

ENVIRONMENTAL SYNOPSIS

The Chairman's Corner

Rep. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chairman



The Joint Conservation Committee (JCC) recently released its 2005 Forestry Task Force report, issued pursuant to House Resolution 256 of 2003. At the invitation of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, the JCC's Executive Director Craig Brooks also recently delivered a summary of the task force report in testimony before the standing committee.

The Forestry Task Force has been a constant part of the JCC for many years. It was first formed in 1994, pursuant to House Resolution 263. The resolution itself was introduced after three statewide public hearings by the JCC into forestry issues in Pennsylvania, and formation of a task force was a direct recommendation of the JCC. Since its inception in 1994, the task force has been re-formed and continued its work through a series of legislative resolutions enacted in succeeding legislative sessions.

The task force is composed of two members of the House and two members of the Senate, as well as myself as JCC chairman, and works together with a diverse 16-member advisory committee. The advisory committee presently includes representatives of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) Bureau of Forestry, the PA Game Commission, U.S. Forest Service, Penn State's School of Forest Resources and Cooperative Extension Service, members from the forest products industry, from conservation, education and environmental organizations, and other members deemed appropriate by the task force itself.

The task force and advisory committee meet on a quarterly basis. The group takes testimony and holds discussion on the issues prescribed in the legislative resolution as the starting point toward our eventual biennial report. When these issues are sufficiently

addressed, the report is drafted and recommendations listed which are reviewed by the task force, and when completed, forwarded to the members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly.

In defining the task force's mission, the task force has concerned itself with forest management, renewal and sustainability since its inception. The task force has adopted the perspective that forests are an important part of Pennsylvania's future, and that we need to study and nurture the future of Pennsylvania's forests. The task force has also long recognized that Pennsylvania's forests are many things to many people, and that forest use need not be exclusive but rather multi-purpose in nature and scope.

The 2005 report continues the task force's record of in-depth study of forestry issues and deals with five basic issues. They are:

- forest planning and management on federal and state lands;
- recreational opportunities in state parks and forests;

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NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

CRAIG D. BROOKS, DIRECTOR

It's been the mantra for months... "The cost of gasoline is going up everyday"... While the hike in the price of unleaded gasoline has shocked and frustrated most motorists, certain other people are not as bothered by the increases. Who are they?

They are the ones who have taken matters into their own hands. From initiating special gas programs to driving electrical powered vehicles, some individuals, communities and states are trying to ease the pain of rising gasoline prices and limit their demand for gas.

The gasoline-electric hybrid vehicles have become a popular solution because many hybrids average 20 to 30 miles per gallon more than standard vehicles. For the first time since its commercial

debut in Japan eight years ago, the hybrid car is in the fast lane of public consciousness. But whether the awareness translates into any sort of meaningful consumption remains to be seen.

Hybrid technology involves a combination of a gasoline-powered combustion engine paired with an electric motor. The two systems function as a tag team based on road and environmental conditions. On a straightaway, where less fuel is needed to make the car move, the gas engine will take over. On an incline or other terrain where more power is needed, the electric motor will kick in.

Unlike other forms of alternative vehicles, including those powered solely by electricity, ethanol or natural gas, the gas-electric hybrids require no special fueling stations or recharging devices. And unlike their early counterparts, hybrids today are designed and available with many options that a

conventional car would feature. However, the price of a new hybrid can be anywhere from \$2,000 to \$6,000 more than their gasoline counterparts.

That's not stopping some from moving forward though. A bill to require New York City to approve one or more models of hybrid electric vehicles for use as taxicabs was passed this summer by the NY city council. The bill, which was approved overwhelmingly on a 50-0 vote, calls for the city Taxi and Limousine Commission to act on the required vehicle approvals within 90 days of enactment.

The typical New York taxi, a Ford Crown Victoria, is rated at 18 miles per gallon for city driving, versus 36 miles per gallon for the Ford Escape hybrid and 33 miles per gallon for

the Toyota Highlander. Eligible vehicles would be commercially available, mass-production models manufactured with a combination of combustion engine and electric propulsion systems. The bill was part of an overall legislative proposal to convert the city's entire fleet to clean-burning, alternative fueled vehicles. For those vehicles meeting the required specification, a "medallion" is fixed to a taxi's body to signify city approval.

The bill's passage has been hailed by the Coalition for Smart Transportation, an environmental group made up of organizations including the American Lung Association, Natural Resources Defense Council, the New York League of Conservation Voters and the Sierra Club. For those familiar with New York City, the coalition says that taxis make up 30 percent of all Manhattan traffic below 96th Street, and that polling has shown strong support for the hybrid cabs.

Hybrid cabs in New York City...the start of a new trend?
How do we move from awareness to meaningful consumption?

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.

Iowa, North Carolina are Top Users of Antibiotic in Livestock Feed

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

According to a report by Environmental Defense, Pennsylvania is ranked 19th among states in the estimated use of antibiotics as feed additives for chickens, hogs and beef cattle. The report, "Resistant Bugs and Antibiotic Drugs: Local Estimates of Antibiotics in Agricultural Feed and Animal Waste", is the first study to provide state and county level estimates of the quantities of antibiotics used as feed additives for chicken, hogs and beef cattle, along with estimates for antibiotics in animal waste.

The report contends that overuse of antibiotics in agriculture is widely regarded as contributing to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threaten human health.

The report also states that antibiotics are added to feed not to treat sick animals, but rather to promote slightly faster growth or prevent disease that could result from the crowded, stressful indoor conditions under which most modern poultry and livestock production takes place. More than half of all antibiotics used as feed additives are considered "medically important" – that is, identical or nearly identical to those used to treat sick humans.

The report estimates that almost all (90 percent) of the 26.5 million pounds of antibiotics estimated to be used in the United States as feed additives each year occur in 23 states (mainly in the Mid-Atlantic and the South) and are seven times the amount used each year in human medicine nationwide.

North Carolina and Iowa are each estimated to use three million pounds of antibiotics as feed additives annually, the same quantity of antibiotics estimated to be used each year in human medicine nationwide. At least one million pounds of antibiotics are estimated to be used as feed additives annually in seven other states: Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, Alabama, Minnesota, Mississippi and Missouri. At over 431,000 pounds per year, Pennsylvania ranks 19th in the country in its estimated yearly use of all antibiotics as feed additives.

Use of antibiotic feed additives is highly concentrated

in a few counties. Duplin and Sampson counties in eastern North Carolina are the top two counties in the United States for estimated annual antibiotic feed use, at about 450,000 pounds and 400,000 pounds respectively. Lancaster County in Pennsylvania is ranked 15th nationwide with over 138,000 pounds.

On a per square mile-adjusted basis, Delaware is estimated to be by far the most intensive user of all antibiotic feed additives, using three times as many antibiotics per thousand square miles (187,000 pounds) as the next closest state, North Carolina (64,000 pounds). Two other smaller states join the ranks of the top 10 states on a per square mile basis, Maryland (4th) and Indiana (9th).

Overuse of antibiotics in agriculture is widely regarded as contributing to the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria that threaten human health

The Environmental Defense report cautioned that the figures were only estimates. The estimates were based on the best publicly available data from the United States Department of Agriculture on numbers of animals per county, and multiplying those figures by estimates previously developed by the Union of Concerned Scientists on the quantity of feed-additive antibiotics consumed per animal. The Union of Concerned Scientists presented national estimates, but not state or county estimates.

The report recommends enactment of federal legislation to phase out use of medically important antibiotics as feed additives.

According to its website, Environmental Defense is a leading national nonprofit organization representing more than 400,000 members dedicated to protecting the environmental rights of all people.

The Environmental Defense report, "Resistant Bugs and Antibiotic Drugs: Local Estimates of Antibiotics in Agricultural Feed and Animal Waste", is available on the Internet at: http://www.environmentaldefense.org/documents/4301_AgEstimates.pdf.

Special Fuel Blends Help Improve Air Quality But Constrict Supply

– Craig D. Brooks, Executive Director

For the past 15 years, a wide variety of studies by EPA and others have concluded that changes to properties in gasoline can substantially reduce emissions from automobiles. Special gasoline blends can reduce volatile organic compounds (VOC's) but typically show greater promise in reducing nitrogen oxide (NOx), carbon monoxide (CO) and toxins. This has been particularly attractive to states because it offers immediate reductions as they attempt to achieve federal Clean Air Act emission standards.

According to a Government Accounting Office (GAO) report, state and federal requirements for special gasoline blends help improve air quality in some areas but also increase prices. Because of this, the report recommends more study by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on air quality and the price impacts of special blends to help guide congressional action on reformulated gasoline requirements.

GAO found that before Congress takes any action to reduce gasoline blends, EPA needs to comprehensively study emissions from modern vehicles and fuels, and estimate the air quality benefits of using special blends.

Special gasoline blends help improve air quality in some areas but also increase the price and hinder supply

To help urban areas comply with the federal air quality standards for ozone, the Clean Air Act and state programs include requirements for reformulated gasoline. The act includes a mandate for blending gasoline with corn-based ethanol in many areas. Several states have programs to require special fuel blends to reduce emissions of VOC's and nitrogen oxides from automobiles to help some achieve those ozone requirements.

Although there is no consensus on the total number of special gasoline blends available in the United States, GAO found that in addition to conventional gasoline, at least 11 fundamentally distinct special blends were used during the summer of 2004 in parts of 34 states. The report found that the use of these special blends reduced vehicle emissions by varying degrees.

Models show that blends required in California (California Cleaner Burning Gasoline or CBG) reduce VOC emis-

sions by 25 percent to 29 percent and nitrogen oxides by about 6 percent. In contrast, the most commonly used fuel blend, which is used in the Gulf Coast Region, is estimated to reduce VOC emissions by about 12 to 16 percent, and nitrogen oxides by about 1 percent.

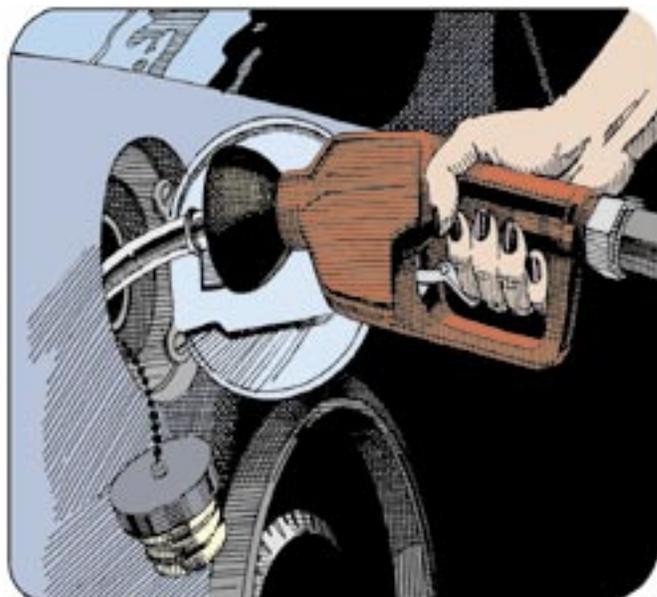
According to the report, the use of special gasoline blends has made it more difficult to supply gasoline and has raised costs, significantly affecting operations at refineries, pipelines and storage terminals. Producing these blends may require significant capital investments at refineries.

Once produced, different blends must be kept separate as well. It is also more difficult to ship the special blends through pipelines, meaning fuel shortages in some areas may not be filled as easily.

GAO evaluated pretax wholesale gasoline prices for 100 cities and generally observed that the highest priced fuels tend to be found in cities that use special blends not widely available in the region, or that cost more than other blends to make. There was general consensus that increased complexity of the blend and the cost associated with supplying the fuel contributed to higher gasoline prices. The lowest prices were found in cities close to major refining centers or those using gasoline widely available in that region.

In addition to recommending that EPA study how special blends affect emissions from late-model vehicles and the air quality benefits from using blends, the report also recommends that EPA work with the Department of Energy and private sector stakeholders to develop a plan to balance the supply and price of fuel blends.

The GAO report, "Special Gasoline Blends Reduce Emissions and Improve Air Quality, but Complicate Supply and Contribute to Higher Prices" (GAO-05-421), is available at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05421.pdf>.



Lead Hazards in the Workplace: Occupational Exposure to Lead in Maine

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

The hazardous substance lead was banned from house paint in 1978, U.S. food canners quit using lead solder in 1991, and a 25-year phase-out of lead in gasoline reached its goal in 1995. Since the elimination of leaded paint and gasoline, and the removal of lead from solder in canned food containers, adult lead exposures tend to be limited to certain occupational sources.

According to a report by the Environmental Health Strategy Center, lead poisoning is a serious problem affecting industrial workers and hobbyists across the state of Maine. The report, “Known Hazard; Unrecognized Danger: Lead Exposure in Maine’s Workforce”, suggests that lead poisoning often results from a lack of awareness of lead hazards, even in industries where lead had been recognized as a problem for years. The report, compiled from data on employment and occupational health, identifies industries and occupations in which workers have increased risk for lead exposure. The lists are based on state and federal data on employment and occupational health.

Lead poisoning is the oldest known occupational health threat, yet preventable lead hazards persist. Lead workers are traditionally thought to be those working in mining, smelting and refining industries, or in the manufacture of lead products such as lead acid batteries. However, there is a large number of occupations outside these industries that either use materials containing lead or can disturb existing lead hazards in older buildings or industrial sites.

Employees working in a variety of occupational settings may be exposed to lead hazards. According to the report, in 2003, more than 37,000 jobs in Maine were in occupations that often bring workers into contact with known lead hazards. These workers include 5,830 carpenters; 5,290 maintenance and repair workers; 3,620 auto mechanics; 3,300 construction laborers; 3,150 electricians; 2,330 construction supervisors; 2,240 machinists; 2,060 police officers; 1,850 plumbers, pipe fitters and steamfitters; and 1,840 painters, among others.

Exposure to lead hazards occurs regularly in industries that employ more than 50,000 Maine workers. The report identifies nine specific industries with a high risk of lead exposure: building and construction (22,310 jobs); ship and boat building and repair (11,798); police protection (4,022); repair and maintenance (3,011); metal product and machinery manufacturing (2,439); waste management (1,856); plastics and minerals (1,841); furniture and miscellaneous manufacturing (1,476) and electronic and electrical equipment manufacturing (1,073).

The report suggests there are likely to be additional persons experiencing or at risk for occupational lead poisoning in Maine. For example, the largest single group of at-risk workers excluded from these numbers is that of self-employed painters. These persons may not be experiencing symptoms, may have symptoms for which they have yet to seek medical advice, or may have escaped recognition by health care providers who overlook this diagnosis.

Lead in the workplace is measured by air and surface sampling. Airborne lead can be a fume (small solid particles, formed by the condensation of vapors or solid materials) or a dust (small solid particles, created by the breaking-up of larger particles). Workers are usually exposed to lead by inhalation (breathing dust or fumes). Workers can also be exposed by ingestion (getting lead inside the mouth by eating, drinking or smoking with dust on their hands, face and clothes).

Lead exposure continues despite progress in eradicating occupational health hazards...and often in unexpected industries and occupations

Serious health problems result from occupational lead exposure. Occupational exposure to lead can damage the central nervous system, heart, blood, kidneys and cause reproductive harm. Lead is a persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemical. It builds up in the human body, especially in bone, and does not readily break down. This creates a lifetime of risk from exposure.

Despite the high number of Maine workers at risk, very few are screened for lead exposure. Limited surveillance coordinated by the Maine Bureau of Health shows that the workers with the greatest documented exposure to lead include painters (43 percent of elevated blood levels), contractors/construction workers (13 percent), hobbyists (13 percent), radiator repair workers (eight percent) and lead abatement workers (six percent).

The report recommends Maine take a more protective strategy for reducing lead hazards and preventing occupational lead exposure including:

- Establish ongoing funding for educational outreach to prevent occupational lead exposure.
- Eliminate lead hazards for construction workers through a significant increase in funding for lead paint cleanup.
- Identify and promote safer alternatives to the lead-based products that remain in use.
- Improve and enhance existing state and federal lead hazard prevention programs.

The report, “Known Hazard; Unrecognized Danger: Lead Exposure in Maine’s Workforce”, is available on the Internet at: <http://www.preventharm.org/downloads/Lead%20Report%20Final%20Web.doc>.

Municipal Solid Waste Management: 40 Years of Progress

– Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) consists of everyday items such as product packaging, grass clippings, furniture, clothing, bottles, food scraps, newspapers, appliances, paints and batteries. A report by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) summarizes data on the generation and disposal of waste in the United States. The report tracks trends in the nation's MSW stream – tracing data collected from 1960 through 2003, the agency's most recent figures.

According to the EPA report, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2003", over the last few decades, the generation, recycling and disposal of MSW has changed substantially.

For example, MSW generation almost tripled, from 88 million tons per year in 1960 to over 236 million tons per year in 2003. Per person, Americans are generating more waste than 40 years ago. In 1960, the generation rate was just 2.7 pounds per person per day, it grew to 3.7 pounds in 1980 and reached 4.5 pounds in 1990. It has fluctuated around 4.5 in the ensuing 13 years.

Since 1990, the EPA indicated, the amount of MSW being sent to landfills has decreased by nine million tons, from 140 million tons to 131 million tons in 2003.

In addition, the report said, the number of landfills has dropped significantly, from 7,924 landfills in 1988, to 1,767 landfills in 2002, a nearly 78 percent decrease. On the other hand, the report said, average landfill size has increased.

Per person, Americans are generating more waste today than 40 years ago

Over time, the recycling rates have increased from ten percent in 1980 to 16 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2003. The rate of MSW recovered for recycling has increased, rising to more than 55 million tons in 2003, about a three percent increase over 2002, according to the report. Composting totaled another 17 million tons, bringing the total MSW diverted from disposal in 2003 to more than 72 million tons.

Wastes that were not recovered by recycling or composting were incinerated or went to landfills. According to the report, in 2003, about 33 million tons (14 percent) were combusted, and 131 million tons (55 percent) went to landfills or were otherwise disposed of.

Sources of MSW included both residential and commercial locations. The EPA estimated the amount of residential waste, including waste from apartment houses, at up to 65

percent of the total generated in 2003, while the remainder came from schools and commercial locations. The rates do not include industrial, hazardous, or construction waste.

According to the EPA, organic materials continue to be the largest MSW components, with paper products accounting for 35 percent, the largest share of the waste stream. Yard trimmings and food scraps account for about 24 percent.

The EPA also breaks down the recycling rates for MSW materials by commodity. Yard trimmings, paper products, and metal products achieved the highest recovery rates in 2003. About 56 percent of yard trimmings, or about 16 million tons, were composted, representing a fourfold increase since 1990. About 48 percent of paper and paperboard were recycled; and nearly seven million tons, or about 36 percent, of metals, were recycled, the report said.

The EPA said lead-acid batteries were among the most recovered products in 2003, with a recycling rate of 93 percent. Steel from major appliances also reached a high recovery rate – 90 percent. Other products with high recovery rates cited in the report were: corrugated boxes, 71 percent; newspapers, about 82 percent; steel cans, 60 percent; and aluminum beverage cans, about 44 percent.

Another trend worth noting is the rate of electronic waste recycling. About ten percent of certain consumer electronics, including computers, televisions, stereos, and cell phones were recycled, the report said.

The EPA report is the latest publication in a series of publications describing the national waste stream based on data collected from 1960 through 2003. The historical perspective provided by the data is useful for establishing trends in types of MSW generated and in the ways that MSW is managed.

The EPA's report, "Municipal Solid Waste Generation, Recycling, and Disposal in the United States: Facts and Figures for 2003" and related additional data are available on the Internet at: <http://www.epa.gov/msw/pubs/msw05rpt.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



✓ **Tuesday, October 4 and Wednesday, October 5, Radisson Penn Harris Hotel & Convention Center, Camp Hill – Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful Roadside Aesthetics 2005 Summit and Workshop.** JCC Chairman Rep. Scott Hutchinson will offer welcoming remarks. Learn more about a strategic approach to roadside aesthetics in PA through plenary and breakout sessions. State legislators may call the committee office at (717) 787-7570 to register. Others may call Keep PA Beautiful at 717-214-7901 or register online at www.keeppabeautiful.org.

✓ **Monday, October 24, 12 noon, Room 205, Matthew J. Ryan Building, Capitol Complex, Harrisburg – Environmental Issues Forum.** PA Recreation and Park Society (PRPS) President Lee Bryan will join Cindy Dunn, director of the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation, and Vanyla Tierney, chief of Greenways and Rivers Partnerships, both of the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to make a presentation on the implementation of the Pennsylvania Recreation Plan.

✓ **Monday, November 14, 12 noon, Room 205, Matthew J. Ryan Building, Capitol Complex, Harrisburg – Environmental Issues Forum.** Audubon Pennsylvania's Paul Zeph, director of the Kittatinny Ridge Project, will describe the project and introduce Audubon's statewide Important Bird Area Program. The Kittatinny Ridge is the largest forest area in central and southeast PA, the state's largest Important Bird Area, and a key recreation corridor and source of drinking water.

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 COMMITTEE MEMORABLE EVENTS

The Joint Committee recently hosted the principals of a Philadelphia firm called RecycleBank, which is conducting a pilot recycling incentive program in the city to seek to spur participation in recycling.

In the photo at right, RecycleBank President Patrick Fitzgerald describes the program, which provides coupons from local and national retailers and service providers to those who recycle. The coupons can then be redeemed by consumers for products and services. Participants receive coded recycling containers and the amount of recycled material is read electronically when the items to be recycled are picked up. The pilot program is proving to be successful in Philadelphia,

which historically has a poor recycling rate, and RecycleBank is looking to expand its program.

In the photo at left, Fitzgerald (center) poses with JCC Chairman Rep. Scott Hutchinson (left) and Vice-chairman Sen. Raphael Musto (right).



- promotion of timber management to private landowners;
- government and non-governmental organization (NGO) acquisition of forestland; and
- forest bioreserves.

Much of the discussion of forest planning and management on federal and state lands dealt with DCNR's new State Forest Resource Management Plan, adopted in 2003. In regard to this issue, the task force made several recommendations to the Bureau of Forestry, including urging assurance of public involvement and interaction in management planning activities, providing for coordination with the Game Commission on deer herd management to restore forest regeneration, renewing its commitment to the forestland use planning process by clarifying land use objectives and the planning framework, and coordinating with other state and federal agencies on related management issues.

The task force noted an ever-increasing usage of forests for recreation and recommended that the Bureau of Forestry provide additional field staff for public contact throughout the state forest system, implement recreational programs and activities and provide a clearinghouse for recreation information, promote outdoor recreation and outdoor learning activities, and develop partnerships with both private and public entities to coordinate, develop and promote such opportunities.

The full 2005 Forestry Task Force Report is available on the JCC website at <http://www.jcc.legis.state.pa.us>. Or call the committee office at 717-787-7570 for a copy.

Over two-thirds of the state's forestlands (12.5 million acres) are privately owned, and about 90 percent of the raw material needs of the timber and forest products industry are met by private forests. The task force encouraged improved incentives to increase needed harvest for private landowners who pledge to maintain and manage their working forests, utilizing voluntary programs like the existing Forest Stewardship Program. In addition, the task force recommended more education and outreach for landowners regarding sustainable forest management, further study of the impact of Timberland Investment Management Organizations (TIMO's) on Pennsylvania forests, and study of the impact of state and federal tax policies -- specifically estate taxes -- on private forest landowners.

The task force noted that currently, state and private land acquisition activities are not guided by any established long-term plan or strategy, and the task force communicated to DCNR some concern about continued acquisitions without such a plan. Accordingly, the task force's first recommendation regarding government and NGO acquisitions is that a strategic plan for acquisition be formulated. In addition, other recommendations include targeting funding for easements and forest management activities on lands that produce a sustainable timber supply, evaluating state grant strategies regarding NGO purchases to ensure emphasis on sustainable management, evaluating the impact of conservation easements which are not for perpetuity but may be for specific time periods -- i.e., 25-year escape clauses -- and studying the impact of local government purchases on forestland management, conservation and the local tax base.

Because the concept of bioreserves is a promising but largely untested approach to conserving biodiversity for perpetuity, the task force recommended that the amount of state forestland dedicated to bioreserve zoning be limited, and that the bioreserves system not preclude forest management activity from consideration, ensures that bioreserves adequately represent species and community types, develops an adjoining lands strategy with adjacent landowners to encourage participation in voluntary conservation of biodiversity, allows some movement of plants and animals between core areas, and ensures public involvement and review.

The work of the forestry task force is important because forestland and the forest products industry continue to be key parts of Pennsylvania's economy, environment and recreation. Forests cover about 16.7 million acres in Pennsylvania, about 58 percent of our total land area. According to the Pennsylvania Forest Products Association, the forest products industry has combined sales of \$15 billion annually and an overall economic impact estimated at \$25 billion. More than 3,000 forest product manufacturing establishments employ more than 88,000 individuals. As you can see, the need for and importance of the task force's duties have perhaps never been greater, and Senate Resolution 137 has already been introduced to continue the task force's work.

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