

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Holston & Crisci

November 13, 2006

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

Governor Outlines Priorities for Second Term, House Majority Still Tentative



Thank a Veteran

Gov. Rendell began to lay out his priorities for “Rendell 2” this week after easily winning his bid for re-election. They include items like transportation funding, promoting alternative and renewable fuels, governmental reform, health insurance for low-income adults and raising the state Sales Tax to provide more property tax relief.

The Rendell Administration set up a transportation task force last year to study funding options for highways, bridges and mass transit which is due to issue its report next week. They have tentatively identified from \$800 million to \$2.2 billion in annual funding needs.

The task force looked at a variety of funding options, including a higher sales and personal income taxes and a higher realty transfer tax as well as privatizing certain highways to make up the funding gap.

Republicans and Democrats in the House are also looking at the future when they return to session November 13, but their issue is a little more basic—who will have the majority next year? And who will be the leaders in each Caucus as well as Appropriations Chair (for the Republicans at least).

Right now Republicans have a tentative hold on the majority with 102 to 101 seats, however, both sides are looking very closely at the 19 votes and the remaining absentee ballots in Chester County’s 156th District.

There are also two other very close state House results—District 70 in Montgomery County- where Republican Jay Moyer held a 69 vote edge in a three way race and in District 3 in Erie County where Republican Rep. Good is losing his seat by 110 votes.

There was no change in the make up of the Senate – 29 Republicans and 21 Democrats, but Senate Republicans face the task of reorganizing their leadership and electing a new chair for Appropriations when they return to session on November 20.

Stay tuned for more

Link: [2006 Election Results – PA Dept. of State](#)

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Session Schedule

The House will return to session on November 13. The Senate and House are scheduled to be in session on November 20 and 21.

[PA Environment Digest Video Blog](#)

- Volunteers Join In 29th Street Cleanup Along the Capital GreenBelt
- 2006 River Sojourn Season a Success!

On the Hill

- On the Senate/House Agenda/On Governor's Desk
- Bills on the Governor's Desk

Other News

- National Fish Habitat Initiative Focuses on Restoring, Protecting Critical Habitat
- 2006 Green Business Award Recipients Announced in Chester County
- Legacy Property Fund Provides New Tool To Financially Support Conservation
- Parks and Forests Foundation Announces Cliff Jones Land Acquisition Fund
- Natural Gas Suppliers Brief PUC on Gas Supplies for This Winter
- PUC Sets Emergency Notification Requirements for Water Utilities
- Students! Applications For Ralph W. Abele College Scholarships Due May 5
- November Issue of EE Connections Newsletter Now Available
- Game, Fish & Boat Commission, Wild Resource Fund Have Holiday Gift Ideas
- Help Wanted: West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative

Opinion

- Pennsylvania Transportation Strategy Needs "Smart Growth" Principles, *By 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania*

Feature

- Game Commission Intensifies Efforts to Help Endangered Birds, *By Joe Kosack, Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist, Game Commission*

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

Video Blog

Volunteers Join in 29th Street Cleanup Along the Capital GreenBelt



[PA CleanWays](#) and the [Capital Greenbelt Association](#) lead a band of more than 30 volunteers in cleaning up a ravine next to Spring Creek and the Greenbelt along 29th Street in Harrisburg last weekend.

Learn how they did it and how you can too!

The volunteers removed nearly 4 tons of trash including almost 200 car and truck tires and nearly 250 shopping carts.

Video Blog: [29th Street Cleanup](#)

Video Blog

2006 River Sojourn Season a Success!

Sojourns are part expedition, part traveling party and part school field trip, but most of all they are a very fun way to learn about Pennsylvania's rivers, streams and lakes!

Justin Shellenberger, PA Sojourn Program Coordinator, talks about the role of sojourns in educating the public about our water resources and provides an overview of the record-breaking 2006 sojourn season.

Video Blog: [What's a Sojourn?](#)

Learn more by going to the [Pennsylvania's Sojourns webpage](#) or contact Justin Shellenberger by sending email to: jshellenberger@pawatersheds.org.



On the Hill

On the Senate/House Agenda/On Governor's Desk

These environmental bills are on the House calendar this week—

On the House Calendar: [House Bill 2067](#) (Allen-R-Schuylkill) setting limits on state spending through a constitutional amendment; [House Resolution 692](#) (Ross-R-Chester) directing the Environmental Resources and Energy Committee to study and report on the methods of reducing greenhouse gas emissions; [Senate Bill 410](#) (M.White-R-Venango) establishing the PA Center for Environmental Education; [Senate Bill 884](#) (Brightbill-R-Lebanon) limitations on state spending; [Senate Bill 940](#) (Waugh-R-York) would set aside up to \$200,000 per year from the Agricultural Conservation Easement Purchase Fund to reimburse Land Trusts for expenses incurred in acquiring agricultural conservation easements; and [Senate Bill 1025](#) (Madigan-R-Bradford) to establish a Clean Vehicle Program that gives automakers two options to comply— use the California II or federal Tier II vehicle emissions standards and forming a stakeholders group.

Bills on the Governor's Desk

[House Bill 1902](#) (Rubley-R-Chester) extending the \$2/ton Recycling Fee sunset date through 2012 was signed into law by the Governor this week.

In Other News

National Fish Habitat Initiative Focuses on Restoring, Protecting Critical Habitat

A two-year effort by fisheries policy and resource managers and other partners from across the United States has resulted in the first [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#).

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Dr. Doug Austen, Executive Director of Pennsylvania's Fish and Boat Commission, served as chair of the habitat plan working group.

"The importance of fish habitat has long been recognized as vital to sustaining the diverse fisheries resources across the United States and in Pennsylvania," said Dr. Austen. "Nationally, habitat loss is the primary cause of species decline and extinctions."

The Plan is designed to foster new national and local grassroots-driven efforts to address, measure and communicate the status and needs of aquatic habitats and is targeted toward fisheries protection, restoration and enhancement in key watersheds.

"In Pennsylvania, one existing effort that will likely become a recognized fish habitat partnership is the [Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture](#)," said Dr. Austen. "The efforts of the EBTJV include an impressive assessment of status and risk associated with brook trout populations that will lay out an efficient and effective strategy for conservation and protection of this important species."

"Science serves as the foundation for actions taken and for documenting the effects of these actions (in the Plan)," explained Dr. Austen. "As we learn more about what works and does not work, we will adapt our approach and management strategy."

The Plan was developed by an unprecedented coalition of anglers, conservation groups, scientists, state and federal agencies and industry leaders and with an emphasis on using partnerships to protect and restore fish habitat.

The Fish and Boat Commission has clearly recognized the significance of habitat in sustaining fishery resources by taking steps to create a new Division of Habitat Management and by hiring six new habitat specialists and other biologists to expand the Commission's habitat restoration efforts.

These new staff will work with the fisheries staff, other experts and local partners to identify critical habitat needs.

Dr. Austen encouraged watershed groups and others interested in developing new partnerships to contact Scott Carney, head of the new Division, at 814-353-2225 or by sending email to: rscarney@state.pa.us.

For more information, visit the [National Fish Habitat Action Plan](#) website.

2006 Green Business Award Recipients Announced in Chester County

The Chester County Board of Commissioners and the Chester County Chamber, with the support of the [Chester County Solid Waste Authority](#), recognized the 2006 Green Business Award recipients at this year's Annual Dinner.

The University of Pennsylvania-[New Bolton Center](#) received an award for their distinguished recycling and waste reduction practices.

Located in Kennett Square, New Bolton Center is a non-profit large animal teaching hospital and research facility located on approximately 700 acres with about 70 buildings, half of which are occupied by people.

New Bolton Center was challenged to establish a recycling collection program spread over a large geographic area with an unusual variety of buildings and services, not the typical business park or strip mall. It required the promotion and the necessary education on recycling procedures to the approximately 400 employees and 50 students there at any time.

In the first year they recycled: 8.9 tons of white, mixed office paper, newspaper and magazines; 17.6 tons of cardboard; 4.5 tons of glass bottles and cans; 5.7 tons of wood

skids which were made into mulch; 277 toner cartridges; 50 cell phones; 300 pounds of batteries; and 3.9 tons computers, hard drives and printers.

They reduced their trash bill by 33 percent in just one year by reducing their trash volume by 66 percent. Starting with 45 trash containers, they now have just 16. They stopped paying for huge boxes taking up space in dumpsters and stopped paying for the emptying of empty containers.

New Bolton Center is a model for those interested in resource conservation, waste reduction and reducing their waste disposal costs. Businesses who are concerned about “the bottom line” need to understand that even the extraordinary circumstances at the New Bolton Center did not stop them from developing a successful, cost effective program.

Legacy Property Fund Provides New Tool To Financially Support Conservation

The [Keystone Conservation Trust](#) has designed a new funding tool--the [Legacy Property Fund](#)-- for individuals and nonprofit groups interested in supporting conservation and environmental projects through the sale of homes and other real estate.

This summer the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society received nearly \$300,000 from a source of money it never had before due to the work done by the Trust.

This contribution used the proceeds from the sale of a donated summer cottage to benefit PHS’s future capital projects. The donation of the property to KCT allowed PHS’ donor, Alan Slack, to convert his cottage into cash, increase his return on his gift, lower his taxes, and provide him future retirement income.

For PHS, the Legacy Property Fund provided a new and significant means to increase capital for the organization in a short time, at no cost, and essentially without any effort. The ongoing goal for PHS is to use the Legacy Property Fund to provide PHS’ donors with a simple and meaningful way to leverage the enormous asset base of their homes to help PHS meet its mission.

“KCT brought the skills, capability and professional experience we needed to make sure the donation happened. It was the perfect connection for PHS” said Jane Pepper, President, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society. “KCT married the desires of the donor with the needs of our organization.”

For the donor, KCT’s Legacy Property Fund made it possible to increase his gift to PHS while saving 16 percent in taxes and generating future income for his retirement needs...truly a win-win-win.

The sales proceeds will be placed into a charitable gift annuity which will pay income to the donor until the time of his death, at which time PHS will receive the remaining principal for its capital needs.

For donor and PHS alike, unlocking the property’s value provided enormous satisfaction, funding, and meaning in the lives of many.

“PHS has been a major part of my adult life, and KCT’s Legacy Property Fund program afforded me the opportunity to help keep PHS financially sound in the future,” said Alan Slack, donor of property to KCT and PHS. “KCT led PHS in launching what is and will continue to be a very valuable and successful tool for philanthropy.”

For more information about [KCT’s Legacy Property Fund](#) and how it can enhance charitable giving, call Phil Wallis, President, [Keystone Conservation Trust](#) at 610-688-3151 or send email to: pwallis@keystoneconservation.org.

Here is a quick summary of how this new tool works--

Keystone Conservation Trust designed the Legacy Property Fund to provide maximum financial and philanthropic benefits to individuals and non-profit organizations through the sale of homes and other real estate. The tool also provides conservation benefits, relieves one of the burden of moving, and offers a powerful mechanism to demonstrate philanthropic leadership in one's community - generating new capital for philanthropy.

Much like the donation of an appreciated security, the donation of part or all of one's property into the Legacy Property Fund allows a donor to minimize taxes and transaction costs while maximizing philanthropic benefits according to one's own personal timetable and needs:

- Minimizes or eliminates capital gains tax at the time of sale, and instead converts the saved tax into a charitable gift while receiving an income tax deduction;
- Reduces transaction costs of the sale (i.e., transfer tax, brokers' and legal fees);
- Shifts the home from being an estate tax burden to a significant charitable asset and gifting opportunity within one's wealth management strategy; and
- Gives your preferred charity(ies) the full, higher donated value of the asset gift, not reduced by taxes and transaction costs.

The Legacy Property Fund tool, Keystone Conservation Trust also provides non-tax benefits to the donor and non-profit organization(s):

- Allows the donor to live on the property for as long as desired
- Handles all aspects (logistics and liability) of the donation and sales transaction
- Accepts and resells any residual property (furniture, etc.) for charitable benefit
- Distributes the net sales proceeds to charity(ies) of the donor's choice

The Trust offers significant conservation benefits to the donor and organization(s):

- Conserves the beauty of the donated property forever at the time of re-sale;
- Magnifies the conservation impact for an individual by pooling the individual's home sale proceeds in the Legacy Property Fund with the monies from others. The pooling increases the total amount and flexibility available through the Legacy Property Fund for critical conservation projects in need; and
- Protects our cherished natural and cultural resources from sprawling development.

The Legacy Property Fund allows donors of all income ranges and property values to consider meaningful gifts to their favorite charity(ies) through their home...a gift which many have never considered, can provide individual tax savings and can translate the savings into philanthropic gifts.

These "Homes for Philanthropy" can demonstrate philanthropic leadership at all levels for many.

Parks and Forests Foundation Announces Cliff Jones Land Acquisition Fund



The [Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation](#) announced the establishment of a land acquisition fund in honor of former board member Cliff Jones, according to Linda McKenna Boxx, Chairman of PPFF.

"As a founding member of PPFF, Cliff advocated strongly for the protection of land near state parks and forests and orchestrated several key acquisitions," said Boxx. "Cliff retired from the board this

year and we fellow board members wished to recognize his invaluable service in a way meaningful to him.”

“Cliff’s strong and steady hand helped shape PPFF through its formative stage. As its first chairman, I looked to Cliff often for advice and assurance, knowing his sincere interest in making sure this fledgling organization achieved success. Cliff brought to the board a long history of service, leadership and accomplishment, both to the Commonwealth and the environment.

“He served six Governors in cabinet positions as Secretary of Commerce, Secretary of Labor and Industry, and Secretary of Environmental Resources. He also served as Chairman and member of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission. He was President of Pennsylvanian’s for Effective Government and retired as President of the Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry.

“We thank Cliff for his service and wish him well.”

Contributions to the Fund may be sent to the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation, 105 North Front Street, Suite 305, Harrisburg, PA 17101.

Links: [Penn’s Stewards, Fall 2006 Issue, PPFF.](#)
[Central PA Conservancy Honors Dr. Cliff Jones as Conservationist of the Year](#)
[Welcome to Pennsylvania – Now Get Out!](#)

Natural Gas Suppliers Brief PUC on Gas Supplies for This Winter

The Public Utility Commission this week held its annual Winter Reliability Assessment meeting and heard indications that natural gas prices were nearly 25 percent lower this year than last.

The Energy Association of Pennsylvania, Columbia Gas of Pennsylvania, Duke Energy Gas Transmission, the Independent Oil & Gas Association of Pennsylvania and the Department of Public Welfare advised the PUC that they are prepared to serve utility customers and assist them for the upcoming winter.

The presenters discussed the various conditions that may affect supply, price and service reliability of natural gas and propane this winter.

The [Energy Association of Pennsylvania](#) said the state's natural gas distribution companies are seeing natural gas prices that are nearly 25 percent lower than last year. The NGDCs are working to identify supply resources necessary to preserve service reliability at anticipated levels of demand.

[Columbia Gas](#) reported that Columbia will have sufficient supplies to meet demand this winter and is seeing prices lower than last year's prices and similar so far to prices in the 2004-05 winter heating season.

[Duke Energy Gas Transmission](#), an interstate pipeline, informed the PUC that its storage inventories are above average this year and that will ensure reliable service for Pennsylvania customers.

The [Independent Oil & Gas Association of Pennsylvania](#) said there will be adequate levels of supply this year, because of record drilling levels over the past two years and the significant efforts of two Western Pennsylvania utilities to increase local gas production.

According to [AmeriGas](#), the U.S. overall inventory of winter propane supply is at the second highest level since 1993. Pennsylvania's propane inventories are at seasonal levels.

The [Department of Public Welfare](#) presented the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program's plans for assisting Pennsylvania consumers this winter. The opening day for consumers to apply for LIHEAP grants was on November 6, and the program will close on March 22, 2007.

For tips on saving energy this winter, visit the "[Prepare Now for Winter Gas Prices](#)" webpage.

PUC Sets Emergency Notification Requirements for Water Utilities

The Public Utility Commission this week voted unanimously to [adopt a new policy statement](#) to help water utilities further enhance service for their customers, including communications during unscheduled service interruptions, new methods to provide timely notice to the public and the availability of alternative water supplies during an outage.

"Today's action is aimed at providing further benefits to water service ratepayers," said Commission Chairman Wendell F. Holland. "It's about protecting public health and safety, and making sure utilities provide the best water service possible using the latest communications technology available."

The policy statement -- adopted after soliciting input from consumer advocates and water utilities -- advises water utilities of acceptable methods of public notification during unscheduled service interruptions, or situations that impact health and safety of water consumers such as "boil water" or "do not consume" orders.

It also encourages use of new technology to more readily deliver critical information to the public, the media and direct customer contacts, such as schools, health-care facilities and restaurants, closer to real time. Acceptable communication methods include taking advantage of the latest technology such as using automated dialer system notifications to affected ratepayers' landline or cellular telephones; sending email and text messages to affected ratepayers who have opted to receive such notifications; and utilizing websites.

The policy statement also highlights other types of acceptable communications with consumers, as well as sending fax and/or email notification to local radio and TV stations, cable systems and newspapers.

The policy statement also addresses the importance of making reasonable efforts to ensure adequate quantities of alternative supplies of water are made available in pre-determined, conspicuous and sufficient locations in the affected area.

When there is an unscheduled service interruption involving the quality of water, water utilities should follow Department of Environmental Protection public notification requirements. Timely notification of customers in other incidents affecting the quantity or quality of water, such as water in short supply, discolored or sediment-laden, is recommended.

Students! Applications For Ralph W. Abele College Scholarships Due May 5



High school seniors and current college students have until May 5 to submit applications for a [Ralph W. Abele Conservation Scholarships](#). This year one or more scholarships totaling up to \$4,000 will be awarded.

The Abele Scholarship was formed in 1991 as a living memorial to [Ralph W. Abele](#) who provided extraordinary leadership to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and to Pennsylvania's conservation movement.

Abele scholarships are considered for students giving a priority to seniors or graduates of the Greenwood Area School District in Perry County, second preference to residents of Perry County and children of employees of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and then other residents of Pennsylvania.

Applicants must be admitted to or enrolled in an approved institution of higher learning with a stated objective of studying one of the environmental disciplines at the undergraduate or graduate level.

A written application is required and the scholarship selection will be based on an applicant's potential, his or her interest in conservation education and demonstrated commitment to conservation.

For more information, visit the [Ralph W. Abele Conservation Scholarships webpage](#) for applications and background. For an electronic application, send email to: JGreene62@comcast.net.

November Issue of EE Connections Newsletter Now Available

The [November issue of EE Connections](#) newsletter from the [Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education](#) is now available online. The highlights from this month's issue include—

General News: Barn at Fallingwater Hosts Regional Photo Exhibition, Global Warming 101

K-12 News: Teacher Resources: E and E Series, Susquehanna Watershed Education Program, Cooking Grease to Fuel Buses, Growing a Nation, Fall's Journey South, Acting for Nature

Higher Education: Green Building Classroom Project, Online Watershed Course

Professional Development: Organic Waste Management Workshops, Environmental Permitting Workshops

Grants/Awards: 2007 Environmental Education Grants, Fishing and Aquatic Education Grants, Watershed Mini-Grants, Fall Essay Contest

To get your own copy, send an email to: info@pcee.org or visit the [EE Connections sign-up webpage](#).

Game, Fish & Boat Commission, Wild Resource Fund Have Holiday Gift Ideas

The Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission and the Wild Resource Conservation Fund each have online nature or outdoor shops full of holiday gift giving ideas.

As Pennsylvanians plan for the holiday gift-giving season, the Game Commission unveiled its 2007 calendar, priced at \$8.95 (plus tax and shipping), on "[The Outdoor Shop](#)" on the agency's website and at all Game Commission offices.

The 2007 calendar provides a listing of approved season dates from January 1-June 30, and tentative season dates for July 1-December 31, as well as a reminder about National Hunting & Fishing Day in September.

The 2007 calendar features a year's worth of dramatic wildlife photos taken by agency employees: Hal Korber, wildlife education specialist at the Harrisburg headquarters; Willard Hill, Game Lands maintenance supervisor in the Southcentral Region; Billie Cromwell, retired Food and Cover Crew foreman in Fulton County; Timothy C. Flanigan, retired Bedford County Wildlife Conservation Officer; Jacob Dingel, radio dispatcher in the Northwest Region Office; Joe Kosack, public information writer at the Harrisburg headquarters; and Willard Hill, Game Lands Maintenance Supervisor in the Southcentral Region.

The calendar also provides a brief overview of the Game Commission and a list of contact information for the agency's Harrisburg headquarters and six region offices.

The calendar and other holiday gift ideas are available through the Game Commission's [Outdoor Shop](#).

The Fish and Boat Commission also has a variety of publications, patches, videos and other potential holiday gifts available online through its own [Outdoor Shop](#).

For other wild resource gift ideas, visit the Wild Resource Conservation Fund's [Nature Shop](#).

Help Wanted: West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative

The [West Branch Susquehanna Restoration Initiative](#) is looking for a project manager to help direct a comprehensive and collaborative effort to restore the region's water resources.

This is a full-time position that reports directly to the Director of Abandoned Mine Programs, but will also be expected to work closely with local volunteer and partner leaders on project implementation.

In that capacity, project managers act as ambassadors for the fishery and river, making the case for its protection and restoration. They are coalition builders that work with the local community, TU volunteers, and other organization partners to build the team that will ultimately be responsible for implementing project activities. They must be entrepreneurial, organized, and problem-solvers to implement a wide variety of projects.

Salary and benefits are competitive and Trout Unlimited offers a flexible and collegial work environment.

Send resume, 1-2 page writing sample, and cover letter by November 24 to Amy Wolfe, Director of Abandoned Mine Programs, Trout Unlimited, P.O. Box 27, Mill Hall, PA 17751 or by email to: awolfe@tu.org.

Opinion

Pennsylvania Transportation Strategy Needs “Smart Growth” Principles By 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania

With Pennsylvania at a crossroads in its transportation investment strategy, the anticipated release on Monday of the Transportation Funding and Reform Commission's report will further the consensus that there is a real, immediate need for additional investments to restore Pennsylvania's roads, bridges, and other existing public transportation infrastructure.

However, equally important to the needed new funds to address the growing transportation, land use and infrastructure problems across Pennsylvania will be the reform of the decision-making of transportation investments so that spending is consistent with future goals of economic growth and development throughout the Commonwealth.

The 10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania's Campaign to Renew Pennsylvania is encouraging our leaders to employ smart growth principles, including:

- Pennsylvania must make investment in our existing infrastructure and communities our number one priority;
- Pennsylvania must adequately and sustainably fund public transportation authorities;
- Pennsylvania must employ smart growth principles that link land use and transportation funding. Local and regional planning organizations should be incentivized to invest in projects that support existing infrastructure; and
- By planning and designing projects in our communities more efficiently and supporting those designs with infrastructure investments, Pennsylvania can reshape current trends and provide for smart economic growth for the future.

For more information, visit the [10,000 Friends of Pennsylvania website](#).

Links: [Report Calls for Multi-Pronged Approach to Transportation/Transit Funding Growth, Resource Conservation Principles Released by Rendell Administration](#)
[Rendell to Call Special Mass Transit Session of General Assembly \(2004\)](#)

Feature

Game Commission Intensifies Efforts to Help Endangered Birds By Joe Kosack Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist Pennsylvania Game Commission



Piping Plover

Their foothold in Pennsylvania was never more than a few beachfronts on Presque Isle State Park in Erie County. And, to most beachgoers, their presence was largely undetected. But the loss of these handsome shorebirds as nesters is unfortunate, and something the Pennsylvania Game Commission and other partners are trying to reverse.

Piping plovers nested on the outer shores of Presque Isle into the early 1950s, and then apparently pulled stakes on their nesting grounds. It was a recurring reaction that haunted piping plovers throughout the Great Lakes region until their population collapsed under increasing - but unintentional - competition with humans for beachfront.

The piping plover's continuing struggles here and elsewhere in the Great Lakes region isn't exactly news. It's been on the federal endangered species list since 1985, and currently is listed as extirpated in Pennsylvania since the species hasn't built a nest in state in decades.

Nonetheless, piping plovers created a stir among Pennsylvania birders and wildlife managers over the past year because they appeared on a Presque Isle beach again. But not during seasonal migrations, which has been this reformed transient's pattern for some time. Rather, these plovers were spotted at Presque Isle's Gull Point Natural Area during the 2005 breeding season. The hope is that they were doing more than just passing through. Their timing suggests that they were.

Given their now established - although somewhat dubious - summer presence, and the fact that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) had previously designated Gull Point as a "critical habitat area" for the endangered piping plover, the Pennsylvania Board of Game Commissioners recently approved a staff request to step up its management of piping plovers and develop a detailed Pennsylvania conservation plan.

"Piping plover sightings at Presque Isle State Park during the summer of 2005 have created a stir among birders, because it suggests there is a chance these birds are looking for a nesting site," explained Dan Brauning, who supervises the Game Commission's Wildlife Diversity Program. "That hasn't happened for half a century in this state. For decades, Pennsylvanians only saw piping plovers passing through on migrations in the spring and fall. The summer sightings suggest something may have changed or is about to change.

"We believe the prospects for change in the status of piping plovers in Pennsylvania is genuine, because their population is recovering in the Great Lakes region. This reversal - albeit slow in developing - is a direct result of state and federal efforts to protect and improve plover habitat and public outreach campaigns to increase awareness of and enlist cooperation in the ongoing recovery effort."

The Game Commission will contract with Catherine Haffner, a technical expert on piping plovers who currently resides in Danville, Montour County, to identify management and conservation strategies, and help assemble and implement a "piping plover response plan" that would facilitate the possible restoration of plovers - and possibly common terns, another state endangered species - on Presque Isle beaches. The effort will be funded primarily through annual federal endangered species appropriations and a supplemental federal grant.

Haffner, who was a field coordinator in the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' piping plover recovery effort and who wrote her master's thesis on piping

plovers at the University of Minnesota, is a biologist who specializes in the recovery of small bird populations. Her experience and firsthand knowledge of plovers will benefit Pennsylvania's unfolding effort to intensify its management of piping plovers.

"Piping plovers certainly are endearing birds, and I believe the efforts made by the news media and state and federal agencies in Michigan and other Great Lakes states, like Pennsylvania, have helped their plight," Haffner said. "Raising awareness is the first step. It was always great to talk to someone on the beach about piping plovers who would reference an article he or she had read in the newspaper. Recognition and understanding of the piping plover's plight are key in garnering the public's support and cooperation." Haffner will work with Game Commission biologists to develop and implement conservation strategies with the highest likelihood of attracting plover pairs to Presque Isle's beaches. In addition, she will work closely with park personnel at Presque Isle.

"The Great Lakes piping plover population has increased by 300 percent since it was granted protection under the Endangered Species Act in the mid 1980s," Haffner explained. "Over the past few years, piping plovers have been observed at several historic nesting beaches, including Presque Isle's Gull Point. The timing of this cooperative effort couldn't be better."

An infrequent visitor to Pennsylvania's Lake Erie shoreline, the piping plover is related to the more common killdeer, found statewide. Taxonomists recognized the piping plover for its sweet call, and the longer-legged killdeer for simply being insistently loud. Naturally compact and stocky, piping plovers nest in the Great Lakes region, along the Atlantic Coast in the Northeast and the northern Great Plains. Loss of habitat - beaches of sand and cobble with sparse vegetation - is the primary reason these shorebirds have fallen on hard times in the Great Lakes. Human activities, feral cats and unleashed dogs on beaches also have helped to keep populations suppressed.

"This can be a tremendous recovery if we're successful," explained Brauning. "It's obvious that Gull Point offers our best hope of getting piping plovers and common terns off Pennsylvania's extirpated species list. There has been a coordinated effort to make Gull Point more attractive to these endangered species. Now, we're going to intensify that effort and hope for the best."

About five years ago, the USFWS designated a portion of the Gull Point Natural Area as a critical habitat area for piping plovers, because it provided foraging areas for migrating piping plovers and had areas that were historically used by plovers for breeding, nesting and rearing young. A 3.7-mile section of Presque Isle's shoreline was subsequently protected under the auspices of the Endangered Species Act. As early as 1994, a large portion of Gull Point - 67 acres - was designated as a natural area that is closed to public use from April 1 to Nov. 30. The state park annually attracts about four million people. Gull Point is the peninsula's furthest extension into Lake Erie.

The Great Lakes piping plover population was once vibrant and widespread. Then it began to decline steadily in the early 1900s. By the 1930s, as few as 500 pairs were believed to be nesting in the Great Lakes. In 1982, the number of confirmed nesting pairs dropped to below 20.

In 1904, noted western Pennsylvania ornithologist W.E. Clyde Todd wrote, "About 15 pairs of this interesting little plover nest annually on the outer shore of Presque Isle, where I have often met with it during May and June. Its favorite haunts are wide stretches of dry, sandy beach, with which it agrees so perfectly in color that unless in motion, it is difficult to distinguish. It runs very rapidly, and is rather shy and hard to approach."

More than a century later - and with numbers at precariously low levels, but rebounding apparently ever so slightly - the piping plover retains its affinity for Presque Isle. With some help throughout the Great Lakes Region, plovers will get the habitat protection and security they must have to completely reverse their population's historic nosedive. The piping plover will remain a federally endangered species in this region until its population attains 150 pairs - including 100 pairs in Michigan - for at least five years and suitable habitat is adequately protected.

"The long-term federal goal for the piping plover's Great Lakes Region population is to remove it from the endangered and threatened species lists by 2020," Brauning said. "It would appear the work the Pennsylvania Game Commission is proposing, efforts already underway by park staff and the direction the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is taking with piping plovers ought to dovetail handsomely. Time will tell."

Quick Clips

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

[Powdermill's Eco-Makeover Projected to Create a Nature Center of the Future](#)

[Voters Choose Earned Income Tax Hike to Preserve Land](#)

[Washington County Greenways Plan Open for Comment](#)

[Pike Adopts Plan for Growing Naturally](#)

Video: [Venture Outdoors Pittsburgh Urges Residents to "Step Outside"](#)

[Welcome to Pennsylvania – Now Get Out!](#)

[Riverfront Park Plan Clears Hurdle](#)

[Green Forum Targets Blighted Vacant Lots](#)

[PUC Judges Oppose Request to Scrap Electricity Rate Caps](#)

[Poll Affirms Support for Electricity Competition in PA](#)

[Builders Promote Energy Efficiency](#)

[Wind Provides Alternative Energy](#)

[Conergy Solar Energy Company Moves to PA to Expand Business in the U.S.](#)

[Energy Efficiency is Next Big Design Trend](#)

[Lifestyle Choices Key to Resolving Global Energy Problems](#)

[Ask About Energy Credits Before Buying](#)

[Bidding Farewell to Fossil Fuels as Solar Energy Era Begins](#)

[Farmer Hopes Switchgrass Crop Will be an Alternative Fuel](#)

[Biologist Touts Benefits of Grass as Future Fuel](#)

[Group Promotes Recycling Through Video](#)

[Mt. Lebanon May Start Culling Deer](#)

[Editorial: Climate Change Portends an Economic Disaster](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Fishing Notebook: Bethel Park Youth Wins National Contest](#)

[Manheim Twp Firm First to Cash In Nutrient Credits](#)

[Water Pollution Credits Help Developer Build Homes](#)
[Chesapeake Bay Tributary Rules Could be Re-Written](#)
[Passive Mine Drainage Treatment Inventory Available Online](#)
[AMD Treatment Systems Toured in Somerset](#)
[Williamsport-Lycoming Foundation Awards Grants to 15 Organizations](#)
[Reducing NYC Reservoirs Won't Help Flooding](#)
[Up on the Roof, A Pollution Solution](#)
[Treatment System Using Bacteria Successful in Treating Gasoline Contamination](#)
[Tunkhannock Stream Restoration Plan Endorsed](#)
[POWR Presents at AWRA Conference](#)
[Water Reuse Workshop Declared a Success](#)

Regulations

The Independent Regulatory Review Commission published comments on the proposed Environmental Quality Board regulation [concerning mine opening blasting](#) and notice of a revised radon contractor certification list ([PaB page 6898](#)).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – November 11, 2006](#)

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

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

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

Technical Guidance & Permits

The Department of Environmental Protection [published notice of availability](#) for Chapter 105 General Permit GP-11 for maintenance, testing, repair of existing water obstructions. The Department of Public Welfare [published a notice](#) saying the 2007 Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program Plan was available.

[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](#)

- **November 13** – DEP PennSecurity Fuels Initiative Working Group meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.

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- **November 14** – [DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building (note location change). 10:30.
- **November 14** – **CANCELLED**. DEP Cleanup Standards Scientific Advisory Board meeting. Rescheduled for December 4.
- **November 15** – [DCNR Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **November 16** – [Independent Regulatory Review Commission](#) meets to consider Environmental Quality Board regulation reduce mercury emissions from power plants. 14th Floor Conference Room, 333 Market Street. 10:30.
- **November 17** – [DEP Drinking Water/Wastewater Operator Certification Program Advisory Committee](#) meeting. 10th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **November 20** – Environmental Issues Forum, [Joint Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee](#) featuring J. Kent Crawford, USGS, to discuss the emerging contaminants project. Room 205 Ryan Building. Noon.
- **November 21** – **CANCELLED** – Environmental Quality Board meeting.
- **December 1** – [State Planning Board meeting](#). Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00 a.m.
- **December 4** – DEP [Cleanup Standards Scientific Advisory Board](#) meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 9:30.
- **December 12** – **CANCELLED**. [Coal and Clay Mine Subsidence Insurance Board meeting](#).
- **December 14** – [Coal and Clay Mine Subsidence Insurance Board meeting](#). 14th Floor Conference Room, Rachel Carson Building, Harrisburg. 10:00.

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@HolstonCrisci.com or go to www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com .

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

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