

# Conservation Committee Report

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Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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## Rep. Vitali: Bill Poised To Reduce Protection For PA's Endangered Species

### 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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Lawmakers, sportsmen and environmental groups warned a bill-- House Bill 1576 (Pyle-R-Armstrong) -- poised for a vote November 13 would damage the Commonwealth's ecosystem and threaten millions of dollars in federal funding, according to Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware), Minority Chair of the House

Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.

"The professionals at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat and Game commissions currently decide wildlife that are designated threatened or endangered, and that system works fine," said Rep. Vitali.

"House Bill 1576 would give final deci-

sion making to the Independent Regulatory Review Commission, adding unnecessary delays to the designation process and putting endangered species at risk."

IRRC is made up of five members, two each

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## DEP Accepting Applications for 2014 Environmental Education Grants

Deadline to Apply is Jan. 6, 2014

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today invited schools, colleges and universities, county conservation districts, non-profit organizations,

municipalities and businesses to apply for Environmental Education Grants to develop programs and projects.

"These grants fund projects that explore many of today's most pressing issues," Acting DEP Secretary Chris

Abruzzo said. "Providing opportunities for all Pennsylvanians to increase their understanding of environmental issues fosters life-long environmental stewardship."

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## Rep. Vitali: Bill Poised To Reduce Protection For PA's Endangered Species

appointed by the legislative caucuses, and one by the governor. The bill also would require that any species currently listed as threatened or endangered go through the IRRC process and the legislature within two years of the legislation being enacted to justify its continued designation.

Josh First, a conservative Republican and member of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, said the bill is misguided because it would put profits ahead of protections.

"We are stewards of the planet," First said. "We are not here to dominate it."

The bill has been scheduled for a vote Wednesday by the House Game and Fisheries Committee. If it is reported out of committee, it could be voted by the full House of Representatives.

In addition to weakening protection for endangered wildlife, shifting decision making to IRRC puts millions of dollars at risk. The federal Department of the Interior in August wrote to the state and warned that if it diverts revenue from fishing and hunting, it would risk losing its share of federal restoration funds. In the 2012-13 fiscal year, Pennsylvania received \$19.1 million in restoration funds.

Trout Unlimited Eastern Water Project Director Katy Dunlap said Pennsylvania has a long history of fishing, and millions of people purchase fishing licenses and equipment every year, boosting the state's economy.

"This bill would jeopardize angling traditions and angling revenue in our state," Dunlap said.

Rep. Rick Mirabito (D-Lycoming) said the legislation flies in the face of the legislature's constitutional requirement to protect the environment.

"We have an obligation to protect the environment," Rep. Mirabito said. "It's not a choice; it's an obligation. It's a civil right for the people of Pennsylvania."

Both Rep. Vitali and John Arway from the Fish and Boat Commission said at the press conference the amendment expected to be offered in the House Game and Fisheries Committee would improve the bill, but issues remain (see related stories).

**[Note:** The bill generated significant opposition from sportsmen and environmental groups across the state during two joint public hearings held by the Game and Fisheries and Environmental Resources and Energy Committees.

[The Marcellus Shale Coalition, Associated Petroleum Industries and Pennsylvania Independent Oil and Gas Association all co-signed a letter in support of the bill, applauding its "consistency, transparency and accountability" in handling endangered species.]

Source: PA Environment Digest

## DEP Accepting Applications for 2014 Environmental Education Grants

The grants provide funding to develop programs and projects that support environmental education about important issues, including:

**Watersheds:** Abandoned mine drainage, non-point source pollution and water conservation.

**Chesapeake Bay Watershed Education:** Reducing non-point source pollution, such as nutrient and sediment loads; and meaningful educational watershed experiences for students.

**Air Quality:** Ground level ozone, transportation and electric generation issues.

**Brownfields:** Education and outreach programs in brownfield redevelopment and sustainable communities, along with developing green, open spaces.

**Energy:** Educational programs on energy efficiency and conservation; as well as, natural gas, coal, wind, solar and other energy sources and technologies.

**Environmental Literacy:** Engaging educators and stakeholders in content standards and field-based environmental education.

**Environmental Education Certification:** Developing and implementing institutionalized and community-based certification programs designed for teachers, naturalists and educators working in schools and environmental education facilities.

Eligible projects include, but are not limited to: teacher professional development; curriculum integration; outdoor learning resources, such as trails, shelters, streamside plantings and educational programming; transportation to field study sites; water chemistry testing equipment; and educational events. Grants are awarded up to \$3,000.

In April, DEP awarded 92 grants totaling more than \$334,000 to groups in support of environmental education programs across the state. Since the program's inception, the department has awarded nearly \$8 million in grants.

The program was established by the Environmental Education Act of 1993 and mandates that 5 percent of all pollution fines and penalties collected annually by DEP be set aside for environmental education.

Applications are available online at [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us), keyword EE Grants or calling DEP's Environmental Education and Information Center at 717-772-1828 or email [adevine@pa.gov](mailto:adevine@pa.gov).

The deadline to apply is Jan. 6, 2014.

Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **DEP-Nominated Project Wins National Coal Mine Reclamation Award**

### **P&N Coal Company's Clearfield County Project Deemed Best in Country**

The Department of Environmental Protection announced that P&N Coal Company Inc. of Punxsutawney, Jefferson County, recently received the nation's best coal mine reclamation project award from the National Association of State Land Reclamationists, following a nomination submitted by the department.

"The department was pleased to learn that a Pennsylvania company nominated by DEP had won such a prestigious national award," DEP Deputy Secretary for Active and Abandoned Mine Operations John Stefanko said. "This important project, done through a no-cost Government Financed Construction Contract (GFCC), has made 32 acres of highly used State Game Lands 77 in Sandy Township much safer for area hunters."

The project reclaimed nearly three miles of dangerous abandoned highwall and 32 acres of abandoned surface mine. It also restored 900 feet of Slab Run, a tributary to Sandy Lick Creek. P&N was also able to abate acid mine drainage flowing into Slab Run by adding large quantities of lime to the backfill material.

A no-cost GFCC allows DEP to issue reclamation contracts without cost to the commonwealth to reclaim abandoned mine lands, while the operator is allowed to remove coal that is incidental and necessary to the completion of the reclamation. For this project, DEP provided partial funding of the alkaline addition through a \$300,000 grant from the Growing Greener Environmental Stewardship fund, which is funded in part by impact fees paid by natural gas drillers.

Reclamation performed by P&N Coal on the two adjacent contracts had an estimated value of \$1.7 million, which was done at no expense to the commonwealth.

The award was presented to P&N Coal President John Prushnok by National Association of State Land Reclamationists President Thomas Gragg during a recent meeting in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The association annually presents awards for best coal mine and non-coal mine reclamation projects.

For more information, visit <http://www.dep.state.pa.us> or call 717-783-2267.

Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection

## **Gov. Corbett Urges Homeowners and Small Businesses to Take Advantage of Remaining \$1 Million Available in Solar Rebates**

Governor Tom Corbett and the Department of Environmental Protection urged residents and small businesses to act now to take advantage of the remaining \$1 million in rebates available through the agency's Sunshine Solar Program, ending Dec. 31 or when funds are exhausted.

"Last January, Gov. Corbett brought back the Sunshine Solar Program, and since then, the state has invested more than \$6 million into local economies in the form of solar rebates," DEP Acting Secretary Chris Abruzzo said. "We encourage Pennsylvania's residents and small business owners to not delay in taking advantage of this funding before the program expires."

The \$1 million in remaining funds will be disbursed on a first-come, first-serve basis. Homeowners are eligible for rebates of up to \$7,500 for solar electric projects; and small businesses of 100 or fewer employees are eligible to receive up to \$52,500. Homeowners are eligible for rebates of up to \$5,000 for solar hot water projects, while small businesses are eligible to receive up to \$50,000.

As required under the Alternative Energy Investment Act, eligible applicants must select and work with a DEP-approved installer. The installer applies for the rebate on behalf of the homeowner or business once the project is completed. A list of approved installers is available on DEP's website, [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us); keyword: Sunshine.

The balance of remaining funds will be updated weekly on the Sunshine Solar webpage.

Source: PA Department of Environmental Protection

## 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision

Pacific Islands and Europe lead the way with healthy oceans; Coastal protection is a concern for the future

Researchers announced the 2013 update to the Ocean Health Index. A finding of concern from its first annual update was the low score, 33 of 100, for Food Provision, one of ten measured goals that comprise the Index. The Index also showed that Oceania (Western & Central Pacific) and Europe were the two highest scoring regions in the world. Despite variation in scores between Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs), the cumulative score of the oceans globally was 65 out of 100, which is unchanged from 2012 and indicates there remains room for more effective management of the oceans in order to sustain the benefits they provide for human well-being.

Natural products, a measure of how well we sustainably use non-food ocean products such as sponges, ornamental fish, fish oil, shells, seaweeds and coral products, scored lowest with 31 out of 100. These scores indicate that we are harvesting fish and products from the ocean faster than they can be replaced; and that nations could obtain greater benefits by using resources more sustainably and fully. This provides a clear measure to enable policy makers to monitor their progress towards sustainable management of their coastlines.

"It's exciting to release this year's results because we can now, for the first time, start to see how overall ocean health is changing in each country, and for the whole planet", said Ben Halpern, Professor at the Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, UC Santa Barbara and the Index's lead scientist. "Already the United Nations, international organizations, and individual countries are recognizing how useful the Index can be in assessing how we are doing in managing our oceans and where we need to make changes. To have so much uptake in just over a year since we first launched the Index is really remarkable and very encouraging."

### The Ocean Health Index is categorized into ten goals:

Goal	Ocean Health Index Score 2013
Artisanal Fishing Opportunities	95
Biodiversity	85
Coastal Livelihoods & Economies	82
Clean Waters	78

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## 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)

Carbon Storage	74
Coastal Protection	69
Sense of Place	60
Tourism & Recreation	39
Natural Products	31
Food Provision	33

The Ocean Health Index assesses how well we sustainably use ocean resources and benefits. It serves as a resource for policy makers and businesses worldwide. The Index measures ten ocean health goals and defines a healthy ocean as one that delivers a range of benefits to people both now and in the future. The Index is the collaborative work of scientists led by Ben Halpern at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) at UC Santa Barbara and including the University of British Columbia's Sea Around Us project, Conservation International, National Geographic, the New England Aquarium and a broad spectrum of universities, non-profit organizations and government agencies.

### Food Provision Score is Second Lowest among Index Goals

With a score of only 33 out of 100, Food Provision from Wild Caught Fisheries and Mariculture was the second lowest scoring goal. Nine of the ten highest-scoring regions for Food Provision were island nations in the Western South Pacific --- Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Palau, Marshall Islands, Vanuatu, Wallis and Futuna, Papua New Guinea, Nauru and New Caledonia. Those nations are particularly important because half of the world's tuna fishery depends on their waters. The remaining region, Heard and McDonald Islands, is a group of remote volcanic islands administered by Australia in the southern Indian Ocean 1000 kilometers north of Antarctica nearly equidistant between Australia and Africa.

Scores for the Wild-Caught Fisheries sub-goal of the Food Provision goal for the ten countries with highest fishery catches were: China (16), Peru (67), Russia (16), United States (41), India (13), Indonesia (25), Chile (49), Japan (17), Norway (34) and Taiwan (8). Those scores averaged 29, two points below the Global Score for Wild Caught Fisheries. Distant water catches by those or other nations are allocated to the regions where the fish were caught, so all scores reflect the condition of fisheries in the region listed. Thirty-seven countries or territories scored ten or below.

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## 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)

"The Ocean Health Index measures how well we are sustainably producing seafood including wild catch fisheries and mariculture. The score of 33 out of 100 for Food Provision indicates that food security is at risk, particularly for those parts of the world that depend upon seafood as a critical source of high quality protein," said Andrew Rosenberg, Director of the Center for Science and Democracy at the Union of Concerned Scientists." Seafood is an important part in a healthy diet for all of us. We can do better."

**Sub-goals are weighted by quantity (metric tons) of seafood contributed to the total seafood harvest for each country.**

Top Country	Food Provision Goal Score 2013 (0-100)	Food Provision	
		Sub-goal Score	
		Wild Caught Fisheries	Mariculture
China	68	16	100
Peru	67	67	27
Russia	16	16	3
USA	40	41	11
India	13	13	2
Indonesia	23	25	16
Chile	59	49	100
Japan	18	17	26
Norway	59	34	100
Taiwan	10	8	33

"The Food Provision goal provides a meaningful way to understand the implications of how we manage our fisheries resources across the globe", said Heather Tausig, Vice President of Conservation at the New England Aquarium. "Meanwhile, the Index also reveals that opportunities exist to improve the sustainability of aquaculture operations and increase production of farmed seafood to meet the global demand for protein."

In 2013 the method for calculating the food provision was improved.

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# 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)

A team of scientists developed a new way to assess the maximum sustainable yield for various stocks that had insufficient data in the past. This is an important new metric both for the Ocean Health Index and for other fisheries measurements. The new method was applied to 2012 scores as well in order that those results can be compared to 2013 scores. This caused a change to some scores that were announced in 2012.

## Island Nations and Europe Lead in Scores

Island territories or nations gained the top ten overall scores. The Heard and McDonald Islands' score and rank (94, 1st) were the highest for any populated region, though the population is only 110. Saba's (90, 2nd) were the highest with population greater than 1,000. Top scores for progressively larger populations were Bonaire (84, 7th) for a nation with population over 10,000; Curaçao (81, 10th) for more than a population greater than 100,000 people; Croatia (75, 18th) for more than one million people; and France (73, 32nd) for more than 50 million people.

Western European countries scored relatively well: the Netherlands (score 74, rank 21st), France (73, 32nd), Belgium (72, 37th), Monaco (70, 42nd), and Germany (68, 59th), all scoring above the Global Score of 65.

"The Index scores gave us an interesting look at the diverse types of nations that can score high in ocean health. On the surface, we see a lot of places with little to no human impact but then we see highly populated European countries scoring above the global average," said Dr. Greg Stone, Executive Vice President for The Betty and Gordon Moore Center for Science and Oceans at Conservation International. "This shows us that human activity has an impact on ocean health, but indicates that densely populated and highly industrialized nations that have better management practices in place for their EEZs, as many European nations do, can score higher on the Ocean Health Index."

## Wealth Does Not Mean Health for Oceans

Wealthy countries have the greatest impact on industry and policy so their performance on the Index is important to ocean health, but there was little correlation between their economic performance as measured by GDP and their Ocean Health Index scores. The average score of countries with the fifteen highest GDPs was 65, no better than the global average.

Some of the wealthiest nations as measured by GDP rank very low on the Ocean Health Index.

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## 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)

Many of the ten lowest scoring countries -- of which Guinea Bissau scores the lowest, preceded by the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Haiti, Ivory Coast, Guinea, Pakistan, Angola, Somalia and Nicaragua -- are poor or have a recent history of war, civil strife, ethnic conflict, dictatorship or poor governance. Such conditions constrain resources or opportunities for taking the resilience actions needed to reduce social and environmental pressures on the ocean.

### Top 15 countries in GDP

Country	GDP Rank	Ocean Health Index Rank	Ocean Health Index Score
United States	1	75	67
China	2	162	58
Japan	3	87	66
Germany	4	59	68
France	5	32	73
United Kingdom	6	106	64
Brazil	7	83	66
Russia	8	81	67
Italy	9	111	63
India	10	159	58
Canada	11	61	68
Australia	12	43	70
Spain	13	86	66
Mexico	14	124	62
South Korea	15	116	63

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# 2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)

## Coastal Protection

Globally, the oceans scored 69 for the Coastal Protection goal, which measures the presence of coastal habitats, including mangrove forests, seagrass beds, salt marshes, coral reefs and sea ice that serve to protect coastlines from storm surges and coastal flooding. A score below 100 indicates the decline over the last three decades in the extent and condition of those key natural habitats that protect shorelines from storms. Eighty-five countries that sit in the annual path of tropical cyclones had an average score of 57 out of 100. Of those countries with a population exceeding 10 million people, the average score is only 56.

Recent work has shown that tropical cyclones cause an estimated \$26 billion a year in lost property. “Coastal habitats mitigate the damage that storms can cause so it was important for us to include coastal protection as a goal in the Ocean Health Index. We must try to restore naturally protective coastal habitats in storm prone regions, in combination with sensible coastal planning and civil engineering”, said Elizabeth Selig, Director of Marine Science at Conservation International.

The Ocean Health Index publishes an annual update of scores for ten goals for ocean health based on scientific analysis of over 100 global data layers and using studies from leading research agencies around the world. Index scores were computed for 221 Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) which are identified as “countries” on the website.

Sylvia Earle, Explorer-in-Residence, National Geographic added “The Ocean Health Index provides a quantitative scientific assessment of the human impact on our oceans. It reveals the areas that must be improved in order to provide our children and their children a healthy thriving ocean. This must be done as if it’s a matter of life and death – because it is.”

**About the Ocean Health Index** – The Ocean Health Index is the first assessment tool that scientifically compares and combines key elements from all dimensions of the ocean’s health – biological, physical, economic and social. The Index’s ten goals provide leaders with the portfolio of information they need to promote a more sustainable human-ocean ecosystem. The Index can be used globally, regionally or for an individual bay. It allows for direct comparison across different aspects of ocean health and different locations in a way that is not possible with current assessment tools.

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## **2013 Ocean Health Index Reveals Low Score in Food Provision (continued)**

Source:

The Ocean Health Index was developed with the contributions of more than 65 ocean experts including the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis and the University of British Columbia's Sea Around Us project. The founding partners of the Index are Conservation International, National Geographic, and The New England Aquarium. The Founding Presenting Sponsor of the Ocean Health Index is the Pacific Life Foundation. The founding grant was provided by Beau and Heather Wrigley. . For more information, please see [www.oceanhealthindex.org](http://www.oceanhealthindex.org) or visit us on Facebook or Twitter.

## TreeVitalize Pittsburgh plants 20,000th tree

*Assistant State Forester Matt Keefer helps local dignitaries mulch the 20,000th tree.*

A Pittsburgh urban forestry initiative has reached its initial goal of planting 20,000 trees in the Pittsburgh area—enough trees to fill New York City's Central Park.

TreeVitalize is a statewide initiative led by DCNR in partnership with local governments, organizations and businesses to increase tree canopy in municipalities throughout the commonwealth.

TreeVitalize Pittsburgh, which began in 2008, celebrated this milestone Nov. 7 with a ceremonial tree planting at the entrance to Point State Park.

DCNR's Assistant State Forester Matt Keefer participated in the event and said, "We all know the benefits that trees provide such as stormwater management, beautifying our towns and cities, improving air quality, and increasing property values...but what excites us most about the success of the work here in Pittsburgh are the relationships built during the process and the commitment and investment that people are making to improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods and cities."

The effort managed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy is supported by 6,700 volunteers and eight private and public funders including DCNR.

*The 20,000th TreeVitalize tree planted in Point State Park.*

"This is an important milestone for the Conservancy's urban forestry work. We intend to move forward with more green infrastructure initiatives across the region, such as tree plantings, community gardens, school grounds projects and bioswales," said Thomas D. Saunders, WPC's president and chief executive officer.

TreeVitalize trees being planted benefit communities in a number of ways, including managing storm water, reducing air pollution and energy costs, increasing property values and improving human and ecosystem health. All told, Pittsburgh's street trees alone provide \$2.4 million annually in economic and environmental benefits.

Financial support for TreeVitalize Pittsburgh was provided by not only DCNR, but also the Heinz Endowments, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, the Colcom Foundation and the Pennsylvania Infrastructure and Investment Authority, also known as PENNVEST. To date, \$8.7 million dollars has been invested in the program for tree planting, tree care and outreach efforts.

For more information on TreeVitalize go [here](#).

Source: PA DCNR