

# Conservation Committee Report

Volume 12 Issue 6

By Jack Walters, ACSL Conservation Chair

June 2010



## 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!

### **Inside this issue:**

EPA urges everyone to play it safe in the summer sun

Page 5

PA Sunshine Program Pays Out 1,000th Rebate after Only First Year

Page 6

Monongahela called one of most endangered rivers in U.S.

Page 8

Grand View Scenic Byway Park Addition

Page 9

Sportsmen Commend Introduction of House Clean Water Bill

Page 11

## DEP Plans Thorough Investigation in to Marcellus Shale Well Blowout in Clearfield County

EOG Resources Well Released Fracking Fluid, Natural Gas for 16 Hours

Department of Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger said today that his agency intends to investigate aggressively the circumstances surrounding a blowout at a Marcellus Shale natural gas well in Lawrence Township, Clearfield County, and take the appropriate enforcement action.

At approximately 8 p.m. on Thursday, June 3, the operators of the well, which is owned by EOG Resources, Inc., lost control of it while preparing to extract

(continued on page 2)

## EPA Sets Stronger National Air Quality Standard for Sulfur Dioxide

*First new SO2 standard in 40 years will improve air quality for millions*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is issuing a final new health standard for sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). This one-hour health standard will protect millions of Americans from short-term exposure to SO<sub>2</sub>, which is primarily emitted from power plants and other industrial facilities. Exposure to SO<sub>2</sub> can aggravate asthma and cause other respiratory difficulties. People with asthma, children, and the elderly are especially vulnerable to the effects of SO<sub>2</sub>.

(continued on page 3)

## DEP Plans Thorough Investigation in to Marcellus Shale Well Blowout in Clearfield County (CONTINUED)

gas after hydrofracturing the shale. As a result, the well released natural gas and flowback frack fluid onto the ground and 75 feet into the air. The well was eventually capped around noon on June 4.

“The event at the well site could have been a catastrophic incident that endangered life and property,” said Hanger. “This was not a minor accident, but a serious incident that will be fully investigated by this agency with the appropriate and necessary actions taken quickly.

“When we arrived on scene, natural gas and frack fluid was flowing off the well pad and heading toward tributaries to Little Laurel Run and gas was shooting into the sky, creating a significant fire hazard. That’s why emergency responders acted quickly to cut off electric service to the area.

“Right now, we’re focused on limiting any further environmental damage, but once that work is complete, we plan to aggressively look at this situation and see where things went wrong and what enforcement action is necessary. If mistakes were made, we will be certain to take steps to prevent similar errors from happening again.”

DEP learned of the leak at approximately 1:30 a.m. on Friday after it was informed by the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. DEP immediately dispatched its Emergency Response and Oil and Gas program staff to the site.

PEMA, which elevated its activation level to coordinate resources among multiple state agencies, also worked with PennDOT to initiate an airspace restriction above the well, which the Federal Aviation Administration authorized on a temporary basis earlier today. The restriction prohibits flights at and below 1,000 feet of ground level within a three nautical mile radius of the well site. The restriction is in effect until further notice.

The EOG well pad is located in a rural area near the Penfield/Route 153 exit of Interstate 80 in northwestern Clearfield County. Three other wells on the same pad that have been drilled and fractured remain plugged and are not in danger.

EOG Resources, formerly known as Enron Oil & Gas Co., operates approximately 265 active wells in Pennsylvania, 117 of which are in the Marcellus Shale formation.

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

Source: PA DEP

**EPA Sets Stronger National Air Quality Standard for Sulfur Dioxide****(CONTINUED)**

“We’re taking on an old problem in a new way, one designed to give all American communities the clean air protections they deserve. Moving to a one-hour standard and monitoring in the areas with the highest SO<sub>2</sub> levels is the most efficient and effective way to protect against sulfur dioxide pollution in the air we breathe,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “This is one of many pollutants we’ve been able to significantly reduce through the Clean Air Act, keeping people healthy, protecting our environment and growing our economy. This new standard -- the first in almost 40 years -- will ensure continued success in meeting these challenges.”

EPA is setting the one-hour SO<sub>2</sub> health standard at 75 parts per billion (ppb), a level designed to protect against short-term exposures ranging from five minutes to 24 hours. EPA is revoking the current 24-hour and annual SO<sub>2</sub> health standards because the science indicates that short-term exposures are of greatest concern and the existing standards would not provide additional health benefits.

EPA is also changing the monitoring requirements for SO<sub>2</sub>. The new requirements assure that monitors will be placed where SO<sub>2</sub> emissions impact populated areas. Any new monitors required by this rule must begin operating no later than Jan. 1, 2013. EPA is expecting to use modeling as well as monitoring to determine compliance with the new standard.

The final rule also changes the Air Quality Index to reflect the revised SO<sub>2</sub> standard. This change will improve states’ ability to alert the public when short-term SO<sub>2</sub> levels may affect their health.

EPA estimates that the health benefits associated with this rule range between \$13 billion and \$33 billion annually. These benefits include preventing 2,300 to 5,900 premature deaths and 54,000 asthma attacks a year. The estimated cost in 2020 to fully implement this standard is approximately \$1.5 billion.

The first National Ambient Air Quality Standards for SO<sub>2</sub> were set in 1971, establishing both a primary standard to protect health and a secondary standard to protect the public welfare. Annual average SO<sub>2</sub> concentrations have decreased by 71 percent since 1980.

The final rule addresses only the SO<sub>2</sub> primary standards, which are designed to protect public health. EPA will address the secondary standard – designed to protect the public welfare, including the environment – as part of a separate review to be completed in 2012.

(continued on page 4)

**EPA Sets Stronger National Air Quality Standard for Sulfur Dioxide**  
**(CONTINUED)**

EPA expects to identify or designate areas not meeting the new standard by June 2012.

More information: <http://www.epa.gov/air/sulfurdioxide>

Source: U.S. EPA

## EPA urges everyone to play it safe in the summer sun

*‘Don’t Fry Day’ encourages smart steps to prevent skin cancer*

As millions of families prepare to enjoy the great outdoors this weekend, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency reminds everyone to bring their hats, sunglasses, sunscreen, and seek shade. Why? Because overexposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) from the sun or artificial light is the number one risk factor for skin cancer. By taking these simple steps you can significantly reduce your risk.

EPA has teamed up with the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention to help citizens be more aware of how harmful UV rays can be and encourage sun safety starting the Friday before Memorial Day – “Don’t Fry Day.”

More than one million Americans are affected by skin cancer every year. More new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year than new cases of breast, prostate, lung and colon cancer combined. The incidence of many common cancers is falling, but incidence of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, continues to rise significantly. Melanoma is now one of the most common cancers among young adults ages 15 to 29.

To reduce your risk of getting too much exposure to potentially harmful UV rays *slip, slop, slap, wrap, and seek shade*:

- *slip* on a shirt,
- *slop* on sunscreen (SPF 15+)
- *slap* on a wide-brimmed hat
- *wrap* on sunglasses
- and *seek shade* during midday hours.

To download the EPA’s UV Index application for smartphones, go to: [www.epa.gov/enviro/mobile](http://www.epa.gov/enviro/mobile)

For more information on EPA’s sun safety program called SunWise see: [www.epa.gov/sunwise](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise)

Source: U.S. EPA

## PA Sunshine Program Pays Out 1,000th Rebate after Only First Year

10 Megawatts of Clean, Solar Power Added since Program Launched in May 2009

After a little more than a year, the PA Sunshine Solar Rebate Program has proved immensely successful and popular, having enabled thousands of Pennsylvania homeowners and small businesses to lower their energy bills with the help of the sun's power.

Those projects are paying dividends for the state's economy and putting people to work at the same time, according to Department of Environmental Protection Secretary John Hanger, who today presented the 1,000th rebate check to Montgomery County homeowner Sally Kauffman. Kauffman received a \$10,800 rebate for the 4.8-kilowatt solar system she installed that is expected to generate more than 5,500 kilowatt hours of electricity, saving her nearly \$800 each year.

"The PA Sunshine Program that began just over a year ago has created tremendous results and a number of opportunities for our economy and environment," said Hanger. "Not only has the program helped to lower the price of solar energy here in Pennsylvania, but it also provides clean energy at a fixed price to our businesses and homeowners for the next 25 years.

"Ms. Kauffman is one of the Pennsylvanians who has taken advantage of the benefits that PA Sunshine has to offer. She recently took action with an eye on the future. Since the cost of the sunshine is free and the solar equipment requires little maintenance, Sally is locking in the cost of a portion of her home energy bill for the next couple of decades."

All told, he said, Pennsylvania has added approximately 10 megawatts of installed solar capacity in just over one year as a result of the PA Sunshine Program. More than 790 residential solar electric and 137 solar thermal projects have been completed with another 895 solar projects approved for construction. Among small businesses, another 108 solar electric and 10 solar thermal projects have been completed with another 318 solar technology projects approved for construction.

In total, the secretary added, the \$100 million PA Sunshine Program has provided more than \$72 million in rebates to fund more than 2,300 solar electric and hot water projects that are either completed or already under construction. Rebates for the remaining projects are being processed timely in the order they were received.

"In addition to creating hundreds of new jobs, these projects will be responsible for infusing more than \$252 million of private matching funds into Pennsylvania's economy when completed," said Hanger.

Mercury Solar Systems of Philadelphia installed Kauffman's system and is one of more than 500 approved solar installers in the state. In the past year, the company has installed more than 50 solar projects and has

(continued on page 7)

## PA Sunshine Program Pays Out 1,000th Rebate after Only First Year

dozens more scheduled to be installed in the coming weeks. That new demand has allowed the company to expand its workforce from three employees prior to the opening of the program, to 15 today.

“Alternative energy will be a key to Pennsylvania and the nation's ability to grow its economy by harnessing the power of new technology to create jobs,” said Hanger. “PA Sunshine has been instrumental in generating interest in green energy deployment and is a driving force in helping to turn that interest into reality.”

For more information, visit [www.depweb.state.pa.us](http://www.depweb.state.pa.us), keyword: PA Sunshine, or call the Department of Environmental Protection's Office of Energy and Technology Deployment at 717-783-8411.

Source: PA DEP

Monongahela called one of most endangered rivers in U.S.

Two Pennsylvania Rivers, the Monongahela River and upper Delaware River, are on this year's listing of "Most Endangered Rivers" due to the threat of toxic pollution from accelerated Marcellus shale gas well drilling activities.

American Rivers, a national river advocacy organization, today named the Monongahela River, which flows out of West Virginia and joins the Allegheny River at Pittsburgh to form the Ohio River, the ninth most endangered river in the nation.

The Delaware River, which provides drinking water to 17 million people in Pennsylvania and New York, is ranked first on the endangered river list, which has been issued annually by the group to call attention to imperiled and threatened rivers.

"We must put the brakes on the rampant gas drilling that is already threatening the safety of drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people," Rebecca Wodder, president of American Rivers, said about the Monongahela River. "We simply can't let energy companies rake in profits while putting our precious clean water at risk."

American Rivers called on the federal government, Pennsylvania and West Virginia to protect the Mon from further degradation from drilling wastewater, which contains high concentrations of dissolved solids and hundreds of chemical additives used in the drilling process to break up or "frack" the shale and release the gas from the mile-deep Marcellus shale bed.

Also on the list is the Gauley River, a popular whitewater rafting and recreation river in West Virginia, which is threatened by degradation due to ongoing mountain top coal mining, according to American Rivers.

The top 10 endangered river list also includes the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta in California, the Little River in North Carolina, the Cedar River in Iowa, the upper Colorado River in Colorado, the Chetco River in Oregon, the Teton River in Idaho, and the Coosa River in Alabama.

Source: By Don Hopey, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

## Grand View Scenic Byway Park Addition

### Help Protect an Urban Forest Right in Your Back Yard

As Pittsburgh grows its brand as a "green" city, we have the opportunity to make a significant contribution to helping Pittsburgh and our immediate community stay Truly Green! This rare opportunity to protect more than 17 acres of mature woodlands, springs and trails within a mile of a major city is remarkable.



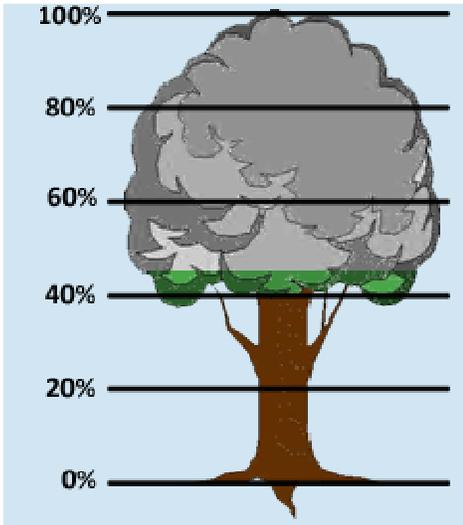
Arrow indicates approximate location of tract to be added to Grand View Scenic Byway Park, at the southwest end of Mt. Washington.

The Grand View Scenic Byway Park, the 235 acre park that embraces Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights, has the opportunity to grow. A 17 acre parcel (off nearby Shaler Street) is the missing link in the park's green loop, and once purchased will provide forever many benefits for the neighborhood, such as scenic beauty, buffering noise and air pollution from Saw Mill Run, and convenient access to nature trails. This substantially sized piece of land is critical to creating a unique and continuous woodland trail experience around Mt Washington.

Allegheny Land Trust and [Mt. Washington Community Development Corporation \(MWCDC\)](#) are working together to raise the necessary funding from State and Foundation sources. The total project cost is \$224,000 and the funding plan includes a goal of 10% of the project cost (\$22,400) to be supported by the local community. Local support is critical to meet state matching requirements and to demonstrate to major foundation funders that the local neighborhood—the primary beneficiary—is willing to support efforts to ensure that the land is protected.

(continued on page 10)

## Grand View Scenic Byway Park Addition (continued)



We have now raised \$101,000 toward the \$224,00 needed to purchase of this addition to the Grand View Scenic Byway Park.

**NEW** As of February 1st, 45% of the funding needed to complete this project has been raised through an \$81,000 Community Conservation Partnerships Program Grant Award from the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and a \$20,000 grant from the Katherine Mabis McKenna Foundation. You can read more about these grants in our [press release](#).

Over the course of the next 10 to 12 months (our deadline is December 1, 2010), community fundraising efforts will be taking place across Mount Washington and Duquesne Heights neighborhoods. Please check back for details about how you can participate in these special events to protect Mt. Washington's green space and its neighborhoods' lush, green, and healthy character.

Right now, you can help by making an on-line donation restricted to this project using the secure [Click & Pledge server](#). If you prefer to contribute by mail, fill in the convenient [contribution form](#), print it, and mail it to us with your check. For more information or to volunteer for this project, please [email Allegheny Land Trust](#) or call us at 412-741-2750.

## Sportsmen Commend Introduction of House Clean Water Bill

*New legislation would restore Clean Water Act protections, conserve fish and wildlife habitat and hunting and fishing opportunities*

The nation's leading sportsmen-conservation groups today commended the introduction of legislation in the U.S. House of Representatives that would restore critical Clean Water Act protections for streams, lakes, wetlands and other important waters. The America's Commitment to Clean Water Act would help sustain the healthy habitat, robust fish and wildlife populations and range of economic benefits that rely on America's waterways and wetlands and would reverse recent Supreme Court decisions that jeopardize the nation's water resources.

The Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership, the Izaak Walton League of America, the National Wildlife Federation and Trout Unlimited have been vocal proponents of legislation that reinstates safeguards previously in place via the Clean Water Act. The bill introduced by Rep. Jim Oberstar of Minnesota responds to these groups' calls for congressional action that strengthens conservation measures for water and wetland ecosystems essential to American hunting and fishing traditions.

"America's waterways and wetlands form the cornerstone of our fish and wildlife populations and our continued ability to enjoy the outdoors," said Tom Franklin, TRCP director of policy and government relations "and so the nation's sportsmen speak together in commending Congressman Oberstar's leadership in introducing the America's Commitment to Clean Water Act – and urging his House colleagues to exercise similar sound judgment in supporting this crucial legislation's speedy passage into law this spring."

The bill represents a new approach to addressing threats posed by the Supreme Court's SWANCC and Rapanos decisions by including

- provisions that reinforce that the bill's purpose simply is to restore Clean Water Act protections to waters protected prior to the SWANCC decision;
- a more specific definition of "waters of the United States" that closely follows the definition the EPA and Army Corps of Engineers have used for decades;
- new exemptions for prior converted cropland and certain waste treatment systems;
- specific references to Congress's constitutional authority to conserve and restore the nation's waters.

The legislation also deletes the term "navigable" from the Clean Water Act to clarify that congressional intent was to protect U.S. waters from pollution rather than to sustain navigation.

"America's Commitment to Clean Water Act is a new bill that would ensure the Clean Water Act protects streams, lakes, wetlands and other waters," said Scott Kovarovics, conservation director with the Izaak Walton League. "It's a balanced, common-sense solution that the House should quickly approve."

The threats to America's water resources caused by the Supreme Court decisions radiate across the landscape:

(continued on page 12)

## Sportsmen Commend Introduction of House Clean Water Bill

(continued)

**Safe drinking water:** The EPA estimates that more than 117 million Americans receive drinking water from public water systems supplied by streams most at risk of losing Clean Water Act protection.

**Fish and wildlife habitat:** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates that America's Prairie Pothole Region produces 50 percent of the nation's duck breeding population. These and other wetlands are at risk because they are seasonal and may not support boating or otherwise be "navigable."

**Economic growth:** Fishing, waterfowl hunting, boating and other outdoor activities depend on clean water and wetlands and are fundamental components of the U.S. economy. In 2006, 1.3 million waterfowl hunters generated \$2.3 billion in economic activity; in 2007, recreational boating generated \$100 billion.

"Congressman Oberstar's important legislation underscores the threats facing clean water and habitat," said Steve Moyer, Trout Unlimited vice president of government affairs, "yet it also presents a clear path forward for enabling our leaders to right the deficiencies of current law. American sportsmen offer the congressman our thanks for responding to our repeated requests for such forward-thinking measures and look forward to working with him and his House colleagues to advance this bill into law."

"The America's Commitment to Clean Water Act reflects Representative Oberstar's commitment to listen to a wide spectrum of interests when developing legislation for Congress to consider," said Jan Goldman-Carter, wetlands and water resources counsel with the National Wildlife Federation. "The EPA and state agencies are finding enforcement of the Clean Water Act increasingly difficult under current law. By acting now, the House of Representatives can conserve drinking water, irreplaceable fish and wildlife habitat and our nation's sporting legacy."

More than half of the estimated 221 million acres of wetlands originally existent in the United States have been lost. More than 90,000 Americans recently signaled their support of restoring federal protections for wetlands and clean water by signing the We Are Wetlands petition, launched by the TRCP. The petition far exceeded its goal of 80,000 names – one for each acre of natural wetlands that our country loses each year – and calls for a legislative fix that restores the integrity of the Clean Water Act.

Source: Izaak Walton League of America