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ENVIRONMENTAL SYNOPSIS

The Chairman's Corner

Rep. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chairman

Did you know that Pennsylvania is home to 17 million acres of forestland? Or that its 2.1 million acres of state forestland is one of the largest expanses of public forest in the eastern United States? Would you have thought that the forest products industry is the fourth largest manufacturing industry in Pennsylvania, a $5 billion industry employing almost 100,000 people?

The future of forests in Pennsylvania is a topic very much on the agenda of the Joint Conservation Committee. As many long-time readers may know, the committee's Forestry Task Force, chaired by committee member Sen. Roger Madigan (R-23), has been working on forestry issues for a number of years and continues to do so.

In each legislative session since first being established in 1994, the task force has taken up issues designed to improve forest management, learn more about and bolster forest sustainability, increase cooperation between the timber industry and forest owners and investigate ways to best regenerate Pennsylvania's forest resources. This session is no exception.

Most recently, the task force heard from Pennsylvania's state forester, Dr. Jim Grace, and Michael Hampton of the Allegheny National Forest (ANF).

Both DCNR and ANF are pursuing comprehensive updates of their respective forest management plans. The meeting in State College gave the task force the opportunity to get progress reports and ask questions regarding both plans.

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In This Issue...

Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee

A Legislative Service Agency of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

CRAIG D. BROOKS, DIRECTOR

If memory serves me correctly, it was President Herbert Hoover who said, " a chicken in every pot and a car in every garage". Now 75 years later how about we add "a PC in every household" to our former president's campaign slogan. It's closer to reality than you might think. It is estimated that nearly 70 million households have at least one computer and the vast majority of those have Internet access. Based on past industry growth rates, it has been forecast that within the next decade, home computers will become a standard fixture in nearly all American households, regardless of income level.

It is estimated that over the next ten years more than 300 million computers will inundate the national waste infrastructure.

Because computer technology is advancing at exceptionally high speed, older machines, usually the ones that were state-of-the-art two years ago, are now "obsolete". More than 20 million personal computers become obsolete every year and by 2005, the number is expected to jump to 65 million. It is estimated that over the next ten years more than 300 million computers will inundate the national waste infrastructure. These numbers are staggering. Computer components contain lead, mercury, cadmium, chromium and other hazardous materials, and the glass screens or cathode ray tubes (CRTs) contain as much as 27 percent lead. So….what do you do with your computer if you want to upgrade to a higher level of performance or it simply becomes too obsolete to run updated programs? You may want to consider the following options:

Upgrade. In many cases additional memory or a new monitor or parts can improve your computer's memory or performance and extend its usefulness.

Donate. Many charities, schools, and other organizations need equipment. A computer that is several years old could be considered new to a charity.

Sell. There are businesses that specialize in computer rebuilds and upgrades. These companies may be interested in purchasing or taking a donated computer and salvaging it for parts.

Recycle. Most major computer manufacturers and many waste companies offer some type of computer recycling program, and consumers should determine which program best fits their needs.

In Pennsylvania, there are several organizations and businesses that may be able to meet your computer recycling needs:

Envirocycle, Inc., located in Halstead, Pennsylvania, uses the slogan "Take anything you plug in" and can be contacted at 570-879-2862 or at www.enviroinc.com.

Reclamere, Inc., provides a wide variety of end-of-life services for electronic equipment and is an insured vendor experienced in electronics recycling and data destruction. They are located in Tyrone, Pennsylvania and can be reached at 814-684-5505 or at www.reclamere.com.

The Children's Project in Norristown, Pennsylvania refurbishes computers and distributes them to disadvantaged families. They can be reached at 610-337-4434 or at www.project-2000-computers.com.

The Computer Hardware Initiative Project(CHIP) is a project of the Pennsylvania State University located in State College, Pennsylvania and accepts computers and computer equipment for refurbishing for placement in schools, nonprofits, and community centers in Pennsylvania. They can be reached at www.scholars.psu.edu/CHIP/.

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.

Using "Green Scissors" to Cut Government Waste

— Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

Can the government cut wasteful spending and help save the environment? Yes, according to *"Green Scissors 2003"*, the annual report highlighting environmentally harmful and wasteful spending. The report targets nuclear fuel technologies, road construction in forests, and more than 60 other programs and subsidies that, if cut, could save taxpayers more than $58 billion and protect the environment.

The *"Green Scissors 2003"* report, released by the Green Scissors Campaign, includes general overviews of programs for reform in each of the following six categories: agriculture, energy, international and military programs, public lands, roads and highways, and water.

Of the 68 programs described in the Green Scissors report, seven are highlighted as "Choice Cuts," primarily because they are especially wasteful, require congressional action or are the most in need of reform. Some programs are national, while others are state based, but all are federally funded and threaten declining natural resources and habitat, according to the report. They represent a cross-section of government programs, including highway, water, unneeded nuclear research and public land subsidy projects.

The Green Scissors 2003's "Choice Cuts" include:

— **Advanced Fuel Cycle Initiative (AFCI)** – Eliminating the U.S. Energy Department's AFCI, a nuclear fuel reprocessing program that separates weapons-grade plutonium from high-level radioactive waste, will save taxpayers $315 million over the next five years.

— **Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Navigation** – Decommissioning an underused navigation system running through Alabama, Florida, and Georgia, will save taxpayers $64.5 million in operation and maintenance costs over the next five years.

— **Bonneville Power Administration** – Bonneville Power's request to increase its federal borrowing authority by $700 million should be denied until completion of an independent financial audit.

— **Indianapolis-to-Evansville (I-69) Highway** – The proposed 140-mile road project is estimated to cost more than $1.7 billion. Eliminating federal funding for this road and upgrading existing highways could save taxpayers $680 million.

— **Oil and Gas Royalty Exemptions** - Under a federal proposal, companies would be able to drill on public lands for free. States currently receive 50 percent of the fees that corporations pay for extracting oil and gas from federal lands. Rejecting proposals that authorize royalty exemptions would raise $802 million over five years.

— **Superfund Tax Reauthorization** – One in four Americans lives within four miles of a Superfund site, but since the Superfund's tax on potential polluters was allowed to expire, the pace of cleanups has dropped off dramatically. Reauthorizing the Superfund tax would raise $5.8 billion over the next five years and ensure that toxic waste sites are cleaned up at the expense of the polluters – not taxpayers.

— **Timber Roads Construction** – The U.S. Forest Service pays for the construction of logging roads in national forests. The Forest Service has constructed so many roads, more than 380,000 miles, that it now faces a $10 billion backlog in needed road maintenance. Eliminating all funding for construction, planning, and design on new logging roads could save taxpayers $173 million over five years.

Four federal programs are highlighted as new issues on the Green Scissors Campaign agenda for the future. They include eliminating federal subsidies to livestock operations that exceed 1,000 animal units and terminating funding of research into hydrogen fuel cells for cars. The report suggests that canceling the hydrogen fuel cell research program would save taxpayers more than $600 million over the next five years.

This is the eighth year the Green Scissors Campaign and its leaders, Friends of the Earth, U.S. Public Interest Research Group, and Taxpayers for Common Sense, has released its lists of wasteful and environmentally harmful spending. Over the last eight years, $26 billion in spending programs targeted by the Green Scissors Campaign have been cut or eliminated from the federal budget.

A copy of the *"Green Scissors 2003"*, report can be found online at http://www.greenscissors.org/publications/gs2003.pdf.

EPA Releases Report on Environmental Outlook for 2003

— Jason H Gross, Research Analyst

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has created the *"Draft Report on the Environment 2003"* as a component of its Environmental Indicators Initiative. The initiative, launched in 2001, seeks to develop better indicators and data that EPA can use to track the state of the environment and support improved environmental decision-making.

EPA examined data sources from other agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to develop a national picture of environmental health, and found there is a lack of key environmental data to support the creation of a comprehensive national environmental picture. EPA has determined that more research and data collection must be done in order to give a truly accurate national environmental assessment. The report, however, does allow for an assessment of national environmental health based on information currently available. It lists a number of positive achievements, but each carries a caveat.

The EPA report shows improvements in air quality, emissions, air toxics and water quality, but...

For example, the report concludes that the nation's air is cleaner than it was 30 years ago. And this despite the fact that the U.S. Gross Domestic Product has increased 161 percent and energy consumption 42 percent during that time, increases that one would normally expect would be tied to environmental degradation because of the associated environmental costs of manufacturing. Despite this progress, challenges remain in attaining health-based standards for ozone and particulate air pollutants, and EPA says more studies must be made to accurately determine air quality needs on a national level.

According to the report, outdoor air emissions of the six principal air pollutants have decreased by nearly 25 percent in the last 30 years. However, many people still live in areas of the country that do not meet the health-based standards for certain air pollutants. Such areas are deemed to be "out of attainment". For example, more than 133 million people live in areas where monitored air quality was unhealthy because of at least one air pollutant.

Further, the report finds that under national toxics inventory preliminary assessments, air toxics emissions have decreased 24 percent from baseline levels in 1990. However, the air toxics survey is but one indicator of outdoor emissions and does not provide a complete national picture of air health. The report states that tools and data for assessing the impacts of air toxics must be improved to get more accurate assessments.

Also according to the report, the U.S. has made significant national level progress in protecting water resources in the past 30 years. While there is a wide body of information regarding the nation's waters at the regional, state, tribal, and local levels, there is again a lack of a coherent national picture of water quality. The report states the nation's estuaries are in fair to poor condition in the Northeast, the Gulf, and the Great Lakes regions. Annual wetland losses have decreased from 500,000 acres a year 30 years ago to about 100,000 acres annually.

One U.S. waterways issue that is of global scale is the health of fisheries. Fish consumption advisories have increased in recent years thereby limiting the catching and consumption of fish because of health concerns in the waters in which they swim. An estimated 14 percent of river miles, 28 percent of lake acreage and 100 percent of the Great Lakes were under fish consumption advisories for at least some portion of 2001, due to the leaching of PCB's and other hazardous materials into the waterways. Beach closings have increased, although the report states this is reflective of more consistent monitoring and reporting rather than an increase in dangerous materials in the water.

According to the report, the nation's rich land resources must be managed and protected so as to not overwork limited assets. Protecting land resources ensures that lands can meet societal, health, and ecosystem demands. EPA land protection activities focus on prevention, management, control, and cleanup.

According to the report, the industrial release of toxic chemicals has declined 48 percent, a drop of 409 million pounds, since 1988. The Toxics Release Inventory tracks the release of more than 650 chemicals and is a leading indicator of chemical exposure.

For an online copy of the full report please go to: http://www.epa.gov/indicators/roe/html/roeTOC.htm. The report is being released as a draft to stimulate input into developing and improving environmental indicators on a national level. Anyone wishing to provide feedback should visit the EPA at http://www.epa.gov/indicators/.

Transportation Costs and the Family Budget

— Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

A new survey of 28 metropolitan areas reveals a higher than expected impact of transportation costs on household budgets. Specifically, the survey finds that cities that rely primarily on roads for transportation and feature a sprawling, auto-dependent pattern of development increase the cost of getting around to the point where transportation often consumes a larger share of the household budget than any other item.

In fact, according to the report, *"Transportation Costs and the American Dream: Why a Lack of Transportation Choices Strains the Family Budget and Hinders Home Ownership"*, transportation costs are eating up more than 20 percent of household budgets in such metropolitan areas.

And, transportation costs have been taking an increasingly large bite out of family budgets, up from 14 percent in 1960 to 19.3 in 2001 – or $7,633 a year for the average household, according to the report.

The report, released by the Surface Transportation Policy Project, ranked Tampa, Florida the highest-cost metro, with an average of 24.6 percent of every household dollar spent on transportation. That, according to the report, translated to $9,292 a year for transportation for the average Tampa household, $1,659 more than the national average. Ranked last is the densely populated, transit-friendly New York City metropolitan area, where the average family spent $7,295 or 15.1 percent of its household budget on transportation.

Out of 28 metropolitan areas, Pittsburgh ranks eighth on the list. The average Pittsburgh family spent $7,715 a year, or 19.9 percent of its household budget, on transportation. The Philadelphia metropolitan area came in 20th nationally, with the average family spending $6,606 a year, equal to 17.1 percent of the family budget. Combined, families in Pittsburgh spend almost half (49.3 percent) of the total family budget on transportation and housing costs, while Philadelphians spend almost 53 percent of the family budget on these items.

Overall, the cost of buying a car accounted for about half of an average family's transportation spending, while gas, insurance, maintenance, vehicle license fees and finance charges made up most of the rest, according to the report. Spending on mass-transit amounted to a picayune 1.6 percent.

The report shows that most American families spend more on transportation than on health care, education, or food. Food and health care combined do not amount to the cash bite transportation consumes. Only housing takes a bigger piece of the family budget (32.9 percent), according to the report.

For households in the lower income brackets, the high cost of transportation may be putting home ownership out of reach. The report states that the nation's poorest families are especially hard hit, spending more than 40 percent of their take home pay on transportation. It concludes that high transportation expenses can hurt family finances by shifting money away from productive investments, such as home ownership, and toward an asset that actually loses value over time.

The report shows that most American families spend more on transportation than on health care, education, or food.

The report outlines recommendations to bring both sprawl and transportation costs into check. Among them are shifting priorities away from highway spending and instead increasing funding to mass-transit projects.

The report also recommends strategies such as incorporating social services into public transportation centers, and rewarding families that locate near transit with more home buying power through Location Efficient Mortgages (LEM). For example, in Los Angeles, LEMs allow people to qualify for larger loan amounts if they choose a home in a densely populated community well served by public transit, and where destinations are located close together so they can also walk and bike instead of driving everywhere.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project is a diverse, nationwide coalition devoted to improving the nation's transportation system. The report uses data from the Consumer Expenditure Survey, produced annually by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The report is available online at: http://www.transact.org/library/decoder/american_dream.pdf.

Report Indicates Progress of Toxics Reduction in Great Lakes Basin

— Jason H. Gross, Research Analyst

A report entitled *"Great Lakes Bi-national Toxics Strategy"* presents a comprehensive summary of activities that were accomplished under the Great Lakes Bi-national Toxics Strategy (GLBTS) Program for 2002. The report concentrates on reporting on the progress of specific substance workgroups who have worked on reducing the quantity of particularly harmful substances in the Great Lakes Basin. The GLBTS represents a recent cooperative partnership between Canada and the United States, seeking to protect and sustain the overall health and integrity of the Great Lakes Basin ecosystem.

The structure and the history of the program that gave rise to the report is important because it provides a template for designing an effective network of conservation agencies and groups. After recognizing the joint interest and vital importance of the natural freshwater system of the Great Lakes Basin, Canada and the United States signed the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement which established a joint, bi-national commitment by the governments of both countries to work together to restore and maintain the basin's chemical, physical, and biological integrity. The agreement was amended in 1978 to virtually eliminate persistent toxic substances in the lakes. The agreement was modified again in 1987 to identify and eliminate critical pollutants that present a threat to human and ecosystem health.

The present GLBTS was developed to respond to the 1994 report on Great Lakes Water Quality. At that time both governments concentrated efforts to adopt a specific and coordinated strategy with a common set of objectives and procedures for action to stop the input of persistent toxic substances into the Great Lakes environment. The GLBTS is co chaired by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Environment Canada. It includes active participation of many stakeholders and non-governmental organizations as well as state and local governments.

The aims of the GLBTS are as follows:

— assess effectiveness of existing programs to address toxic substance sources;

— identify cost-effective options to further reduce inputs of toxic substances; and

— implement actions to work toward the goal of virtual elimination of toxic substances from the water basin.

The report looks specifically at mercury and PCBs. According to the report, U.S. mercury emissions decreased approximately 25 percent between 1990 and 1996. The reduction occurred as a result of regulatory controls on emissions, which eliminated the incineration of medical and municipal wastes. According to the report, another source of the decline of mercury emissions is a more than 50 percent reduction in its use between 1995 and 2001. The primary source of this decrease is from the chlor-alkali industry that accounted for 35 percent of mercury use in 1995. Another source of reduced mercury in the basin is from the "Merc Switch-Out Program", which recovers mercury switches from end-of-life vehicles. The process is tedious, but the program has taken out of circulation a major source of the basin's mercury contamination. The next step is to focus attention on the contamination of metal scrap by mercury-containing devices.

Another major contaminant of the Great Lakes Basin is Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). According to the report, as of April 2002 approximately 84% of high-level PCB wastes have been destroyed, with more than 1000 tons being destroyed over the past year alone. The reduction of PCBs has primarily occurred because PCB equipment is difficult and expensive to replace. As a result, as the equipment that employs PCBs grows old it is replaced with non-PCB equipment. PCBs were primarily contained in manufacturing and other equipment that contained PCB transformers and capacitors. As reductions continue, the EPA will continue to develop ways to evaluate and track progress in the reduction of other PCB-containing components. Future PCB reducing efforts will center on partnerships with companies to voluntarily reduce PCB transformer and capacitor usage in their equipment. Another tool that will be used is to post on the web information that can facilitate removal of PCB equipment. Included will be photographs of electrical equipment, fact sheets, and case studies, identifying reasons to remove PCBs.

A copy of the full report can be found online at http://www.binational.net\bns\2002.

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

✔ **Monday, October 27, 12 noon, Hearing Room 1, Ground Floor, North Office Building, Capitol complex, Harrisburg, PA - Environmental Issues Forum.** The special guest speaker will be Robert B. McKinstry, Jr., the Maurice K. Goddard Professor of Forestry and Environmental Resources Conservation at Penn State University (the "Goddard Chair"). Professor McKinstry will discuss the report he and a 25-member committee prepared which offers recommendations to the Rendell Administration on environmental and natural resources priorities.

✔ **Monday, November 17, 12 noon, Hearing Room 1, Ground Floor, North Office Building, Capitol complex, Harrisburg, PA - Environmental Issues Forum.** Members of the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) will provide a progress report on the updating of Pennsylvania's state Recreation Plan.

✔ **Tuesday, December 9, 8:30 a.m., Hearing Room 1, Ground Floor, North Office Building, Capitol complex, Harrisburg, PA - Environmental Issues Forum.** John Rich, Jr. of Waste Management and Processors, Inc. (WMPI) of Gilberton, PA will tell the story of his firm's cutting edge technology project to produce clean-burning diesel fuel from coal wastes. The federal and state government have helped "fuel" this unique project, in which WMPI is working with Sasol, a South African firm, and other national/international firms.

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

It is exciting when one finds evidence that hoped for improvements in Pennsylvania are occurring. It's even more exciting when other parts of the nation discover them. In the summer of 2001, the Joint Conservation Committee visited Pennsylvania's Heritage Parks, both to see what was happening there and to help spread the word about the good things Heritage Parks are doing.

One of the regions the committee visited was the Endless Mountains (a panorama of which is seen in the accompanying photo). The committee stopped in downtown Tunkhannock to see an old (1936 vintage) movie theater that was being refurbished and returned to the community in hopes of becoming an employer, an arts and entertainment center and a focal point for Tunkhannock's downtown.

Well, Tunkhannock's Dietrich Theater has come a long way and the nation has now taken note. The *Christian Science Monitor* recently featured the theater and its role in reviving Tunkhannock's downtown area, in creating jobs and in providing regional educational and recreational opportunities. Read about a heritage region success story by visiting http://www.csmonitor.com/2003/0829/p19s01-almo.html. We think you'll enjoy it, and we're anxious to go back.

To read Pennsylvania's forest management plan, visit the DCNR website at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/sfrmp/index.htm

Both DCNR and ANF have been holding a series of public meetings over the summer and early fall – and longer - to gather input and fine-tune plans. In the case of the state plan, these are the final steps in a multi-year process.

The new state plan seeks to implement management practices based on the 1995 strategic plan of ecosystem management entitled *"Penn's Woods – Sustaining Our Forests."* Please take the opportunity to review the plan on DCNR's website at www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/sfrmp/index.htm.

To learn more about the Allegheny National Forest and its plan update, visit its website at www.fs.fed.us/r9/allegheny.

Also, at its most recent meeting, the task force heard from Dr. Bruce Lord, a senior research assistant with the Penn State School of Forest Resources. Dr. Lord specializes in the impacts of forestlands upon rural economies. He spoke about the economic impact of forests and timber, focusing more specifically on hardwood timber, public timber and forest recreation.

The meeting topics dovetailed with House Resolution 256, which establishes the latest research topics for the task force. Under the resolution, in this legislative session the task force will focus on:

— forest planning and management on federal and state lands, including impacts on timber supply, amount of timber yield and the economic effects on industry and private forestlands;
— recreational opportunities in state parks and forests;
— promoting timber management of private forests to landowners;
— government and non-governmental acquisition of forestland; and
— forest bioreserves and the ecological and economic implications of this land planning concept.

To read the most recent reports (2003, 2001) issued by the forestry task force, visit the Joint Conservation Committee's website at http://jcc.legis.state.pa.us/reports.htm. Copies of earlier reports are available by contacting the office at 717-787-7570.

Our forests are among our most valuable resources for a variety of reasons, be it as a job creating industry, habitat for flora and fauna, a source of recreation opportunities, or a protector of watersheds. The work of forestry professionals is invaluable, and the task force seeks to assist in their efforts to sustain our forest resources and manage these assets.

Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee

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