

— PA — Environment Digest

*An Update on
Environmental
Issues in
Pennsylvania*

Edited By David E. Hess, Holston & Crisci

March 13, 2006

450 Watershed Enthusiasts Gather to Renew Commitment, “Feel the Power”

Over the last two weeks over 450 people attended the [Coldwater Conference](#) and the [Schuylkill Watershed Congress](#) (*story in this Digest*) to talk about how they can do more to restore and protect their watersheds.

The [Eastern](#) and [Western](#) Coalitions for Abandoned Mine Reclamation are in the process of planning watershed get-togethers in the fall that will no doubt attract hundreds more.



[Just last week more than 200 watershed](#) and other environmental groups renewed their fight to get Congress to reauthorize funding for the federal Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program.

Over 11,000 volunteers actively involved in water quality monitoring throughout Pennsylvania, including PA Senior Environment Corps chapters covering 51 counties, are getting ready for [Watershed Snapshot 2006](#) (*story in this Digest*).

Just a few months ago a record 800 people took part in the annual [Ohio River Watershed Celebration](#) and the internationally televised [2005 Bassmasters Tournament](#) highlighted dramatic changes in water quality in and around Pittsburgh.

Initiatives like the [West Branch Task Force](#) of the Susquehanna River, the [Heartland Coalition](#), the [Exelon, Schuylkill River Heritage](#) Watershed Grant Program and the [No-Till Farming Alliance](#) are new and growing efforts to restore and protect watersheds.

The positive efforts of watershed and environmental groups involved in restoration and education projects from all over the state are being featured in the new “[Water – An Endangered Resource](#)” documentary now playing on public TV stations around Pennsylvania (*story in this Digest*).

Dozens of watershed groups, private partners, municipalities and individuals all over the state have been recognized for their efforts over the past year to protect and restore their watersheds. Just go to our www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com website and click on Find Articles by Subject (Awards & Recognition).

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

Thousands of people take advantage of the sojourns held each summer on a dozen Pennsylvania rivers and streams (many of them over subscribed) to learn more about watersheds in their communities ([story in this Digest](#)).

All this activity is just the latest evidence that confirms what a [study for the Center for Rural Pennsylvania](#) found last month— people involved in watershed groups see themselves as active environmentalists, not environmental activists.

The study concluded that watershed groups: empower local residents, develop local leaders, provide examples of successful community organizations, compliment other state and local environmental programs, get results, play an essential role in promoting the environment, and act as environmental advocates.

Just looking at this short list of recent activities, you can almost feel the power the over 450 watershed groups have to make a positive difference in the environment in their communities.

Keep up the great work!

Session Schedule

The Senate and House are in session the week of March 13.

**Visit Our
Professional Services Directory
Support Your Sponsors**

On the Hill

- On the Senate, House Agenda
- Senate/House Bills Moving/Introduced
- February Synopsis Features Summary of Oil and Gas Recommendations

**Click Here to Visit Our
[Professional Services Directory](#)**

Other News

- Nearly 200 Attend Schuylkill Watershed Congress, Focus on Habitat Restoration
- Applications Due May 1 for Fishing and Aquatic Education Programs
- Applications Due for Game, Fish & Boat Commissions Landowner Habitat Projects
- 2006 Watershed Snapshot to be Held April 21-30
- SRBC Hosts Panel Discussion on West Branch Susquehanna River Issues
- Expedition Susquehanna to Take Unique Journey in June, Your Help Invited
- Schedule Your 2006 Pennsylvania River Sojourn Now
- CBF and Partners Hosting Stormwater Workshops In Cumberland County
- 2006 Ohio River Basin River Sweep Set for June 17, Volunteers Wanted
- Water: An Endangered Resource Documentary to Air on Pittsburgh's WQED
- Pennsylvania Helps Lead Nation With 73 Energy Star Buildings
- Bucks County Brownfield Site of Gamesa Wind Energy Manufacturing Facilities
- One of DEP's Best Kept Secrets - Air Program's Operational Flexibility Provisions
- DEP Revises Priorities, Deadline for Solid Waste-Resource Recovery Grants
- PA Center for Environmental Education March Newsletter
- 2006 Preservation Pennsylvania Partnerships Conference May 18-19
- Reminders – 2006 Clean Energy Expo, Getting Beyond 10 Percent Renewable Energy
- Hawk Watch Set for April 15 at Erie Bluffs State Park
- Help Wanted – Venture Outdoors Looking for Executive Director

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

See & Hear

- Backyard Wetland Conservation Webcasts in March, April by Izaak Walton League

Features

- Mine Water Could Help Provide Make Up Water in Susquehanna Basin Drought
- Annual Migration of Snow Geese, Tundra Swans Delights Visitors at Middle Creek
- Chase Away Those Bluebird Blues, By Joe Kosack, Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist, Pennsylvania Game Commission

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

On the Hill

On the Senate, House Agenda

The Senate and House are in session the week of March 13. Here's the rundown of what's on the calendars and in committees—

Calendars

The Senate and House will start March 13 with this bill of interest on its Calendar-- [House Bill 2067](#) setting limits on state spending through a constitutional amendment.

The Senate will have these items on their Calendar-- [House Bill 213](#) establishing penalties for eco-terrorism; and [Senate Bill 1063](#) providing additional funding to expand the PA Small Business Development Centers.

Committees

In the House, the Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 940](#) further providing for the Land Trust Reimbursement Program and [Senate Bill 723](#) providing for definitions and legislative report under the Agricultural Area Security law; and the House Republican Policy Committee holds a hearing on alternative energy.

In the Senate, the Appropriations Committee meets to consider [House Bill 2317](#) establishing the 2005-2006 Capital Budget for flood control, Keystone Recreation, Environmental Stewardship projects; and the Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 1104](#) amending the One Call System Underground Utility Line Protection Law, [Senate Bill 1052](#) amending the Fireworks law to further define consumer fireworks facilities.

The [Joint Legislative Budget & Finance Committee](#) will meet to consider reports on Game Commission compliance with strategic plan.

Senate/House Bills Moving/Introduced

Legislation proposing a constitutional amendment to provide additional tax incentives for land conservation moved in the House this week and bills on high mileage vehicles and biomass were introduced. Here's the rundown.

Tax Incentives for Land Conservation: The House Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee reported out [House Bill 1895](#) (Fairchild-R-Union) proposing a constitutional amendment to provide tax incentives for land conservation.

Bills Introduced

High Mileage Vehicles: [House Bill 2475](#) (Benninghoff-R-Mifflin) excluding vehicles that are less than 11,000 pounds and have fuel economy that meets or exceeds 40 miles per gallon from sales and use tax.

Biomass Projects: [House Bill 2487](#) (George-D-Clearfield) providing a sales and use tax exemption for biomass, non-fossil plant derived fuels.

February Synopsis Features Summary of Oil and Gas Recommendations

The [February Environmental Synopsis](#) published by the [Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee](#) features a summary of recommendations from the Committee's recent report on oil and gas leasing operations in Pennsylvania.

Also featured are articles on the Chesapeake Bay Program, green technology, climate change, e-waste recycling and hazardous sites cleanups.

The Joint Committee is chaired by Rep. Scott Hutchinson (R-Venango).

In Other News

Nearly 200 Attend Schuylkill Watershed Congress, Focus on Habitat Restoration

The [2006 Schuylkill River Watershed Congress](#) last week attracted nearly 200 participants eager to learn more about how they can protect and restore their watersheds.

Dr. Doug Austen, Executive Director of the Fish & Boat Commission, provided the keynote address focused on the need to do more to restore habitat and to connect young people to the outdoors and natural resources.

“Anglers and boaters contribute over \$3 billion to Pennsylvania’s economy every year,” said Dr. Austen. “Healthy habitat, leads to healthy fish, which leads to healthy people and a healthy economy, it’s all connected.”

Austen pointed to the fact that over \$70 million in tourism and recreation dollars is lost each year because of streams and watershed degraded by abandoned mines and acid mine drainage.

The Growing Greener watershed restoration and bond issue programs, dam removals, the Commissions’ habitat improvement grant and restoration programs and a new state Wildlife Action Plan provide some of the tools needed to improve habitat.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

Austen also pointed to the [National Fish Habitat Initiative](#), that he chairs, as a new initiative to get public agencies, nonprofit groups and private businesses together to form a new partnership to restore and protect habitat areas.

On April 24 members of the Initiative will meet in Washington, D.C. for a “Casting [Call](#)” to visit Congressional leaders and other decision makers to educate them on the urgent need to protect fish habitat across the United States.

In addition to funding, Austen said the challenges for the future include doing more water quality monitoring to assess the health and progress of watershed restoration and using new technology to assess and prioritize habitat improvement projects.

Austen said one initiative the Fish & Boat Commission is planning involves a Conservation Mapping Program that will put all habitat, watershed and stream restoration projects on one GIS system so resource agencies, watershed groups and others can see who’s doing what, where in order to prioritize future projects.

The agenda for the Congress included lots of helpful presentations on topics ranging from invasive and native species, watershed restoration, watershed group organizational development, POWR’s water data system, riparian buffers, dam removal, agricultural controls and case studies of successful watershed projects.

The [Schuylkill Watershed Congress](#) is organized by the [Delaware Riverkeeper](#) and supported by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and more than 40 nonprofit, government and businesses interested in watershed protection and restoration.

Applications Due May 1 for Fishing and Aquatic Education Programs

The Fish and Boat Commission is now accepting applications for the [Fishing and Aquatic Education Grant Program](#). The deadline for applications is May 1.

Grants of up to \$5,000 are available to fund purchases of equipment, materials and cover other costs associated with educational programs and field trips. Funding will be awarded after July 1.

[Re-engaging youth in fishing and conservation](#) is a major point of emphasis for the Commission. Statistics from the National Survey of Hunting, Fishing and Wildlife Recreation show that in 1980, 26 percent of the Pennsylvania kids aged 6-15 fished. In 1995, that number climbed to 41 percent, but dropped to 35 percent in 2000.

Re-engaging youth in outdoor activities is critical to the future of sportfishing and building a more environmentally connected citizenry, says PFBC Executive Director Doug Austen.

“Research clearly shows that good, well-structured youth fishing programs lead to kids increasing their interest in fishing more, improving their skills, and helping them build a greater sense of aquatic stewardship and outdoor ethics,” said Austen. “It’s not enough for us as an agency to talk about more and better programs to involve Pennsylvania’s youth in fishing and aquatic education. We want to put our money where our mouth is and this new grants program is one way to do that.”

The Sportfishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants program expands on the Commission long-standing commitment to youth education. The Commission spends about \$450,000 annually on such efforts.

Currently 45,000 children receive the [Pennsylvania League of Angling Youth \(PLAY\) newsletter](#) from the Commission four times a year; 5,000 Pennsylvania school

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

teachers have been trained and use the PFBC's aquatic education curriculum; and more than 400 PFBC fishing skills instructors teach thousands of children in angling basics annually.

In addition, the Commission provides equipment and support for [25 free tackle loaner sites](#) statewide. The PFBC is looking to add more sites this year, potentially through the grant program.

The PFBC has budgeted \$50,000 for this first round of Sportfishing and Aquatic Resource Education Grants and is hopeful that figure can be increased in future years.

For applications and more information, visit the [Fishing and Aquatic Education Programs webpage](#).

Applications Due for Game, Fish & Boat Commissions Landowner Habitat Projects

Applications are due May 31 for the Fish and Boat and Game Commissions' [Landowner Incentive Program](#) to fund high-priority habitat conservation projects for endangered, threatened and at-risk species across Pennsylvania.

The Landowner Incentive Program is a federal program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to fund projects to protect and restore wildlife habitats on private lands.

Grants are awarded to benefit species of special conservation concern identified in Pennsylvania's [State Wildlife Action Plan](#).

"Our agencies were created more than one hundred years ago because sportsmen -- those who hunt, trap and fish -- recognized the need for conservation of our natural resources," said Carl Roe, Executive Director of the Game Commission. "Over the years, those same sportsmen have stepped up to the plate to fully fund all wildlife conservation programs for both game and nongame species. Due to our limited streams of funding, programs for nongame species have not risen to the top of the list.

"Federal programs such as LIP help our agencies direct monies to conservation programs for those species that face the greatest challenges due to habitat loss."

For more information, visit the [Landowner Incentive Program webpage](#).

2006 Watershed Snapshot to be Held April 21-30

The [2006 Watershed Snapshot](#) will be held from April 21 to 30. Join volunteers from across the Commonwealth as they survey the health of Pennsylvania's watersheds.

This activity provides volunteers with monitoring choices including water chemistry, macroinvertebrates, physical stream characteristics, a visual stream assessment, and a riparian zone survey. Volunteers can do any or all of the monitoring.

Groups can join the Snapshot by getting a complete 2006 Snapshot registration packet, reporting their results and seeing the results of others on the [2006 Watershed Snapshot webpage](#).

Questions about Watershed Snapshot can be directed to Kevin Kelly, Citizens' Volunteer Monitoring Program at kekelly@state.pa.us or 717-772-5807.

Look at the results of previous [Snapshots on the archives webpage](#) going back to the start of the Snapshot program in Pennsylvania in 1996.

SRBC Hosts Panel Discussion on West Branch Susquehanna River Issues

The [Susquehanna River Basin Commission](#) is hosting a [special panel discussion](#) on issues in the West Branch of the Susquehanna River in Williamsport on March 15. The discussion is part of the Commission's regularly quarterly meeting.

Panelists will included Scott Roberts, Deputy Secretary for Mineral Resources Management from DEP, Rebecca Burke, chair Lycoming County Commissioners, H. W. (Skip) Wieder, Geisinger Health System, and Amy Wolfe, Director of Abandoned Mine Programs and Kettle Creek Home Rivers Initiative of Trout Unlimited.

Cathy Curran Myers, Pennsylvania's alternative SRBC Commissioner, will serve as moderator.

Panel topics are expected to include abandoned mine reclamation, the [West Branch Task Force](#) and Remediation Study, the proposed Barnes and Tucker mine remediation project (*see separate story on this project in this Digest*), [Susquehanna Greenway](#), Williamsport River Walk Project, [Susquehanna Heartland Coalition](#), Geisinger Health System's quality of life initiatives and the [2006 West Branch Symposium](#).

[Download this flyer](#) for more information.

Expedition Susquehanna to Take Unique Journey in June, Your Help Invited



The [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#) and Future Farmers of America are partnering to launch [Expedition Susquehanna](#) from June 18 to July 18 that will journey 444 miles from the headwaters of the Susquehanna in New York to the CBF headquarters on the Bay in Maryland.

Twelve high school students from the Pennsylvania Susquehanna watershed, nominated by FFA, with the support of local watershed organizations, will embark on this unique educational journey under the guidance of CBF's professional expedition staff.

The mission of Expedition Susquehanna is to provide an experience for future agriculture leaders that will raise awareness of the value of healthy waterways.

The public is invited to follow the journey online through student journal entries and photographs posted and updated regularly on a special webpage.

CBF invites groups within the Susquehanna River watershed to get involved in the trip by: providing presentations, helping to organize public events, organizing educational opportunities, sponsoring public outreach events, publicizing the event in your newsletter or on your website.

Additional opportunities for participation include meeting up with the group at various stops along the river, or possibly even in your watershed, to give presentations and tours about the pressing environmental issues impacting your watershed or paddle along to enjoy the trip while sharing your watershed knowledge.

Contact Kim Patten, email: KPatten@savethebay.cbf.org, or Kelly Donaldson, email: KDonaldson@savethebay.cbf.org, or by calling CBF-Pennsylvania at 717-234-5550 if you or your organization would like to take advantage of any of these opportunities.

For updates and more information, visit the [Expedition Susquehanna 2006 webpage](#).

Schedule Your 2006 Pennsylvania River Sojourn Now



From May 6 to August 27 you can join an educational canoe or boat trip on one of [12 sojourns scheduled for this year](#) around Pennsylvania.

Sojourns are scheduled for [Swatara Creek](#), Allegheny-Kiskiminetas-Conemaugh Rivers, Stonycreek and Kiskiminetas-Conemaugh Rivers, [Schuylkill River](#), [Juniata River](#), [Chartiers Creek](#), Clarion River, [Susquehanna River](#), [Delaware River](#), [Lehigh River](#), Allegheny River and [Ohiopyle Over the Falls](#).

2005 Schuylkill River Sojourn

Educational, multi-day canoeing and float trips have been organized throughout Pennsylvania and along many of its riverways since the 1980's.

The common term for these trips is River Sojourn. A wide variety of organizations, agencies and corporations are involved in each event.

Most are multi-day trips and cover anywhere from dozens to over one hundred river miles. Some people participate for a day and some for the entire length of the trip. Evening stops are usually large river community events with a public meal, presentations, discussions, singing and other festive activities. Multiple-day participants normally camp at public campgrounds along the river travel route.

Having a good time, relating to the river ecosystem and educating the public about "their" local river are all reasons to organize a sojourn. Sometimes specific issues and accomplishments are highlighted or future river changes are focused upon during sojourns and their related activities.

A Sojourn can serve as an interactive outdoor classroom that allows those who participate to have an up close and personal experience that will change the way they view their effect on water resources.

River Sojourns have become a statewide effort in Pennsylvania thanks in part to the partnership between the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers.

Since 1991, DCNR has provided funding for and actively participated in developing River Sojourns to raise awareness of the beauty, importance and economic value of rivers throughout the Commonwealth. DCNR has also selected a Feature River for Pennsylvania every year since 1983 for a June Rivers Month poster.

For more information, visit the [PA Organization for Watersheds and Rivers Sojourn webpage](#).

Link: [GreenTreks River Sojourn webpage](#) – See and Hear the fun!

CBF and Partners Hosting Stormwater Workshops In Cumberland County

The [Chesapeake Bay Foundation](#) and the [Conodoguinet Creek Watershed Association](#) are sponsoring a series of three stormwater workshops on March 20, 27 and April 3 in Cumberland County.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

The workshops deal with the issue of “Urban Stormwater,” one of the fastest growing sources of water pollution in Southcentral Pennsylvania. They will be held on--

- March 20-- Provides an overview of stormwater issues;
- March 27--Discusses Pennsylvania state stormwater requirements; and
- April 3-- Empowers participants to act on behalf of their watershed by using state and federal tools.

These sessions are open to watershed association members, community groups, and municipal officials in the Southcentral area and will be held at the Cumberland Valley High School, classroom #200 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

CBF supports the efforts of local watershed groups and encourages them to become advocates for restoration of the watersheds and stream ecologies in their communities. These efforts are critical to ensuring that the water quality and habitat of streams, which ultimately drain to the Chesapeake Bay, remain as healthy as possible.

Those interested in participating should contact Don Seiple, CCWA board member, by March 16 at 717-766-4806 or by email to: dseiple12@verizon.net to reserve space at the workshops, and for directions.

2006 Ohio River Basin River Sweep Set for June 17, Volunteers Wanted

Volunteers are needed for River Sweep 2006, scheduled for June 17 along the shoreline of the Ohio, Allegheny, Monongahela, Beaver, Kanawha, and Kentucky rivers and other tributaries.

River Sweep is a riverbank cleanup that extends the entire length of the Ohio River and beyond. More than 3,000 miles of shoreline will be combed for trash and debris. This is the largest environmental event of its kind and encompasses six states.

"River Sweep is very important because for a few hours on one day volunteers can help make a difference in the appearance of this great natural resource," said Jeanne Ison, Project Director. "The Sweep has grown so much in the past few years, we've been able to expand the project to tributaries and feeder streams of the Ohio River."

The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, in partnership with various industries throughout the Ohio River Valley, sponsors the Ohio River Sweep. Other sponsoring agencies are the West Virginia Make It Shine Program, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, Ohio Department of Natural Resources, Ohio EPA, Illinois EPA, Kentucky Environmental and Public Protection Cabinet, and Kentucky River Authority. ORSANCO is the water pollution control agency for the Ohio River and its tributaries.

"Industries throughout the Ohio River Valley play an important role in this great environmental event," said Ison. "Not only do they provide financial support, they also provide volunteers and in-kind services."

Persons wanting to volunteer for this event can call 1-800-359-3977 for local coordinators in their area.

Visit the [Professional Services Directory](#) and [Events Calendar](#)

Water: An Endangered Resource Documentary to Air on Pittsburgh's WQED



Mine Drainage in Kettle Creek

WQED Pittsburgh has announced that the documentary, "[Water: An Endangered Resource](#)" is scheduled to air on April 23 at 5:00 p.m. on Channel 13 (WQED) in Pittsburgh.

"Water: An Endangered Resource" visits some of the 2,000 miles of Pennsylvania's waterways that are polluted with abandoned mine drainage to the point that no aquatic life can survive in them.

The documentary examines the issue from the perspective of watershed associations, fishermen's groups and governmental agencies, and explores efforts to clean up streams with the pollutants left behind by Pennsylvania's long coal industry heritage.

It looks at our state's water supply, emphasizing the importance of rejuvenating the rivers and streams affected by decades of Pennsylvania's unregulated coal industry pollution. These streams and tributaries feed into larger rivers that stretch from Pennsylvania throughout the eastern United States.

The documentary visits diverse sites like the [Cobbs Creek Environmental Education Center](#); the [Philadelphia Water works](#); [Kettle Creek](#), a site devastated by AMD; a 19th century church in Pittsburgh with acidic mine water soaking into its basement; the [Reliant Energy Power Plant in Seward](#), which will utilize 100 million tons of waste coal fuel; Cooks Run, which was at one time believed to be the state's most polluted water source; and the rivers of Pittsburgh (once thought to be too polluted so support significant aquatic life), for [a national bass fishing competition](#).

Individuals featured in the documentary include: **John Dawes**, Administrator, Pennsylvania Watershed Association; **Amy Wolfe**, Trout Unlimited, Executive Director, Kettle Creek Watershed Association; **Dean Mertz**, President Kettle Creek Watershed Association; **Ray Nelson**, Cook's Run Watershed Association; **Dr. Colson Blakeslee**, Cook's Run WA; **Kathleen McGinty**, Secretary, DEP; **Dick Imler**, Manager Reliant Energy Seward Power Plant; **Robert Eppley**, President WPCAMR and President of Blacklick Creek Watershed Association.

And **Dennis Tubbs**, Aquatic Program Specialist, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission; **Robert Hughes**, Regional Coordinator EPCAMR; **Ben Wright**, Director, Watershed Field Services, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy; **Carole Wright**, Program Manager, Loyahanna Watershed Association; **Gail Tomlinson**, Director, Philadelphia Waterworks; **George Ambrose**, Director Park Management Program, Cobbs Creek Environmental Education Center; **Jeff Jordan**, Director of Education, Pittsburgh Voyager; **Angela Belli**, Director, Environmental Education Center St. Vincent College; **Rev. Calvin Cash**, Pastor, John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church; **Chuck Williamson**, Restoration Project Director, John Wesley A.M.E. Zion Church; **Bob Hedin**, President, Hedin Environmental; **Sean Brady**, Program Director, Venture Outdoors; and **Jim Gusek**, Golder Associates, Manager Cook's Run AMD Remediation Project.

This documentary is a production of Penn State Public Broadcasting and was partially funded by the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation; the Pennsylvania Electric

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

Company, Sustainable Energy Fund of the Community Foundation for the Alleghenies; Raymond Nelson and The Project AWARE Foundation. Additional funding was provided by the Pennsylvania Public Television Network.

The documentary originally aired on February 10 on WPSU State College.

Pennsylvania Helps Lead Nation With 73 Energy Star Buildings

Across the U.S., more than 2,500 office buildings, schools, hospitals, and public buildings, representing 482 million square feet, earned [EPA's ENERGY STAR](#) for superior energy and environmental performance through 2005, including 73 in Pennsylvania.

In Pennsylvania, these 73 ENERGY STAR -qualified buildings represent approximately 10 million square feet of space and save an estimated \$37 million annually in lower energy bills, while meeting industry standards for comfort and indoor air quality. These buildings also prevent 150 million pounds of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to the emissions from more than 44,000 vehicles.

Nationwide, ENERGY STAR buildings are saving an estimated \$349 million annually in lower energy bills, because ENERGY STAR buildings use up to 40 percent less energy than typical buildings, while providing the required comfort and services. These buildings also are preventing 1.8 billion pounds of greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to the emissions from 540,000 vehicles.

“By partnering with EPA, building owners are realizing that they can reduce energy costs without sacrificing comfort or tenant satisfaction,” said EPA Region III Administrator Donald S. Welsh. “ENERGY STAR building owners in Pennsylvania are to be congratulated for taking an important leadership step. Commercial buildings account for more than 17 percent of our national’s greenhouse gas emissions.”

Buildings earn the ENERGY STAR based on EPA’s energy performance rating system. These buildings must score a 75 or better (on a scale from 1-100) based on their actual energy use, and also meet industry standards for comfort and indoor air quality. The average score for ENERGY STAR labeled buildings in 2005 is 86.

For a list and links to the 73 buildings in Pennsylvania, visit the [Energy Star Find Buildings webpage](#).

Bucks County Brownfield Site of Gamesa Wind Energy Manufacturing Facilities

Gov. Rendell this week announced the Spanish wind-energy company Gamesa Corp. is expanding operations in Pennsylvania by investing another \$34 million to open three new modern manufacturing centers on 20-plus acres of U.S. Steel’s former Fairless Hills industrial site in Bucks County.

The three new advanced technology plants in Bucks County will create more than 300 new jobs in the production of wind mill blades and towers and the assembly of nacelles, which house the wind turbines.

“It is an ambitious industrial plan that will reinforce our long-term commitment to the wind energy market of the United States, which is one of the priority markets for Gamesa,” said company President Alfonso Basagoiti, who noted that Gamesa has signed contracts for more than 669 megawatts of wind production during 2004 and 2005.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

The new operations build on Gamesa's presence in Pennsylvania, where the company has invested \$50 million to locate its North American headquarters in Philadelphia and construct and operate a separate manufacturing facility in Ebensburg, Cambria County.

Thirty people work at the Philadelphia office; another 234 workers are employed at the Ebensburg plant, located about 20 miles north of Johnstown.

The Department of Community and Economic Development, along with the Bucks County Economic Development Corp., offered Gamesa a financial package totaling approximately \$10 million in grants, loans and tax credits for the three manufacturing centers. The company received \$9.31 million in state incentives for its Cambria County facility.

Gamesa's blade manufacturing plant at Fairless Hills will produce parts for the Gamesa G8X-2.0 MW multi-megawatt wind turbines, which incorporate the latest technological advances, such as the use of carbon fiber. The \$12 million plant, which will have an annual production capacity of 300 megawatts, will begin production in the middle of the year.

The new \$7 million plant for the manufacture of towers for the Gamesa G8X-2.0 MW wind turbine platform will have an annual production capacity of 300 megawatts. This project will become fully operational in the first half of 2006.

The \$15 million plant responsible for the assembly of the nacelles for the Gamesa G80-2.0 MW, Gamesa G83-2.0 MW, Gamesa G87-2.0 MW and Gamesa G90-2.0 MW wind turbines will have an annual production capacity of 1,000 megawatts, enough to power more than 300,000 homes. This project will become operational before summer.

Pennsylvania remains a leader in wind production east of the Mississippi, providing enough clean energy to power some 70,000 homes.

NewsClip: [Rendell Announces Bucks County Site of Gamesa](#)

One of DEP's Best Kept Secrets - Air Program's Operational Flexibility Provisions

The Department of Environmental Protection has found that many regulatory provisions in the Air Quality Program that offer operational flexibility are underutilized by the regulated community.

DEP set out to change that with a [special summary of some of these provisions](#).

If you would like to discuss flexible air permitting for your facility, contact John Slade, Chief of the Division of Permits in the Bureau of Air Quality, at 717-783-9476 or send an e-mail to jslade@state.pa.us.

DEP Revises Priorities, Deadline for Solid Waste-Resource Recovery Grants

The Department of Environmental Protection this week [published revised priorities](#) and a deadline of June 5 for submitting grant applications under the Solid Waste Resource Recovery Grant Program.

DEP will now give priority to funding projects that demonstrate unique and innovative energy recovery technology in addition to curbside collection programs for food waste recycling.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

DEP also removed the \$250,000 cap on grants saying instead it would reserve the right to fund all or none of a grant application.

For more information see the [March 11 PA Bulletin Notice](#).

PA Center for Environmental Education March Newsletter

Pennsylvania Center for
Environmental Education



The [March issue of the EE Connections](#) newsletter from the [Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education](#) is now available online. Here's a rundown on stories this month--

General News: 2006 Great PA Cleanup, Game Commission Offers Seedlings for Habitat Improvement, Senior Volunteers Seek New Members, Muir Trek Leaders' Training, Desilting Basin Finds New Life as Wildlife Habitat, Educational Sanctuary, National Environmental Education Week, EPA Releases Clean Energy-Environment Guide to Action, Plant H2O, Center for Environmental Education Online

K-12 News: 2006 Pa Envirothon, Pennsylvania American Water Art Contest, Learn About Biodiversity in Pennsylvania, Fisheries Learning on the Web, Earth: A Graphic Look at the State of the World, National Geographic EdNet Resource Library, Rangers of the Earth

Higher Education: Beginning Farmers' Workshop, The Macoskey Center Seeks Vendors for its Annual Earth Festival, Watch Spring Unfold through Birding at the Macoskey Center

Professional Development: Pa Environmental Professionals Annual Conference, Think Spring! Attend a Tree Tender Workshop, Pa Environmental Council Sponsors Stormwater Retrofit Workshops, Pa Chamber Environmental Conference and Trade Show, 14th Annual Bluebird/ Purple Martin Workshop

Grants/Awards: 2006 Compost Infrastructure Development Grants, 2006 Canon National Parks Science Scholars Program, American Stars of Teaching Nominations, The Nature of Learning Start-Up Grants, Nominate a Young Eco-Hero for the Barron Prize, EPA SmartWay Environmental Transportation Awards, USDA Renewable Energy, Efficiency Grants

The [PCEE's Question of the Week feature](#) remains very popular on the Center's website not only presenting a thought-provoking question, but activities and background on a topic teachers and students can use. Regular visitors to the Question can also qualify for [Question of the Week Awards](#) to recognize visitors who enter their answers in the feature.

To get on the email list for the EE Connections newsletter, [fill out the online form](#) at the PA Center for Environmental Education website. Call 724-738-9020 for more information on the services offered by the Center to support environmental education.

2006 Preservation Pennsylvania Partnerships Conference May 18-19

Preservation Pennsylvania is sponsoring its annual [Preservation Pennsylvania Partnerships Conference](#) in Franklin, Venango County on May 18-19.

This year's theme, "Spreading the Work, Bridging the Gap" will feature workshops and speakers on why preservation and heritage make good economic sense for Pennsylvania communities.

Community and business leaders, municipal officials, nonprofit groups, owners and developers of historic properties, architects, planners, real estate professional, and anyone interested in how heritage tourism and heritage development, community revitalization, historic preservation and historic building rehabilitation are welcome to attend.

For more information visit the [Preservation Pennsylvania Partnerships Conference webpage](#).

Special Event: This year the [National Historic Preservation Conference](#) of the National Trust for Historic Preservation will be in Pittsburgh on October 31-November 5.

Reminders – 2006 Clean Energy Expo, Getting Beyond 10 Percent Renewable Energy

Two renewable and clean energy conferences are coming up – [PA Clean Energy Expo](#) on March 31 to April 1 in State College and Getting Beyond 10 Percent on May 25 in Harrisburg.

The [PA Clean Energy Expo](#) will showcase clean transportation options, home and business energy efficiency, technical and community energy workshops and other special events. The first Expo in 2004 attracted over 11,000 attendees

[Getting Beyond 10 Percent Conference](#) will feature discussion of issues surrounding Pennsylvania's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard including global energy trends, building new energy markets and workshops on biofuels, birds, bats and windfarms and financing new energy projects.

Hawk Watch Set for April 15 at Erie Bluffs State Park

The [Presque Isle Audubon Chapter](#) and the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources are co-sponsoring a hawk watch for April 15 at [Erie Bluffs State Park](#), Girard Township, Erie County.

Not only take the family to see hawks and other raptors as they migrate north, but get a close up view of live birds of prey from the [Tamarack Wildlife Rehabilitation Center](#).

Experts with binoculars and spotting scopes will be on hand to ID hawks and other migrating birds. Raptors likely to be observed include: Osprey, Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk and American Kestrel.

Visit the [Events webpage](#) of the Presque Isle Audubon Chapter for more information.

Visit the [Professional Services Directory](#) and [Events Calendar](#)

Help Wanted – Venture Outdoors Looking for Executive Director

[Venture Outdoors](#), a nonprofit organization dedicated to educating the public about outdoor recreation in Western Pennsylvania, is seeking an Executive Director.

The executive director is responsible for all phases of management, fundraising and operations of Venture Outdoors which has a full-time staff of seven people and 25 part-time staff. Annual base compensation ranges is between \$70,000 to \$90,000.

Submit a resume, cover letter and compensation requirements to Dewey & Kaye, Attn: Venture Outdoors Search, 20 Stanwix St., 9th Floor, Pittsburgh, PA 15222, by fax to 412-281-5925 or send email to: ventureoutdoors@deweykaye.com.

See & Hear

Backyard Wetland Conservation Webcasts in March, April by Izaak Walton League



[Join the Izaak Walton League](#) for [two live webcasts](#) this spring that will help you conserve wetlands and provide a home for wildlife while creating beautiful landscaping for your home, office or schoolyard.

Wetland-Friendly Backyard (March 28, 8:00-10:00 pm) includes information on how to create rain gardens, install rain barrels, landscape with native plants, and reduce pesticide and fertilizer use. What you plant in your garden and how you take care of your lawn can affect water quality in your neighborhood.

In this webcast series, the concept of [backyard conservation](#) will be introduced, as well as some of the basic things people are doing to make their yards more eco-friendly. The experiences of actual homeowners that have successfully implemented these practices in their own yards are shown.

Wet Spots into Wonderlands (April 25, 8:00-10:00 pm) will help you learn the benefits of having wetlands on your property, how to protect those wetlands, and how to create vernal pools or bog gardens.

Do you have a wetland on your property? Discover the many benefits (both environmental and economic) of "greening" your property, and find out how you can ensure that these sensitive ecosystems remain healthy. No wetlands on your property?

Learn how to create vernal pools and backyard bogs that are guaranteed to attract wildlife and reduce storm-water runoff. Using low-cost materials and simple techniques, this program will demonstrate how you can transform your backyard landscape into a "greenscape."

In addition to the live programs, there will be various resources available on the League's website to help you get started with these projects.

The webcasts will be available live on the Internet nationwide through streaming video. Participants will be able to interact with the presenters through question and answer sessions and a discussion group. Each session will be archived on the Izaak Walton League's website and will be available on DVD for future use.

This on-line training series is made possible with support from the Bureau of Land Management, the U.S.D.A. Forest Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

For more information, visit the Izaak Walton League's [webcasts webpage](#) or contact Suzanne Zanelli, 301-548-0150, ext. 223 or send email to: szanelli@iwla.org .

Feature

Mine Water Could Help Provide Make Up Water in Susquehanna Basin Drought



Barnes & Tucker Discharge

The Susquehanna River Basin Commission and the Department of Environmental Protection are looking at the potential of treated mine water to provide make up water for agricultural operations in times of drought.

In 1992 the Susquehanna River Basin Commission suspended the application of its consumptive water use regulations to agricultural operations in the basin to look for options to provide about 15.7 million gallons a day of make up water in the Pennsylvania portion of the basin.

An early option looked at increasing water storage in the George B. Stevenson Reservoir in Cambria County, but at a cost of \$43 million.

Through some discussions with the Department of Environmental Protection, SRBC staff learned about a mine water treatment project DEP is planning at the abandoned 15,000 acre Barnes and Tucker Lancashire #15 deep mine in Cambria County.

DEP is developing a project there to replace the 30-year old pumps and treatment facility because of its age, operational expense and inefficiency in treating the water. Barnes and Tucker went bankrupt in 2001 and left the operation of its mine treatment systems in the hands of DEP.

Prior to mining, approximately 70 percent of the area drained to the Ohio Basin (Blacklick Creek) and approximately 30 percent drained to the Susquehanna Basin. Upon completion of mining and closure of the mine, the pool began to fill to the point where it eventually broke out into the headwaters of the West Branch Susquehanna River in the early 1970's.

This breakout caused a massive fish kill in a 40 mile stretch of the West Branch. Subsequently, Barnes and Tucker constructed pumping and treatment facilities on the Blacklick Creek side of the mine complex and pumped and treated the mine pool, with a discharge to Blacklick Creek. Without pumping, the pool would again breakout and discharge to the West Branch.

The proposal by DEP will reduce pumping costs by discharging to the West Branch. DEP will construct a new 10 million gallon per day treatment facility at a cost of from \$5 to \$9 million to build.

DEP will use federal mine reclamation funds to construct the facility. SRBC is requesting a state appropriation of \$3.9 million to help finance a trust fund to provide for the operation and maintenance of the new treatment system in perpetuity

The new treatment project would provide up to 10 million of the 15.7 million gallons per day of consumptive use make up water needed by agriculture during a drought.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

It would also help to restore 25 miles of West Branch of the river impaired by acid mine drainage.

On the other side of the equation, however, Blacklick Creek would be losing up to 10 million gallons a day of water and the alkalinity from the treated water provided by the existing Barnes and Tucker treatment plant.

Since 1993, the [Blacklick Creek Watershed Association](#) has been working to restore water quality in the watershed by developing and operating 13 restoration projects, with more being planned.

Without mitigating the removal of 10 million gallons a day of water from the Blacklick watershed, the new project could have a devastating impact on cleanup efforts in the watershed.

As part of the planning for the new project, DEP has been working with the Blacklick Creek Association to do additional projects in that watershed to make up for the positive water quality impacts the existing Barnes and Tucker treatment facility has on the stream.

Two projects have been proposed so far by DEP to treat mine water and provide the alkalinity the creek would be missing. Discharges from relief boreholes near Vintondale and the Wehrum discharge have been selected and preliminary engineering work is underway.

DEP has made a commitment to the Blacklick Creek Association that the switch of the Barnes and Tucker mine water from the Ohio to the Susquehanna basin would not be done without the completion of the complimentary projects on the Blacklick Creek to mitigate the impacts there.

Funding for the Blacklick Creek projects is proposed to come from Federal SMCRA 10 percent Set Aside funds and mining the coal assets DEP received during the Barnes and Tucker bankruptcy proceedings. Coal royalties should generate about \$500,000 to \$1 million a year for the next five to six years.

The Barnes and Tucker project is part of a larger DEP initiative in the West Branch of the Susquehanna River to look at the potential of mine pools to provide make up water for the basin.

DEP has so far identified ten mine pools with a potential to provide make up water through the development of mine water treatment and pumping projects. The agency is now doing a study to determine the five most feasible mine pools to pursue. SRBC is seeking an additional \$2.2 million in funds to look at mine water treatment and other options in order to make up the final 5.7 million gallons needed by agriculture.

DEP estimates the potential is there for a number of these mine pools to easily provide the remaining 5 to 6 million gallons per day of make up water needed by agriculture.

There also appears to be interest from entities that are required by SRBC to mitigate their consumptive use of water about the potential of mine pools to provide make up water for their needs. PPL and the City of Baltimore have already been in touch with DEP about the potential of mine pools to provide make up water. This interest is important because these partners would contribute financially to mine treatment and pumping projects providing the water.

The potential of mine water treatment projects to provide make up water in the Susquehanna or other river basins in the Commonwealth turns an environmental liability into an environmental and economic asset.

This initiative follows [earlier DEP initiatives](#) over the last eight years to promote the use of treated mine water for processing and cooling purposes, for example the [Shannopin mine discharge](#) in Greene County or the [Panther Creek power plant](#) using the Lausanne Mine Tunnel discharge in Carbon County.

Sources of polluted mine water in Pennsylvania range in size from a mine pool in Westmoreland County that contains an estimated 80 billion gallons of water and covers an area 50 miles long and 10 miles wide, to the Jeddo Discharge in Luzerne County that produces 3 million gallons an hour.

For more information on the Barnes and Tucker Project, contact Michael Brownell, SRBC, at 717-238-0425 ext. 200 or send email to: mbrownell@srbc.net or Scott Horrell, DEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, at 814-472-1800 or send email to: shorrell@state.pa.us or Bob Eppley, [Blacklick Creek Watershed Association](#), send email to: eppldr@bcwa-inc.org.

Link: [Barnes & Tucker Project Fact Sheet from SRBC](#)

Feature – Watchable Wildlife

Annual Migration of Snow Geese, Tundra Swans Delights Visitors at Middle Creek

Snow geese by the tens of thousands have been converging on the Game Commission's [Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area](#) on the Lebanon/Lancaster county line; their arrival is proof positive of spring's approach.

This week an estimated 55,000 snow geese and between 2,000 to 4,000 tundra swans were hanging out at Middle Creek. At the height of migration, 100,000 to 150,000 snows may converge on Middle Creek, creating a "got-to-see-it-to-believe-it" spectacle.

But there's never a guarantee the snow geese will ever show in big numbers or stay within viewing distance from the network of roads that crisscross Middle Creek's rolling fields and soggy settings.

Late last week the 35,000 snow geese staging at the Wildlife Management Area swelled to perhaps 95,000 for a short period, noted Jim Binder, Middle Creek's resident manager.

"This morning 40,000 of them turned up missing," Binder said. "Reports indicate that the birds have abandoned their wintering grounds in Delaware and that snow geese are showing up in New York. It is unclear whether the birds that stopped here briefly and then left recently still are somewhere at this same latitude or if they have pushed north. It would be somewhat early for large numbers of snows to be north of us but the movements of



these birds is hard to predict. As soon as conditions permit they will usually try to push north, but if they encounter much snow or ice they will again retreat southward."

Potential visitors should remember that these numbers are estimates and are subject to rapid and dramatic change. Click on the [Waterfowl Migration webpage](#) for the latest "attendance" figures.

Snow geese migrate north from states south of Pennsylvania to the eastern Arctic region in spring. In the early 1990s, snow geese came to Middle Creek in relatively limited numbers. Then, in 1997, a phenomenal 150,000 snows blanketed the management area's fields and large impoundment, and the birds have been visiting in large numbers pretty much ever since then. The Atlantic Flyway population of snow geese currently numbers about 800,000.

The growth in the greater snow goose population has been phenomenal. In the 1930s, there were only a few thousand. Now, the population is in excess of 800,000 and is above the goal of 500,000 set by Canadian and United States waterfowl managers.

The tundra swan's occupation of Middle Creek parallels that of snow geese. Traditionally, swans leaving their wintering grounds further south used to stage on the Susquehanna River and, when they were ready, headed north. Now, Middle Creek - along with the Susquehanna River - has become a migratory staging area that is used each spring by several thousand tundra swans.

Since its creation in the 1970s, Middle Creek, which is part of the larger State Game Lands 46, in Lebanon and Lancaster counties just south of Kleinfeltersville, has become a critically important migratory bird stopover and staging area. The 6,254-acre property also contains a 400-acre lake and a wide variety of waterfowl-friendly potholes, ponds and wetlands.

In fact, the Game Commission created the Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area specifically to help migrating waterfowl and other wildlife. Middle Creek is now a critically-important Atlantic Flyway stopover for tens of thousands of migrating waterfowl, as well as an over-wintering location for myriad waterfowl. It also provides nesting grounds for many declining species of grassland-nesting birds, such as bobolinks and meadowlarks. It also is home to bald eagles, beavers and a thriving whitetail population.

"Toward sunset, waterfowl by the thousands converge on the main impoundment, so long as there's open water," said Binder. "The sunset return and sunrise liftoff are about the only movements we can predict snow geese and tundra swans will make. When they may arrive, where they go to feed and how long they stay at Middle Creek are strictly up to the birds and closely related to weather conditions."

Visitors planning to see waterfowl up-close should bring a pair of binoculars or a spotting scope. Sometimes the birds will feed quite near roads. If you encounter a bird close to the road, approach slowly and keep noise to a minimum. However, do not go beyond the "no entry" signs.

Middle Creek's visitor center, which houses a large wildlife exhibit, is a good first-stop for newcomers. Located just off Hopeland Road near the lake's western shore, the visitor center is staffed and open to the public six days a week. Its schedule is: Tuesdays through Saturdays, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.; and Sundays, noon to 5 p.m. The center is closed on Mondays.

In addition to snow geese and tundra swans, Middle Creek offers opportunities to view other wildlife. Canada geese can be found throughout the area. Black ducks, mallards

and shovelers cruise the impoundments along with many other ducks. Northern harriers, or marsh hawks, patrol the fields. A bald eagle pair hangs out along the southern shore and eastern end of the lake. Bluebirds also are very busy inspecting roadside bluebird boxes for the upcoming nesting season.

For [directions](#) and more information, visit the [Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area](#) and the [Waterfowl Migration webpage](#).

NewsClip: [Gathering of Geese](#)

Link: [Middle Creek Wildlife Management Area Spring 2006 Newsletter](#)

Feature – Watchable Wildlife

Chase Away Those Bluebird Blues

By Joe Kosack

Wildlife Conservation Education Specialist
Pennsylvania Game Commission



[Eastern bluebirds](#) have long been the displaced darlings of Pennsylvania's spring, as well as the poster bird for what can go wrong when people introduce non-native species to a new area.

Bluebirds suffered considerable - almost unrecoverable - losses in the twentieth century as a result of the injudicious introductions of house (English) sparrows and European starlings to New York City - and ultimately America - in the 1800s, and the toxic toll DDT exacted on many songbirds and raptors for decades beginning in the 1940s. Further

complicating the bluebird's plight, particularly in Pennsylvania, has been the loss of open spaces to development or reforestation.

Pennsylvania's bluebird population was probably its strongest ever in the late 1800s and early 1900s, before starlings and house sparrows became too plentiful, and before the advent of DDT. It was the period just after large sections of the Commonwealth's forests had been logged off and a time when farms covered about two-thirds of the state. Pennsylvania's human population was half what it is today. Combined, that translated into lots of open space - preferred habitat, few environmental issues and limited competition with other cavity nesters. Bluebird paradise.

With time, though, America's bluebirds began to lose their grip. The European transplants began to dominate the nesting cavities bluebirds preferred. DDT and other harmful pesticides hampered reproduction until they were banned nationally in '70s. And Pennsylvania's open spaces slowly, but steadily, were reclaimed by trees, or worse, buildings. The bluebird's perfect world was slipping away, and it was helpless to reverse the troubling tailspin it found itself in.

Bluebirds needed help competing with the more aggressive European species, and American ornithologists soon recognized this problem. By the 1930s, a national movement

had started to remedy the bluebird's "homeless" status. But whatever gains were made for bluebirds likely were offset by the increased usage of DDT - and a general disregard for many environmental concerns - during the war years of the '40s.

"Bluebirds were in deep trouble in the mid 1900s, just before America's environmental awakening in the '60s," explained Dan Brauning, Pennsylvania Game Commission Wildlife Diversity Section chief. "Just about everything seemed to be working against this handsome, and extremely popular songbird. But the situation started to improve for bluebirds in the 1960s and '70s as more and more Americans rallied to help by placing nest boxes in their backyards and creating bluebird nest box trails."

The Game Commission regularly campaigned for bluebirds by encouraging Pennsylvanians to consider getting involved in the fight to make the state a friendlier place for them. But then the bluebird has always had someone to champion its well-being in the Commonwealth, even before the creation of the Game Commission in 1895. In the state's second oldest songbird protection law, dated 1843, bluebirds were one of several species listed specifically for complete protection in Allegheny and Franklin counties. The \$2 fine for breaking the law was equivalent to about a \$50 fine today.

It's not hard to figure out why bluebirds were so popular in the 1800s, and probably well before that, given their striking blue and orange plumage and willingness to nest close to homes and in the fence-posts that once separated farms and agricultural fields. John J. Audubon referred to the bluebird as a "lovely bird ... full of innocent vivacity," and surely countless Americans had similar feelings toward it.

The Game Commission's Howard Nursery, near Milesburg, has been manufacturing bluebird nest boxes and box kits for more than a quarter century. Each year, about 9,000 kits are manufactured there and sold or provided to Pennsylvanians to help bluebirds. That annual influx of new nest boxes helps to ensure Pennsylvania remains a "keystone state" in bluebird conservation.

"That bluebirds currently nest in all of Pennsylvania's 67 counties is directly related to the interest Pennsylvanians have shown toward bluebird conservation and doing something more for wildlife in their yards over the past 50 years," explained Brauning. "But we should not consider bluebird's comeback a done deal, because their existence seems destined to hinge on the continued involvement of people who care about the species. If people stop putting out nest boxes for bluebirds, there undoubtedly will be serious repercussions."

Bluebirds have the unique distinction of being the only member of the thrush family to nest in a cavity. But they get plenty of competition for nesting sites from other wildlife. In addition to house sparrows and starlings, native species such as the tree swallow, house wren, great-crested flycatcher, black-capped chickadee, and tufted titmouse also use cavities. It's also not uncommon to find flying squirrels, white-footed mice, deer mice, even yellow jackets and bumblebees using nest boxes.

Given the aforementioned list of possible tenants, it's not hard to understand why nest boxes are in such demand. Add to that the diminishing number of fence-posts found in rural America - caused by field consolidation, farm loss, and use of prefabricated plastic and metal posts - and the dwindling number of snags and mature tree with cavities in Penn's Woods, and it hits you like a runaway train why bluebirds are so dependent upon people and why their future will always be hazy.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

Countless Pennsylvanians already are involved in bluebird conservation, because they enjoy seeing bluebirds, or simply would like to lend a helping hand to a songbird that could use all the help it can get. Most have bluebird nest boxes in their yard; others maintain bluebird nest box trails. Casual conservationists probably account for the biggest share of this ongoing outreach effort. They also are responsible for putting nest boxes in locations that simply won't do much for bluebirds.

"People frequently ask the Game Commission why bluebirds won't use a nest box they've placed in their yard," said Doug Gross, Game Commission ornithologist. "More often than not the reason is the box was placed in an undesirable location. People often mistakenly place nest boxes in places where they'd like to see them, rather than locations that satisfy bluebirds.

"A box is best placed on a post - not a tree trunk - four to six feet off the ground in direct sunlight. Preferred locations are open backyards, meadows, near fencerows or agricultural fields, and around cemeteries or athletic fields. Boxes placed too close to houses and other buildings, waterways and wetlands, or forested and brushy areas will attract nesting competitors and predators."

Of course, it should be pointed out that a bluebird nest box used by any species other than a house sparrow - starlings can't access the entrance of a properly-constructed bluebird nest box - is still a box that's serving wildlife and helping to fill a habitat deficiency.

If helping bluebirds is your objective, then place or relocate your nest box to an area where there will be limited nesting competition and predator problems, and where bluebirds are more apt to find it. If you're reusing a box, removing old nesting materials from inside before hanging it. Otherwise, recognize its worth to other wildlife and place it where it'll do some good.

The best time to erect a bluebird box is right now. The earlier a nest box is placed afield or in a yard, the better its chances are of attracting bluebirds. Males - the more vibrantly-colored ones - start shopping for nest boxes in early to mid March. After attracting a female, they build a nest in the box. In late April - and often again in mid June - the female lays eggs.

"Although Pennsylvania's bluebird population appears to be stronger today than any time over the past 50 years, the species surely needs to remain in the public's eye to ensure its well-being and that it continues to prosper," emphasized Gross. "Probably nothing reinforces the need for bluebird nest boxes more than seeing bluebirds scrapping with house sparrows over a box. It's a sight that inspires people to get a nest box and help make a difference locally. So please do put out nest boxes, and put them where they can help. Please encourage your neighbors to do the same."

The [Bluebird Society of Pennsylvania](#) as well as the North [American Bluebird Society](#) have done much to promote bluebirds and the species' never-ending need for nest boxes. Their websites offer a variety features that will familiarize interested landowners with ways to make their properties more attractive to bluebirds.

The Game Commission's [Bluebird webpage](#) for more information on bluebirds, as well as nest box plans. The Commission will be selling bluebird nest boxes and nest box kits to the public in May at its [Harrisburg headquarters](#).

Quick Clips

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

[Schuylkill Pushes Great PA Cleanup](#)

[Recycling Effort Sets Record](#)

[\\$527,000 in Household Hazardous Waste Collection Grants Announced](#)

[Ethanol's Newest Fans](#)

[Pittsburgh Firm Hired to Explore Mine Fire Options](#)

[From Towpaths to Trails](#)

[Conservation Groups Hope to Preserve Lehigh Gap Trails](#)

[Barn Owl Conservation Initiative Extended to Southwest](#)

[Gathering of Geese](#)

[PJM Gives Boost to Mid-Atlantic Power Lines](#)

[MSHA Issues Tougher Mine Safety Rules](#)

[Editorial: Open Yucca Mountain](#)

Watershed NewsClips

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

[Students Partner With County Planners for Water Study](#)

[River Communities Getting Help with Overflows](#)

[Lake Wallenpaupack Shows Water Quality Improvement](#)

[Bradford County Landowners Get County Assist for Stream Stabilization](#)

[Re-Mining to Reclaim Abandoned Mines in Youghiogeny](#)

[Upgrade to Mine Discharge Treatment System in Venango County Finished](#)

[DEP Awards Grant for Closing Old Mine Entries in Cambria County](#)

[Northampton, Lehigh Get Floodplain Update](#)

[PPL Plan to Help Shad, Energy Production](#)

[Beavers Make Midstate Home](#)

Regulations

The Department of Environmental Protection published [notice of Laboratory Accreditation Proficiency Test Study Requirements](#).

[Pennsylvania Bulletin – March 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 a [proposed General Air Quality Permit for Dry Abrasive Blasting Operations](#).

[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](#)

- **May 8-12** – [“Show Me the Money” Grant Workshop](#). Lewisburg.
- **March-April** – [No Cost Internet Based Site Remediation Training Courses](#).
- **March 13** – Senate Appropriations Committee meets to consider [House Bill 2317](#) (Feese-R-Lycoming) 2005-2006 Capital Budget for flood control, Keystone Recreation, Environmental Stewardship projects. Rules Committee Room. Off the Floor.
- **March 13** – Governor’s Renewable Agricultural Energy Council meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **March 13** – [DEP Citizens Advisory Council](#) and [Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee](#) to discuss proposed mercury regulation. Southcentral Regional Office, 909 Elmerton Ave. Harrisburg. 9:00.
- **March 14** – House Agricultural and Rural Affairs Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 940](#) (Waugh-R-York) further providing for the Land Trust Reimbursement Program and [Senate Bill 723](#) (Wenger-R-Lancaster) providing for definitions and legislative report under the Agricultural Area Security law. Hearing Room 2, North Office Building. 10:15.
- **March 14** – Senate Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committee meets to consider [Senate Bill 1104](#) (Tomlinson-R-Bucks) amending the One Call System Underground Utility Line Protection Law, [Senate Bill 1052](#) (Waugh-R-York) amending the Fireworks law to further define consumer fireworks facilities. Room 8E-A East Wing. 11:00.
- **March 15** – [Joint Legislative Budget & Finance Committee](#) meeting to consider reports on Game Commission compliance with strategic plan. Hearing Room 3, North Office Building. 10:00.
- **March 15** – **CANCELLED** - [DEP Radiation Protection Advisory Committee](#) meeting has been [rescheduled for June 15](#).
- **March 16** – House Republican Policy Committee hearing on alternative energy. Room 140 Main Capitol Building. 10:00.

PA Environment Digest – Holston & Crisci

- **March 17** – **CANCELLED** - [DEP Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee](#) meeting.
- **March 21** – House Republican Policy Committee hearing on DEP Regulatory Process and Economic Development. Room 140 Main Capitol. 1:00.
- **March 21** – Senate Public Health and Welfare and Consumer Protection and Professional Licensure Committees joint hearing to review energy assistance programs and outreach. Room 8E-A East Wing. 9:30.
- **March 21** – **CANCELLED** – [Environmental Quality Board meeting](#). Next scheduled meeting April 18.
- **March 22** – House Democratic Policy Committee holds a hearing on deer management. J.E. DuBois Hose Company Fire Hall, 301 First Street, DuBois. 2:00.
- **March 22** – DCNR [Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Committee](#). Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **March 22** – **CANCELLED** – DEP [Oil and Gas Technical Advisory Board](#).
- **March 23** – [Independent Regulatory Review Commission](#) meeting to consider final Nutrient Management regulation. 14th Floor Conference Room, 333 Market St., Harrisburg. 10:30.
- **March 25** – [PennFuture Global Warming Conference](#). Coraopolis.
- **March 31** – Pennsylvania State Planning Board meeting. Room 105 Rachel Carson Building. 10:00.
- **March 31** – [DEP Workshop on Wetlands, Stream Impacts, Permitting for Local Officials and Developers](#) in Mercer and Venango Counties. Mercer.
- **April 3** – [Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee](#) Environmental Issues Forum – PA CleanWays update on rural dumping in Pennsylvania. Room 205 Ryan Building. 12:00.
- **April 5** – Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee hearing on gasoline additives and their impact on the environment and fuel supplies (MTBE, ethanol). Room 8E-A East Wing. 9:00.
- **April 18-19** - [Chamber Environmental Conference and Trade Show](#). Camp Hill (near Harrisburg).
- **April 28-29** – [PA Land Conservation Conference](#). State College.
- **May 18-19** – [2006 Pennsylvania Heritage Partnerships Conference](#). Preservation PA. Franklin, Venango County.
- **June 12** – [Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee](#) Environmental Issues Forum – Jim MacKenzie, [Octoraro Native Plant Nursery](#) “Going Native – Opportunities for Using Native Plants in Pennsylvania.” Room 205 Ryan Building. 12:00.
- **October 31-November 5** – [National Historic Preservation Conference](#). National Trust for Historic Preservation. Pittsburgh.

[DEP Calendar of Events](#)

[Watershed Events](#)

(courtesy [PA Organizations for Watersheds & Rivers](#))

[Environmental Education Workshop/Training Calendar](#)

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

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

Helpful Web Links

[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.

All rights reserved.

Visit the [Professional Services Directory](#) and [Events Calendar](#)