

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 10 Issue 7

By Jack Walters, ACSL Conservation Chair

July 2008



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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GOVERNOR RENDELL PROCLAIMS 'DUMP THE PUMP DAY,' PROMOTES ALTERNATE TRANSPORTATION, ANNOUNCES HYBRID INVESTMENT FOR TRANSIT

Urges General Assembly to Pass Energy Independence Strategy to Break Dependence on Foreign Oil, Help Pennsylvanians Conserve and Cut Costs

Governor Edward G. Rendell proclaimed, "Dump the Pump Day," by announcing the purchase of 14 hybrid public transportation vehicles, and launched a Web site to promote alternate transportation as he continues leading Pennsylvania toward energy independence.

"The only way to secure our energy future is to take steps now that allow Pennsylvania to be more energy efficient and conserve our natural resources," Governor Rendell said. "We cannot reduce our dependence on foreign oil unless we

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TO ELIMINATE MOSQUITOES AT HOME: DUMP IT, DRAIN IT, TREAT IT

After discovering the first positive mosquito sample of the year in neighboring Luzerne County, the Department of Environmental Protection and representatives of Lackawanna County's West Nile program today reminded area residents of simple steps they can take to control mosquitoes in their own yards—an important effort in combating the spread of the West Nile virus.

"DEP and local coordinators are working to keep mosquito populations under control, but residents can also play a big role in managing these insects," said DEP Northeast Regional Director Michael Bedrin. "Remember: dump it if it has water in it; drain it if it can be drained; and treat it if it has standing water.

"These are easy measures that everyone can take in their own back yards to help protect themselves and their family from the West Nile virus."

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GOVERNOR RENDELL PROCLAIMS 'DUMP THE PUMP DAY,'

(continued)

make better use of the alternative transportation options and invest in our own home-grown fuel resources as proposed in the PennSecurity Fuels Initiative.

"Dump the Pump Day reminds consumers to be responsible and make informed transportation decisions as a means to declare their own energy independence," the Governor said. "If the General Assembly acts now, that's exactly what my Energy Independence Strategy will start to do for Pennsylvania families and businesses — allow them to take control of their energy use."

To help protect consumers from rising energy costs, Governor Rendell unveiled the Energy Independence Strategy in February 2007 that would save Pennsylvania families and businesses \$10 billion over the next decade. The plan, pending in the state Senate, would leverage \$850 million in new investments to attract \$3.5 billion in alternative and renewable energy products and reduce Pennsylvania's dependence on foreign oil.

"Energy independence begins at home, and commuters can do their part to help reduce energy consumption and reduce Pennsylvania's dependence on foreign oil by relying more on public transit or carpooling," the Governor said.

"We have to do all that we can to help families and businesses save on energy costs and those savings can't stop with commuting," he said. "Let me remind you that when my Energy Independence Strategy was unveiled 18 months ago, the average price for a gallon of regular gasoline in Pennsylvania was \$2.23, diesel was around \$2.65 per gallon, and a barrel of crude oil was around \$53. Now, motorists are paying \$4 per gallon at the pump for gas, almost \$5 per gallon for diesel, and crude oil set a new record this week when a barrel of oil was trading near \$140.

"Under my Energy Independence Strategy and PennSecurity Fuels Initiative, we can break our dependence on foreign oil and consumers will find it easier to conserve electricity and use it in a more efficient manner," Governor Rendell said.

The Governor again urged the General Assembly to adopt the strategy and send these bills to him for signature:

H.B. 1202, the Governor's PennSecurity Fuels Initiative, has been awaiting action by the Senate since June. It requires nearly 1 billion gallons of biofuels to be produced and consumed in the commonwealth — an amount equal to what the state will import from the Persian Gulf by 2017.

Special Session H.B. 1, which was adopted by the House on March 11, will provide funding to develop solar, wind and other advanced energy industries; make it easier for consumers to purchase and install solar panels; continue the state's leadership in energy-efficient green buildings, and helps consumers purchase high-efficiency heating/cooling equipment and appliances.

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GOVERNOR RENDELL PROCLAIMS ‘DUMP THE PUMP DAY,’**(continued)**

H.B. 2200 was passed by the House on Feb. 12 and will help consumers save on their energy bills by conserving electricity and using it more efficiently. Once fully implemented, H.B. 2200 will save consumers \$1.3 billion by 2012 on their energy bills through conservation and bringing down the cost of electricity during peak load times — when demand is highest and electricity is most expensive.

House Bill 2201, which is awaiting a vote in both chambers, will require utilities to provide service to customers at the lowest reasonable rate. The bill will require utility service providers to procure power through a mix of short- and long-term contracts and spot market purchases, and obligate the Public Utility Commission to ensure that the procurement process is free of fraud, collusion or market manipulation.

To help commuters make smart transportation decisions, Governor Rendell unveiled a new PennDOT Web page where residents can explore transit options, carpooling and park and ride locations across the state. The page is found under the “Dump the Pump” link at: www.dot.state.pa.us.

The Governor also announced that he directed the Office of Administration to develop an incentive program to encourage state employees to use public transit and related options.

To help expand public transit’s use of cleaner, more efficient vehicles, Governor Rendell announced the investment of \$2 million to help fund the purchase of 14 hybrid transit vehicles that will be used in rural and small urban areas. Ten hybrid para-transit buses will expand Rabbittransit’s shared-ride program in York County. Four other regions will each receive one standard size hybrid bus: the Area Transportation Authority of North Central Pennsylvania, the Berks Area Reading Transportation Authority, the Luzerne County Transportation Authority and the Westmoreland County Transit Authority. The buses will be delivered in 2009.

Pennsylvania’s investment was matched by a federal grant allowing \$4 million to help transit agencies offset the cost of the hybrid buses which get 40 to 50 percent better gas mileage than their non-hybrid counterparts and reduce pollution emissions by 30 to 40 percent.

“These hybrid buses are an investment in our public transportation system to help Pennsylvanians make smart choices when it comes to traveling,” the Governor said. “As we support Dump the Pump Day, I again urge the General Assembly to enact my Energy Independence Strategy.

“We must act now if we’re going to succeed in creating an energy independent and environmentally friendly Pennsylvania that will create opportunities for our children and grandchildren while reducing our reliance on foreign energy sources.”

The alternate transportation resources are online under the “Dump the Pump” link at www.dot.state.pa.us. For more information on the Energy Independence Strategy, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us and click on the “Fueling Energy Savings” icon.

Source: PA DEP

DUMP IT, DRAIN IT, TREAT IT

(continued)

DEP staff and Lackawanna County West Nile Coordinator Mike Chisdock were on hand today at McDade Park to show how homeowners can eliminate standing water.

DEP offers the following tips to eliminate mosquito-breeding sites around the home:

Identify and eliminate standing water that collects on your property. Mosquitoes will breed in any puddle that lasts for more than four days.

Dispose of tin cans, plastic containers, ceramic pots or similar water holding containers, including those that have become overgrown by aquatic vegetation.

Empty water that may accumulate in discarded tires.

Drill holes in the bottom of recycling containers that are left outside.

Have clogged roof gutters cleaned annually, particularly if the leaves from surrounding trees tend to block the drains.

Turn over plastic wading pools when not in use.

Turn over wheelbarrows and do not allow water to stagnate in birdbaths.

Aerate ornamental pools or stock them with fish.

Keep swimming pools clean and chlorinated, and prevent water from collecting on swimming pool covers.

DEP and county West Nile coordinators monitor the type, location and population of immature (larvae and pupae) and adult mosquitoes. This information is then used to treat those areas where high populations of mosquitoes that are known West Nile carriers are found.

Pennsylvania's aggressive approach has contributed to a drop in the number of human West Nile virus cases. The West Nile virus can cause West Nile fever and encephalitis—an infection that can cause inflammation of the brain and death—when transmitted to people.

Last year, the West Nile virus was found in 25 Pennsylvania counties. Ten state residents contracted the virus, but no deaths were reported. In 2006, two of the nine Pennsylvanians who contracted West Nile virus died and in 2005, 25 residents contracted the disease, with no deaths attributed to the virus.

Most people bitten by an infected mosquito will never develop any symptoms, and only one in 150 with symptoms will develop the more serious West Nile encephalitis.

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DUMP IT, DRAIN IT, TREAT IT (continued)

Because mosquitoes acquire the virus from infected birds, residents are reminded to report dead crows, blue jays and hawks. Residents who discover dead birds and would like to submit them for testing should call the local West Nile county coordinator.

When handling dead birds, use rubber gloves. If you do not have gloves, insert your hand into a plastic bag, grasp the bird carefully and invert the bag over the bird. Each bird should be placed in a tied plastic bag and then placed inside a second tied bag.

If you are not submitting the bird for testing, place the bagged bird in the trash. Wash your hands with soap and water.

For more information about West Nile virus, and register for updates via e-mail, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us. People can also call 1-877-PA-HEALTH for information.

Source: PA DEP

CONSOL Inc. Works with DOE to Reduce Pollution and Dispose of By-Products from Coal Combustion

Carbon Dioxide Sequestration in Coal Seams - CONSOL Inc. will evaluate the effectiveness and economics of carbon sequestration in an unmineable coal seam. This study will determine the effectiveness and costs of sequestration in this manner, which could have significant favorable implications for coal-fired power plants that can separate CO₂ from exhaust gas and inject it into unmineable coal seams. This project has a total value of \$13.28 million with DOE funding \$8.96 million.

Greenidge Multi-Pollutant Control Project - CONSOL Energy Inc., South Park, PA, plans to demonstrate a multi-pollutant control system to reduce NO_x, sulfur dioxide (SO₂), mercury, acidic gases, and fine particles from smaller coal plants for less money than it costs to control NO_x and SO₂ separately. Among the innovations CONSOL plans to install at the AES Greenidge Power Plant near Dresden, NY, is a hybrid catalytic (SCR) and non-catalytic (SNCR) NO_x reduction technology that works inside the plant's ductwork, a low-NO_x combustion technology that burns coal mixed with biomass, and a circulating fluidized bed dry scrubber that is less complex and nearly half the cost of conventional systems. This project was selected as part of the Power Plant Improvement Initiative. It's valued at \$32.7 million (DOE share: \$14.3 million).

Field Trial of Mercury Capture Process - CONSOL Energy Inc. will determine the performance, operability, and economics of a low-cost method for >90% mercury control on a full-scale boiler. DOE is providing \$1.85 million of the \$2.5 million project cost.

Source: U.S. DOE

Siemens Westinghouse Pioneering Advanced Fuel Cells

Cleaner More Efficient Power Plants

Siemens Westinghouse Power Corporation, Pittsburgh, PA, is conducting a solid oxide fuel cell (SOFC) project. Fuel cells are an environmentally clean, quiet, and highly efficient method for generating electricity and heat from natural gas and other fuels. They are vastly different from other power systems. A fuel cell is an electrochemical device that converts the chemical energy of a fuel directly to usable energy - electricity and heat - without combustion. Solid oxide fuel cells use ceramic electrolytes (yttria-stabilized zirconia) and operate at about 1,000 degrees Celsius. The solid-state nature, the potential to reform gaseous fuel within the cells, and the high operating temperatures offer advantages over other systems. The solid electrolyte eliminates problems of electrolyte containment and migration and allows for various designs. Westinghouse has been a leader in solid oxide fuel cell technology since the late 1950s.

High-Temperature Tubular SOFC Development - In August 1997, DOE extended the SOFC research and development effort with Westinghouse Electric Company for an additional five years. This research will provide a pathway for low-cost commercial production of tubular SOFCs. The current five-year development effort has a total value of \$211.13 million, with DOE supplying \$101.62 million. This extended effort will help provide a pathway toward commercial markets.

Source: U.S. DOE

Paper, plastic or cloth:

Everyone from the local grocer to the major chains now sell reusable bags

Unlike many forgetful shoppers, Joan Major remembers to use her reusable grocery bag frequently in place of plastic bags.

But Major's use isn't always for shopping. Instead, she carries her insulin shots and supplies when she rides to the Wilkes-Barre VA Medical Center three to five times each month.

Major, 67, had previously relied on plastic bags to carry her supplies before her daughter Joann gave her the non-woven, canvas tote as a gift. Joann Major, an employee of Boyer's Food Market in Hazleton, has given 23 bags to veterans who commute to Wilkes-Barre in addition to her mother.

"This whole concept of offering environmentally friendly alternatives is catching on in a very big way," said Tracy Pawelski, a spokeswoman for Giant Food Stores.

Pawelski has seen a variety of uses for these bags. One school in the greater Philadelphia area had students resell the bags in order to buy an acre of rainforest, she said. Others have used the bags to carry their lunch to work or their clothes to the gym, she said.

Tony Casella, a store manager at Boyer's, said he heard several customers use the store's reusable bags for beach or bingo supplies. At Gould's Supermarket in Conyngham, Assistant Manager Brent Radzwich said he has seen people buying the reusable bags in place of more expensive gift bags.

What are they?

Reusable grocery bags, which are often priced around \$1 at supermarkets, have been available for months at some supermarkets and more than a year at others.

Other chains have been adding insulated reusable grocery bags to refrigerate items. Giant Food Stores, which introduced reusable grocery bags in August 2007, recently introduced reusable insulated totes, according to Pawelski.

Paper, plastic or cloth:

(continued)

The totes typically hold more than one plastic bag, but the exact figure varies depending on who you ask. Totes at supermarkets like Weis Markets and Giant Food Stores have the store's logo and are made from a green fabric.

The slogan on reusable bags at Giant Food Stores says "Reduce. Reuse. Recycle."

But the reusable bags are rarely able to be recycled, according to experts.

Very few curbside recycling programs will collect reusable bags, said Charles Young, an information specialist at the Department of Environmental Protection in Harrisburg.

But Young suggested other alternatives.

"You certainly can reuse those free plastic bags, both at the store or around the home," Young wrote in an e-mail. "Reuse is the most important point."

Use-Less-Stuff, a consumer advocacy report that began in 1994, released a study in 2007 to evaluate the merits of San Francisco's ban on plastic bags in supermarkets and large pharmacies.

The report found that "after four or more uses, reusable [grocery] bags are superior to all types of disposable bags — paper, polyethylene and compostable plastic — across all significant environmental indicators."

Sales, success?

Wegmans has sold more than 1.3 million reusable bags since they were introduced a little more than a year ago, said Jason Wadsworth, a sustainability specialist at Wegmans' corporate office.

Despite the chain's success in sales, Director of Media Relations Jo Natale said the company doesn't neces-

Paper, plastic or cloth:**(continued)**

sarily see those purchases in the chain's stores.

"We know the real benefit is when they are reused, so anything we can do to remind customers to bring them in is the biggest challenge," Wadsworth said.

A November 2007 poll by Wegmans of 10,300 customers found that one of the most significant issues was reminding customers to bring the reusable bags back to the store.

Although Boyer's, Gould's and the entire regional chain of Giant have not seen significant reductions in plastic bag orders, Wegmans has tracked a 15 percent decrease in plastic bag use, according to Wadsworth. The degree to which reusable bags contributed to this reduction is unavailable, though, and not currently tracked.

"Overall consumption is taking a pretty slight dip," said Vince Cobb, founder of Reusablebags.com. "It's not that plastic bags are evil; it's just that we consume too many."

While more than 380 billion plastic bags are consumed in the United States each year, only one percent is recycled, according to the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

Most of the customers of reusable bags use the products as grocery bags, Cobb said, but others like Major have found multiple uses.

"That's just the nature of a bag," he says.

Source: By DAVID TAUBE

Staff Writer

Standard ~ Speaker, Hazelton, PA