

News from Our Partners

DiBerardinis Resigns as DCNR Secretary

Michael DiBerardinis, DCNR Secretary since 2003, resigned effective April 3 to accept the position of Parks and Recreation Commissioner for Philadelphia. DiBerardinis will oversee the merger of the Fairmount Park Commission and the Department of Recreation, a move overwhelmingly approved by the city's voters in November 2008. DiBerardinis previously served as Philadelphia Recreation Commissioner from 1992 to 2000.

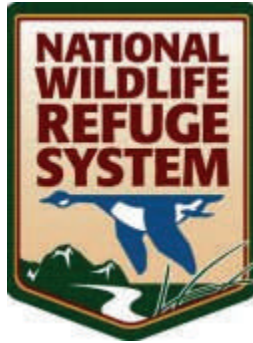
Cherry Valley NWR Approved

In December, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service approved a new national wildlife refuge encompassing almost 20,500 acres in Cherry Valley in Monroe and Northampton Counties. The Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge harbors rare ecosystems, several plants and animals protected under the Endangered Species Act, and many more species of concern. Cherry Creek, at the valley bottom, flows into the Delaware River. The Kittatinny Ridge, which parallels the creek to the south, is a major avenue for migrating birds and bats and home to the Appalachian Trail.

Establishment of a national wildlife refuge is a long-term conservation strategy to preserve the natural area and rural way of life in Cherry Valley. The project will mix outright land purchases from willing sellers, voluntary conservation easements, and other financial incentives and will demonstrate that people and wildlife can live in harmony.

Pennsylvania has two other national wildlife refuges: Erie and John Heinz at Tinicum.

For more information, see www.fws.gov/northeast.



PGC Accepts 1,100 Acres In Monroe County

The Game Commissioners has accepted a 1,100-acre tract of land located in Ross and Eldred Townships, Monroe County, as the Game Commission's portion of an anticipated settlement in a Natural Resources Damage Assessment case filed against CBS for the Palmerton Zinc Superfund Site in Carbon, Northampton and Monroe Counties.

The Game Commission is a participating Trustee, along with other state and federal agencies, in this case. When final settlement is reached, the transfer of this property to the Game Commission will fully compensate the agency, as the Commonwealth's Trustee, for damages incurred to wildlife habitat and State Game Lands within the area of the former zinc smelting facility.

That facility discharged metals, including arsenic, cadmium, chromium, copper, lead, manganese, and zinc, into the surrounding environment via air emissions and through the release of solid wastes, including the creation of a large waste pile, locally known as the "cinder bank." The release of these metals resulted in the contamination and defoliation of thousands of acres of land, including state game lands.

The mostly forested 1,100 acres, also known as "Kings' Manor," is near State Game Land 168. More than a mile of the

Aquashicola Creek runs through the new property, and it is an Important Bird Area, protecting the Blue Mountain migratory corridor identified in Pennsylvania's Wildlife Action Plan.

DCNR Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grants

KTA received one of the 316 conservation and recreation projects funded in November (see page 8). Several other grants of interest to hikers were awarded to:

- **Appalachian Mountain Club**, \$75,000, for the Pennsylvania Highlands Outreach and Trail Project, to implement the PA Highlands Coalition Committee's Strategic Plan goals by developing a tracking system and GIS data clearinghouse, communications plan, and organizational improvements for the Committee
- **Appalachian Trail Conservancy**, \$100,000 for implementation of the South Mountain Conservation Landscape Initiative to include coordination of the activities of the 2008-2010 work plan, supporting the sub-landscape lead partners, and developing and implementing land protection strategies
- **Delaware & Lehigh National Heritage Corridor, Inc.**, \$160,000, for the D & L Trail from Northampton to Catasauqua Borough, to include the determination of the trail alignment, preparation of drawings and specifications to facilitate the bidding and construction of approximately two and one half miles of trail.

Independent Review Hails Management of State Forest System

The state's public forests have again been certified as well managed by the SmartWood, a New York-based operation accredited to offer independent, third-party certification of sustainable forest-management practices. The assessment evaluated the ecological, economic and social performance of the Bureau of Forestry according to forest management guidelines established by the Forest Stewardship Council.

SmartWood applauded the Bureau of Forestry for programs and services. These include: extensive formal and informal consultative processes; high awareness of stakeholder interests; a genuine interest in trying to balance multiple values; recreational user-conflict resolution principles; and strong contributions to local economic development, civic activities and public education. Also praised was the Bureau's strong conservation ethic that has led to developing a system of natural areas, state parks, wild areas, limited resource zones, non-management buffer zones, and wild plant sanctuaries that encompass more than half of the state forest system (approximately 1 million acres).

The certification assures consumers that wood products from the state's public forests come from a sustainable, well-managed system, which helps Pennsylvania compete in the growing niche consumer market for "green" label wood products.

The evaluation team also suggested some areas of improvement, including the Deer Management Assistance Program and monitoring the ecological effects of using non-native species to manage forests.

A full report can be found at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry; choose "Forest certification."

Energy News

Wind Energy Agreement Protecting Wildlife and Habitats

As Pennsylvania and the nation seek alternative sources of energy, the Game Commission and twenty wind energy companies are cooperating to avoid, minimize, and mitigate impacts on wild birds and mammals. The Wind Energy Voluntary Cooperative Agreement is addressing questions such as where to best site turbines in relation to important migration routes and critical habitats, and which species are most susceptible to impacts from wind turbines and how much mortality is occurring.

The agreement requires companies to report one year of pre-construction surveys of wild birds and mammals in the project area, as well as two years of post-construction monitoring for mortality of birds and mammals in the project area.

Three proposed project sites were voluntarily abandoned by wind energy companies due to potential wildlife resource impacts that were brought to light through consultation with the Game Commission. Other highlights of pre-construction monitoring during the past year were the discovery of the second largest Indiana bat maternity colony and the first-ever documented discovery of a female lactating silver-haired bat and maternity colony in Pennsylvania.

For a complete copy of the report, visit the Game Commission's website www.pgc.state.pa.us, click on "Wildlife" in the left-hand column, and then "Wind Energy."

Act 213 of 2004, the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act, requires that eighteen percent of the electricity sold to retail customers in Pennsylvania come from renewable and advanced energy sources within fifteen years.

Presque Isle Wind Turbine Poses Little Threat to Nearby Birds and Bats

A wind turbine at Presque Isle State Park in Erie poses no overt threat to bat and bird life, according to a two-year independent study. DCNR erected a small monopod turbine to generate supplemental power and serve as an education aid at the park's environmental center.

Erected in May 2007, the 120-foot wind turbine at Presque Isle generates approximately 10,000 kilowatt hours annually in supplemental power to the education center. Similar turbines were installed at Prince Gallitzin, Cambria County; Pymatuning, Crawford County; Tuscarora, Schuylkill County; Yellow Creek, Indiana County; and Promised Land, Pike County. Park personnel are conducting ongoing monitoring at these five state park sites.

Complete study methodology and findings can be found at www.dcnr.state.pa.us; select Wind Energy : Wildlife : Hot Topics.



Presque Isle Wind Turbine

New Law Aims to Save Energy

Under PA Act 129 of 2008, utilities are required to work with customers to cut electricity use one percent by 2011 and three percent by 2013. By 2013, utilities must also cut energy use four and a half percent during peak demand periods when prices are highest—typically the hottest days of summer and the coldest days of winter. Electric utilities that fail to meet the law's requirements will face penalties.

New Price Plans

The law directs electric utilities to offer customers new pricing plans that reward customers who shift heavy use to off-peak hours. Consumers can choose to continue using traditional rate plans where they pay the same cost regardless of when energy is used, or they can take advantage of two new plans that offer savings for making smart energy choices.



One plan will charge customers two prices (either a peak rate or an off-peak rate depending on what time of day they use energy), while the second option will offer bills based on real-time pricing, or the actual cost of energy every hour. Consumers using the real-time pricing option could benefit by consuming in the hours when costs are lowest.

Smart Meters

To help consumers take maximum advantage of these new choices, every home and business in the state must be equipped with "smart meters" within fifteen years. The law also will help Pennsylvania's utilities purchase sources of energy at the lowest possible cost. This required "least cost" purchasing by utilities ensures that the commonwealth's utility customers don't foot the bill for bad energy purchasing decisions by utilities.

Utilities will be required use a "prudent mix" of energy purchases conducted via auctions, limited long-term contracts, spot market purchases, and short-term contracts.

Carbon Capture and Storage

Carbon capture and sequestration, or CCS, is a process of capturing carbon dioxide emissions from emission sources to prevent them from going into the atmosphere, and then storing them permanently underground in safe geological formations.

Pennsylvania ranks third among all states in greenhouse gas emissions, producing one percent of the entire planet's climate changing pollution. Pennsylvania and the nation are likely to continue relying on fossil fuel-generated electricity for at least the next few decades.

DCNR is required by PA Act 129 of 2008 to complete a site assessment, risk assessment and a cost study to possibly develop a state geologic sequestration network. Last month, DCNR requested bids on a package of four contracts that will examine geologic information to determine whether any suitable areas in the state exist to store carbon dioxide underground. These activities will build upon the geologic assessments DCNR completed last year, as part of the Carbon Management Advisory Group.

The CCS Education Initiative has released a new video that explains CCS and its link to climate change, and features a panel of international experts. To see the video and for more information on CCS, go to www.ccs-education.net.

Environmental Commentary

Oil and Gas Drilling:

Learn From Our Mistakes, Protect Future Generations

By Robert Davey, Jr.

In 1955, Governor George Leader signed the Oil & Gas Leasing Act. Revenue generated by leasing, production and storage of natural gas and oil on State Forest land was to be set aside in a fund for conservation, to expand public forests and parks and lessen the impact of oil and gas development.

Extraction of oil and gas has taken a toll on our public lands. Many thousands of acres of State Forest were fragmented into 40-acre woodlots by the well sites, pipelines and access roads. No follow up maintenance was required and over time these sites became barren. Access roads are gated for security, but off road vehicles negotiated the terrain adjacent to gates and caused accelerated soil erosion and sedimentation. Forest fragmentation also invited establishment of invasive plant and animal species. Eventually wells are abandoned and these orphan wells become environmental hazards.

Reading the children's book, *The Lorax* by Dr. Seuss, brings home the lesson that we need to carefully conserve the natural resources on both private and public land. It is up to us to start living in a sustainable way so that future generations won't be saddled with mistakes we made because of a myopic view of natural resource limitations or outright greed.

There is great excitement by many for the opportunity to make it big with the Marcellus Shale Gas exploration effort. The pitfalls are many and could leave our children's children with a degraded place to live.

Extraction of natural gas from Marcellus Shale requires twenty million gallons of water per well. Thousands of tankers hauling legal loads will use township, private and State Forest roads that are not engineered for this continuous pounding. Many bridges on these routes have low weight limits, creating a safety hazard. The fluids from "fracing" the wells must be treated at a sewage treatment plant before being discharged into waters of the Commonwealth. Earth moving construction will breed massive soil erosion and sedimentation events. Those areas will become breeding grounds for invasive species.

The gas and oil companies are used to operating where they control the regulators and have free reign over their activities.

We must look at past oil and gas practices, learn from mistakes and provide protection for private landowners and public lands so that future generations will be able to enjoy living and working in Penn's Woods.

[Ed. Note: The author is a retired DCNR forester.]

What Will Pennsylvania be Like After the Marcellus Shale Boom?

By Dick Martin

Receipts from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund (Act 865 of 1955) have been used to purchase 26 State Parks and tens of thousands of dollars of new State Forest lands. Governor Rendell has diverted over \$174 million of DCNR's Oil & Gas Lease Fund to pay for general state operations, leaving environmental infrastructure needs unmet.

Conservation programs always seem to suffer larger cuts than other programs. At least two bills (HB 623 and HB 625) are currently in the legislature to further siphon away DCNR's O&G Lease Fund. DCNR has little chance to continue its good work in conserving major areas of land for public use without that fund – in its original form.

Most states provide for remediation of the damage done by extraction of oil and gas by way of a severance fee. This is separate from lease fees and royalties.

David Masur, director of PennEnvironment, states, "Unlike 39 other states, drillers here have not had to pay a fee for extracting our natural resources. And unless part of this fee goes to environmental protection and cleanup, funds for reinvesting in our parks, forests and other green infrastructure will continue to evaporate – just when public works efforts and great green jobs could be most beneficial to the economy."

For further information, go to these web sites:

- www.pecpa.org/node/621
- www.conserveland.org
- www.dcnr.state.pa.us/topogeo/education/es8.pdf

SRBC Moves to Protect Water Resources

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission (SRBC) has approved regulatory changes streamlining the review of consumptive water uses by the natural gas industry. The Commission is seeking to protect the basin's water resources. The regulatory amendments went into effect January 1, 2009.



All requests for consumptive water use by the natural gas industry will now be handled through SRBC's simplified approval-by-rule process (commonly known as a general permit). To make this change possible, SRBC expanded the sources of water that applicants can consider for their consumptive water use, including public water supplies, discharges from wastewater treatment facilities and other reclaimed

waters, and withdrawals from other sources approved separately by SRBC.

Water is considered consumptively used when it is withdrawn from the Susquehanna River Basin but not returned to the basin. Drilling wells for natural gas development in the Marcellus Shale and other formations in the Susquehanna basin involves large volumes of water being injected underground. This water is then not reasonably available for future use.

For more information about the new regulations, go to www.srbcc.net and choose "Marcellus Shale."

Ecological News

Identifying

Green Businesses

Do you prefer to purchase goods and services from environmentally conscious businesses? The website Climatecounts.org (www.climatecounts.org/scorecard_overview.php) rates everything from airlines to apparel companies on how serious they are about climate change. The lists include only larger firms. For on-the-spot answers, you can text 30644 with the message cc, followed by the name of a major company, and it'll let you know how well that organization scores.

Recycling Resources

Earth911 has launched a recycling database hotline at 1-800-CLEANUP. Enter your zip code to locate recycling resources in your community. Computer users can locate this information on the web at www.earth911.com.

Everyone Can Help

Combating global warming is not only the task of the government and industry. Small actions by individuals add up. Resolve to do your part.

- **Recycle** – The average American produces four and a half pounds of trash each day! Recycling keeps your discards out of a landfill and is good for our economy, since recycling and re-use industries employ more than a million workers in the US.
- **Pre-cycle** – Avoid buying products with excessive packaging. Find new uses for packaging.
- **Use reusable grocery bags** – Americans use a billion plastic bags a year, and only 2% of them are recycled.
- **Reduce your use of plastic water bottles and always recycle them.**— About 90% of water bottles are not recycled. It takes about 18 million barrels of crude oil to replace the two million tons of plastic in the water bottles that are not recycled.
- **Eliminate vampire power usage** – Turn off lights and appliances not in use. Unplug chargers that draw power when not in use. Use smart power strips and turn off the strips.

Developing Backyard Habitats

Landowners interested in developing backyard habitats beneficial to wildlife can check out the book *Landscaping for Wildlife in Pennsylvania*. Written by Marcus Schneck, a noted outdoor and nature writer from Hamburg, Berks County, the 160-page book comes complete with descriptions, drawings and photos of ideal habitat for a variety of species, from hummingbirds to bats, as well as construction plans for a number of wildlife nesting boxes.

The book also contains a chapter on nuisance wildlife and steps to address certain situations, as well as the importance of planting native species and a listing of recommended plants.

The book, which costs \$10 (plus shipping and handling), is available from The Outdoor Shop on the the Game Commission's website www.pgc.state.pa.us or by calling 1-888-888-3459.

Rachel Carson Sense of Wonder Contest

The US Environmental Protection Agency, Generations United, the Dance Exchange, and the Rachel Carson Council, Inc., invite entries to their Sense of Wonder poetry, essay, photo and dance contest. Using one of these four mediums, contestants are asked to share their own interactions with and reflections on the wonders of nature.



Through her landmark book *Silent Spring*, Pennsylvanian Rachel Carson is considered to be the founder of the contemporary environmental movement. Its publication is credited with reversing the nation's pesticide policy.

In honor of Carson, the contest seeks to reach all generations to spur and instill the same sense of wonder that Carson had. Entry deadline is June 10 and the winners will be announced in September. For more information, rules, and an entry form, visit www.epa.gov/aging and click on "Rachel Carson Contest."

WNS Infected Bats Found in State

Bats infected with white nose syndrome, first identified in the state in January, have now been located at six sites in the state. Those sites include two abandoned mines near Carbondale, Lackawanna County, an abandoned mine near Shickshinny, Luzerne County, and the abandoned Shindle Iron Mine, Aitkin Cave, and Seawra Cave in Mifflin County.

Anyone who encounters five or more dead or dying bats in an area should contact the nearest Game Commission regional office (see "Contact Us" on the PGC web site www.pgc.state.pa.us) or use the "Report Sick Bats" option on the left side of the web site.

Once bats leave their hibernacula, the fungus is not very visible as moisture and flight seem to wear it off the bat. So affected bats may not show any signs of infection.



The Game Commission warns people not to go in caves, mines, or underground hibernacula, because such intrusions could disturb and endanger more bats. Even though there currently are no known human health implications associated with WNS, the Game Commission warns people not to handle any bats, and to keep pets and children clear of downed bats.

Recycling: the act of helping a bottle re-fulfill its destiny and become something great again.

— BMECC Newsletter, Spring 2009.