

ENVIRONMENTAL SYNOPSIS

The Chairman's Corner

Rep. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chairman



Remember the Ghostbusters movie? And the ubiquitous "Who ya gonna call?" refrain in its theme song? Well, suppose you had a problem with erosion, forest or wildlife management, dirt and gravel roads or the West Nile virus? Who ya gonna call? How about storm water or flood plains, stream encroachment and wetlands, or abandoned mine reclamation, nutrient management or agricultural preservation? Who ya gonna call?

Believe it or not, there is one answer that satisfies all of the above. The answer is managed by volunteer boards of directors made up of local people from all walks of life. And the answer has been around since the "dust bowl" days of the 1930s. Give up?

The answer is a County Conservation District. Every Pennsylvania county - save Philadelphia - has one, meaning there are 66 conservation districts in all. Their goal, as eloquently stated in the mission statement of the Venango Conservation District (VCD) in my home county is, "The Venango Conservation District is a local agency committed to serving the residents, businesses and visitors of Venango County by providing educational, technical and financial assistance for quality and sustainable natural resource management." You can pretty much copy Venango's mission for the 65 other conservation districts around the state.

The county conservation districts address local natural resource problems, but also have a significant statewide presence. The Pennsylvania State Conservation Commission is an 11-member commission, established by law in 1945, which provides oversight and support to the local conservation districts.

The Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts (PACD) also brings the local groups together at the state level to formulate policies and priorities, and works with the Pennsylvania General Assembly and state government on issues that affect our natural resources - and Pennsylvania residents - statewide.

The PACD recently held its annual statewide conference in State College and adopted a number of policy positions. Among these are:

- support for legislation entitled "The Second Phase of the Farmers First Agenda", a package aimed at improving agricultural education and sustainability;
- endorsement of the Pennsylvania Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) tax credit program to offset the costs of a number of environmental improvements (see more on REAP below);
- urging increased funding for a number of conservation programs under the federal Farm Bill, particularly for technical assistance programs that conservation districts provide for landowners and land users;

(continued on page 8)

In This Issue...

- The Chairman's Corner p. 1
- Notes From the Director p. 2
- Research Briefs..... p. 3-6
 - ✓ American Autos and Greenhouse Gases
 - ✓ Global Warming Pollution on the Rise
 - ✓ EPA Reports on Greenhouse Gases
 - ✓ Does the Nation Follow California's Lead?
- On the Horizon p. 7
- Committee Chronicles p. 7

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

CRAIG D. BROOKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The phrase “where the rubber meets the road” may soon take on a whole new meaning. A familiar material is making its way into neighborhood sidewalks – rubber. First used in certain neighborhoods where old tree roots forced concrete sidewalks to buckle and lift at awkward angles, the idea of using rubber sidewalks is now catching on in other areas. For reasons of safety and ease of maintenance, dozens of communities are installing rubber sidewalks made of ground-up tires (molded crumb rubber) that would normally be headed for the landfill.

Thanks to some creative public and private partnerships, rubber sidewalks are very much becoming a reality in many U.S. cities. Some 130,000 square feet of rubberized sidewalks grace about 60 North American cities, giving local governments an alternative to concrete and its pitfalls, such as rising prices, trip-and-fall lawsuits and a trail of chopped-down urban trees.

In Olympia, Washington, for example, the city has purchased 1,200 square feet of rubber sidewalks – about the length of one city block at a cost of about \$10,000. Rubber sidewalks flex and bend as tree roots push upward with age and the interlocking rubber panels can be lifted to trim tree roots, and are then put back in place. In the long run, the idea could save urban landscapes and the cost of traditional concrete sidewalk repairs. The idea is being incorporated into the city’s one-year pilot program to fix 75 broken sidewalks around town. Typically, private property owners are responsible for repairing or replacing adjacent sidewalks, but as part of a one-year pilot program, the city of Olympia will take responsibility for replacing the sidewalks.

Unlike concrete, which is poured and set on location, the prefabricated rubber squares are a modular sidewalk system that is cut to fit on location. Installers usually place the rubber squares over a bed of crushed granite and connect the interlocking pavers using interlocking dowels. The result: a sidewalk with a two inch

deep footprint which is far shallower than its concrete counterpart. To repair a rubber sidewalk, workers simply unlock the dowels and remove and replace the individual paver. The pavers are slip resistant, and allow rainwater to filter through the seams between the panels into the gravel and soil underneath. Pedestrians might actually feel a bounce in their step, but the sidewalks are firm and sturdy. These rubber sidewalks are made of 100 percent recycled tire rubber and each square foot of sidewalk uses the rubber from one passenger tire.

The idea, first tried in Santa Monica, California in the late 1990’s, is the brainchild of a public works director that tried to stop work crews from cutting down trees that were breaking up sidewalks. Santa Monica now has rubber sidewalks in 50 locations and has incorporated them into the renovations of many city-owned sites.

Rubber sidewalks – made from recycled tires – are catching on, and can be found in 60 North American cities

Is there a downside? Initial costs can be high. Rubber sidewalks cost about one-third more than concrete and when faced with replacing sidewalks or razing streetside trees, many cities unfortunately choose the latter, less

expensive option. But the modular systems are predicted to last approximately 20 years or more, and can save communities the costs of liability and concrete repairs. The pavers are considered to be environmentally friendly, and tree roots and freezing weather won’t crack them. The shock absorbing surface also happens to be easier on the joints of joggers and is more forgiving when someone takes a spill. This allows communities to save urban landscapes and have safe and passable sidewalks.

When you consider that Pennsylvania generates 12 million waste tires annually, and that the state has been a leader in the effort to recycle tires (having enacted 1996’s Waste Tire Recycling Act and several follow-up acts improving the original), it would make sense for Pennsylvania communities to start to take a look at rubber sidewalks.

RESEARCH BRIEFS

Each month, the committee's staff researches and prepares a number of "briefs" on several topics relevant to the Joint Conservation Committee's mission. Very often, these briefs include references to reports and further research on the topics so that readers may pursue issues on their own.

Half of Global Car Exhaust Produced by U.S. Vehicles

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

American cars and pickup trucks are responsible for 45 percent of all greenhouse gases emitted by automobiles globally, according to a report by the advocacy group Environmental Defense.

The report, *"Global Warming on the Road: The Climate Impact of America's Automobiles"*, also found that the nation's Big Three automakers – General Motors, Ford and Daimler Chrysler – accounted for nearly three-quarters (72 percent) of the carbon dioxide released by cars and pickup trucks on U.S. roads in 2004, the latest year for which statistics are available. The report details, by automaker and vehicle type, the greenhouse gas contribution made by America's auto sector.

Carbon dioxide emissions from personal vehicles in the United States equaled 314 million metric tons in 2004. According to the report, that much carbon could fill a coal train 55,000 miles long – enough to stretch 17 times between New York and San Francisco.

American cars and pickup trucks are responsible for 45 percent of all greenhouse gases emitted by vehicles globally

Vehicles built by the Big Three automakers gave off 230 million metric tons of greenhouse gas carbon dioxide in the United States in 2004. Cars and trucks made by GM (64.4 million vehicles) gave off 99 million metric tons of carbon dioxide or 31 percent of the total; Ford vehicles (49.8 million vehicles) emitted 80 million metric tons or 25 percent; and Daimler Chrysler vehicles (30.4 million) 51 million metric tons or 16 percent, according to the report.

By comparison, the nation's largest operator of coal-fired power plants, American Electric Power, had emissions of 41 million metric tons. The total carbon dioxide emissions from Big Three automobiles in 2004 were comparable to the total from the top 11 electric companies.

Nine other car manufacturers with vehicles on the U.S. market accounted for an additional 84 million metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions. Toyota (18.6 million vehicles), ranked fourth, giving off 27 million metric tons or nine percent of the total; Honda vehicles (13.3 million) emitted 17 million metric tons or six percent; and Nissan (10 million vehicles) emitted 15 million metric tons or five percent.

The 202 million vehicles on America's roads in 2004 represented about 30 percent of the estimated 683 million vehicles in use worldwide that year. The report suggests that cars in the U.S. account for a disproportionately high amount of greenhouse gas emissions for three primary reasons: U.S. vehicles are driven more than those in the rest of the world; the 11,000 miles per year average for U.S. vehicles is about 29 percent above the global average of 8,500 miles per year, they face lower fuel economy standards and burn fuel with higher levels of carbon than many other cars in other countries. For example:

- U.S. cars and light trucks were driven 2.6 trillion miles in 2004.
- U.S. automobiles had an average fuel economy of 19.6 miles per gallon in 2004, implying an average fuel use rate of 51 gallons per 1,000 miles of driving.
- Gasoline in the United States contains 5.3 pounds of carbon per gallon. All of that carbon ends up in the atmosphere as carbon dioxide in automobile exhaust when the fuel is burned.

Some other highlights in the report include:

- Despite the proliferation of SUVs, small cars such as compacts and subcompacts still account for 25 percent (77 million metric tons) of carbon dioxide emissions on the road. The reason, according to the report, is because small cars were the top-sellers for a long-time, and cars tend to stay on the road for many years.

● Although SUVs currently trail small cars as sources of carbon dioxide emissions that contribute to global warming (67 million metric tons or 21 percent of all U.S. emissions), they will soon be in first place and will remain a leading cause of global warming on U.S. roads for many years.

● The average new car, led by personal trucks, emits more carbon dioxide than many older cars still in use, so the idea of simply getting rid of older cars to reduce on-road emissions will not solve the problem.

The Environmental Defense report, *“Global Warming on the Road: The Climate Impact of America’s Automobiles”*, is available at http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/5301_Globalwarmingontheroad.pdf.

Report Finds Global Warming Pollution Continues to Rise

– Craig D. Brooks, Executive Director

Texas leads all other states in the annual emissions of carbon dioxide, followed by California, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Florida, according to a report by the U.S. Public Interest Research Group (PIRG). The report, based on emissions data covering four decades between 1960 and 2001 said Texas accounted for roughly 12 percent of the total U.S. carbon dioxide emissions in 2001, or 668.5 million total metric tons of the greenhouse gas. The report draws from the most recent data available on emissions reported by the Energy Department’s Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

Total carbon dioxide emissions from Texas – which also leads the nation in emissions from oil and natural gas, and is second only to Indiana in coal-related emissions – were nearly double that of the second highest emitting state, California, which released 368.7 million metric tons in 2001.

U.S. emissions of carbon dioxide have doubled over the past four decades

Other high emitting states are generally those with large industrial bases of significant populations, such as Pennsylvania (258 million metric tons), Ohio (249 million metric tons) and Florida (235.6 million metric tons). Other high emitting states in descending order were Illinois, Indiana, New York, Michigan and Louisiana.

The report also highlights states that are said to have at least doubled their annual total carbon dioxide emis-

sions between 1960 and 2001, led by Texas, Florida, California, Georgia, Louisiana, Indiana, Kentucky and North Carolina. A total of 28 states have doubled their emissions over the four decade period.

The report suggests that the United States could significantly cut its total emissions using available technology to make power plants and factories more efficient, improve automobile efficiency and shift the nation toward cleaner, renewable sources of energy such as wind power, geothermal and biomass. For example, the report suggests establishing mandatory limits on carbon dioxide and other global warming gases to reduce emissions from today’s levels by 20 percent by 2020 and by 80 percent by 2050.

Also, the report suggests that states rely more heavily on renewable energy sources by requiring renewable energy standards, such as the standards that Pennsylvania has already set in place.

The major factors driving the rise in carbon dioxide emissions over the decades examined in the report included a dramatic growth in emissions from the transportation sector and from the increased reliance on coal-fired electric power plants to meet energy needs.

The report suggests that significant opportunities exist to cut total emissions in the U.S. using existing technology

In 2002, the National Academy of Sciences concluded that automakers could use a combination of existing and emerging technologies to achieve 37 MPG within 10 to 15 years, while improving safety and maintaining performance.

As a whole, the annual amount of carbon dioxide emitted by the United States doubled over the last four decades, from 2.9 billion metric tons in 1960 to 5.7 billion metric tons in 2001. Emissions of the greenhouse gas increased to nearly 6 billion metric tons by 2004, the most recent year for which national data on U.S. emissions are available.

The U.S. PIRG report, *“The Carbon Boom: National and State Trends in Global Warming Pollution Since 1960”*, is available at <http://www.uspirg.org/carbon-boom>.

Total Greenhouse Gas Emissions Up; Methane, Nitrous Oxide Down in 2004

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

A report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) provides information on the sources and amounts of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gas emissions in the United States. The report provides the most up-to-date information estimating man-made emissions and provides details on various carbon sequestration efforts, including sinks that absorb carbon.

The EPA report, *"Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990-2004"*, indicates that U.S. emissions of greenhouse gases are increasing. Total greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and other trace gases increased 1.7 percent between 2003 and 2004. Total emissions of the six main greenhouse gases in 2004 were equivalent to 7,074 million metric tons of carbon dioxide, an increase of 125 million from 2003's total of 6,959 million.

It is the third consecutive year U.S. greenhouse gas emissions have increased, with EPA reporting a 0.3 percent increase for 2002, a 0.6 percent increase for 2003, and the 1.7 percent increase in 2004.

Total U.S. emissions have risen 15.8 percent over the 15-year period (1990-2004). The report notes the strong link between economic growth and increasing greenhouse gas emissions since 1990. While U.S. emissions increased 15.8 percent over that period, the nation's gross domestic product increased by 51 percent over the same period, the report said.

The EPA report agrees with the PIRG report (see previous article) that greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise

In addition to increasing economic growth, the report cited two other factors as primary contributors to the 2003-2004 increase in greenhouse gas emissions – expanding industrial production that relies on electricity and fossil fuels and increased travel requiring petroleum fuels.

The increased demand for fuels came as prices for natural gas escalated, which caused some electric power

producers to switch to coal, which remained available at relatively stable prices, the report said. Electricity consumption also increased due to a growing economy and increased residential development, which raised demand for residential power.

The largest source of greenhouse gases is carbon dioxide from the combustion of fossil fuels. According to the report, fuel combustion accounted for 94 percent of carbon dioxide emissions in 2004. Carbon dioxide from fossil fuel combustion has accounted for approximately 80 percent of emissions since 1990, growing slowly from 77 percent of total emissions in 1990 to 80 percent in 2004. Carbon dioxide emissions from all sources totaled 5,988 million metric tons in 2004.

Other information provided by the EPA report details various gases and their sources. These include methane, nitrous oxides, and other manmade gases.

For example, methane emissions, the second largest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, declined 10 percent from 1990 levels. Landfills are the largest source of methane emissions in the United States, accounting for approximately 25 percent of total methane emissions.

From 1990 to 2004, methane emissions from landfills have decreased by approximately 18 percent, with small increases occurring in some interim years. The primary reason behind this decline, according to the EPA, was the increases in the amount of landfill gas collected and combusted by landfill operators.

Nitrous oxide emissions have declined two percent from 1990 levels. Nitrous oxide emissions include one large source and several small sources. Agricultural sources account for 68 percent of nitrous oxide emissions. Emissions associated with fossil fuel use account for another 11 percent of U.S. nitrous oxide emissions.

While total nitrous oxide emissions are much lower than carbon dioxide emissions, nitrous oxide is approximately 300 times more powerful than carbon dioxide at trapping heat in the atmosphere. Since 1750, the global atmospheric concentration of nitrogen oxide has risen by approximately 18 percent.

A copy of the report, *"Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks: 1990 – 2004"*, is available on the EPA's website at: <http://yosemite.epa.gov/oar/globalwarming.nsf/content/ResourceCenterPublications-GHGEmissionsUSEmissionsInventory2006.html>.

California's Vehicle Emission Standards Set National Trends

- Craig D. Brooks, Executive Director

For nearly half a century, air pollutant emissions from mobile sources have been regulated by the federal government, launched in part by the deterioration of air quality in Southern California in the 1950's. From somewhat simple beginnings, emissions for light duty cars and trucks have evolved to today's complex regulation of engine and emissions control technologies.

A report released by the National Academies' National Research Council (NRC) suggests that rules allowing California to set stricter standards over the past several decades for cars, trucks and non-road equipment, and allowing other states to follow, were effective in reducing air pollution and help drive the development of clean technologies that benefit the rest of the nation. Congress allowed California to pursue separate emissions standards so that the state could tackle persistent air pollution problems, and at the same time, serve as a "laboratory" for technical innovation.

According to the report, California should continue its role in setting mobile source emissions standards to achieve air quality goals and allow it to be a proving ground for new emissions control technologies that could potentially benefit California and the United States.

The report, commissioned by Congress, examined the scientific and technical practices used by California and other states in developing emissions standards for mobile sources. An 11-member NRC committee of engineers, toxicologists and public policy experts conducted the evaluation.

Where does the California experience fit into the national picture?

Section 209 of the Federal Clean Air Act grants California the authority to establish separate standards for certain mobile sources, as long as they are at least as effective as those set by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). California, however, must obtain waivers from EPA to enforce those standards.

Under Section 177 of the same statute, other states are allowed to adopt California standards. Massachusetts, for example is one of 15 states, along with the

District of Columbia, to adopt California standards for certain trucks and passenger cars.

While the report validated California's authority to set its own emissions standards and supported the statute that allows other states to follow if needed, it did conclude that separate regulatory schemes do come with additional risks and costs for industry.

The study made several recommendations for improvements. In particular, the report recommends that changes are needed to streamline the process required to obtain waivers to enforce new standards. The study suggests that routine revisions considered non-controversial could be approved through direct rulemaking.

In addition, the waiver approval process takes too long. EPA should have a two-year deadline to act on all waivers. This would give manufacturers some lead time to comply. In many cases, waivers have been approved for vehicles and engines that already meet the standards being proposed.

The report also recommends that EPA and the California Air Resources Board improve modeling systems to achieve better emissions reductions estimates, conduct periodic assessments to gauge the actual feasibility of implementing new standards, and evaluate safety issues when setting new standards.

The report, "State and Federal Standards for Mobile Source Emissions (2006)", is available at <http://newton.nap.edu/books/0309101514/html>.

News to Use in the Environmental Synopsis... share it with a friend

The *Environmental Synopsis* is issued monthly.

The newsletter examines timely issues concerning environmental protection and natural resources.

If someone you know would like to receive a copy of the *Synopsis* each month, please contact the committee office at 717-787-7570.



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ON THE HORIZON . . .

A LOOK AT UPCOMING EVENTS

- ✓ Tuesday, September 12, 12:30 p.m., Empire A Room, Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, West Chocolate Avenue and University Drive, Hershey, PA – First Meeting of the Sewage Management and Treatment Task Force pursuant to House Resolution 88.
- ✓ Wednesday and Thursday, September 20-21, Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2nd Street, Harrisburg, PA – Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful (KPB) Roadside Aesthetics Summit.
- ✓ Thursday, September 28, 10 a.m., Senate Room, Penn Stater Conference Center Hotel, 215 Innovation Boulevard, State College – Legislative Forestry Task Force Meeting.
- ✓ Monday, November 20, 12 noon, Room 205, Matthew J. Ryan Building – Environmental Issues Forum. J. Kent Crawford, Water Quality Specialist with the Pennsylvania office of the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) will discuss the USGS' emerging contaminants project.

Environmental Issues Forums are open to the public.
Please call the committee office at (717) 787-7570 if you would like to attend.

COMMITTEE CHRONICLES . . .

REVIEW OF SOME MEMORABLE
COMMITTEE EVENTS

One of the Joint Conservation Committee's recent Environmental Issues Forums featured a presentation by Jim MacKenzie, President and Operations Manager of the Octoraro Native Plant Nursery in Kirkwood, PA. MacKenzie's presentation was entitled "Going Native – Opportunities for Using Native Plants in PA."

MacKenzie (photos at right) discussed initiatives in Pennsylvania on how native plants can be used in stream buffers and roadside plantings and to contribute to carbon sequestration initiatives to combat global climate change, and described the economic and environmental benefits of such uses. MacKenzie also touched on how invasive and exotic species such as Purple Loosestrife and Japanese Knotweed have destroyed productive habitats in Pennsylvania.



Octoraro Nursery was originally established in 1990 and specializes in raising container-grown mid-Atlantic and Eastern regional native trees and shrubs.

MacKenzie, pictured at left chatting with Joint Conservation Committee Chairman Rep. Scott Hutchinson, serves on the board of the Pennsylvania Landscape and Nursery Association, is a member of the PA Native Plant Society, the PA Association of Environmental Professionals and serves as vice-chair of DEP's State Water Planning Advisory Committee.



- *opposition to mandating local matches for Growing Greener grants from Pennsylvania;*
- *a recommendation that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) update the Chesapeake Bay Model and Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy to better address nutrient and sedimentation loads;*
- *support for recently introduced changes to the Conservation District Law to clarify, update and improve the statute governing the operation of conservation districts.*

Legislatively, there has either been action or action is pending on several proposals to aid conservation districts. Act 110 of 2006 was signed into law on July 7, and is important because it provides a single, non-lapsing fund for the state's conservation districts, under the auspices of the State Conservation Commission. A part of the Farmers First package, Act 110 not only provides a more efficient way to manage funding for local conservation districts, but will also streamline reporting requirements and paperwork required for multiple funding sources, thereby saving time and money. Act 110 begins to address the findings of a recent year-long study by the General Assembly's Legislative Budget and Finance Committee which showed that conservation districts were underfunded.

The REAP initiative mentioned above is also part of the Farmers First agenda (Senate Bill 1286 and House Bill 2878). It would provide tax credits to farmers and businesses that install best management practices such as barnyard improvements, riparian buffers, stream fencing, and manure management plans to reduce water pollution. Forested buffers on non-farm lands would also be eligible. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation kicked off promotion of the legislation at this month's Ag Progress Expo in State College.

State Senator Robert Wonderling, a member of the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee, introduced comprehensive legislation this month to update the Conservation District Law. The legislation would make structural, funding and operational changes to help conservation districts provide services.

Want to learn more about conservation districts?

Visit the Internet websites www.pacd.org or

www.agriculture.state.pa.us/agriculture/cwp/view.asp?a=3&q=127144

Perhaps the most practical way to get the best feel for all that conservation districts do is to examine local examples and then try to imagine 66 entities working together toward similar and sometime identical goals. Using my home county of Venango as an example, District Manager Mark Rickard informs us that the district recently held its "No-Till Walk-about and Field Day", designed to educate farmers and agency representatives (about 75 this year) about conservation agriculture, including no-till farming, soil health, cover crops, fuel usage reduction, conservation planning and nutrient management. Venango uses 450 acres of Commonwealth property which it has transformed into a demonstration farm for the event. Another educational project was recently held by the Lebanon County Conservation District which showed 41 children, ages 9-14, how snack foods get from the field to store shelves. Students visited snack-food manufacturers, took pictures and then were responsible for completing worksheets and journals about what they had learned.

The VCD also helps DEP conduct West Nile virus monitoring, surveillance and education. The district works with Growing Greener funded programs in areas such as stream-bank stabilization, plugging of abandoned oil wells that impact waterways, and other water quality improvement programs. Working with the Pennsylvania Senior Environmental Corps, the district helps conduct field surveys to locate abandoned and orphan oil wells (an estimated 200,000 in Venango County) to help prevent environmental and safety hazards. The district, and many others around the state, work with local governments in providing grant funds to perform environmentally sensitive maintenance projects on local dirt and gravel roads to both stabilize the roads and prevent sediment runoff from entering streams. This year's three-day statewide Dirt and Gravel Road Program Annual Maintenance Workshop will be held in Venango County.

The bottom line is, county conservation districts provide a wide number of services to protect, preserve and improve our natural resources. Don't forget your local conservation district if you have questions or problems like those discussed above. The local districts work closely with local, state and federal government partners to solve problems and educate people. Check out your local conservation district to learn more.

How to Contact The Joint Conservation Committee

Phone:
717-787-7570

Fax:
717-772-3836

Location:
Rm. 408, Finance Bldg.

Internet Website:
<http://jcc.legis.state.pa.us>

Mail:
Joint Conservation Committee
PA House of Representatives
House Box 202254
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2254

Joint Legislative
Air and Water
Pollution Control and
Conservation
Committee