

# Conservation Committee Report

Volume 10 Issue 11

By Jack Walters, ACSL Conservation Chair

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## 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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## DEP DECLARES DROUGHT WATCH IN 29 WESTERN, NORTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES

### *Below Normal Rainfall Prompts Call for Voluntary Water Conservation*

The Department of Environmental Protection issued a drought watch today for 29 Pennsylvania counties as precipitation deficits continue and stream flow levels fall in the western and north central areas of the state.

“The commonwealth has received below-normal precipitation over the past two to three months that have resulted in rainfall deficits of as much as five inches in parts of western and north central Pennsylvania,” said acting DEP Secretary John Hanger. “Recent rainfalls have not been enough to bring streamflow and groundwater levels back to normal, so we are asking residents and businesses

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## DCNR breaks ground for nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park; first in state park system

On the morning of October 23, basking in autumn sunshine, DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis spoke proudly to the more than 60 people assembled to celebrate the groundbreaking for the nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park. The 16-room inn—a showplace of environmental and energy-efficient design—will feature locally-quarried stone, Pennsylvania hardwoods, and interpretive messages about conservation and wildlife, especially bird life. It will be the first facility of its kind in a Pennsylvania state park.

“The nature inn will connect people to the natural resources in a powerful way,” DiBerardinis said. “This is an historic groundbreaking.”

From the hilltop location overlooking 1,700-acre Sayers Reservoir, state Senator Jake Corman, local government leaders, and other DCNR officials also

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**DEP DECLARES DROUGHT WATCH IN 29  
WESTERN, NORTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA COUNTIES**

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to conserve water until we get more substantial precipitation in these areas of the state.” Although conditions are better in the eastern portion of the state, county groundwater well levels have shown signs of stress and conditions are being monitored closely by DEP.

A drought watch declaration is the first level — and least severe — of the state’s three drought classifications. It calls for a voluntary 5 percent reduction in non-essential water use.

DEP will send letters to all water suppliers in the affected counties, notifying them of the need to monitor their supplies and update their drought contingency plans as necessary. In addition to precipitation totals, DEP monitors groundwater levels, streamflows, soil moisture and water supply storage. “There are a number of simple steps that homeowners and businesses can take to immediately reduce water consumption without being inconvenienced,” said Hanger. “Hopefully, these conservation measures will allow us to maintain adequate groundwater and streamflow levels as we head into the winter months.”

DEP offers the following tips for conserving water around the home: In the bathroom: Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets; Check for household leaks – a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water a day; Take short showers instead of baths.

Kitchen/laundry areas: Replace older appliances with high efficiency, front loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40-50 percent less energy; Run dishwashers and washing machines only with full loads; Keep water in the refrigerator to avoid running water from a faucet until it is cold.

The department also offers water conservation recommendations for commercial and industrial users such as food processors, hotels and motels, schools and colleges, as well as water audit procedures for large water customers. Water conservation tips and drought information can be found online at [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us), keyword: drought.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The drought watch covers Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Butler, Cambria, Cameron, Centre, Clarion, Clearfield, Clinton, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Fayette, Forest, Greene, Indiana, Jefferson, Lawrence, Lycoming, McKean, Mercer, Potter, Somerset, Tioga, Venango, Warren, Washington, and Westmoreland counties.

Source: PA DEP

## DCNR breaks ground for nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park

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shared their reflections on the sustainable attributes, public benefits, and overall importance of the project. Representatives from the Pennsylvania Wilds Artisans Network displayed samples of carvings and other artistic media similar to pieces they'll be creating for the interior of the inn. Birding enthusiasts trained spotting scopes on a bald eagle nest on the opposite shore—allowing attendees a thrilling glimpse of this signature species.

The nature inn is scheduled to open in the spring of 2010. It will provide a unique lodging experience to visitors in the Pennsylvania Wilds.

“We also believe that visitors will help support local economies for goods and services during their stay,” DiBerardinis said. “This nature inn at Bald Eagle will make the natural resource the attraction, and serve as an entrance to the large expanse of public land in the Pennsylvania Wilds. It will be the model for other parks in our system since the design can be used elsewhere.”

Every spring, songbirds, like warblers, flycatchers and swallows, display courtship rituals and sing enchanting melodies while searching for nesting spots in the park. Boaters and beach goers commonly see herons, gulls, geese and osprey around the lake. In the fall, you can find migrating mergansers, cormorants, and buffleheads on the lake.

“It’s our intention through this facility to highlight the fabulous birding opportunities in Bald Eagle that result from its ridges, valleys and diverse habitat that attract many bird species,” DiBerardinis said.

Partnerships with conservation and artisan groups are being pursued to maximize the inn’s educational and community benefits. In cooperation with Audubon Pennsylvania, guest rooms will feature limited edition prints of John James Audubon’s paintings of birds found in Pennsylvania.

“Through green features and technology, this nature inn will model environmental sensitivity,” DiBerardinis added.

Green features of the 18,500-square-foot, 16-room building will include: a high efficiency geothermal heating and cooling system; solar collectors to heat water for showers and laundry; rainwater will be collected and used for flushing toilets; low-water-use plumbing fixtures and high efficiency lighting throughout; Pennsylvania hardwoods from forests certified as using sustainable forestry for structure, finishes and furnishings; and direct access to hiking and biking trails to enable and encourage healthy interaction with park resources.

The inn will feature works by artisans participating in the Pennsylvania Wilds Artisans Workgroup that was created in the north central region of the state.

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**DCNR breaks ground for nature inn at Bald Eagle State Park  
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Reservations to stay at the inn will be made through the existing state park reservation system ([www.visitPAParks.com](http://www.visitPAParks.com)).

Rooms will include a microwave, refrigerator, linens, cable TV and Internet connection. Breakfast will be provided.

For more information about Bald Eagle or other state parks, visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us).

Source: PA DCNR

## DEP AMENDS DREDGING PERMIT TO PROTECT SALAMANDER MUSSEL IN ALLEGHENY RIVER

The Department of Environmental Protection issued a permit amendment today that restricts Hanson Aggregates' dredging activities in portions of the Allegheny River. The change was made after a type of mussel, regarded by the federal government as a species of concern, was discovered.

When DEP issued Hanson its dredging permit in June 2006, it required the company to conduct mussel surveys and report the results to the agency. The surveys and reporting had to be done before dredging could begin in a new area.

The survey—conducted in the river within South Buffalo and Gilpin townships in Armstrong County—found two live salamander mussels, which the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission have proposed be placed on the state's threatened and endangered species list.

***Because species on the endangered list are protected, DEP agreed to prohibit dredging in the areas where salamander mussels were found in order to provide the Fish and Boat Commission with time to finalize the mussel's status.***

The amendment issued prohibits Hanson from dredging in the river at mile 31.25 through mile 31.65, but authorizes the company to dredge in the river from mile 30.7 to mile 31.25 and from mile 31.65 to mile 31.7.

Hanson may request authorization to dredge in the prohibited area if the mussels are not added to the Fish and Boat Commission's threatened and endangered list.

Dredging operations have been in place on the rivers in and around Pittsburgh for more than 100 years. Dredging companies must report annually on their dredging activities, including location, depth and dates of operation. In addition, each must pay a 30-cents-per-ton royalty to the Fish and Boat Commission for sand and gravel removed from Pennsylvania's rivers.

For more information, visit [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us), keyword: Watersheds.

Source: PA DEP

## DCNR awards \$1 million for Pittsburgh region parks, trees, trails

DCNR Secretary Michael DiBerardinis this week said the state will invest \$1 million to enhance parks, plant trees and improve trails in the Pittsburgh region.

The money will be awarded to the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, the City of Pittsburgh for TreeVitalize, and the Regional Trail Corp. for the Great Allegheny Passage.

“As we work to address the impact of global warming, our urban areas offer tremendous opportunities around already existing infrastructure and transportation,” DiBerardinis said at an event at Mellon Square announcing the grants. “It’s the parks, trees and recreational opportunities that make them places where people want to work and live, and that’s what we are supporting with our investments today.”

The Community Conservation Partnerships Program grants administered through DCNR will be awarded to:

Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, \$250,000 to help restore historic trails and bridges in Frick, Highland, Schenley and Riverview parks and to erect new signage to increase accessibility by identifying the parks and their key features;

The City of Pittsburgh, \$250,000 for the TreeVitalize partnership with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, Allegheny County and others to continue efforts to increase the region’s tree canopy; and

The Regional Trail Corp., \$500,000 to help construct 1.3 miles of the Great Allegheny Passage which includes a new bridge to cross over an active rail line.

Funding for the grants comes from the Growing Greener II bond issue and Keystone ’93, a DCNR fund generated from a portion of the state’s realty transfer tax.

“We are very grateful to DCNR for this generous grant,” said Meg Cheever, president and CEO of the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy. “This funding enables us to conduct much-needed repairs to improve drainage infrastructure and reduce soil erosion along trails in Frick, Highland, Schenley and Riverview parks. It will also help cover the costs of installing new signage that will significantly enhance visitors’ enjoyment of the parks.”

“TreeVitalize is making an immediate impact on the quality of life by improving the environment in urban areas,” TreeVitalize Director Marijke Hecht said. “DCNR’s leadership on this project has been invaluable for making TreeVitalize a reality.”

“DCNR has been our most important partner in this 30 year saga of building the Great Allegheny Passage and has provided tremendous financial support throughout these decades,” said Hannah Hardy, president of the Regional Trail Corp. “We are close to completing the last section through the Mon Valley and this grant will be a tremendous help.”

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**DCNR awards \$1 million for Pittsburgh region parks, trees, trails  
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“Our local partners are critical to our successful efforts to protect our natural areas,” DiBerardinis said. “Our grants help them meet the vision they have for their communities and regions.”

The announcement of these grants coincides with the International Urban Parks Conference occurring in Pittsburgh, Sept. 21-24.

For more information about DCNR’s grant program, visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us) and click on the “Recreation and Conservation” quick link.

Source: PA DCNR

## Even with Lower Gas Prices, Taking the Bus Can Save Thousands Annually

Despite declining gas prices, commuters can still achieve significant financial savings by taking public transportation instead of driving - and benefit the environment as well.

The American Public Transportation Association's monthly "Transit Savings Report" reminds commuters that in these tough economic times taking public transportation is the quickest way to save money compared with the overall driving costs of commuting by auto or light truck.

According to a savings calculator on the association's Web site, even moderate commutes by public transportation can save significant money. For example, the annual cost of a 15-mile roundtrip commute in a medium-sized car that averages 17 miles per gallon, with \$8 daily parking and gasoline at \$2.38 per gallon, is \$2,623. If bus fare is \$2.30 for the daily round trip, the annual cost of public transportation is \$552 – a savings of more than \$2,000 a year.

To use the calculator, visit [http://www.publictransportation.org/contact/stories/calculator\\_08.asp](http://www.publictransportation.org/contact/stories/calculator_08.asp).

"Even as the price of gas goes up and down, the one constant is that riding public transportation is the most economical and efficient way for American's to save money, reduce their consumption of oil, and lessen their impact on the environment," said William W. Millar, president of APTA.

By reducing gasoline consumption, public transportation users also reduce their carbon footprint. According to APTA, the "leverage effect" of public transportation reduces the nation's carbon emissions by 37 million metric tons annually – equivalent to the electricity used by 4.9 million households. To achieve similar reduction in carbon emissions, every household in New York City, Washington, DC, Atlanta, Denver and Los Angeles combines would have to completely stop using electricity.

Source: PA DEP

## EIGHT NEW HUMAN CASES OF WEST NILE VIRUS CONFIRMED

State officials confirmed eight new human cases of West Nile Virus for 2008.

The new cases include six individuals from Philadelphia County, one from Montgomery County and one from Chester County.

There are now 13 confirmed human cases in Pennsylvania this year, with no fatalities.

## **Pa. CleanWays Surpasses 10,000 Tons Of Waste Removed From Pennsylvania's Landscape**

PA CleanWays announced that it has removed more than 10,000 tons of waste from Pennsylvania's landscape since its inception in 1990. PA CleanWays, a nonprofit organization based in Greensburg, has the mission of empowering people to eliminate illegal dumping and littering in Pennsylvania. PA CleanWays carries out its mission with the help of five affiliates and 13 chapters across the state.

PA CleanWays, along with its affiliates and chapters, have conducted 829 illegal dump cleanups and 525 special collection events. Additionally, PA CleanWays adoption groups have done hundreds of litter cleanups across the state. This work couldn't be possible without the efforts of PA CleanWays volunteers. Over 47,000 volunteers have donated almost 200,000 hours of service to help clean the state of illegal dumps and litter.

In recognition of this significant achievement, PA CleanWays has honored its founder, Sue Wiseman, with a Legacy Award presented to her by John Dawes from the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds at a recent event. Starting a nonprofit organization was not something Ms. Wiseman anticipated when she and her family decided to do something about the furniture, appliances, mattresses, and trash that were regularly dumped along the roadway where they rode their horses.

In April 1989, Ms. Wiseman brought her neighbors together and spent 64 hours moving and bagging 38 tons of trash. Recognizing that clean roads would benefit the whole community (and eventually the entire state of Pennsylvania), she solicited local businesses, enforcement agencies, the media, and local townships for help. This community-oriented approach, coupled with her strength and conviction, has led to a grassroots organization that can proudly claim the removal of over 10,000 tons of trash from public lands statewide.

Ms. Wiseman's vision of a cleaner Pennsylvania has not only transformed communities but has also fostered a sense of pride within the people of Pennsylvania. Ms. Wiseman left the organization in 2002.

"Without Sue's vision and tenacity, PA CleanWays would never be able to have reached this significant organizational milestone of 10,000 tons of trash properly disposed," said Shannon Reiter, president of PA CleanWays. "Her efforts, along with the rest of our grassroots network and wonderful volunteers, make Pennsylvania a better place to live, work, and play."

Historical funders of PA CleanWays include, but are not limited, to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - Bureau of Forestry and Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, the Richard King Mellon Foundation, and the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds.

Source: PA DEP

## Sustainable Energy Fund Announces Solar Scholars™ Grant Awardees

The Sustainable Energy Fund (SEF) has announced the winners in the 2008 Solar Scholars™ PV grant competition. SEF, in collaboration with PPL Electric Utilities, provided \$180,000 in matching grants to 12 Pennsylvania colleges. The grants will provide a portion of the funding necessary for each team of professors and students to design and install an electric-producing solar system as well integrate renewable energy concepts and technologies into their college curriculum.

“Renewable energy is a big part of Pennsylvania’s future,” SEF President Jennifer Hopkins said. The Solar Scholars™ Conference and in particular, these grants will provide the tools necessary for professors and students to become our solar champions.”

“We’re supporting this initiative as part of our e-power wise energy use campaign,” PPL Director of Customer Strategy Tom Stathos said. “Raising awareness about renewable energy and ways to save benefits customers and helps protect the environment.”

Recipients of this year’s PV solar grants are:

- Dickinson College (Carlisle), Ken Shultes, Associate Vice President for Operations;
- Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown), Troy McBride, Associate Professor of Physics and Engineering;
- Franklin & Marshall College (Lancaster), Dr. Linda S. Fritz, Professor of Physics;
- Harrisburg Area Community College (Harrisburg), Robert Meyers, Instructor of Industrial Maintenance Technology;
- Lycoming College (Williamsport), Dr. Melvin Zimmerman, Professor of Biology;
- Muhlenberg College (Allentown), Jane Flood, Associate Professor of Physics;
- Northampton Community College (Bethlehem), Leo J. Thielmann, Director of Center for Business and Industry;
- Penn College of Technology (Williamsport), Wayne Gebhart, Assistant Professor of Electrical Technologies;
- Pennsylvania State University –Hazleton Campus, Wes Grebski, Associate Professor of Engineering; Pennsylvania State University –Schuylkill Campus (Schuylkill Haven), Thomas J. Cleary, Instructor of Engineering;

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## Sustainable Energy Fund Announces Solar Scholars™ Grant Awardees

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- Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology (Lancaster), Bruce Schreiner, Professor of Electronics Technology;
- University of Scranton (Scranton), Robert A. Spaletta, Professor of Physics and Electrical Engineering.

The Solar Scholars™ program is a first-in-the-nation solar education initiative that promotes the adoption and integration of renewable energy concepts and technologies into the curriculum of the Commonwealth's universities and community colleges. To qualify for a grant, teams of professors and students from 27 colleges attended a weeklong experiential training program this summer. SEF provided education on renewable energy technologies, the electric power industry, solar manufacturing, and energy curriculum. Following the conference, each team submitted a grant application which described the proposed solar systems and detailed how they would integrate renewable energy into the school's curriculum. A panel of judges from SEF and PPL Electric Utilities then reviewed the applications and selected the awardees.

Bill Dougherty and Bill Routson, the program's managers, stated "Due to the outstanding quality of the grant proposals, narrowing the list down to 12 schools was very difficult. They all did a great job."

Teams submitted a variety of designs including roof-mount and ground mount solar arrays, and systems that adjust the solar array's position to track the sun. The systems range from 3kW up to 4.8kW, with capacity to produce 47,375 kWh per year. That is enough energy to power 1,500 homes for one day. The solar arrays will have data collection systems so that professors and students can monitor the system's performance.

The Solar Scholars™ Program does not end when the grants are awarded as SEF supports the colleges with the final system design, system installation, and curriculum integration as well as marketing and other educational activities related to the program.

Currently 34 Pennsylvania colleges and universities participate in SEF's Solar Scholars™ Program.

Source: PA DEP