

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 10 Issue 9

By Jack Walters, ACSL Conservation Chair

September 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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Report Finds Spikes in Electricity Costs May Devastate Families

According to a report by Penn State University's Workforce Education and Development Initiative, increases in the cost of electricity once rate caps are removed might "devastate individual families."

Electricity rates were capped in the late 1990s when the electricity market was restructured, and the last of the rate caps will expire at the end of 2010. Pennsylvania's Office of Consumer Advocate has estimated rates in some areas could increase more than 60 percent.

Governor Edward G. Rendell has said it is "a moral imperative that we act

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More to be Done on Energy Independence,

Pennsylvania Economic Development Executive Says

Tremendous progress has been made toward energy independence but more work remains, a top Department of Community and Economic Development official said at the Northeast Renewable Energy Conference in State College.

"Governor Edward G. Rendell and the General Assembly have laid the foundation for Pennsylvania's energy independence, but we must be aware of the challenges ahead," DCED Deputy Secretary Rebecca Bagley said. "Our work is not complete."

Nearly 300 people from industry, academia, trade associations and environmental groups attended the conference.

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Spikes in Electricity Costs May Devastate Families (continued)

promptly to protect consumers from these rate spikes.”

When Governor Rendell signed important energy legislation this summer, he called for more action to protect consumers when the state legislature returns later this month. The Governor has been urging legislative action on bills to protect consumers and mitigate any future rate increases for more than a year and a half.

H.B. 2201 will change Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission requirements so that utilities must provide service for customers at the lowest reasonable rate. H.B. 2200 will help consumers save on their energy bills through conservation and using electricity more efficiently. Once fully implemented, H.B. 2200 will save consumers \$1.3 billion by 2012 through conservation and bringing down the cost of electricity during peak load times — when demand is highest and electricity is most expensive.

PSU researchers David Passmore and Rose Baker of Workforce Education and Development Initiative used computer modeling to forecast the economic, demographic, and workforce effects of each 10 percent increase in electricity rates for Pennsylvania’s residential, commercial, and industrial customers from 2011 through 2015.

Passmore and Baker’s modeling suggest that the expected increases will hit low-income families hardest.

“What might appear like a hiccup for a large, robust Pennsylvania economy, might devastate individual families,” according to their report “Your Electrifying Utility Bill.” The researchers said most households will have to shuffle their budgets, but low-income families might have to shift spending away even from some necessities.

“Pennsylvanians in the lowest 20 percent of the income distribution are likely to bear two times the job loss and loss of personal income that is borne by the highest 20 percent of the Pennsylvania income distribution,” according to the report.

Source: PA DEP

More to be Done on Energy Independence

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Pennsylvania's Alternative Energy Investment Act signed into law July 9 will provide \$650 million in funding and tax credits for alternative energy and conservation. The fund will be used to spur the development of alternative and renewable energy technologies and help consumers and small businesses take steps to reduce their electricity consumption and save money.

DCED and the Department of Environmental Protection are at work developing program guidelines and applications to implement the incentives for individuals and businesses as called for in the law.

Bagley outlined the almost \$430 million geared towards alternative energy projects and economic development included in the \$650 million Alternative Energy Investment Act fund:

- \$165 million for clean and alternative energy projects (not including solar)
- \$80 million for solar-related alternative energy production projects
- \$40 million to support early-stage business development activities through Ben Franklin Technology Partners to companies developing and implementing alternative energy and energy efficiency technologies
- \$25 million for pollution control technology projects on coal-fired power plants with less than 500 megawatts of capacity to reduce mercury, sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, which produce smog and acid rain.
- \$25 million for high- performance "green" buildings construction or renovation by small businesses or homeowners
- \$25 million for geothermal or wind energy projects, including manufacturing facilities for wind energy
- \$50 million in Alternative Energy Production tax credits equal to help with development, construction and equipment costs for alternative energy production projects.

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More to be Done on Energy Independence

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Another \$237 million geared towards consumers in the fund includes:

-- \$100 million to support installation of solar energy technology, to help homes and businesses generate their own electricity and sell any excess power back to the grid through net metering. Solar technology can go a long way to reduce energy use during peak rate periods, which are typically times when the sun is most intense and temperatures are highest.

-- \$45 million for financial assistance through the state's Low Income Heating Assistance Program and to establish an energy efficiency loan fund through the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency.

-- \$92.5 million for grants, loans, reimbursements or rebates for consumer conservation and weatherization projects, such as installing energy-efficient windows, doors, or heating and cooling systems; insulation, air-sealing, or geothermal heat pumps.

But Bagley also noted that residents and business owners face double-digit increases to their electric bills when rate caps expire in the next few years. Bagley called for action this fall on House Bills 2200 and 2201. HB 2200 will help consumers save on energy bills by conserving electricity and using it more efficiently; HB 2201 would help ensure electricity consumers benefit from service at the lowest reasonable rate by requiring utilities to purchase power for their customers at the lowest reasonable rate.

"The legislation is essential to reducing overall demand -- especially at peak times when rates are most expensive," said Bagley.

"Pennsylvania already has established itself as a leader in the development and deployment of advanced energy solutions." Bagley said. "We've attracted some of the world's leading renewable energy companies and supported cutting-edge businesses that are making groundbreaking advancements in these fields. Collectively, these business -- large and small, startup and mature -- have created more than 3,000 new jobs and injected more than \$1 billion into our economy. But we should not rest on our laurels. It's imperative that we act now to protect our people and our employers and mitigate the expected higher electricity rates."

Source: PA DEP

Making Homes Energy Efficient Before High Heating Bills Hit

With the cost of heating homes expected to hit record levels this winter, the Department of Environmental Protection is urging residents to make their homes as energy efficient as possible before the heating season begins.

Cooling and heating a home uses more energy than any other system in a house. The typical American family spends close to \$1,862 a year on their home's utility bills and the U.S. Energy Information Agency predicts residential heating costs will rise more than 30 percent in 2009.

Unfortunately, a large portion of that energy is wasted. By using a few inexpensive energy-efficiency and conservation measures, residents can reduce their energy bills by 10 percent to 50 percent.

- Keep your thermostat at a low but comfortable temperature throughout the winter and opt to wear a sweater or use an extra blanket if you are chilly. You can also set the temperature lower on your thermostat when you are away from home for extended periods.
- Close any vents or openings that you may have used in the summer. You can also close all windows and storm windows at the start of the heating season, but keep shades, blinds and curtains open to let winter sun in during the day, especially on the east and south sides of your home to create extra heat. Close coverings at night to slow heat escaping back out of the home.
- Check furnace air filters each month, and clean or replace them as needed. Dirty filters block air flow through your heating and cooling systems, increasing your energy bill and shortening the equipment's life. You should also avoid blocking warm-air supply and return registers with furniture, carpets or drapes.
- Seal up your fireplace if not in use: Keep existing glass fireplace doors closed or seal-up the fireplace tightly with insulated foam board to help stop heat from being lost up the chimney. Remember to remove any insulation and open dampers next time you operate the fireplace.
- Lower the temperature on your water heater to 120°F and wrap it with an insulation blanket.

More tips for energy conservation are available at www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Energy, then click on "Pollution Prevention/Energy Efficiency."

Information is also available at www.StayWarmPA.com, including conservation tips and resources for getting financial assistance with utility bills and home weatherization.

On Sept. 11, the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission will kick off its annual "Prepare Now" campaign to increase consumer awareness on rising energy prices, explore ways to reduce energy usage, educate consumers about the availability of low-income programs, increase awareness for safe home heating, and discuss potential policies and strategies. Visit www.puc.state.pa.us, and click on "Prepare Now" or call the PUC at 1-800-692-7380.

Source: PA DEP

PA TAKES ANOTHER MAJOR STEP TOWARDS ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AS ADVISORY COMMITTEE HOLDS FIRST MEETING

Acting Department of Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger said today the commonwealth is continuing its efforts to address the challenges and opportunities of climate change with the first meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee.

The committee was established under the Pennsylvania Climate Change Act, or Act 70, that the General Assembly passed and Governor Edward G. Rendell signed in July.

“Governor Rendell believes Pennsylvania must have smart, effective policies that reduce global warming pollution and that protect our economy and environment,” said Hanger as he cited the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards Act of 2004, as well as the recently enacted \$650 million Alternative Energy Investment Fund and the Biofuels In-State Development Act. “These measures were made possible with the support of the General Assembly and have helped us make progress in boosting the supply of cleaner and zero-emission sources of electricity, as well as transportation fuels that are produced at home and are better for the environment—accomplishments that will greatly inform our deliberations and the work of this committee.

“The task now is to build on these policies and identify new ideas that reduce Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions and protect our economy. That includes carbon capture and sequestration—an issue on which the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources has led—and the tremendous benefits energy efficiency and conservation can produce. House Bill 2200, now awaiting action in the Senate, can produce those benefits and make Pennsylvania a leader on electricity conservation.” Act 70 establishes a 21-member advisory committee that is charged with advising DEP on implementing the law, creating a report on potential climate change impacts and economic opportunities for the commonwealth, and developing an action plan to implement cost-effective strategies to reduce or offset the state's greenhouse gas emissions. Hanger chairs the committee.

The state action plan will be renewed every three years.

The committee will also help DEP compile an annual inventory of the sources and amounts of global-warming pollution generated within the state.

The committee is comprised of six members appointed by the Governor, six by the Senate and six by the House of Representatives. The secretaries of the departments of Conservation and Natural Resources and Community and Economic Development and the chair of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission are ex-officio voting members of the committee.

The PA Climate Change Act also will provide a means by which businesses and industries can voluntarily track greenhouse gas emissions, emissions reductions and offsets through a registry. The registry may provide economic benefits should emissions credit-trading protocols be implemented.

“The Climate Change Act sets in motion an in-depth process of studying and benchmarking current sources of greenhouse gas pollution, then creating an action plan to reduce those emissions through cost-effective

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**ADDRESSING CLIMATE CHANGE AS
ADVISORY COMMITTEE HOLDS FIRST MEETING**

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strategies for businesses and consumers,” said Hanger. “This plan will help us to create new economic opportunities by advancing technologies like cellulosic ethanol, solar, wind, methane capture, geothermal and carbon capture and sequestration that hold tremendous potential for Pennsylvania’s industries.”

Addressing the threats of climate change is an opportunity, Hanger said, but the state should not ignore the huge costs of inaction. “So much of the world around us is dependent on a stable climate,” said Hanger. “As the effects of climate change increase, industries like agriculture and tourism could suffer, infrastructure systems may fail, ecosystems will face an increasing number of invasive species, and regions will be exposed to new diseases that may threaten the public health. We’re looking to come up with the best thinking and the best approaches to solving this pressing problem.” For more information about the Climate Change Advisory Committee, visit www.depweb.state.pa.us, keyword: Public Participation, then click on “Advisory Committees.”

Source: PA DEP

EPA Tightens Engine Standards for Lawn Equipment, Boats

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has announced strict new standards for gas-powered lawn equipment and marine engines to substantially reduce the amount of gas fumes, carbon monoxide, hydrocarbons and smog-forming pollutants emitted from a wide range of engines. The regulations will take effect in 2010 and 2011.

When fully implemented, the rule will yield annual emission reductions of 600,000 tons of hydrocarbons, 130,000 tons of nitrogen oxide (NO_x), 5,500 tons of direct particulate matter, and 1.5 million tons of carbon monoxide (CO). EPA expects the new standards to save approximately 190 million gallons of gasoline each year.

The rule kicks into gear in 2011 for lawn and garden equipment of 25 horsepower or less. For a full range of gas-powered personal watercraft and inboard and outboard engines, the rule powers up in 2010.

To meet the new exhaust emission standards, manufacturers will likely employ catalytic converters for the first time in many small watercraft and lawn and garden equipment. After rigorous analysis and work with stakeholders, EPA determined this strategy was feasible and safe. This regulation also includes the first national standards for boats powered by stern-drive or inboard engines, and carbon monoxide standards for gasoline-powered engines used in recreational watercraft.

Non-road gasoline-powered engines, such as those used in lawn and garden equipment, will see an additional 35 percent reduction in smog-forming hydrocarbon (HC) and NO_x emissions. These cuts go beyond the 60 percent reduction that saw final implementation two years ago under an earlier rulemaking. The updated engines will also achieve a 45 percent reduction in fuel evaporative emissions.

Recreational watercraft powered by gasoline engines will incur a 70 percent reduction in HC and NO_x emissions, a 20 percent reduction in CO and a 70 percent reduction in fuel evaporative emissions.

Each year, Americans spend more than 3 billion hours using lawn and garden equipment and more than 500 million hours in recreational boating. As a result, the total estimated public health benefits range between \$1.6 and \$4.4 billion by 2030. These benefits outweigh estimated costs by at least eight to one, while preventing over 300 premature deaths, 1,700 hospitalizations, and 23,000 lost workdays annually.

For more information, visit:

- Lawn and Garden (Small Gasoline) Equipment: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/equip-ld.htm>

- Gasoline Boats and Personal Watercraft: <http://www.epa.gov/otaq/marinesi.htm>

Source: PA DEP

Manufacturers and Retailers Balance Tires and the Environment

Tire companies, big box stores, and the government are putting the brakes on the use of lead wheel weights. Through EPA's National Lead-Free Wheel Weight Initiative, partners have agreed to phase-in the use of lead-free alternative wheel weights and reduce the amount of lead released into the environment by 2011.

"Our partners have pledged to reduce or eliminate their use of lead wheel weights," said Susan Parker Bodine, assistant administrator of EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response. "Their efforts will remove millions of pounds of lead from the environment and the waste stream."

Eliminating lead wheel weights is a significant step toward reducing the overall amount of lead released into the environment. EPA estimates that 50 million pounds of lead per year are used for wheel weights in cars and light trucks. It is common for wheel weights to come off when a vehicle hits a pothole in the road or stops suddenly, which results in lead entering the environment. Lead-containing wheel weights also add lead into the environment as they move into the waste stream at the end of product life.

The charter members include Firestone Complete Auto Care; Firestone Racing (a division of Bridgestone Firestone North American Tire); Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co.; Costco Wholesale; Wal-Mart Tire and Lube Express; Sam's Club Tire and Battery Centers; Wal-Mart Transportation; Hennessy Industries Inc.-BADA Division; Perfect Equipment; 3M Automotive Division; the U.S. Air Force; U.S. Postal Service; General Services Administration; Ford Motor Co.; General Motors Corp.; Chrysler; Plombco; the Association of International Automobile Manufacturers; the Town of Blacksburg, Virginia; the Ecology Center; Sierra Club; the Environmental Council of States and several small businesses.

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[Information about lead-free tire weights: epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/minimize/nlfwwi.htm](http://epa.gov/epaoswer/hazwaste/minimize/nlfwwi.htm)

Source: U.S. EPA

**FOURTY MOSQUITO SAMPLES IN TWELVE COUNTIES, ONE HORSE
TEST POSITIVE FOR WEST NILE VIRUS**

State officials today reported that 40 mosquito samples tested positive for West Nile Virus in the following locations:

Adams County - Conewago Township (2 samples) - Beaver County - Independence Township

Bucks County - Bristol Township (2 samples) - Bucks County - Warminster Township

Bucks County - Bensalem Township - Chester County - Easttown Township (4 samples)

Cumberland County - Camp Hill Borough - Cumberland County - Carlisle Borough

Cumberland County - Hampden Township (3 samples) - Delaware County - Colwyn Borough

Delaware County - Glenolden Borough - Delaware County - Yeadon Borough

Delaware County - Haverford Township - Franklin County - Hamilton Township

Franklin County - Washington Township - Lancaster County - Lancaster City

Lancaster County - West Earl Township - Lehigh County - Allentown City

Montgomery County - Norristown Borough (7 samples)

Montgomery County - Upper Merion Township (4 samples)

Philadelphia County - Philadelphia City (3 samples) - York County - Newberry Township

State officials also reported that a horse tested positive for West Nile Virus in Lancaster County. This is the first infected horse in Pennsylvania since 2006.

DEP and County Staff are responding with increased surveillance and mosquito control activities as needed in these areas.

Source: PA DEP