

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 17 Issue 6

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

October—November 2015



Independent Review Hails Management of Pennsylvania's State Forests

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:

Obama doesn't get his way on EPA water rule	5
As U.S. coal production drops, international demand rises	7
From the American prairie, a conservation success story	9
DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Winterize Their Homes	10

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today released results of an independent review team's annual study of state forestlands, noting its findings continue to affirm Bureau of Forestry efforts to conserve these resources through sound management.

"Once again our state forests were deemed 'well-managed' in an official certification reflecting the pride we take in overseeing our state forest system for many values and uses, while maintaining its long-term health and viability," Dunn said. "Auditors were very pleased with our management and dedication of staff,

and I extend thanks to districts involved in this year's audit for another job well done." For the 17th consecutive year, since 1998 when a team of scientists first began reviewing management of the 2.2 million acres of state

(continued on page 2)

Lake Erie International Coastal Cleanup Improves 67.5 Miles of Shoreline and Waterways

The numbers are in for the Lake Erie International Coastal Cleanup. Beginning on Saturday, September 19, and ending on October 2, volunteers picked up 6,853 pounds of trash along the 67.5 miles of Lake Erie shoreline and water-

ways within the County.

Over 1700 hundred volunteers cleaned up 27 different locations around Lake Erie and picked up 70,909 pieces of trash. Among the most unusual items found were a vehicle drive shaft and a toi-

let tank along Elk and Walnut Creeks.
Cigarette butts – 17,496
Food wrappers – 7,648
Plastic beverage bottles – 3,155
Plastic Bottle Caps – 4,202

(continued on page 4)

Independent Review Hails Management of Pennsylvania's State Forests

forestlands, researchers applauded Pennsylvania's commitment to its forests, and exemplary practices and innovation in managing forest resources.

"Forest management faces many threats and challenges, including fragmentation and disturbance, invasive plants, destructive exotic insects and challenges with regeneration," noted Dunn. "The certification process shows we are doing everything we can to improve our management plans and practices. More importantly, it helps us identify areas we can improve to ensure our forests are well-managed and in line with public expectations."

Ending Sept. 2, the three-day Annual Surveillance Audit was conducted by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an Emeryville, Calif.-based certification body accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to conduct forest management and resource evaluations.

An SCS project team consisting of two foresters specializing in wildlife biology, ecology, forestry management and socio-economic issues toured Rothrock, Bald Eagle, Weiser, and Pinchot state forest districts. They met with DCNR staff, scoring forests on timber-resource sustainability, forest-ecosystem maintenance, financial and socioeconomic considerations and other FSC indicators.

The audit team visited timber sales, recreational trailheads, research areas and a mine reclamation area. Auditors sought district input on effects of energy extraction; deer impact in the forests; forest regeneration; and bureau public input and education efforts. Their study focused on public involvement; timber harvests; chemical use; landscape considerations in timber sales; soil, wildlife and other ecological safeguards; and use of non-native species.

After evaluating sites and bureau policies and guidelines for conformance with standards for sustainable forest management, the auditors issued the bureau no Corrective Action Requests. Specifically, SCS applauded the Bureau of Forestry for:

- The districts' strong working relationships with external agencies; regional knowledge exhibited by their managers; and their ability to work closely with bureau headquarters in Harrisburg;
- Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with a core of well-trained, experienced loggers;
- A strong, active prescribed wildfire program;
- Its routine surveys for rare, threatened and endangered species;
- Clear vision for incorporating forest data into geographic information system for planning.

"In each of the four districts studied and at many sites visited, auditors also looked at the overall condition of our forests, roads, trails and infrastructure," said Dunn. "Every bureau employee should feel proud of the work they have done to help us maintain this high standard."

The audits are designed to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of the Bureau of Forestry according to forest management guidelines established by the Forest Stewardship Council.

(continued on page 3)

Independent Review Hails Management of Pennsylvania's State Forests

The council was formed in 1993 by environmental, social and forest-products industry representatives to establish guidelines for sustainable forest-management practices. Certification assures consumers that wood products from the state's public forests come from a sustainable, well-managed system, which helps Pennsylvania to compete in the growing niche consumer market for "green" label wood products. Copies of state forest evaluations can be found at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforestmanagemndex.htm>.

Source: PA DCNR

Lake Erie International Coastal Cleanup Improves 67.5 Miles of Shoreline and Waterways (continued)

Straws and Stirrers – 2,814

“Every year a team of dedicated volunteers donate their time to pick up the trash that others have left behind,” DEP Northwest Regional Director John Guth said. “I am always impressed by the number of volunteers, the amount of trash they remove, and the positive impact it makes on the surrounding coastline.”

Information gathered in the past cleanups has been used as educational material for environmental programs in local schools and highlighted in the Erie Times News, Newspapers in Education section. During the school year, the Erie Times News publishes a page dedicated to environmental issues every Tuesday.

Anna McCartney, Communications and Education Specialist with PA Sea Grant, coordinated with local teachers and these schools to help pick up trash:

JoAnn Connell School
McKinley Elementary School
Fairview High School
Fort LeBoeuf High School
Harding Elementary School
Perry Elementary School
Union City High School
St. Luke’s School
St. Gregory School
Strong Vincent High School
Central Tech High School
Edison Elementary School

DEP’s Coastal Resources Management (CRM) program has been the main sponsor of the PA Lake Erie International Coastal Cleanup since 2003. Since then, the cleanup has removed 121,886 pounds of trash from the Lake Erie shoreline and watershed tributaries.

The International Coastal Cleanup (ICC) is the oldest and largest volunteer-driven, beach cleanup effort of its kind in the world, and this year celebrated its 29th anniversary. From its beginnings in 1986 with 12 sites in the Texas coastline, the ICC has transformed to more than 6,000 sites in about 100 countries with 600,000 volunteers.

For more information, to volunteer for next year’s cleanup, visit <http://nie.goerie.com/coastal-cleanup/>.

For more information on the Ocean Conservancy, International Coastal Cleanup, visit <http://www.oceanconservancy.org/our-work/international-coastal-cleanup>.

Obama doesn't get his way on EPA water rule

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Obama's Environmental Protection Agency would be acting illegally if it attempted to enforce its new policy rule reinterpreting portions of the Clean Water Act.

In the 2-1 ruling, the majority concluded "that petitioners [against the change] have demonstrated a substantial possibility of success on the merits of their claims."

Opponents argued the rule assured the EPA the power to broadly interpret innovative terms in its language, effectively expanding its authority to encompass any ditch in the ground where water, eventually, could flow downhill.

Based on precedent, the court appeared to agree. It also criticized the manner in which the Obama administration promulgated the rules change during the public commenting period, arguing that the White House and the EPA should have explained the proposal's nebulous and obfuscating language.

From the ruling:

Petitioners first claim that the Rule's treatment of tributaries, "adjacent waters," and waters having a "significant nexus" to navigable waters is at odds with the Supreme Court's ruling in *Rapanos*, where the Court vacated the Sixth Circuit's upholding of wetlands regulation by the Army Corps of Engineers. Even assuming, for present purposes, as the parties do, that Justice Kennedy's opinion in *Rapanos* represents the best instruction on the permissible parameters of "waters of the United States" as used in the Clean Water Act, it is far from clear that the new Rule's distance limitations are harmonious with the instruction.

Moreover, the rulemaking process by which the distance limitations were adopted is facially suspect. Petitioners contend the proposed rule that was published, on which interested persons were invited to comment, did not include any proposed distance limitations in its use of terms like "adjacent waters" and "significant nexus."

... [R]espondents [the EPA, etc.] have failed to identify anything in the record that would substantiate a finding that the public had reasonably specific notice that the distance-based limitations adopted in the Rule were among the range of alternatives being considered. Respondents maintain that the notice requirements were met by their having invited recommendations of "geographical limits" and "distance limitations." Perhaps. But whether such general notice satisfies the "logical outgrowth" standard requires closer scrutiny. Nor have respondents identified specific scientific support substantiating the reasonableness of the bright-line standards they ultimately chose.

(continued on page 6)

Obama doesn't get his way on EPA water rule (continued)

That last bit is a pretty damning criticism, whether intentional or not, of an administration that prides itself for staking its policy positions on clearly settled science.

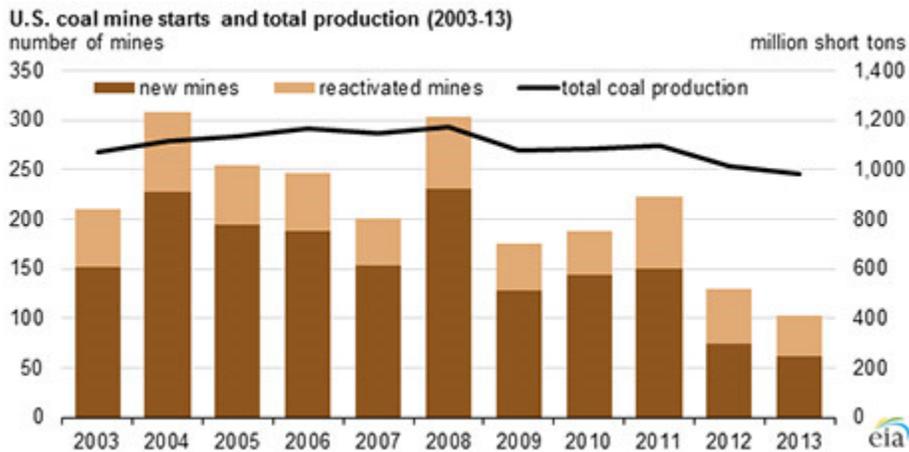
The Hill described the ruling Friday as “a stinging defeat to Obama’s most ambitious effort to keep streams and wetlands clean, saying it looks likely that the rule, dubbed Waters of the United States, is illegal.”

The ruling affirms an earlier stay that blocks the government from implementing the rule in 13 states, and extends the stay so that it applies throughout the nation. The court has yet to issue a final decision in the underlying lawsuit — a decision expected to ultimately settle the ongoing legal battle over the legality of the Clean Water rule.

Coallercoaster: As U.S. coal production drops, international demand rises

According to a recent report from the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the number of new and reactivated coal mines in the U.S. hit a 10-year low in 2013 — down nearly 67 percent from 2008.

Total coal production in the U.S. was also down during the same time period. The drop was driven by a number of factors, including regulatory pressure, reduced investment, shifting demand toward natural gas and renewables and weak exports.

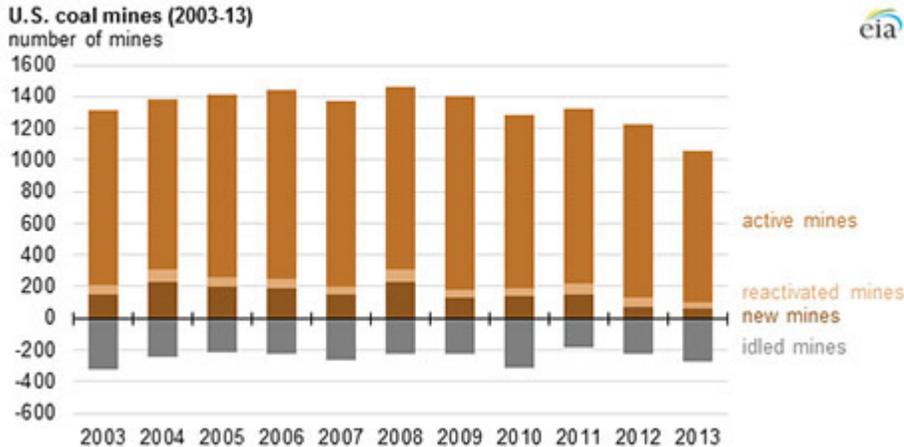


Data and chart by Energy Information Administration

Overall, the total number of coal mines in the U.S. also declined, dropping by nearly 400 sites from 2008 to 2013. The report doesn't distinguish between high- and low-output mines, which is an important distinction. According to the EIA, "in 2013, 877 Appalachian mines produced 270 million short tons [245 million metric tons] of coal compared with 52 Western region mines that produced 530 million short tons [480 million metric tons]."

(continued on page 8)

Coallercoaster: As U.S. coal production drops, international demand rises (continued)



Data and chart by Energy Information Administration

Why does this matter? At the end of 2014, the U.S. had 262 billion tons (237 billion metric tons) worth of coal reserves, or about 27 percent of the global total. Following the U.S., the next five countries for coal reserves are Russia, China, Australia, India and Germany. Together these countries account for 77 percent of known global reserves.

The decline in domestic coal mining and use may help reduce greenhouse gas emissions as outlined in the EPA's Clean Power Plan.

Despite decreased U.S. production and consumption, global demand for coal is projected to continue increasing. The report "Global Coal Mining to 2020" prepared by Timetric outlines India's plans to ramp up domestic coal production and consumption while Russia has set a target of increasing in-country use for power generation from 25 percent in 2014 to 27 percent by 2020. Overall, global demand is projected to continue increasing by 2.1 percent annually through 2019, according to IEA.

Source: ENSIA <http://ensia.com/articles/>

From the American prairie, a conservation success story

From rhinos to Cecil The Lion, we live in a world where stories of [species loss](#) and [illegal wildlife trade](#) dominate the conservation headlines, so a good news story every now and then is a welcome surprise.

Three years ago, 63 bison originally from Yellowstone National Park left a quarantine facility just outside the park's boundary where they were being monitored for brucellosis and made the journey nearly 400 miles to the [Fort Peck Reservation](#) in northeastern Montana. The transfer, which brought bison back to a stretch of the high country prairie from which they had been absent since the 1870s, was part of a larger program aimed at moving the animals to remote locations across the West to boost resilience to diseases that could wipe out a single herd.

Late last year — due to the combined efforts of Defenders of Wildlife, National Wildlife Federation, World Wildlife Fund, [InterTribal Buffalo Council](#) and others — an additional 138 Yellowstone bison joined the original herd on the reservation. Combined, the Assiniboine and Sioux tribes now manage nearly 200 free-ranging bison over close to 13,000 acres (5,260 hectares).

The move was good for more than just the bison. In a press release announcing the second transfer, Robert Magnan, director of the Fort Peck Tribes' Fish & Game Department and the buffalo program said, "In the two years since we welcomed back the first Yellowstone buffalo, we've seen the ecosystem revive. Grassland birds have returned, native grasses are thriving. We welcome and look forward to the buffalo's continued benefits to our tribal lands, as well as our culture."

Source: Writer Todd Reubold

DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Winterize Their Homes

Winterization increases energy efficiency, reducing energy use and saving money

While it might not feel like it, colder winter weather is on the way and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection wants all residents to stay safe and warm this winter by properly preparing their homes. Home winterization can help keep your home warmer, while using less energy and costing less money.

According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the average Pennsylvania family consumes more than 10,000 kWh of electricity annually and spends more than \$2000 per year on energy bills. Half the energy consumed in Pennsylvania homes is for space heating. Fortunately, homeowners can take small steps to make their home safe and more efficient.

“With smart, inexpensive fixes, Pennsylvanians can keep their homes warmer and save money this winter,” said DEP Secretary John Quigley. “The time to take steps to make your home ready for the cold weather is now, before it gets here.”

Consider these tips this winter to keep your home running efficiently:

Set back the thermostat; each degree lowered can save up to 3 percent on heating. A programmable thermostat, which cost as little as \$20 at a local hardware store, can be programmed to be setback automatically at designated timeframes, saving you more energy and money.

Clean warm-air registers, baseboard heaters, and radiators regularly and make sure they are not blocked by furniture, carpeting, or drapes.

Weather-strip windows and exterior doors where you can feel air leakage. Check the bottom of the door to see if there is a gap. If there is a gap of a quarter inch or more, significant air can flow in and out of the house. Install a door sweep on the bottom of the door. Weather-stripping for the windows and doors is available in foam, rubber, vinyl and metal. For homes without storm windows, consider purchasing a window insulator kit (plastic window coverings). Install insulating drapes or curtains for windows that still feel drafty after weatherizing.

Use the sunlight to heat your home by opening the curtains on south-facing windows during sunny days and close all curtains at night.

Check the door to the attic to make sure it seals well and closes tightly. Some manufacturers make insulated attic covers.

Do not heat unused spaces, other than as needed to prevent freezing of pipes. Close vents in unused rooms.

If you have a wood stove, be sure to clean the flue vent and inside of the stove regularly.

(continued on page 11)

DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Winterize Their Homes (continued)

If you have a fireplace, reduce heat loss from the fireplace by keeping the damper closed; when open, warm air goes up the chimney. Install tempered glass and a heat-air exchange system that blows warmed air back into the room. Check the seal on the fireplace damper and ensure it is snug and add caulking around the hearth. It is a good idea to have a carbon monoxide monitor, as well.

If you have a furnace, have it checked by a heating professional. This will make the unit more efficient, and provide peace of mind that it is running safely. A heating professional should check the exhaust flue and venting to prevent carbon monoxide poisoning. Be sure to replace the air filter as directed to keep the air in your home clean and the unit running well. A properly maintained furnace can result in a 10 percent reduction in fuel consumed.

The most cost-effective way to save energy in the home is to air seal and insulate.

Be sure to air seal before insulating as insulation material will not block leaks.

Find and seal air leaks with caulk around windows, doors, gaps around chimneys, and recessed lights in insulated ceilings.

Fill larger cracks with spray foam. Always follow the directions on the caulking and spray foam containers to ensure proper adherence and safety.

After all the cracks are filled, you can install the insulation. Use the [U.S. Department of Energy's insulation page](#) to determine what kind of insulation you should use and how to put it in your home.

For more information about home winterization, visit www.dep.pa.gov.

Here's a list of helpful resources to learn more about energy efficiency:

For a more comprehensive, whole-house approach to long-term energy and dollar savings, schedule a home energy audit by checking with your electric utility and finding a [certified auditor](#).

More tips to save energy, find financial assistance, and shop for an electricity supplier can be found at the [PA PUC's consumer information page](#).

Learn more about [financial incentives from your electric distribution company](#).

See if you can take advantage of [available tax credits](#) for products such as geothermal heat pumps, small wind turbines, solar energy, fuel cells, and microturbine systems.

The [U.S. Department of Energy's Energy Saver's website](#) contains several energy saving tips in addition to more comprehensive information about saving energy.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

