

ENVIRONMENTAL SYNOPSIS

The Chairman's Corner

Rep. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chairman



Legislation has recently been introduced (House Bill 2735) that would regulate prescribed burning practices in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The legislation is titled the Prescribed Burning Practices Act and was introduced by State Representative Gary Haluska (D-Cambria), who is a long-time member of the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee's (Committee) Forestry Task Force. I am cosponsoring the legislation.

Prescribed burning, which is the skilled application of fire to existing vegetative fuels under planned and controlled conditions, is a land management tool which has been used successfully in other states and on a limited basis in Pennsylvania. Prescribed fire is used to reduce hazardous vegetative fuel buildups, maintain and provide wildlife habitats, control forest diseases and pests, preserve endangered plant and animal species, manage range and grasslands, prepare sites for planting, and maintain and restore fire dependent ecosystems.

The Prescribed Burning Practices Act is the product of collaborative research, discussion and hands-on experience involving a number of well-respected and knowledgeable parties. The legislation represents a consensus of diverse opinions based on the group's research and practical experience. Much of the research into the use

of prescribed burning can be traced to the study done by the Committee's Forestry Task Force pursuant to Senate Resolution 137 of 2005. In its December 2007 report, the task force recommended development of legislation like the Prescribed Burning Practices Act.

In March 2007, a group called the Pennsylvania Prescribed Fire Council Steering Committee met to pursue formation of a formal prescribed fire council. That council met initially at a statewide conference in February 2008 in State College, PA. It called itself the Pennsylvania Prescribed Fire Council (PPFC), and established a mission statement, which reads in part "...to promote the exchange of information, techniques and experiences of the Pennsylvania prescribed fire community, and to promote public understanding of the importance and benefits of prescribed fire."

The conference featured a historical perspective on the use of fire to improve ecosystems, a look at other states' experiences (among them Ohio and Georgia), an examination of the national perspective, and a discussion of fire training standards.

(continued on page 8)

In This Issue...

- The Chairman's Corner p. 1
- Notes From the Director p. 2
- Research Briefs p. 3-6
 - ✓ 2007 a Good Year for Green Tech
 - ✓ Wind Power Goals Mean New Construction Needed
 - ✓ Are Beaches Getting Cleaner?
 - ✓ Whither Coal and Carbon Capture and Storage?
- On the Horizon p. 7
- Committee Chronicles p. 7

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

CRAIG D. BROOKS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Just as the 2008 swimming season is coming ever nearer to its close, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is posting its latest data about beach closings and monitoring for the 2007 swimming season.

When Congress passed the BEACH Act of 2000, it required coastal and Great Lakes states and territories to report to EPA on beach water quality for their respective coastal recreational waters. The BEACH Act defines coastal recreational waters as those that states and territories officially designate for swimming, bathing, surfing or similar water activities. When the water quality shows that levels of certain indicator bacteria exceed standards, states and local authorities are required to notify the public and EPA of the beach advisory, closing and the possible risks associated with public swimming.

The good news from EPA is that beaches were open for use 95 percent of the designated beach days in 2007, and state and territorial beach water quality managers are improving pollution monitoring and prevention. The bad news, however, is that many beaches still remained unsafe for public use.

According to EPA's "2007 Swimming Season Update", 1,167 (32 percent) of the 3,602 beaches that were monitored had at least one advisory or closing due to pollution issues. This is the same percentage as reported in the 2006 swimming season.

The report says that 94 percent of the 6,274 beach notification actions reported during the 2007 swimming season were one week or less. Fifty percent of the beach notification actions were only one or two days long, compared with 47 percent in 2006.

EPA determined that there were 679,589 beach days associated with the swimming seasons on the

monitored beaches and notification actions were reported on 31,055 days. This indicates that beaches were under an advisory or closed about 5 percent of the time, similar to the previous two years.

For the past eight years, EPA has made available nearly \$71 million in grants to 35 coastal and Great Lakes states and territories since the passage of the BEACH Act in 2000. The funds are designed to help improve water quality monitoring and public information programs to alert beach goers about the health of their beaches. The funding level for beach monitoring this year is \$9.75 million and legislation reauthorizing the BEACH Act doubles the amount of grant money available annually to states through 2012.

Beach contamination often results from storm-water runoff from streets, fields, forests and other areas. EPA and the states are making progress in collection and reporting data on water quality conditions at the nation's beaches. EPA is focusing its beach

research on a number of areas, including:

- Enforcing regulations pertaining to sewer overflows;
- Developing new tests for detecting water-borne pathogens that will provide results within a six hour period;
- Working with communities to help build and operate their sewage treatment plants and end sewage overflows from outdated sewer systems;
- Implementing a national stormwater program to reduce urban runoff; and
- Working with the United States Coast Guard to improve disposal of sewage and other wastes from seagoing vessels.

EPA continues to work on monitoring and public notification improvements for the BEACH Program. EPA's 2007 swimming season update is available at <http://www.epa.gov/waterscience/beaches/seasons/2007/>.

See this month's Research Brief article entitled "U. S. Beaches Get Dirtier, But Not at Pennsylvania's Presque Isle" for another perspective on beach closings and advisories

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.

Four Clean Energy Markets Increased a Combined 40 Percent in 2007

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

According to an annual report issued by Clean Edge, a research firm that studies the green technology industry, 2007 was a very strong year for global clean energy markets. And, projections for the next 10 years suggest that the best may be yet to come. The report, "*Clean Energy Trends: 2008*", outlines the areas of clean technology that saw the most growth in 2007 as well as the hurdles ahead.

Sales for companies specializing in four benchmark sectors, including biofuels, wind power, solar photovoltaics and fuel cells, reported a 40 percent increase in 2007, up from \$55 billion in 2006 to \$77.3 billion in 2007. The four sectors are projected to more than triple over the next decade, growing to \$254.5 billion by 2017.

Although the fuel cell and distributed hydrogen market remains relatively immature, with revenues of \$1.5 billion in 2007 (primarily for research contracts and demonstration and test units), the three other renewable markets each exceeded \$20 billion in revenue. Of the four energy markets, wind power earned the highest revenue, at \$30.1 billion. In 2007, global wind power installations reached a record 20,000 megawatts worldwide, equivalent in size to 20 conventional fossil fuel power plants. Biofuels revenues reached \$25.4 billion in 2007.

The forecast for the future is that the green technology industry will continue to grow...although challenges remain

In terms of production, the biofuels industry produced 13 billion gallons of ethanol throughout the world, as well as 2 billion gallons of biodiesel. Solar photovoltaic system installation revenues totaled \$20.3 billion in 2007, falling just short of 3,000 megawatts worldwide, up nearly 500 percent from just four years earlier.

The report looks ahead 10 years to 2017 and predicts that global installed solar photovoltaic capacity will increase eightfold, to 22,760 megawatts (\$74 billion). Global wind power capacity will nearly

quadruple, to 75,781 megawatts (\$83.4 billion). Bio-fuel production will nearly triple, to 45.9 billion gallons (\$81.1 billion). It also projects a tripling of the three clean energy markets over the next 10 years, with the largest growth rate in the fuel cell and distributed hydrogen market, which is predicted to grow more than tenfold to \$16 billion.

New global investments in energy technologies – including venture capital, project finance, public markets, and research and development – have expanded by 60 percent from \$92.6 billion in 2006 to \$148.4 billion in 2007. According to the report, venture capitalists in the U.S. invested \$2.7 billion in the clean energy sector, representing more than nine percent of total venture capitalism activity.

However, the report also notes a few important challenges that must be overcome in the upcoming years:

- Limiting the impact of biofuel production on food supplies and agricultural commodity prices; and
- Developing accurate lifecycle analyses for renewable and conventional sources in order to understand their actual impact.

In addition, the report suggests the constrained credit market, uncertainty about U.S. regulation on renewable energy and carbon emissions, and the latent global economic recession are three important factors that could hamper the growth of the clean energy market.

Apart from these general conclusions, the report takes note of five key trends that are currently ongoing:

- 1) Interest in the next generation of electric vehicles will continue to grow, driven in large part by innovations from small companies, not the major automotive companies;
- 2) Sustainable cities (the emergence of new, fossil-fueled, carbon neutral cities, in the Middle East of all places) are being designed and built from the ground up;
- 3) Foreign companies will become an increasing presence in the American wind power industry, building wind farms and manufacturing plants in the United States;
- 4) Geothermal energy, which uses the Earth's heat to generate electricity, is experiencing a renaissance as a clean energy resource, particularly in the western United States;
- 5) There will be a push for cleaner ocean-going vessels and transport, including putting sails on freighters.

Clean Edge, based in San Francisco and Portland, Oregon, provides research to businesses and investors looking to profit from the green tech industry, and has issued its annual reports since 2002. The 22-page report, "*Clean Energy Trends: 2008*", is available at <http://www.cleandedge.com/reports/pdf/Trends2008.pdf>.

New Wind Power Construction Needed to Meet Goals

– Craig D. Brooks, Executive Director

Within a decade, the United States will need to triple annual construction of new wind power facilities to meet its goal of supplying 20 percent of the nation's electricity via wind power by 2030, according to the Department of Energy (DOE). The report, "*20% Wind Energy by 2030 – Increasing Wind Energy's Contribution to U.S. Electricity Supply*", suggests that the United States will need to build 16 gigawatts of new generation capacity each year after 2018 to meet the goal of 300 gigawatts. This installation rate, although large, is comparable to the recent annual installation rates of natural gas units which totaled more than 16 gigawatts in 2005. According to the report, wind generators added 5,244 megawatts – about 5.2 gigawatts – of new wind capacity in 2007 for a total of 11.6 gigawatts of wind generation in operation. This represents only one percent of the national power consumption. A gigawatt is 1,000 megawatts, or 1 billion watts.

Because power consumption is expected to grow 5.8 billion megawatt-hours annually by 2030, a 39 percent increase over 2005, wind power will play a crucial role in rebalancing the nation's portfolio of clean, domestic energy. According to the report, reaching the 20 percent goal set in 2006 would displace an estimated 50 percent of America's natural gas consumption and 18 percent of its coal consumption and possibly help stabilize the fuel prices. The report suggests that up to 8,000 gigawatts of power could be available from land-based winds not including offshore wind farms. Although DOE's Energy Information Administration office forecasts only 7 gigawatts of new wind capacity being built within the next 22 years, the industry predicts that the 20 percent goal is achievable.

According to the report, meeting the 20 percent goal by 2030 would reduce carbon dioxide emissions by a cumulative 7,600 million tons and save 4 trillion gallons of water during that period. U.S. turbine technology has advanced steadily to offer improved performance. In 2006 alone, average turbine size increased by more than 11 percent over the 2005 level to an average size of 1.6 megawatts. In addition, average capacity factors have improved 11 percent over the past two years as well. Wind turbines typically have a lifespan of at least 20 years and trans-

mission lines can last more than 50 years, meaning that investments in the infrastructure would continue to supply clean energy at least through 2050.

To meet power supply goals, construction of new wind power facilities will have to be increased dramatically

However, building wind turbines and expanding transmission line networks to move the power where needed present their own set of challenges. The report suggests that the United States needs to invest in clean energy superhighways to move wind-generated power to where it is needed. However, changes would be necessary to the permitting process to allow for new transmission lines to keep pace with the 20 percent goal. Inadequate transmission lines appear to be the most strategic constraint facing the expansion of the wind industry.

The report suggests the following as major challenges:

- Investment in the nation's transmission system needs to be addressed so the power generated is delivered to urban centers that need the increased supply;
- Look closely at larger electric load balancing areas, in tandem with better regional planning so that regions can depend on a diversity of generation sources, including wind power;
- Foster continued reduction in wind capital cost and improvements for wind turbine performance through technology advancement and improved manufacturing capabilities; and
- Address potential concerns about local siting, wildlife, and environmental issues within the context of generating electricity.

According to the report, wind power expansion would require careful and logical fact-based considerations of local and national environmental concerns, allowing siting issues to be addressed within a broad-based framework. Experience in many regions has shown that this can be done but efficient and streamlined procedures will likely be needed to reach the 20 percent goal by 2030.

U.S. Beaches Get Dirtier, but not at Pennsylvania's Presque Isle

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

Pennsylvania's Presque Isle beaches on Lake Erie had a cleaner year in 2007 than the year before, bucking a national trend, although the improvement may simply be a result of drier weather. The state ranked roughly in the middle of coastal states examined by the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) in its 18th annual survey of beach water quality in the United States.

The NRDC report, *“Testing the Waters: A Guide to Water Quality at Vacation Beaches”*, rates beaches based on cleanliness of the water – as well as how often it is monitored and how the public is notified.

Twelve beaches at Presque Isle State Park along the Erie County shoreline were tested for the degree to which pollution of nearby water exceeded national standards. In 2007, six percent of water samples taken in shallow waters off the public beaches at Presque Isle State Park revealed elevated bacteria levels from stormwater sources, according to the report. Water contamination and unsafe bacteria levels prompted swimming advisories or restrictions in Presque Isle beaches six times in 2007, down more than 89 percent from 53 days in 2006 and 39 days in 2005.

You can compare the NRDC report with that of the EPA by reading “Notes From The Director” on page two

The beach with the most violations in Presque Isle was Beach 1. In 2007, 12 percent of the water samples taken off the beach exceeded the federal water quality standard. According to the report, Beach 1 and the other public beaches are sampled twice a week. Beachwater quality monitoring activities were conducted from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Presque Isle’s seven miles of beaches ranked 16th among the 30 coastal and Great Lakes states monitored for federal water quality standards. Pennsylvania ranked better than its immediate coastal neighbors, Ohio (2nd in the nation for having the most frequent levels of harmful bacteria found in 18 percent of water samples taken), New York (8th with 11 percent) and Maryland (14th with 7 percent). Illinois had the highest percentage of failed water quality tests – 23 percent of its samples failed national health standards. However, the report noted that the state also has one of the highest rates of testing. The state with the lowest percentage of failing tests was Alaska.

Nationally, ocean, bay and Great Lakes beaches were closed or under advisories more than 22,500 days in 2007, the second-highest level in the history of the survey. Seventy-one percent of the closures were based on monitoring that detected elevated bacteria levels. Twenty-five percent were precautionary because of rain likely carrying pollution to swimming areas and three percent were prompted by incidents like sewage treatment plant failures or pipe breaks.

According to the report, contaminated beaches can make people sick and hurt seaside community economies. About a quarter of the population of the

United States goes to the beach every year. That is about 1.8 billion trips annually to the nation’s ocean, bay and Great Lakes beaches. Contact with polluted water can cause a variety of illnesses including ear, nose and eye infections, skin rashes, and stomach, respiratory and intestinal ailments, especially for the old and young and those with weakened immune systems. A U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study cited in the report indicates that 10 percent of Great Lakes beachgoers reported symptoms of gastroenteritis or respiratory illness after a day at the beach. Swimming in a “red tide” (a massive algae bloom) is doubly dangerous. In 2000, coastal areas contributed \$1 trillion and 2 million jobs to the economy.

Local officials in 30 coastal and Great Lakes states are responsible for testing beach water throughout the swim season and informing the public of any health risks. Those local results eventually are reported to the EPA. Beaches close or post advisories when water samples exceed state or federal standards for bacteria that indicate the presence of human or animal waste. In 2007, state and local labs screened more than 131,000 water samples taken during the swimming season from more than 3,500 beaches.

This year’s NRDC report shows:

- Ocean, bay and Great Lakes beaches closed or posted no-swimming advisories 22,571 days in 2007, a 12 percent decline (3,072 days) from the 2006 record of 25,643 days. The 2006 record was driven by unusually heavy rain over parts of the country, especially Hawaii.
- Closing and advisory days increased dramatically in 2007 at Gulf Coast, New York and New Jersey beaches but declined at Southeast and West Coast Beaches.
- Of the 131,977 water samples local health officials took in 2007, seven percent exceeded the national safe swimming standard set by the EPA. That is essentially unchanged from 2006. The results were worse for Great Lakes Beaches, where 15 percent of beachwater samples exceeded the safety standard.

The report contains recommendations that include urging the federal government to speed the process of implementing new standards. Individuals can help cut pollution in coastal waters by conserving water, redirecting runoff, using natural fertilizers or compost, maintaining septic systems and properly disposing of animal waste, litter, used motor oil and leftover household products.

The NRDC’s 18th annual report, *“Testing the Waters: A Guide to Water Quality at Vacation Beaches”*, is available at <http://www.nrdc.org/water/oceans/ttw/ttw2008.pdf>.

Carbon Technology Faces Challenges

– **Craig D. Brooks, Executive Director**

Coal is cheap and abundant in the United States and it is undeniable that coal is - and will remain - the major fuel source for baseload power for the U.S. in the foreseeable future. Therefore any attempt to make coal-powered electricity generation more climate friendly through the consideration of clean technologies such as carbon capture and storage (CCS) is very significant.

However, major hurdles must be overcome before CCS, a system that would allow carbon dioxide emissions to be stored in the ground rather than released into the atmosphere, can be implemented on a nationwide level, according to a report by the World Resources Institute. The report suggests that the push to create widely used CCS needs to include involvement by policymakers directing capital toward deployment of new technologies, market incentives and education and a legal and regulatory framework that supports this process. In addition, there must be public acceptance of the technology and understanding of the liability if the carbon dioxide leaks.

There are several logistical hurdles to be considered before CCS can be implemented on a national level

CCS has been viewed as a potential way to continue using coal-fired energy plants while cutting emissions, something that would be important to the United States and developing countries. The report, *“Capturing King Coal – Deploying Carbon Capture and Storage Systems in the U.S. at Scale”*, says that U.S. policy support will need to be ramped up, adding that domestic carbon prices will have to be higher than European prices in an effort to serve as an incentive for implementing CCS. The report suggests a cap on carbon as a way to set the price. The report quotes estimates up to \$60 per ton of carbon dioxide to make CCS economically feasible.

However, making CCS economical is not the only consideration. Regulatory and legal issues with respect to injection, storage, measurement, monitoring, verification and liability need to be addressed in order to build trust in the technology. According to the report, there is currently no regulatory framework in the US designed to deal specifically with CCS. The report suggests that sequestration will require new standards and increased cooperation between federal and state agencies, and that there could be inefficiencies and increased costs if the current patchwork of regulations for both CO2 transport and use are applied to CCS.

In addition, the existing standards were not

designed with long-term carbon sequestration in mind. While the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Underground Injection Control (UIC) program governs the injection of CO2 for the recovery of oil, it does not have the provisions to address some of the specific issues related with long-term storage of CO2 and the larger volumes and higher pressures being considered for CCS. The report suggests that creating a regulatory framework will be vital, in order to give industry and investors more certainty about compliance requirements and costs. EPA is currently working on modifying the UIC program to cover the injection of CO2 for geologic sequestration.

According to the report, CO2 storage has significant liability considerations, from siting and operation to long-term storage. Because the establishment of large scale sequestration reservoirs will ultimately intersect with pre-existing mineral rights, water rights and surface claims, clearly defined property rights and liability arrangements are essential for a successful CCS program. In addition, the potential leakage of stored CO2 presents its own unique set of liability issues.

While many geologic formations may be ideal to store CO2, there is the possibility of leakage from storage sites. Leakage would negate many of the benefits of sequestration and cause adverse health, safety and environmental consequences. However, the report suggests that these risks are manageable, and comparable to other industrial activities if properly sited, operated and monitored.

The report calls for full scale demonstration projects of the technology, realistic emission standards for coal-fired power plants, and increased governmental support for research and development funds.

“Capturing King Coal – Deploying Carbon Capture and Storage Systems in the U.S. at Scale” is available at http://pdf.wri.org/capturing_king_coal.pdf.

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

- ✓ The Governor's Sustainable Water Infrastructure Task Force (SWITF) has been holding a series of meetings to discuss formulation of its report, which is to be issued by October 1. The next scheduled meeting is Wednesday, September 3 in Room 105 of the Rachel Carson State Office Building at 9:30 a.m. The Tuesday, September 23 meeting will be held in Room 109, Rachel Carson State Office Building.
- ✓ Monday, September 22, 12 noon, Room 205, Matthew J. Ryan Building, Capitol complex, Harrisburg, PA - Environmental Issues Forum featuring a presentation entitled "Emerging Contaminants in Pennsylvania Streams - An Update" by U. S. Geological Survey (USGS) Water Quality Specialist J. Kent Crawford. Environmental Issues Forums are open to the public. *
- ✓ Thursday, October 16, 10 a.m., Penn Stater Conference Center, 215 Innovation Boulevard, State College, PA - Meeting of the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee's (Committee) Sewage Task Force. (This meeting was rescheduled from September 18.) *
- Thursday, October 23, 10 a.m., Penn Stater Conference Center, 215 Innovation Boulevard, State College, PA - Meeting of the Committee's Forestry Task Force. (This meeting was rescheduled from October 2.) *

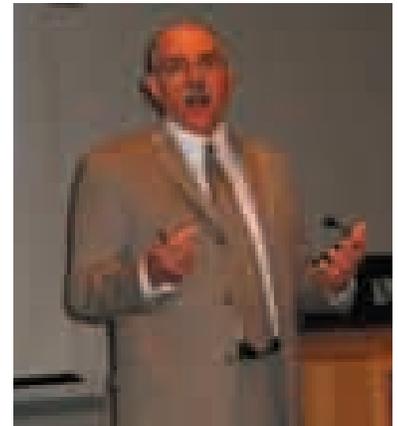
* Please call the Committee office at (717) 787-7570 if you plan to attend.

COMMITTEE CHRONICLES . . .

REVIEW OF SOME MEMORABLE COMMITTEE EVENTS

The Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee's (Committee) Sewage Task Force continues to meet to discuss and seek solutions to the water and sewer system financing and infrastructure needs across Pennsylvania. At the most recent meeting, the task force heard from several speakers on different topics related to the issue.

In the photo at right, Jeff Wendle, president of CET Engineering Services, described how the "Actiflo" treatment technology works.



The meeting also featured two presentations on funding. An update on PENNVEST funding was provided by PENNVEST Deputy Executive Director Brion Johnson, and in the photo at left, Jim Elliott, vice-president of Gannett Fleming, Inc., spoke about infrastructure financing.

A presentation on the Environmental Protection Agency's "Total Maximum Daily Load" (TMDL) program was provided by Steven Hann, Esquire of Hamburg, Rubin, Mullen, Maxwell and Lupin (photo at bottom right).

The meeting was wrapped up by PA Municipal Authority Association Governmental Relations Associate Pete Slack, who discussed Pennsylvania's water quality criteria for nutrients.



Also discussed were relationships with the public, insurance and liability issues, and building the prescribed fire community, as well as the prescribed fire legislation being developed in Pennsylvania, which has now become HB 2735.

Under the guidance of the Committee, the PFC has helped to formulate, draft, review and alter this legislation. Among the notable principal partners of the PFC are the U. S. Forest Service Northeastern Area, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Bureau of Forestry, The Nature Conservancy, PA Game Commission, Natural Lands Trust, Inc., PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, and the Penn State University School of Forest Resources. Other interested organizations are PA Private Forestry and the Ruffed Grouse Association.

The legislation seeks to accomplish a number of goals. It would encourage the continued use of prescribed burning for fuel reduction, and for ecological, forest, wildlife and grassland management purposes. It would establish standards for the safe use of prescribed burning and the training of prescribed burn managers and those under his/her supervision, provide for the content of written prescribed burn plans, and establish a training program.

Further, the legislation addresses a shortcoming in Pennsylvania law by providing for limited liability exposure for those individuals contracting for a prescribed burn, and for the prescribed burn manager and those under the manager's supervision, provided such individuals meet several rigorous standards. The standards are established in the legislation, by regulation and under the training, equipment and operational requirements established by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group.

The Prescribed Burning Practices Act – House Bill 2735 – has 24 bipartisan cosponsors in the House of Representatives

Fire has always played an active role in Pennsylvania's natural environment, but often that fire was unplanned, uncontrolled and unwanted. Prior to the establishment of the PFC, the Bureau of Forestry recognized the value of prescribed burning in its wildland fire management plan and as part of its State Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP). In the SFRMP, the bureau notes that it has "joined forces...to develop a strategy for fire use in Pennsylvania and recognizes the need to address our citizens' interests and concerns." The document further states, "In the hands of trained, skilled and experienced people, fire may be used as an effective tool to meet many ecosystem management objectives and ultimately enhance and protect resource values."

The policy statement that accompanies the draft of the "Wildland Fire Management Components" (which is part of the SFRMP) reads, "The health of Pennsylvania's forest ecosystems will be maintained and enhanced through the prevention and suppression of wildfires and through the application of prescribed fire when appropriate." The use of prescribed fire to maintain or establish certain forest ecosystems is also described as a critical research need.

The lack of a state statute to govern the use of prescribed burning and concerns about liability have inhibited prescribed burning's continued use as a conservation and safety tool in Pennsylvania. HB 2735 would place clear rights, responsibilities and protections in statute, in accord with existing federal standards, so that beneficial prescribed burns could be more safely used in Pennsylvania. Used properly, prescribed burning would be an effective and economical protection against wildfires, and would benefit public safety, the environment and the economy of Pennsylvania by reducing the threat of loss of life and property and by preserving and protecting community assets and investments.

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