

# Conservation Committee Report

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Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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## DEP Detects Small-Scale Harmful Algae Bloom in Presque Isle Bay

### The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection has confirmed that a Harmful Algae Bloom (HAB) has occurred in some backwater areas of Presque Isle Bay, along the shoreline bordering the City of Erie.

The HAB, which is comprised of cyanobacteria, has the appearance of brightly

colored latex paint floating on the surface of the water and is most noticeable in calm backwater areas such as coves and marinas.

“On July 31, DEP collected samples to determine that a Harmful Algae Bloom has taken place,” DEP Northwest Regional Director Kelly Burch said. “Boaters

and bucket fisherman are advised to avoid contact with the algae where it occurs in the near shore.”

Cyanobacteria are a natural part of the ecosystem, which can bloom in warm, calm, nutrient-rich waters.

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## DEP Provides Update on Long-Term Marcellus Air Sampling, Releases Technical Support Document

The Department of Environmental Protection announced that its long-term air monitoring study in southwestern Pennsylvania will continue through the end of the year. The agency also released a technical support document that provides addi-

tional information about the study's scope and process.

“The use of natural gas holds great promise in continuing recent trends of cleaner air in this state, and the data from this study will allow us to make sound decisions for

the long-term,” DEP Acting

Secretary E. Christopher Abruzzo said. “Our study, which is stationed in one of the most active drilling regions in the

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## DEP Detects Small-Scale Harmful Algae Bloom in Presque Isle Bay (continued)

While most algae blooms are harmless, some cyanobacteria blooms can lead to fish kills and have been known to harm pets and livestock.

The public is advised to avoid contact with any visible surface scums or films and should rinse thoroughly if contact occurs. Pets and livestock should not be allowed to drink from water with visible surface blooms. There is little risk to healthy recreational water users where visible surface scums are not present.

“It is very important to keep out of areas that are visibly in bloom,” Director of the Erie County Department of Health Andrew Glass said. “We are working closely with the DEP as the situation occurs.”

Additional cyanobacteria blooms may occur throughout the remainder of the summer, depending on environmental conditions. DEP will continue to monitor this situation as it develops.

The heaviest blooms do not appear to be affecting the open waters of the bay. HABs have not been detected in Lake Erie that would affect the bathing beaches on Presque Isle State Park.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

## **DEP Provides Update on Long-Term Marcellus Air Sampling, Releases Technical Support Document (continued)**

state, will help us to identify potential air-quality related risks associated with drilling, processing and transporting natural gas.”

In July 2012, DEP announced it would be conducting a long-term study in southwestern Pennsylvania to measure ambient air concentrations of pollutants, in Chartiers Township, Washington County, where both “wet” and “dry” gas are being extracted and moved to sale via compressor stations and pipeline networks.

The Technical Support Document released gives the public additional detailed information on the study, its sampling design and the analysis methods critical to the success of the study. The document also provides more detail about the science behind ambient air studies.

The samples collected during the study will be subjected to rigorous quality-assurance and data validation criteria. A final report is expected to be released in the spring of 2014.

DEP previously conducted three short-term ambient air quality sampling studies in various drilling regions of the state, detecting no levels of any pollutant that would violate federal ambient air quality standards. Nor did the studies identify concentrations of any compound associated with Marcellus shale drilling activities that would likely trigger air-related health issues.

The main monitoring site for the long-term study includes sampling for ground-level ozone, particulate matter, carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, hydrogen sulfide and methane. The ambient air will also be tested for more than 60 volatile organic compounds, including hazardous air pollutants, and meteorological data will be collected continuously.

DEP is also monitoring for volatile organic compounds and collecting meteorological data at three additional sites in Chartiers Township and Hickory Township, Washington County. Of the two additional Chartiers Township sites, one is upwind of the Houston gas processing plant, and the other is downwind of the Brigich compressor station. The site in Hickory Township will be located downwind of the Stewart compressor stations.

The long-term study is the latest effort by this administration to ensure that the abundant natural gas resources are being developed responsibly. Earlier this year, DEP announced a revised general permit for compressor stations and gas processing facilities that included significantly lower allowable emission limits.

A recent DEP emissions inventory submitted to EPA in December 2012, showed significant reductions in sulfur dioxide emissions in Pennsylvania between 2008 and 2011. These reductions, which are due to the deactivation of certain sources, installation of emissions controls at other

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## **DEP Provides Update on Long-Term Marcellus Air Sampling, Releases Technical Support Document** (continued)

remaining sources, and the conversion to natural gas have represented between \$14 and \$37 billion of annual public health benefit, based on EPA methodologies. The inventory, which for the first time included unconventional gas operations, also showed significant reductions in nitrogen oxide, carbon monoxide, volatile organic compounds and particulate matter during that same time period.

For more information, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), and click "Air," or call 717-787-9702.

Source: The Department of Environmental Protection

## Environmental Quality Board Approves Proposed Regulation for Oil and Gas Surface Activities

The Department of Environmental Protection announced that the Environmental Quality Board approved a proposed regulation that will strengthen environmental protection performance standards associated with oil and gas activities.

This proposed rulemaking reflects significant input from statewide environmental organizations, local government groups, residents living near well sites and industry representatives who have met with DEP over the last two years to share their expertise in shaping this proposal.

The department has recommended increasing the public comment period for the proposal from the normal 30-day timeframe and holding one public hearing, to a 60-day comment period with at least six public hearings across the state to gather as much public input as possible.

“Through Gov. Corbett’s leadership, Pennsylvania is proving that economic opportunity does not have to occur at the expense of environmental stewardship,” Acting DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo said. “We are working hard to ensure that natural gas development is done according to the high and consistent standards Pennsylvanians expect.”

This proposed regulation furthers the department’s implementation of the tasks it was assigned by the General Assembly under Act 13 of 2012. Corbett signed Act 13 on Feb. 14, 2012, and the law represents the first comprehensive update and strengthening of the state’s oil and gas laws in nearly 30 years.

The draft regulation includes provisions further enhancing the consideration of impacts to public resources, such as parks and wildlife areas; the prevention of spills; the management of waste; and the restoration of well sites after drilling.

Additionally, the draft rulemaking also includes standards affecting the construction of gathering lines and temporary pipelines, and includes provisions for identifying and monitoring abandoned wells close to well sites.

“This proposed regulation includes comprehensive amendments that are designed to reduce potential environmental impacts from oil and gas activities,” Abruzzo said. “I personally want to thank the EQB for their support in moving this historical package forward.”

The draft regulation will be reviewed by the Attorney General’s Office and the Office of General Counsel. After the offices’ review, the comment period will be opened and the public invited to submit written comments to the EQB.

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## Environmental Quality Board Approves Proposed Regulation for Oil and Gas Surface Activities (continued)

Details on where comments can be submitted on the draft rulemaking will be provided when the proposal is published in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and on DEP's website. The dates and locations of the six public hearings will be announced by the EQB in the near future on the website and through a news release issued by the department.

To view materials for the proposed regulation, visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us) and click the "Draft Oil and Gas Regulations" button.

Source: The PA Department of Environmental Protection

# New Pesticide Labels Will Better Protect Bees and Other Pollinators

In an ongoing effort to protect bees and other pollinators, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed new pesticide labels that prohibit use of some neonicotinoid pesticide products where bees are present.

“Multiple factors play a role in bee colony declines, including pesticides. The Environmental Protection Agency is taking action to protect bees from pesticide exposure and these label changes will further our efforts,” said Jim Jones, assistant administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention.

The new labels will have a bee advisory box and icon with information on routes of exposure and spray drift precautions. Today’s announcement affects products containing the neonicotinoids imidacloprid, dinotefuran, clothianidin and thiamethoxam. The EPA will work with pesticide manufacturers to change labels so that they will meet the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) safety standard.

In May, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and EPA released a comprehensive scientific report on honey bee health, showing scientific consensus that there are a complex set of stressors associated with honey bee declines, including loss of habitat, parasites and disease, genetics, poor nutrition and pesticide exposure.

The agency continues to work with beekeepers, growers, pesticide applicators, pesticide and seed companies, and federal and state agencies to reduce pesticide drift dust and advance best management practices. The EPA recently released new enforcement guidance to federal, state and tribal enforcement officials to enhance investigations of beekill incidents.

More on the EPA’s label changes and pollinator protection efforts:  
<http://www.epa.gov/opp00001/ecosystem/pollinator/index.html>

View the infographic on EPA’s new bee advisory box:

<http://www.epa.gov/pesticides/ecosystem/pollinator/bee-label-info-graphic.pdf>

## **Wildlife watching tops fishing or hunting In Pa. economic contributions**

The 2011 National Survey of Anglers, Hunters and Wildlife Watchers found that 4.6 million Pennsylvania residents and non-residents (16 years and older) fished, hunted or wildlife watched in Pennsylvania. Of the total number, 1.1 million fished, 775,000 hunted and 809,000 observed, fed and/or photographed wildlife away from home. Another 3.2 million observed, fed and/or photographed wildlife around the home.

From 2001 to 2011, the number of anglers, hunters and away-from-home wildlife watchers decreased 13 percent, 23 percent and 37 percent, respectively. In-state expenditure from 2001 to 2011 decreased among anglers and hunters by 34 percent and 19 percent, respectively, but increased among wildlife watchers by 4 percent.

In 2011, total expenditures all three activities was \$2.6 billion-- fishing \$485.4 million, hunting \$970.5 million and wildlife watching \$1.2 billion. In 2001, total expenditures for all three activities was \$2.8 billion-- fishing \$762.2 million, hunting \$901.1 million and wildlife watching \$1.2 billion.

The Survey is conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and U.S. Census Bureau.

Source: PA DCNR

# New grant funds wheelchair accessible boat dock at Point State Park

Launching a canoe or kayak at Point State Park in Pittsburgh will be a whole lot easier and safer for Pennsylvanians with disabilities thanks to a generous grant from the Mary Hillman Jennings Foundation to install an accessible dock there. The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation received the grant and will work with DCNR and the EZ Dock® company to build an ADA compliant canoe and kayak launch system in the park.

“DCNR has a long-standing commitment to meeting the needs of people with disabilities because we believe all visitors should have access to exciting outdoor learning, recreational opportunities and the pleasure of being active,” Acting Secretary Ellen Ferretti said. “We are especially excited to have this accessible dock at Point because is one of our most visited state parks in the system.”

In addition to giving paddlers with disabilities a place to launch, the Point State Park project will also provide users with access to ADA-compliant restrooms nearby, and helps create an accessible route to Pittsburgh’s downtown.

“The EZ Dock initiative will help Point State Park accommodate paddlers of all abilities, and help get more Pennsylvanians outdoors,” PPF President Marci Mowery said. “I am very excited by the opportunities this dock will provide for innovative programming and use. Improvements in accessibility benefit all users, and make recreation more open to all, every day.”

The “EZ Launch” system includes a platform with rollers to smoothly move boats in and out of the water, and a transfer bench for wheelchair users. The specialized dock allows paddlers to move from wheelchair to bench and then directly into their boat, providing a stable and safe means to board and recover kayaks and canoes from the water.

“This canoe and kayak launch will not only provide access to the historic, cultural and natural resources of Point State Park, but it will allow us to provide programming geared toward park visitors with disabilities,” said Point State Park Manager Matthew Greene. The new dock will replace a stop on the Three Rivers Water Trail that currently has steps leading down to the water, limiting access at that point.

One in five Americans has a disability, and approximately 38 million people visit Pennsylvania state parks each year. That means that state parks serve potentially eight million people with disabilities.

For more information about accessible recreation opportunities in Pennsylvania’s state parks and forests, go here and choose “Final ADA Accessible Amenities.”

Source: PA DCNR