

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 9 Issue 4

By Jack Walters, ACSL Conservation Chair

April 2007



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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EXTENSIVE DCNR STUDY OF FOREST VEGETATION SHOWS DEER EXACTING HEAVY TOLL IN MOST AREAS

Browse monitoring uncovers troubling data in state woodlands

Preliminary findings from ongoing, extensive state forest studies of the effect of white-tailed deer populations on woodland regeneration show habitat damage is the heaviest in the north central and Pocono Mountains areas of the state, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Michael DiBerardinis said today.

"Like our past surveys from the air, this unprecedented study on the ground of what deer eat, or browse, is proving to be an invaluable tool in understanding deer densities and distribution in our state forestlands, and it is guiding future

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New Green Big-Rigs Cut Greenhouse Gases, Save Truckers Up To \$11,000 Yearly

Release date: 03/30/2007

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(Washington, D.C. - March 30, 2007) Starting this month, truck and trailer manufacturers are offering customers 2007 models certified by EPA's Smart-Way program to improve fuel efficiency. By meeting EPA equipment specifications, these models provide the triple benefit of saving operators money while reducing greenhouse-gas emissions and air pollutants.

"These new trucks will make an important contribution toward achieving EPA's goals for conserving energy and reducing emissions," said Bill Wehrum, EPA's acting assistant administrator for Air and Radiation. "Truckers who buy this

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**STUDY OF FOREST VEGETATION SHOWS
DEER EXACTING HEAVY TOLL IN MOST AREAS (continued)**

DCNR efforts to ensure forest regeneration and healthy habitat,” said DiBerardinis.

“And, like those aerial counts, these browse-study findings are just a single snap-shot in time, incapable of documenting whether forest habitat health is improving or declining. They will, however, provide a meaningful baseline to compare in future trend analyses.”

The browse studies, which were conducted last year and covered almost 90 percent of the state forest system, showed findings the secretary deemed “troubling.”

“Across the entire state forest system, less than 25 percent of the 41,650 plots showed desirable regeneration, and almost 45 percent of the plots lacked any new, woody growth,” DiBerardinis said. “The problem is more acute in the state’s north central ‘big woods’ section where almost 50 percent of the study plots show no woody regeneration and only about 20 percent desirable regeneration. The most severely browsed habitats were documented in the north central and Pocono regions of the state.

“For these reasons, it would be premature to draw any conclusions that would support an increased deer herd, even in areas where we observed relatively low-browse damage,” DiBerardinis said.

The secretary applauded the commitment of Bureau of Forestry personnel from 19 of the state’s 20 state forest districts who undertook the browse studies during early spring in 2006.

“Never has there been an undertaking of this magnitude in which data from 1,600 miles of transects was entered into the bureau database for analysis,” said DiBerardinis. “These researchers are foresters first, but they also are hunters and naturalists and all are dedicated to restoring forests to a healthy level where deer and other wildlife have sufficient food and cover.”

“We will use this detailed vegetation analysis in conjunction with past aerial surveys to help guide our management decisions and adjust our efforts to steer hunters to certain state forest areas in the 2007-2008 hunting season,” DiBerardinis said.

Transects, which are lines for ecological measurements, were spaced two miles apart. They were sampled by visiting vegetative plots every 200 feet, recording woody species, and assigning a browsing category to that species at that plot. Also, presence or absence data was recorded for “desirable” and “undesirable” woody vegetation at every plot.

Woody plants include trees, shrubs and vines. Woody plants dominate the vegetation wherever conditions are favorable for plant growth. Deer feed on the leaves, twigs and buds of these plants.

Other survey findings include:

Data gathered aided in development of a preliminary deer-browsing preference index for woody species observed, which will help guide future monitoring efforts and provide browse intensity indicators;

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**STUDY OF FOREST VEGETATION SHOWS
DEER EXACTING HEAVY TOLL IN MOST AREAS (continued)**

Across the state, the proportion of plots with desirable regeneration (24.45 percent) and lack of woody regeneration (44.45 percent) indicate browsing has not been suppressed long enough for a widespread regeneration response;

Identifying browsing impact from lowest to most severe, the Forest Districts ranked as follows: relatively lightly browsed with better regeneration—Lackawanna, Buchanan, Michaux, Tiadaghton, Tuscarora, Gallitzin, and Cornplanter; relatively moderately browsed with less regeneration—Moshannon, Susquehannock, Rothrock, Forbes, Bald Eagle, and Tioga; relatively severely browsed with poor regeneration—Weiser, Kitting, Wyoming, Sproul, Delaware and Elk;

Monitoring will should continue to locate other areas of continued excessive browsing where deer harvests should be increased, and these efforts will be coordinated in the State Forest Management Plan.

Details on the 2006 state forest deer browse study, as well as DCNR's aerial surveys and other information on deer, can be found online at www.dcnr.state.pa.us and select "State Forests."

Source: DCNR

New Green Big-Rigs Cut Greenhouse Gases (continued)

new equipment, and who are members of the EPA SmartWay program, will be able to proudly display a logo on their qualified big-rigs."

SmartWay-approved equipment, like aerodynamic bumpers and mirrors on a tractor, can generate fuel reduction of 10 to 20 percent more than trucks without these devices. For example, aerodynamic bumpers and mirrors on a tractor help conserve fuel by reducing wind resistance. Each qualified truck can produce savings from 2,000 to 4,000 gallons of diesel per year, which would result in a gain up to \$11,000 annually.

Participating in the program are well-known truck brands including Freightliner, International, Kenworth, Mack, Peterbilt, and Volvo.

EPA plans to set more ambitious performance targets for the SmartWay-recognized tractor-trailer combination in the future. EPA is also developing guidelines for recognizing other vehicles such as delivery vans, in which hybrid technology can dramatically improve fuel efficiency.

The SmartWay Transport Partnership is an innovative program developed by EPA and the freight industry to reduce greenhouse gases and air pollution, and to promote cleaner, more efficient ground freight transportation.

For information about joining the SmartWay program, and for a complete list of the specifications for the 2007 SmartWay Tractor and 2007 SmartWay Trailer: epa.gov/smartway

Source: U.S. EPA

DOE Signing Paves Way for Funding, Construction of Innovative Clean Coal Plant in Florida

Advanced Technology System Deemed One of the Cleanest, Most Efficient in the World

Washington, DC - The U.S. Secretary of Energy Samuel W. Bodman today announced the signing of a Record of Decision that clears the path for construction of a \$569-million, 285-megawatt coal-fired power plant that will be one of the cleanest, most efficient plants of its kind in the world. The plant will be co-owned by Southern Power Company, the Orlando Utilities Commission (OUC), and Kellogg, Brown and Root and will be located at OUC's existing Stanton Energy Center near Orlando, FL. DOE will provide 41% of the funding, or \$235 million, through a cooperative agreement with Southern Power.

"The innovative technologies we are funding through President Bush's Clean Coal Power Initiative hold the promise of generating clean, reliable, and affordable electricity in the United States, utilizing our most abundant natural resource, coal," Secretary Bodman said. "Southern Company's proven combined-cycle approach increases the amount of electricity that can be generated from a given amount of fuel and takes us to the next step in implementing this technology on a wide scale, commercial basis."

This is one of three projects moving forward that were selected under the second round of the President's Clean Coal Power Initiative (CCPI), a 10-year, \$2-billion demonstration program that seeks to deliver innovative technologies to improve the environmental performance of new and existing coal-fired power plants in the United States. The technologies developed under the CCPI program will help maintain the Nation's abundant coal resources as a cornerstone of our future domestic energy portfolio, particularly for power generation.

The other projects are Excelsior Energy Inc. and ConocoPhillips' 531-megawatt Mesaba Energy Project at Hoyt Lakes, MN and the Pegasus Technology Project, which combines Pegasus Technologies Inc. with Texas Genco in a joint effort to demonstrate technology advancements supporting the President's Clean Skies Initiative calling for dramatic reductions in power plant emissions, particularly mercury, by 2018.

The Florida plant will demonstrate an advanced power generation system that uses a form of integrated gasification-combined cycle technology and state-of-the-art emission controls. The transport gasifier technology to be demonstrated at the plant is unique among coal gasification technologies in that it cost-effectively uses low-rank coals, as well as coals with a high moisture or high ash content. These coals comprise half of the proven U.S. and world reserves.

Integrated gasification combined-cycle technology will be at the heart of FutureGen, a \$1 billion prototype power plant that will integrate a suite of technologies to slash emissions while producing both electricity and hydrogen from coal. Emissions from the plant will be reduced almost to zero, solid wastes will be converted to useful commercial products, and as much as 90 percent of the CO₂ produced by the plant is expected to be captured initially. The FutureGen plant will also serve as the proving ground for even more advanced technologies, including devices that may eventually capture up to 100 percent of CO₂ emissions.

Source: DOE

GOVERNOR RENDELL ANNOUNCES \$5 MILLION TO HELP COUNTIES FIGHT WEST NILE VIRUS

PUBLIC URGED TO ELIMINATE MOSQUITO BREEDING AREAS AT HOME

Governor Edward G. Rendell today announced more than \$5 million to help counties monitor and control West Nile Virus, which is spread by mosquitoes.

“Over the past seven years of fighting the spread of West Nile Virus, we have gained knowledge and developed strategies that allow us to efficiently target our resources for maximum effect,” Governor Rendell said. “Again this year, we will work with counties to conduct aggressive mosquito surveillance and, when needed, implement control activities. We believe our aggressive approach these past two years has contributed to a drop in the number of human cases of West Nile Virus in Pennsylvania.”

In 2006, nine Pennsylvanians contracted West Nile Virus, with two reported deaths. In 2005, 25 residents contracted the disease, with no deaths attributed to the virus. However, most people bitten by an infected mosquito will never develop any symptoms, and only one in 150 who develops symptoms will develop the more serious West Nile encephalitis, a swelling of the brain which can cause serious health problems, including death.

The Department of Environmental Protection reminded homeowners to take steps to treat or eliminate standing pools of water where mosquitoes can breed.

“For your personal protection, remember to ‘Dump it, drain it, treat it,’ to get rid of standing water on your property,” said Environmental Protection Secretary Kathleen A. McGinty. “When outside in warm weather, you should also consider using insect repellent containing DEET.”

DEP and county staff use environmentally sensitive materials to control the mosquito population.

For killing larvae, which is the major method of mosquito control, the naturally-occurring bacteria Bti and Bsph are used. These bacteria attack the digestive system of the mosquito larvae, and have no effect on people, animals, plants, or other insects. The other larval control product is the insect hormone methoprene that prevents the mosquito larvae from developing into adults. The products used to kill adult mosquitoes likewise are selected based on their environmental sensitivity and are applied so they do not harm people, animals or plants.

Funding for the 2007 West Nile Virus grants is included in Governor Rendell’s proposed budget. DEP staff will administer the West Nile Virus surveillance and control program for Forest County and contract for a private firm to conduct the program in Lycoming County.

For more information, visit www.westnile.state.pa.us.

Source: DEP

DEP NOTIFIED THAT WAL-MART ASSUMING CONTROL OF KILBUCK SITE

Site Monitoring and Development of Stability Plan to Continue

The Department of Environmental Protection has received notification from Wal-Mart Stores Inc. it will assume full control of the Kilbuck Properties site, where a landslide happened last September along Ohio River Boulevard in Kilbuck Township, Allegheny County. Wal-Mart will prepare and implement a plan to ensure permanent site stability this summer.

Wal-Mart has agreed to take the actions DEP had previously ordered Kilbuck Properties to conduct at the site, including monitoring the site for movement, completing the stability analysis, and developing and implementing a plan for permanent stabilization of the site.

The department reiterated to Wal-Mart officials that only work related to ensuring permanent stability of the site will be considered. Future development plans – if any – would need to be proposed to the department through the relevant new permit applications.

Ohio River Boulevard was closed to traffic for about two weeks after development activities caused a landslide that dumped as much as 300,000 cubic yards of earth from the hillside. One lane of state Route 65 remains closed. The landslide also affected three Norfolk Southern train tracks.

Source: DEP

River Sweep

Saturday June 16, 2007

River Sweep is a riverbank cleanup of the Ohio River and its tributaries. River Sweep encompasses the entire length of the river, from its origin in at Pittsburgh to its end at Cairo, IL including 1,962 miles of shoreline and many tributaries.

During 2004, more than 21,000 volunteers from public organizations, civic groups, recreational clubs and the general public in six states bordering the river came together to collect more than 13,000 tons of trash and other debris from the banks of the Ohio River.

Since 1989, River Sweep has been organized by the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission, an interstate water pollution agency for the Ohio River Valley, along with environmental protection and natural resource agencies from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania.