell [had earlier said](#) he looks forward to doing more to promote alternative fuels. Rep. DeWeese also mentioned the need to do more to protect the environment and create jobs when he took over as House Majority Leader in December.

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Sen. Mary Jo White (R-Venango), Majority Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, said she and Sen. Ray Musto (D-Luzerne), Minority Chair, will be working on several key issues in the new session:

- Finalizing a state strategy to reduce mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants;
- Comprehensive amendments to the state’s mine safety law;
- Securing long-term funding for the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund;
- Reforming operations of the Department of Environmental Protection and Environmental Quality Board;
- Reviewing alternative energy and “climate change” policies; and
- Assuring consumer access to reliable and affordable energy.

Among the biggest and most controversial environmental issues to be faced this year will be adequately funding environmental programs.

Funding for both the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund and the Nutrient Management Fund will be needed since they are both set to run dry by July 1.

Over the last two years \$50 million to fund the Hazardous Sites Cleanup Fund has been taken away from the original Growing Greener Program which finances watershed cleanup, abandoned mine reclamation and other conservation projects.

In the coming year, funding for debt service to pay for the Growing Greener II bond issue approved in 2005 by voters is also authorized to be taken from the original Growing Greener Program.

In the current budget (2006-07), \$52.7 million was diverted from DCNR’s Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund to the General Fund as a “one-time” measure to balance the budget.

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Session Schedule

The Senate and House will now BOTH return to session on January 16.

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Video Blog Feature

- Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Offers Unique Experience for Birdwatchers, Hikers

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

Video Blog

Volunteers Mitigate Acid Rain Impacts on Wiconisco Creek

[Walt Finch, president of the Wiconisco Creek Restoration Association](#), takes visitors on a tour of one of the six Rattling Creek limestone sand dosing sites that helps restore damage to the stream from acid rain.

The [Wiconisco Creek Watershed](#) is approximately 42 miles long and covers 116 square miles in Dauphin and Schuylkill counties. The ongoing effects of abandoned coal mines, impacts from acid rain and poor agricultural practices in many instances have created a number of severe problems affecting water quality in this watershed.

A number of restoration efforts have already been undertaken, including: limestone dosing of Rattling Creek to reduce acidity, treatment of the Porter Tunnel discharge to reduce acidity and iron discharges, and a project currently underway to eliminate iron from [Bear Creek](#) near Lykens.

Another project to improve fish habitat in Wiconisco Creek adjacent to the [Ned Smith Center](#) has been designed and will be completed during the summer of 2007 with the help of the [Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited](#).

A Rivers Conservation Plan was developed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources which will aid in directing future restoration work on the Wiconisco and



its tributaries. It was based on earlier work done by the [Susquehanna River Basin Commission](#).

Helping to guide the efforts is the Wiconisco Creek Task Force currently comprised of representatives from the Ned Smith Center, Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Fish and Boat Commission, Wiconisco Creek Restoration Association, [Dauphin County Conservation District](#) and the Millersburg Borough Authority. The Department of Environmental Protection and the [Eastern](#) and [Western Coalitions](#) for Abandoned Mine Reclamation have also been key partners in restoration efforts.

Anyone who appreciates what the Wiconisco watershed once was and can visualize what it can represent for future generations in terms of improved water quality and recreational benefits should contact WCRA President Walt Finch at 717-647-4043 or send email to: walterfinch@comcast.net to offer support for the group's future restoration efforts.

(Article Contributed by Bob Pennell, Doc Fritchey Chapter Trout Unlimited)

Video Blog: [Walt Finch, Wiconisco Watershed Restoration Association](#)

On the Hill

Senators White, Musto Work on Environmental Reform Legislation

Senators Mary Jo White (R-Venango) and Ray Musto (D-Luzerne), Majority and Minority Chairs of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, are working on a series of proposed environmental reform bills for the new session. Here are several of the measures they plan to introduce—

Environmental Funds Reporting: “The Environmental Funds Reporting and Disclosure Act” would require the Department of Environmental Protection to provide a comprehensive update of all special funds and their expenditures, the number and nature of violations of environmental statutes and the number and nature of criminal referrals by DEP to the Attorney General for prosecution. The bill would also require that if fines and penalties collected by a specific fund increase more than five percent, the excess funds would be required to be transferred to the General Fund. *(Sen. White)*

Independent Counsel: Giving the Environmental Quality Board authority to appoint legal counsel independent of the Department of Environmental Protection to advise members on any matter before the Board. *(Sen. Musto)*

Review of Air Quality Plans: Specifically require the public availability of Clean Air State Implementation Plans on the Internet and submission of proposed and final SIPs for review by the Senate and House Environmental Resources and Energy Committees. *(Sen. White)*

Rulemaking Petitions: The Environmental Quality Board would be prohibited from accepting a rulemaking petition to regulate an emission or discharge which is not required to achieve, maintain or satisfy either a federal or state environmental statute. *(Sen. White)*

For more information, visit the [Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee webpage](#).

In Other News

Meetings Planned on How to Best Use Increased Federal Abandoned Mine Funding

U.S. Senator Arlen Specter, PA Congressmen John Peterson and Tim Murphy, John Dawes head of the Pennsylvania AML Coalition, Department of Environmental Protection Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management J. Scott Roberts met at an abandoned mine site near the Pittsburgh Airport in Bridgeville, Allegheny County, to mark passage of a 15 year extension to the federal Abandoned Mine Lands Trust Fund that will



(l to r) Congressman Peterson, U.S. Senator Specter, Scott Roberts and John Dawes

deliver over \$1 billion to Pennsylvania for abandoned mine reclamation.

In addition, the Commonwealth will have the option of setting aside up to 30 percent of its total annual grant for cleanup of acid mine drainage that pollutes or degrades over 5,000 miles of rivers and streams in Pennsylvania.

Under the new law, the collection and distribution of abandoned mine lands funds will be overseen by the U.S. Office of Surface Mining. Allocation of funds will no longer require congressional approval, and will allow Pennsylvania and other states with historic abandoned mine problems to engage in long-term planning and budgeting.

The existing tax on the active mining industry, which is the primary source of income for the Abandoned Mine Lands Trust Fund, will be reduced by 20 percent over the next six years.

“The increased funding will be phased in over a five-year period, which will give us the opportunity to begin long-term planning and meet with local and state leaders to gather input on the future direction of Pennsylvania’s abandoned mine reclamation program,” Deputy Secretary Roberts said. “Although this extension does not change our mandate – we still have an obligation to reclaim the most dangerous sites – it will give us greater flexibility and allow us to accelerate the pace of that reclamation.”

DEP’s Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation is developing a fact sheet that will outline the changes in the new law and let local watershed and community groups know how OSM intends to allocate funds to clean up Pennsylvania’s ‘worst in the nation’ abandoned mine problem.

In addition, the department is planning to conduct a series of public outreach meetings to involve state and local elected officials, environmental and watershed groups, businesses, foundations and economic development organizations to explore options for addressing the host of problems faced by Pennsylvania’s former mining communities, and to look at opportunities presented by this historic legislation.

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The department will also be seeking input on alternative reclamation methods such as re-mining of abandoned sites under modern mining regulations, and investment in creative methods to turn mine drainage and mine lands into opportunities for economic development.

The Abandoned Mine Lands Trust Fund was created in 1977 with congressional passage of the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act. Under the Act, OSM inventoried abandoned mine sites nationwide, established a priority ranking system for the danger aspect of mine sites, and created an online database of abandoned mine problems in each state.

The original program expired in 1992 and was reauthorized through 2003. Congress passed temporary extensions of the program in 2004, 2005 and 2006. The current extension takes effect on October 1, 2007 and extends the collection and distribution of fees through 2021.

NewsClips: [5,000+ Mine Sites Will Be Cleaned Up](#)
[\\$1 Billion to Help Clean Up Mine Sites Across PA](#)
[State to Use Federal Funding to Clean Up Abandoned Mines](#)
[PA to Use Funding to Clean Up Most Dangerous Abandoned Mines](#)
[Environment for Change in PA's Abandoned Mines](#)

Farmers May Apply Now for Environmental Quality Incentive Program Grants

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service is now taking applications for the [Environmental Quality Incentives Program](#). Applications are due February 2.

EQIP—one of the largest programs in the 2002 Farm Bill—is a voluntary conservation program that provides producers with incentive payments for conservation activities that help limit soil erosion, improve water and air quality, and protect wildlife habitat.

New to EQIP this year is the Winter Cover Crop Program and Nutrient Management-Use Efficiency Program.

The cover crop program offers an annual incentive payment on eligible acres at \$20/acre/year, up to 100 acres per year for up to 3 years. Under this program, approximately \$1.2 million is available for winter cover crops.

Under the nutrient management-use efficiency program, Pennsylvania NRCS will reward producers who implement nutrient management techniques that go beyond the minimum requirements of the nutrient management standard. Incentive payments for the development and implementation of a nutrient management plan will be authorized on eligible acres for up to 3 years.

Producers engaged in livestock or agricultural production are eligible for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, pasture, private non-industrial forest land, and other farm or ranch lands. NRCS works with the participant to develop a conservation plan that identifies problems, land use objectives, and planned practices.

This plan becomes the basis of the cost-share agreement between NRCS and the participant. NRCS provides cost-share payments to landowners under these agreements that can be up to 10 years in duration.

For more information about the program, visit the [EQIP webpage](#), or contact your local USDA Service Center.

Get a Fishing Education Program Started in Your School Through “Physh Ed”

The Future Fisherman Foundation, the National Association for Sport and Physical Education and the Recreational Boating and Fishing Foundation are partnering to sponsor the Physical Education - "[Physh Ed](#)" – [Grants Initiative](#).

Applications for the 2007-2008 school year are due March 2.

These grants provide up to \$5,000 to physical education teachers to help establish a fishing and/or boating education program in their school. The grant is open to all K-12 PE teachers who are national members of the American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance.

Programs must expose at least one class period to the sports of fishing, boating, or a combination of both. Activities must include instruction in one or more of the following: spin-casting, bait-casting, fly fishing, ice fishing, canoeing, kayaking, or power boating. Supplementary activities may include fly tying, knot tying, resource management/conservation, water safety, or water rescue/CPR training.

Grants funds are not available to solely support clubs, after-school programs, or supplementary-education activities. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to include an after-hours program component. All equipment and/or materials purchased for a curriculum-based program may be used for any activity thereafter as deemed appropriate by the grant recipient.

Grant funds are available to all elementary, middle, or high school physical education instructors. Public school instructors must hold a current state physical educator certificate. Private or charter school instructors must be certified or hold a degree within a physical education domain. Grant funds under this initiative are not yet available to higher education institutions.

Applicants must be current national members of the American Alliance of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance for the length of the grant contract period.

[Applications and other grant requirements are available online.](#)

Grant applicants may contact the Future Fisherman Foundation at info@futurefisherman.org with questions regarding potential proposals.

Global ReLeaf 2007 Tree Planting Grants Available

Global ReLeaf, a program of American Forests is offering annual grants towards tree planting projects. Applications are due January 15 and July 1.

Grants are available to support rural seedling projects restoring damaged forest ecosystems. Global ReLeaf is particularly interested in partnering with private and public sector organizations and agencies to plant trees and improve the environment in projects that would otherwise not be feasible.

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

Reminder: Water Resources Education Network Grant Applications Due April 2

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The [Water Resources Education Network](#) is soliciting proposals for its next round of Water Resources Education Grants. Applications are due April 2.

Partnerships of organizations in Pennsylvania such as watershed associations, civic groups, community water systems, governmental entities (including municipal authorities), and other public interest organizations are all eligible. All partners must play an active role in the project.

Educational projects that raise awareness about protecting the community's drinking water source and/or preventing non-point source pollution in the watershed. Projects must aim at building an informed citizenry who will protect water resources with actions at home, at work, and within the community, including encouraging local officials to make decisions that will promote clean water.

Grants will be awarded up to \$5,000 per project for projects that must be completed during the period July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008.

Grantees must attend Orientation Meeting in mid-June, 2007 (date and location TBA) to network with other WREN grantees and receive resources and tools. There is no cost to the grantee to attend.

Applications may be sent or hand delivered to the office of League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania CEF, 226 Forster Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102-3220 (no faxed or emailed applications).

[Applications are available online](#). To receive an application, send email to wren@palwv.org or call 800-692-7281 ext 10.

Delaware Estuary Experts to Converge on Conference and Summit

On January 22-24, several hundred scientists, resource managers and environmentalists from throughout the tri-state region will descend upon Cape May, N.J., to convene at the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary's second-ever [Delaware Estuary Science Conference](#).

For three days, these experts will deliberate regarding the current issues and future needs of the Delaware Estuary, one of the most industrialized ecosystems in the world.

In addition, the [Delaware Estuary Environmental Summit](#), a new event occurring simultaneously with the science conference, will bring together environmental organizations and other interested parties to showcase and discuss their past activities that have resulted in environmental improvements. Participants at the summit will also have an opportunity to network with environmental scientists while discussing their respective roles in conservation.

Those in attendance will look to build on the momentum of the last conference by listening to speakers, taking part in roundtable discussions, and engaging in regular and special topic sessions.

Those interested in attending can still register by downloading and submitting registration forms available at [Delaware Estuary Partnership website](#) .

The theme of this year's conference will be "Linking Science, Management and Policy to Set Achievable Environmental Goals in the Delaware Estuary."

"In 2005 we brought together representatives from agencies, nonprofits, and academia, groups which rarely interact directly with one another, and this resulted in fertile discussions about science and management needs for the region," said Dr. Danielle Kreeger, science director at the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary. "This time, we'll

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focus our attention on how to address those needs and chart meaningful environmental targets.”

The precedent for such communication will be set forth by Keynote Speaker, Dr. Scott Nixon, professor of oceanography at the University of Rhode Island. Among other topics, Nixon plans to discuss the national importance of the Delaware Estuary.

The desired outcomes of the conference and summit are to exchange information, address scientific needs, respond to emerging issues, identify and set environmental goals, and link science and management to policy. More than anything, however, organizers wish to build on the energy generated within the scientific and management community in 2005 and foster creative collaborations among diverse stakeholders.

Currently the cost is \$200 for professionals or \$110 per day, and students pay just \$95. This includes admission to both the science conference and environmental summit, five meals, including three lunches and two dinners, and refreshments during frequent breaks. Room reservations and directions to this year’s venue, the Grand Hotel, can be secured by calling 800-257-8550 toll free.

The Delaware Estuary Science Conference is a biennial event, meaning the next opportunity for attendance will not take place until early 2009. For more information, please contact Natalie Ignacio at 800-445-4935, extension 104.

Event programs are available for download at [Delaware Estuary Partnership website](#).

DEP Invites Comments on TMDL for Crawford County Watershed

The Department of Environmental Protection this week invited comments on a proposed Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for Coon Run Watershed in Crawford County.

DEP will hold a public meeting on February 1 at the Northwest Regional Office in Meadville beginning at 9:00 a.m. to take comments. Comments are due March 6.

For more information contact Erin Stuart, DEP, 814-332-6984 or send email to: estuart@state.pa.us.

Visit [DEP’s TMDL webpage](#) to see a copy of the proposed TMDL.

Workshop on Fish Health in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed January 23-25

A regional [Fish Health Workshop](#) will be held in Shepherdstown, WV from January 23-25 with an objective to synthesize what is known about fish health and disease in the Chesapeake Bay watershed including a summary of prevalence and affected species.

The first day of the workshop is an open session for any interested participants. A series of comprehensive overviews of fish health concerns and topics are scheduled, presented by the region’s experts for these issues.

Focus topics will include: mycobacteriosis in striped bass, ulcerative lesions and fish kills associated with "secondary" bacterial infections (ulcerative mycosis in menhaden, fish mortalities in the Shenandoah, Potomac, and Juniata Rivers), neoplastic alterations in fish, algae-induced fish disease and mortalities, and endocrine disruptor impacts on regional fish populations.

For more information, visit the [Fish Health Workshop webpage](#).

PA Section Amercian Water Works Assn. Announces 2007 Training Schedule

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The PA Section of the American Water Works Association this week announced their 2007 training schedule.

Nearly 50 training sessions have been scheduled on a variety of operation, maintenance and environmental management aspects of managing water systems, many for credit under the Department of Environmental Protection's operator continuing education requirements program.

[Download the list of programs.](#)

For more information, visit the [PA – American Water Work Association website.](#)

Is Your Flood Insurance Up-to-Date?

Floods and flash floods can happen anytime of year and almost anywhere. If you're in areas that could be flooded, make sure your flood insurance is up-to-date.

Regular homeowners policies do NOT cover flood damage. Only flood insurance provides you coverage from potentially devastating losses.

To find out if you live in a flood-prone area, visit the [Flood Risk webpage](#). But, to be sure, contact your local township, borough or county.

To learn more, go to the www.FloodSmart.gov website.

Bowman's Hill Preserve Hosts Ecological Landscaping Symposium

The Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve presents its 7th Annual Land Ethics Symposium: [Creative Approaches for Ecological Landscaping](#) on February 15.

The Symposium focuses on ways to create economical and ecologically balanced landscapes using native plants and restoration techniques. It is geared towards landscape architects, designers, contractors and other members of the landscape/horticulture industry, environmental consultants, public and private landowners, land planners, managers and developers, state and municipal officials, and students.

Featured speakers include: Keith Bowers, RLA, Founder/President of Biohabitats, Inc., "Conservation Design, Best Development Practices;" S. Edgar David, MLA, RLA; Principal of S. Edgar David and Associates, "Integrating Nature, Culture and Art;" Jeffrey Featherstone, Director of the Center for Sustainable Communities, Temple University Ambler, "Stormwater Management from a Watershed Perspective;" Roger Latham, Ecologist, Conservation Biologist and Environmental Planner, "Native Grasslands and Meadows in Pennsylvania: Their History and Current Condition;" and Edmund C. Snodgrass, President of Emory Knoll Farms Inc. and Green Roof Plants, "Green Roofs as Living Machines."

This event is co-sponsored by Solebury Township, County of Bucks Office of the Commissioners, Andropogon Associates and the PA/DE Chapter of American Society of Landscape Architects.

Landscape architects, designers, contractors and other members of the landscape/horticulture industry; public and private landowners; land planners, managers and developers; environmental consultants; state and municipal officials; and students would benefit from this program.

The Symposium will be held at the Sheraton Bucks County Hotel, Langhorne, PA.

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Credits for the program will be provided by the Pennsylvania State Board of Landscape Architects, Association of Professional Landscape Designers, Pennsylvania Landscape & Nursery Association, Pennsylvania Certified Horticulturist and Certified Landscape Technicians.

Pre-registration with payment required by February 5, 2007.

For more information, visit the [Creative Approaches for Ecological Landscaping webpage](#). Or contact Hildy Ellis by sending email to ellis@bhwp.org or calling 215-862-2924.

DCNR Solicits PA Heritage Areas Grant Applications

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources announced this week it is accepting applications for the [Pennsylvania Heritage Area Program](#).

The deadline for applications is April 13. (*PA Bulletin notice*)

Eligible projects must seek to develop and protect the historic, cultural, natural, scenic and recreational resources within a Heritage Area to enhance regional economic development.

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

For more information, visit the [Pennsylvania Heritage Area Program webpage](#) or contact C. Alan Chace, Chief, Greenways & Conservation Partnerships Division, DCNR, 717-783-5877.

The Nature Conservancy Commits \$3.5 Million To Protect Land in PA

Pennsylvania's diverse wildlife has nearly 500 additional acres forever protected across the state thanks to local conservationists and a \$3.5 million commitment from [The Nature Conservancy in Pennsylvania](#).

The newly protected habitat includes a riparian corridor along the pristine [French Creek](#) near Meadville in Northwestern Pennsylvania's Crawford County, endangered Bog Turtle habitat in [Cherry Valley](#) in Northeastern Pennsylvania, woodland vernal pools at [Minsi Lake](#) in Northampton County and [South Mountain](#) in Cumberland County, and old-growth forests at [Woodbourne Preserve](#) near Dimock.

The 50-year-old conservation organization, whose mission is to protect the diversity of life on earth, identified five critical parcels that are habitat for Pennsylvania's unique biodiversity and, through acquisition and conservation easements, took action to protect the land for future generations.

The acquired riparian corridor along French Creek, a major tributary of the Allegheny River, comprises forests and floodplains as well as 1,800 feet of frontage on the famed river. French Creek is the most biologically diverse river in the northeastern United States and contains 28 species of native mussels and 89 species of native fish, including almost all of the native species that were present when George Washington followed the

river before the French and Indian War. It is possibly the only river in the entire Ohio drainage whose ecosystem remains this intact.

The riparian forests along the river create a migratory funnel for birds on their way to Lake Erie and beyond, and the watershed contains Pennsylvania's largest wetland and most of the natural glacial lakes found in Northwestern Pennsylvania.

"We're delighted to protect French Creek, one of our state's aquatic treasures. In addition to its ecological importance, we're proud this property is The Nature Conservancy's most recent land acquisition in western Pennsylvania," said Bill Kunze, The Nature Conservancy's state director in Pennsylvania.

"Protection of this property, which includes streamside forests, will help safeguard countless aquatic species including a number of rare mussels and freshwater fish which thrive in this relatively intact and pristine watershed," added Darran Crabtree, director of conservation science at the Conservancy's French Creek Project.

The streamside forests on The Nature Conservancy land offer critical riparian protection to the rich aquatic species, plants and animals found here. Wooded areas act as natural filters for runoff and sediment and help maintain high water quality. The site is especially ecologically valuable because of its proximity to some of the best rare mussel and fish habitats on Earth. This section of French Creek harbors a rich population of northern riffleshell, a federally endangered freshwater mussel. This species, along with others such as clubshell has disappeared from approximately 95 percent of its original range throughout the Mid-West. As a result, many mussel species in French Creek and the Allegheny River represent the best remaining populations available.

Protection of French Creek helps address numerous threats to this natural area. They include increased inappropriate development and the spread of invasive species such as the tenacious zebra mussel. Loss of riverbank stability and riparian forests, as well as increases in nutrient run-off, can lower water quality and impact the rich variety of aquatic life found here.

Funding for this acquisition comes, in part, from support of French Creek area residents and riverside neighbors. Additional funding was provided by grants from The Gott Family Foundation, Drs. Carolyn and Paul Rizza, and the Bonnie and Joe Kies Land Acquisition Fund. The Kies Fund provides a one-to-one match to the Nature Conservancy for conservation work in the French Creek area. In addition to maximizing donor dollars in the French Creek area, the Kies Fund also provides for matching funds for the Conservancy's work throughout Pennsylvania.

For more information, visit [The Nature Conservancy/Pennsylvania webpage](#).
NewsClip: [Conservancy Buys 17 Acres to Help Preserve French Creek](#)

DCNR Issues 2006 Accomplishments Report

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources issued a 2006 accomplishments report in the latest issue of its [Resource online newsletter](#).

"This new year is an exciting and challenging time for DCNR," said DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis. "Some of our most rewarding accomplishments have included: the success of the [Pennsylvania Wilds](#) nature tourism initiative; our work on stakeholder involvement leading up to the creation of our Action Plan and the course it has set us on; the successful passage of Growing Greener II to fund improvements to state park and forests, protect open space and support community recreation and revitalization;

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connecting people to the outdoors through [TreeVitalize](#), which is restoring tree cover in southeastern Pennsylvania, and the [Get Outdoors PA](#) recreation effort; and our new, regional approach to conserving landscapes such as in the Lehigh Valley Greenways initiative.”

Here are links to DCNR’s major accomplishments in 2006—

- [Stewardship and Management of State Parks and Forests](#);
- [Statewide Land Conservation](#);
- [Maintain Attractive and Sustainable Communities](#);
- [Outdoor Connections for Citizens and Visitors](#); and
- [Building Capacity](#).

For more information, visit the [Resource online newsletter](#).

PennDOT Anti-Litter Program Earns National Acclaim

The PA Department of Transportation announced this week it has won a [Keep America Beautiful Award](#), presented by the U.S. Department of Transportation, for its success in highway beautification.

The award recognizes states for their support of Keep America Beautiful programs and to highlight the importance of anti-litter programs that involve public/private partnerships.

Besides Pennsylvania, the departments of transportation in Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee and Texas also won.

PennDOT also was recognized for its support of Keep America Beautiful’s Great American Cleanup program. As part of the [2006 Great Pennsylvania Cleanup](#) last April, local government leaders, business and trade organizations, community groups and ordinary citizens teamed to remove litter from community parks, roads and streams, and in vacant lots.

Started in 1990, [PennDOT’s Adopt-A-Highway Program](#) has 7,125 participating groups involving more than 131,000 volunteers who have adopted 16,283 miles of state-maintained roadways.

Groups interested in participating in the Adopt-A-Highway program should contact their local PennDOT district office.

Do the “ROT” Thing, Chester County Offers Free Master Composting Classes

The Chester County Board of Commissioners, through the Chester County Solid Waste Authority, is offering free [Certified Master Composting Classes](#) at three convenient locations.

Attendance is required during all three weeks to become certified. Identical classes are held at each location. All classes begin at 7:00 p.m. at these locations--

- Chester County Solid Waste Authority, 7224 Division Highway, Narvon: March 5, 12 & 19;
- Chester County Government Services Center – Room 171, 601 Westtown Road, West Chester: March 6, 13 & 20; and
- Owen J. Roberts Middle School, 981 Ridge Road, Pottstown: March 7, 14 & 21.

Trainees will learn how to compost, how to construct various compost bins, how to grasscycle, leafcycle and how to reduce food waste by vermi-composting. The Chester County Solid Waste Authority will provide training, materials, volunteer opportunities and support.

To register or for more information, call 610-273-3771 ext. 228 or visit the [Certified Master Composting Classes webpage](#).

Pittsburgh's Convention Center Releases 2006 Green Practices Report Card

Pittsburgh's [David L. Lawrence Convention Center](#), the world's largest certified green building and the first of its kind in the world, released highlights of the facility's 2006 green practices in a special report card.



Through green management practices, the Convention Center:

- Recycled 65,480 pounds of paper and cardboard - enough to save more than 557 trees and 229,000 gallons of water;
- Recycled 1,720 pounds of glass, plastic and aluminum-- creating the amount of needed energy to keep a 100-watt bulb burning for nearly 30 years;
- Reclaimed more than 4.75 million gallons of water through the Convention Center's water treatment facility-- the amount of water saved provides enough water to run 317,000 standard dishwashers;
- Reused approximately 1,500 wooden pallets -- approximately 30,000 pounds of pallets that were sent to a local pallet vendor; and
- The Convention Center's natural ventilation system for 58 event days (representing 33 percent of the Exhibit Hall event days) eliminated the need for artificial heating and cooling of the space

"As the results indicate, there is a significant environmental impact when meeting planners, exhibitors, attendees and the facility's staff pull together to conserve resources," explained Mark Leahy, general manager of the David L. Lawrence Convention Center. "In fact, even our service partners are committed to our green practices. Levy Restaurants, our exclusive food service provider, purchases fresh-grown products from local farms including organic items."

According to Leahy, effective green practices are designed to operate smarter and more resourcefully each year.

"Processes change. New technologies create greater efficiencies. Through ongoing research (both our own and that of our service partners) we learn about new opportunities and ultimately purchase smarter," said Leahy. "For example, Levy Restaurants is now using biodegradable and compostable and disposable materials and utensils. These practices and results are reinforcing the community's belief that greening has a short and long-term positive impact on Pittsburgh and the region."

The [David L. Lawrence Convention Center](#), which opened in 2003, is owned and operated by the Sports and Exhibition Authority of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County and managed by SMG.

2006 High Performance Green Schools Planning Grants Program Opens

The Governor's Green Government Council announce the continuation of the [High Performance Green Schools Planning Grants Program](#) for FY 2006-07.

To encourage school districts to invest in these high caliber facilities, High-Performance Green Schools Planning Grants will help defray costs which are not typically included in the design fee, but which are critical to the design of a high performance building.

There is no deadline for applications, but awards will be made on a first come, first served basis.

Visit the [High Performance Green Schools Planning Grants Program webpage](#) for more information.

800 Pound Butter Sculpture at Farm Show to be Converted to Biodiesel

The 800 pound butter sculpture depicting both Benjamin Franklin and America's Liberty Bell displayed at the Pennsylvania Farm Show next week will be recycled by Philadelphia-based [Fry-o-Diesel, LLC](#), into cleaner-burning biodiesel.

Philadelphia Fry-o-Diesel is actively seeking a site to build a commercial production facility in Philadelphia that will make biodiesel from restaurant grease that can be used in most oil burners and diesel engines without retrofit.

By creating a use for this waste product, Philadelphia Fry-o-Diesel aims to increase business for grease collectors, reduce disposal costs for restaurants and allow municipalities to better enforce grease handling regulations.

The Department of Environmental Protection provided an Energy Harvest grant that partially funded Philadelphia Fry-o-Diesel's pilot plant and, more recently, an Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant toward the development of a commercial production facility.

The [Pennsylvania Farm Show](#) runs from January 6 through 13.

Online Video: [Agriculture Secretary Wolff Unveils Farm Show Butter Sculpture](#)

IRS Increases Employers, Employee Commuter Benefit Tax Incentives

The IRS has increased the amount employers and employees can set aside in qualified, tax-free transportation fringe benefit plans to \$1,320 for 2007, [Commuter Services of South Central Pennsylvania](#) reported this week.

"Participating in the transportation fringe benefit plan helps employers to get an edge in recruiting and retaining workers. We often hear from employers in this region that this is their greatest challenge," said Rich Farr, vice chair of the Susquehanna Regional Transportation Partnership and executive director of the York County Transportation Authority.

Similar in tax treatment to health savings accounts, the pre-tax payroll deductions up to \$110 per month can be used by commuters to pay for vanpools and transit, or the employer can pay for the benefit. Commuters save money by reducing their federal taxable income and their commuting costs. Employers save by reducing payroll taxes, such as Social Security and Medicare.

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Transit agencies partnering with Commuter Services include: Adams County Transit Authority; County of Lebanon Transit Authority (COLT); Red Rose Transit Authority (Lancaster); York County Transportation Authority (rabbittransit); and Capital Area Transit (CAT, Cumberland-Dauphin-Harrisburg).

CAT, rabbittransit, Red Rose Transit, and Colt all accept TransitChek and QuickPay, which are ways that employers can provide the qualified fringe benefit program. TransitCheks and QuickPay are used to buy passes, tokens or tickets.

The new \$110 monthly maximum benefit is more than enough to cover current costs of monthly transit passes for these regional transit agencies.

Employers can contact Commuter Services regarding the options for taking advantage of the federal transportation tax benefit, provided by the IRS under Code Sec. 132(f)(2).

Visit the [Commuter Services of South Central PA website](#). Commuter Services, which serves seven counties that have more than 800,000 commuters, promotes transit use and vanpooling as two of several alternatives to driving alone to work.

Intern Wanted: PHMC Seeking Environmental History Summer Intern

The State Museum of Pennsylvania in Harrisburg, in partnership with the Pennsylvania Association of Environmental Professionals, is offering a full time, paid internship for Summer 2007 in the field of Environmental History.

Application deadline is January 26.

This internship, open to upper level undergraduate and graduate students, will include research to inform the development of an exhibit on Pennsylvania conservationists, to be installed in the museum's Ecology Hall; as well as possible support for other environmental history related projects currently under development.

This internship is being administered in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission's Keystone Internship Program and will conform to the general requirements and parameters of that program.

The Environmental History intern will work Monday through Friday for 12 weeks, from May 21 to August 10, 2007; some accommodation may be made for an individual unavailable for the entire 12 week period. The stipend for the full 12 weeks is \$3,500.

The intern will work directly with a State Museum staff mentor as well as have an opportunity to learn about PHMC's multiple functions through a series of staff presentations and field trips. He or she will give an informal presentation on his/her work at the end of the summer; and the intern's work will be formally evaluated at the conclusion of the internship.

As with all PHMC internships, the Environmental History Internship is understood as a structured educational experience, designed to provide hands-on, real world experience in the field of public history to complement a student's academic work. Applicants are encouraged, though not required, to seek academic credit for their work.

To apply, complete an application for the Keystone Internship Program and indicate an interest in the Environmental History internship.

[Application materials available online.](#)

Questions may be addressed to Linda Shopes, PHMC Internships Coordinator, 717-772-3257 or by sending email to: lshopes@state.pa.us

Video Blog Feature

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Offers Unique Experience for Birdwatchers, Hikers

As the world's first refuge for birds of prey, [Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#) in Kempton, Berks County that started during the Great Depression with an amateur ornithologist by the name of Richard Pough, offers a dramatic and compelling experience for birdwatchers, hikers and nature lovers.

[Dr. Keith L. Bildstein](#), Director of Conservation Science at the Sarkis Acopian Center at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, talks about the history of the Sanctuary and current programs, including its international internship program.



In 1929, the Game Commission placed a \$5 price tag on the goshawk's head—a grand sum in Depression years. Two years later, while Pough was a recent college graduate living in Philadelphia, he became one of a growing number of conservationists opposed to the widespread movement to eradicate wildlife predators, including predatory birds.

Pough heard of the place locals called "Hawk Mountain" and decided to visit. There he saw gunners stationed, shooting hundreds of passing hawks for sport. He returned to gather the carcasses lying on the forest floor and take photographs. Pough unsuccessfully tried to stop the shooting himself, but his photographs were eventually seen by a national conservation activist-New Yorker [Rosalie Edge](#).

In 1934, Mrs. Edge came to Hawk Mountain and leased 1,400 acres. She installed a warden on the property, a New England bird enthusiast named Maurice Broun, and Maurice's wife and bird conservation partner, Irma Broun.

The shooting stopped immediately and the next year, Mrs. Edge opened the Sanctuary to the public as a place to see the beautiful, but persecuted birds of prey. She purchased and deeded the 1,400 acres to Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association, incorporated in 1938 as a non-profit organization in Pennsylvania.

During the 2006 Fall migration season, more than 25,000 hawks and other birds of prey safely migrated passed Hawk Mountain.

[Listen to Lale Aktay](#), an intern from Turkey who is midway through a four month international internship at the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, as she talks about how her background, her projects at Hawk Mountain and what she plans to do with her experience when she returns to her native Turkey.

The [Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Visitors Center](#) offers birdwatchers, students and visitors with an introduction to the history of Hawk Mountain.

The [Acopian Center at Hawk Mountain](#) offers unique facilities for visiting professors, the international interns working at the Sanctuary and the public. The main Center building holds the library, research facilities and meeting spaces. Two other buildings house rooming facilities for interns and apartments for visiting professors. The grounds around the Center offer several trails for birdwatching and a wetland for handling stormwater from the facilities.

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The [South Lookout at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#) is the first of several lookouts visitors to this unique educational resource come to on the trail going up the mountain. The Lookout is about a 20 minute walk from the Hawk Mountain Visitors Center along a trail that varies from smooth to somewhat rocky.

The [North Lookout at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#) is the largest of the many lookouts for raptor watchers. The Lookout is about a 45 minute walk from the Hawk Mountain Visitors Center along a trail that varies from smooth to rocky.

Visitors come for the Fall and Spring migration seasons and many other times of the year to [Hawk Mountain Sanctuary](#).

Video Blog: [Dr. Keith L. Bildstein & Hawk Mountain Video Postings](#)

Quick Clips

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

[State Touts Township Trash Tactics](#)
[Elementary Students Join Clean-up Effort](#)
[Students for Recycling Helps School Turn Plastic Into Cash](#)
[Recycling Campaign Features Mayor's Photos](#)
[State Reduces Schuylkill's West Nile Grant](#)
[Birdwatchers Conduct Annual Survey](#)
[Collector Aims to Restore Chestnut Tree](#)
[Pennypack Trust Purchases Pitcairn Tract](#)
[Bushcreek Trail Could be Available in Spring](#)
[Conservancy Buys 17 Acres to Help Preserve French Creek](#)
[Allegheny Power Plans 4 – 15% Rate Hikes](#)
[Duquesne Light Required to Keep Power Plant Operating](#)
[Future Ushered in With Clean Energy](#)
[Fuel Plan Goes with the Grain, Against Herd](#)
[Biofuel Recipe Adds Chicken Fat](#)
[Heating Prices Low Thanks to Mildness](#)
[Wind Power Contract From Somerset Will Reduce Customer's Energy Costs](#)
[DEP Issues Permit for Combined Cycle Generating Facility](#)
[Op-Ed: Sequestering Carbon Can Fight Global Warming](#)
[Editorial: PA & Fight Against Global Warming](#)
[Paul King Reappointed to PEC Board](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Schuylkill's Environmental Advisory Council Proposed Ordinance on Tree Cutting](#)
[Bradford Makes More Money Available for Stream Stabilization](#)
[Group Prepares for First Study of Watershed](#)
[Neshaminy Creek is Nearly Hidden Pearl](#)

[5,000+ Mine Sites Will Be Cleaned Up](#)
[\\$1 Billion to Help Clean Up Mine Sites Across PA](#)
[State to Use Federal Funding to Clean Up Abandoned Mines](#)
[PA to Use Funding to Clean Up Most Dangerous Abandoned Mines](#)
[Environment for Change in PA's Abandoned Mines](#)

Regulations

The Environmental Quality Board published a final rule [changing the stream designations](#) for Newtown Creek and other streams. The [EQB meets January 17](#) to consider proposed regulations on streamlining the air quality permitting requirements and considering a petition restricting the idling of diesel-powered vehicles.

The Legislative Reference Bureau this week formally notified the Department of Environmental Protection it does not have the authority under the Regulatory Review Act to publish the final rule setting mercury emission limits on power plants until the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee has the opportunity to complete its review of the regulation.

The review period starts for the Senate Committee January 22, if they are named by that date. The Committee then has 10 days to review the rule and report out a resolution blocking the rule permanently from publication. The resolution must then be passed by both the Senate and House and be presented to the Governor for his action.

Link: [Senate, House to Resume Review of Controversial Mercury Rule Next Year](#)

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – January 6, 2007](#)

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

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

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

Technical Guidance & Permits

The Public Utility Commission published its [final policy statement](#) on implementing the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act. The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources [published notice of its reorganization](#). The Department of Environmental Protection published [notice of its intent to reissue](#) the General Permit for Stripper Well Discharges ([PA Bulletin Page 70](#)).

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

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

Calendar of Upcoming Events

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

- [DEP No Cost Internet Environmental Remediation Training](#)
- [DEP Published Notice of Advisory Committee Meetings for 2007.](#)
- **January 10** – DEP [Water Resources Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **January 11** – DEP [Solid Waste Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **January 16** – Inauguration of Gov. Rendell for second term.
- **January 16** – First day of session for the Senate and House.
- **January 17** – [Environmental Quality Board](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:00.
- **January 17** – [DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 11:00.
- **January 17** – [DEP Coastal Zone Advisory Committee](#) meeting. 10th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **January 18** – DCNR [Snowmobile and ATV Advisory Committee](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building, 9:00.
- **January 24** – DEP [Small Business Compliance Advisory Committee](#) meeting. 12th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **January 25** – DEP [Mining and Reclamation Advisory Board](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **January 26** – [Regional Water Management Task Force](#) – SW PA Elected Officials Briefing. Regional Learning Alliance, 850 Cranberry Woods Dr., Cranberry Township. 412-624-7792. 2 to 4 p.m.
- **February 8** – Sewage Task Force, Joint Conservation Committee. Penn Stater, State College. 10:00.
- **February 15** – Legislative Forestry Task Force Meeting, Joint Conservation Committee. Penn Stater Conference Center, State College. 10:00.
- **March 3** – [Schuylkill Watershed Congress](#). Montgomery County Community College, Pottstown.
- **March 18-20:** [Governor’s Outdoor Conference](#). State College.
- **April 5-6:** [Preparing for the Storm: Stormwater Solutions for PA Communities](#). State College.

DEP Calendar of Events

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

Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar

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

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

Helpful Web Links

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

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

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

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

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

Stories Invited

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

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

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