

Joint Legislative  
Air and Water  
Pollution Control and  
Conservation  
Committee



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## The Chairman's Corner

Rep. Scott E. Hutchinson, Chairman

I am pleased to take pen in hand - or more appropriately PC on lap - and present from me to you the first of a series of articles on a variety of topics, from newsworthy items to committee business.

My predecessor, Rep. Dave Argall, had earlier composed some similar lines, and it seemed to me to be a great opportunity to restore direct and personal communication with the readers from the chairman's perspective. I hope you find the column interesting.

On page 2 you will find Craig Brooks' familiar byline on "Notes From the Director." It is our hope that by combining our efforts with the traditional Research Briefs done by the committee staff, we can provide even more food for thought related to the committee's mission.

The study of forestry and its importance to Pennsylvania, both environmentally and economically, has long been a staple of the Joint Conservation Committee's duties. And now is no exception. Even as one phase of the Forestry Legislative Task Force's continuing investigation into forestry and the forest products industry is completed, another begins. And, I'm pleased to announce that the state's Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a national winner.

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Craig D. Brooks, Director

At what was supposed to be a temporary site, Staten Island's Fresh Kills landfill received its final load of New York's waste this past spring, marking the end of the landfill's controversial 53-year history. But the end of one era is also the beginning of another: one of waste exportation, landfill closing procedures and monitoring. While the landfill is being prepared for permanent closure, New York city has started its "interim" waste management plan which is based on the principle of "self-sufficiency".

The city began implementing its interim plan to divert waste from Fresh Kills by contracting for long distance truck transport of a portion of the city's residential waste in 1997. Contracts for more waste were added in 1998 and 1999, and in February 2001, the remainder of the city's residential waste stream was contracted for disposal, thereby clearing the way for closure of Fresh Kills. This means that 13,000 tons of the city's daily waste is shipped to 15 transfer stations, with its ultimate destination being disposal and incineration facilities in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and New Jersey.

Reports from Pennsylvania municipal waste landfill and waste-to-energy facilities for 2000 indicate that waste disposed in the Commonwealth increased 2.3 million tons from 1999. Residents generated approximately 14.2 million tons of this waste while 12.2 million tons came from out of state. Most of the increase in municipal waste from out of state came from New York and New Jersey.

While not everyone is happy about the export plan initiated by the Fresh Kills closure,

Kathy Dawkins, Deputy Director of Public Information for New York's Sanitation Department has said, "Our position is that garbage is protected by interstate commerce".

Here in Pennsylvania, the governor has called for a moratorium on landfill permits and is pushing for legal tools to enforce road safety and "quality of life standards" for residents affected by trash importation. House Bill 1436 has been introduced to improve two areas of solid waste management: host municipality agreements and the registration of waste hauling trucks. DEP Secretary David Hess, testified recently at a public hearing before the House Environmental

Resources and Energy Committee, and urged the consideration and passage of both state and federal legislation. Until federal legislation is passed, he said, "waste imported into Pennsylvania will continue to increase".

State power to regulate imports of solid waste from other states was curtailed in 1992 after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that banning solid waste imports was an unconstitutional violation of the 10th amendment's Interstate Commerce Clause. Only congress has the power to effect such legislation.

At the federal level, Congressman Jim Greenwood has introduced legislation - HR 1213 - to give states the authority to limit waste imports. The bill would require host community agreements, allow states to limit the amount of out-of-state waste they must accept, and allow states to deny a permit for new waste disposal facilities if no local or regional need exists. This legislation has the support of Pennsylvania's congressional delegation but faces significant opposition from other states.

***"Until federal legislation is passed... 'waste imported into Pennsylvania will continue to increase'."***



# 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.

## Environmental Quality in the United States Continues to Improve

- Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

Contrary to popular belief, environmental quality in the United States has improved dramatically over the past two decades, according to a report by the Pacific Research Institute of Public Policy. The report, *"Index of Leading Environmental Indicators 2001"*, suggests that an examination of national environmental trends dispels the common misconception that environmental quality is deteriorating.

The report presents trends and analysis on the progress of environmental quality in the United States over the last 20 years, and includes the indicators of air quality, water quality, land use, toxics, and energy.

The greatest single environmental success has occurred in air quality. Significant improvements have been made in five of six criteria pollutants regulated under the federal Clean Air Act. Lead, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxides, and particulate matter either have declined or remained steady since 1976. The report cites the biggest reductions in the national averages of sulfur dioxides (65 percent), carbon monoxide (67 percent), and lead (97 percent) from 1976 to 1997.

The report provides further evidence of the United States' environmental improvement in other areas. The primary source for measuring water quality is the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) National Water Quality Inventory (NWQI), a program that summarizes state water quality data. The NWQI assesses rivers, lakes, and estuaries based on five indicators. These indicators include support of aquatic life, fish consumption, swimming, drinking water, and agriculture. In the 1998 NWQI, 65 percent of river and stream miles

were judged to be "fully supporting" or "good" for all five uses (compared to 63 percent in the 1996 NWQI). The proportion of lakes rated as "fully supporting" or "good" comes in at 55 percent (compared to 50 percent in the 1996 NWQI). The 1998 NWQI report shows that less than one percent of rivers and streams and less than one percent of lakes meet "not attainable" criteria that signifies poor water quality.

One of the most controversial environmental issues in recent years is land use. However, despite widespread media attention and public concern about "urban sprawl," the report claims that only five percent of all U.S. land is developed. Pastureland, rural land, forestland, rangeland, cropland, and federal land account for 93 percent of U.S. land today.

Few topics gain more public attention than the supply of energy. This year's report includes a section analyzing energy supplies focusing on the current California energy shortage. The public may perceive California residents as energy guzzlers, but the state is the fourth most energy efficient in the country, behind Hawaii, New York, and Rhode Island. The report suggests that artificial market constraints and a refusal to utilize supplies of fossil fuels have caused California's energy woes.

The report also discusses EPA's annual Toxic Release Inventory (TRI), criticizing it for not being a true measure of toxic chemicals released into the environment. Because the EPA amends the list of chemicals that must be reported from year to year, the data from the TRI must be continuously restated, making it more difficult to discern trends. The TRI also excludes large sources of toxics releases, such as military bases and other government facilities, along with thousands of small businesses. Despite such drawbacks and inconsistencies, the report indicates a 45 percent decrease in releases of chemicals reported to the TRI since 1988.

The report concludes that positive environmen-

tal trends are likely to continue as a result of improving technology, market-based incentives, and local activism, which people tend to rate more highly than government efforts.

A copy of the report, "2001 Index of Leading Environmental Indicators", is available from the Pacific Research Institute for Public Policy, 755 Sansome Street, Suite 450, San Francisco, California 92111, telephone (415) 989-0833. The report is also available on the Institute's website at [www.pacificresearch.org](http://www.pacificresearch.org).

## Wind Power in Pennsylvania on the Rise

- Jason H. Gross, Research Analyst

With increasing demands on electric utilities, as evidenced by the problems in California, we are increasingly aware of the pressures on our electrical supplies. In order to remedy these issues we should become more aware of the possibility of alternative means of generating electricity. The area of renewable resources has long been a staple of electricity production, usually taking the form of dams and hydroelectric generators. Blowing over the horizon is an increasing use of wind-generated power, a clean and viable alternative source of electrical energy.

According to the American Wind Energy Association (AWEA) wind power generates zero-emission power that can adequately contribute to the energy generation needs of Pennsylvanians. Pennsylvania generates the majority of its electricity from coal and other pollution-causing energy sources, with coal-fired power plants accounting for 60 percent of the total electricity produced. According to AWEA, the solution to the pollution problems caused by fossil fuels is to increase the use of zero-emission energy production methods such as wind-generated power.

Pennsylvania is ideal for wind power, according to AWEA, because Pennsylvania has the most advanced customer choice energy program in the country. There are two primary ways of increasing wind-generated power: small scale privately owned wind turbines; and large scale incorporated wind farms. AWEA's studies show that Pennsylvanians already make use of small scale personally owned wind turbines. Many farmers and private landowners save money across the Commonwealth by installing small numbers of turbines on their property. Often these turbines produce enough excess power that the landowner can sell back electricity to the grid at a profit.

AWEA goes on to state that Pennsylvania currently is home to several large-scale wind energy facilities, as well. These facilities create a total of 106 megawatts of power, producing nearly enough electricity for 2,800 homes, and reducing in turn the accumulated effects of air pollution attributable to pollution causing electricity sources. According to AWEA, more than 170 MW of new wind generation is planned for construction in Pennsylvania within the next two years. If wind power can supply 10 percent of Pennsylvania's electricity needs by 2010, says AWEA, greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 15 million tons per year.

In Pennsylvania, what will be the largest wind-powered electricity generation site in the state is currently under development in Fayette County. Community Energy, Inc. will operate the site, which will contribute 15 megawatts to the power grid, enough to power approximately 5,700 homes. Currently the largest wind facility in the Commonwealth is Green Mountain Energy's site in Somerset County, composed of eight turbines, producing a total of 10 megawatts of power.

The main issue that prevents customers from choosing wind-generated power is cost. Early in the history of wind power the cost to consumers of the electricity was as high as 40 cents per kilowatt-hour. That has now dropped to between four cents and seven cents per kilowatt-hour, a more viable option for consumers. As a reference for comparison the current cost of energy from PECO is approximately 5.7 cents per kilowatt-hour.

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**Pennsylvania is ideal for wind power... because it has an advanced customer choice energy program.**

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One added benefit of wind energy is that the source of the energy, the wind itself, remains stable in cost. Even as the cost of coal and petroleum products fluctuates as a factor of supply and demand, wind production generally remains constant. As new technology is developed it becomes cheaper and more efficient to convert wind into usable electricity. As a result, as traditional methods of generating power become more expensive due to diminishing quantities of fuel source, wind power will increase in cost effectiveness.

The Joint Conservation Committee is currently exploring the possibility of visiting a wind farm in Pennsylvania. For further information on wind power and purchasing options contact AWEA at [windmail@awea.org](mailto:windmail@awea.org), utilize their website at [www.awea.org/pennsylvania](http://www.awea.org/pennsylvania), or call (202) 383-2500.

## Energy Production Threatens America's Rivers

- Tony M. Guerrieri, Research Analyst

America's rivers may be the first to feel the effects of the national energy crisis, according to a report by the conservation group American Rivers. The report, "*America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2001*", examines the link between rivers and energy production, paying special attention to the impacts of hydropower, fossil fuel extraction, and fossil fuel combustion.

According to the report, the nation's 2,400 hydroelectric dams cause a disproportionate amount of damage to rivers, even though they generate less than ten percent of the nation's electricity. Dams drown important wildlife habitat under reservoirs, vary downstream flows between a trickle and scouring torrents, and block migratory fish from spawning grounds. For example, conservation groups claim that the system of hydroelectric dams in the Pacific Northwest has reduced the number of returning salmon in the region from about 16 million to less than 300,000.

Meanwhile, millions of acres of land and countless river miles have been scarred by the extraction of fossil fuels through coal mines and oil and gas wells. The report states that acid draining from coal mines in Pennsylvania has poisoned 3,000 miles of streams, costing the state an estimated \$67 million in lost fishing revenue.

Once the fossil fuels are extracted, their combustion causes further problems. According to the report, coal-fired power plants are the largest uncontrolled source of mercury. Burning coal releases mercury into the environment, which is at least partially responsible for fish consumption warnings in 40 states.

Nearly half of the 13 most endangered rivers of 2001 cited by American Rivers made the list due to the impact of hydropower, fossil fuel extraction and pollution from fuel consumption. The complete list of the most endangered rivers, in order of severity, and the principal threats facing them, are:

- ◆ Missouri River - threats to fish and wildlife from the operation of six federal dams;
- ◆ Canning River in Alaska - threatened by oil and gas exploration;
- ◆ Eel River in California - threatened by a two-dam hydropower project;
- ◆ Hudson River in New York - polluted by PCBs manufactured for use in electrical transformers;
- ◆ Powder River in Wyoming - threatened by thousands of proposed natural gas wells;
- ◆ Mississippi River - threatened by proposed flood control projects;
- ◆ Big Sandy River between Kentucky and West Virginia - 75 miles were smothered in millions of gallons of coal sludge;
- ◆ Snoqualmie River in Washington - threatened by urban sprawl and corridor development;
- ◆ Animas River in Colorado and New Mexico - a proposed water supply project threatens endangered species, wetlands, and recreation;
- ◆ Lewis River in Washington state - proposed gravel mine expansion threatens habitat for three species of endangered salmon;
- ◆ Paine Run in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park - slowly succumbing to acid rain;
- ◆ Hackensack River in New York and New Jersey - urban development threatens wetlands and drinking water; and
- ◆ Catawba River in North and South Carolina - urban growth threatens drinking water and wildlife.

To save the rivers, the report recommends increased efforts to use energy efficiently, produce conventional energy responsibly, and expand the supply of energy from clean and renewable sources such as wind power and solar power.

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





The report is the American River's 16<sup>th</sup> annual "report card" on the most endangered rivers in the United States. The report, "*America's Most Endangered Rivers of 2001*", is available from American Rivers, 1025 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 720, Washington, D.C. 20005; telephone: (202) 347-7550. The report is also online at <http://www.americanrivers.org>.

## Scientists Link Climate Change and Rates of Infectious Disease

- Jason H. Gross, Research Analyst

The American Academy of Microbiology recently released a report detailing the interconnection between climate and infectious disease. This issue has particular relevance for Pennsylvanians because of the rising incidence of the vector-borne diseases the West Nile virus and Lyme Disease within the Commonwealth. These two diseases in particular have been linked to increased global temperatures and rainfall changes. The report is titled "*Health, Climate and Infectious Disease: a Global Perspective.*"

You only need know about "flu" season to know that certain diseases are related to weather changes. However, until now the scientific connection between climate and illness has not been fully investigated. The emergence of new diseases has spurred the increased awareness and investigation of the link between climate and illness, while the advent of acute climate changes and the rise of new infectious diseases have provided the ideal venue for investigating and modeling the climate-disease link.

The report synthesizes conclusions reached by a colloquium of scientists who met to discuss how climatological changes influence the rate and passage of infectious disease. The report makes specific recommendations for research, risk assessment, and data collection techniques. The colloquium met to discuss how natural climate variations affect the occurrence and prevalence of pathogenic microorganisms, vectors, and disease outcomes. The scientists include climatologists, ecologists, epidemiologists, oceanographers, and space scientists.

Recent climate changes that have created a venue for this research include the El Nino event of 1997-1998, the two years of La Nina conditions which followed, and some of the worst hurricane seasons on record. There has also been, according to the report, increasing debate over anthropogenically induced climate changes such as greenhouse gas production and ozone depletion.

According to the Academy of Microbiology, if a model of disease and climate interrelation is created, then predictions can be made which will prevent disease before or at the same time as the disease is on the rise. The current method of coping with disease outbreaks is to wait for the clinical cases to appear, and then deal with the disease issues. By studying and modeling climate changes scientists will be able to be proactive in fighting disease outbreaks.

Vector-borne diseases were one of the first diseases that were related to climate variables. The vectors in the case of Lyme Disease are ticks, and mosquitoes for the West Nile Virus. The relation between the vector and climate has been noted for some time, especially in the case of mosquito borne diseases. The effect on the environment of the life cycle of the vector has a direct causal link to rates of disease incidents. By monitoring climate changes scientists can model and predict potential disease outbreaks earlier, allowing steps to be taken toward reducing the vector population, and creating enough lead-time to anticipate outbreaks and prepare for remediation techniques. The goal of the academy is to increase the ability to make short-term predictions as well as create a more viable long-term prediction capability.

To reduce climate-linked diseases, the report recommends that climatologists, medical doctors, and ecologists find common ground for research and investigation. Long-term ecological surveillance of pathogens and vectors must be made so that the data can be tracked in relation to airborne disease research.

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**By studying and modeling climate changes scientists will be able to be proactive in fighting disease outbreaks.**

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Historical data must be identified, stored, and archived so that research organizations have greater accessibility to the data. Studies should make greater efforts toward generating predictive models and integrated risk assessment frameworks. More remotely identified disease outbreaks require higher profile reporting. The final recommendation is that bioclimatology must be advanced by creating greater support among learning institutions. These recommendations should engender further research, study, and remediation of worldwide disease outbreaks.

The academy's report is available on the web at <http://asmusa.org/acasrc/aca1.htm> or by calling (202) 942-9380.

# On The Horizon...

## a look at upcoming committee events

► **August 6, 7, 8 — Tours of Pennsylvania's Heritage Regions.** Committee members and staff will visit the Schuylkill River Heritage Corridor, Delaware and Lehigh National Canal Heritage Corridor and the Lancaster-York Heritage Area.

► **Monday, August 20, 12 noon, Saltsburg Borough Building, Saltsburg, PA — Committee Public Hearing on Acid Mine Drainage.** DEP Secretary David Hess is among those scheduled to testify.

► **Tuesday, September 11, 12 noon - 3 p.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Bldg. — Infiltration Task Force Meeting.** Guest presenters will be John Schombert, executive director of the 3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program in Allegheny County and Susan Lior, deputy commissioner of the Philadelphia Water Authority. Schombert will describe the 3 Rivers' partnership program with local governments to work together on wastewater systems. Lior will discuss the use of asset management techniques in the water authority's operations.

► **Monday, October 1 at 11:30 a.m. — Environmental Issues Forum.** Dr. T. Allan Comp, historian with the federal Office of Surface Mining, will describe his unique vision to create environmentally sound parks on reclaimed mine land throughout Appalachia, using landscape architects, sculptors, history and nature. Location to be announced.

► **Monday, October 15 at 9 a.m., Hearing Room 1, North Office Bldg. — Infiltration Task Force Meeting.** Final review of issues and discussion of recommendations.

► **Tuesday, October 23 at 8:30 a.m. — Environmental Issues Forum.** Professor Susan Meo of Shippensburg University will present a program on Mira Lloyd Dock (1853-1945), noted botanist, educator, author, civic leader, conservationist, and activist, noted as a catalyst for Harrisburg's "City Beautiful" movement at the turn of the century. Professor Meo was in residence this year with the PA historical and Museum Commission. Location to be announced.

**Environmental Issues Forums are open to the public.**

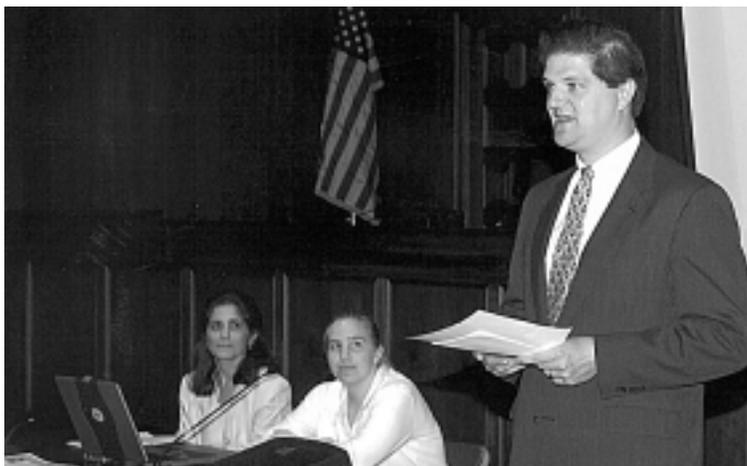
**Please call the committee office at 787-7570 if you would like to attend.**

## Committee Chronicles...

### a review of some memorable committee events

Rep. Scott Hutchinson, chairman of the Joint Conservation Committee, welcomes attendees to the committee's June Environmental Issues Forum, the final forum held before the General Assembly adjourned until September. The committee hosted the Pennsylvania Organization for Watersheds and Rivers

(POWR). Carrie Burkholder, POWR's Environmental Monitoring Project Coordinator, and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) staff (seated to Rep. Hutchinson's right) presented an interesting program on the state's volunteer watershed monitoring network, called the Keystone Watershed Network. This network will serve as a clearinghouse for volunteer watershed monitoring information and resources throughout the Commonwealth.





For what was termed “remarkable efforts in outreach and enrollment”, the American Forest and Paper Association (AF & PA), the national trade association of the forest products industry, conferred its third annual SIC Achievement award upon the Pennsylvania SFI State Implementation Committee (SIC). The award was presented at the association’s annual summer conference in Washington, D.C.

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**Copies of the Forestry Task Force Report are available at the committee offices by calling (717) 787-7570.**

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Pennsylvania earned the award for its significant strides in outreach efforts with policymakers and the forestry community, for implementation of a comprehensive communications program, for expanding industry participation in the SFI program, for fostering new partnerships, and for recruiting into the SFI program 2.1 million acres of forestland managed by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

SFI provides a rigorous system of principles and guidelines, including environmental and conservation practices, that all member companies are required to uphold. These practices include wildlife and water quality protection, biodiversity conservation, harvesting practices and others.

The Legislative Forestry Task Force recently issued its report pursuant to House Resolution 13 of 1999. Chaired by Sen. Roger Madigan, the task force investigated the following: third-party certification of Pennsylvania’s forests and forest products; long-term forestry research needs of PA; educational programs in sustainable forestry for

private landowners and municipalities; and regular and comprehensive assessments of Pennsylvania’s forests to assist in management, development and marketing of timber resources.

The task force gathered information from a variety of organizations, including DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry, the PA Forestry Association and Association of County Conservation Districts, the USDA Forest Service and U.S. Forest Service’s Northeast Research Station, Kane Hardwood and Penn State University.

Among its recommendations, the task force is seeking to increase funding and build public-private partnerships for long-term forestry research, enhance and expand a variety of educational materials on sustainable forestry to private landowners, analyze demand for certified wood products in order to better promote and market such products in Pennsylvania, and provide a separate federal budget line item for forest inventory while shortening the inventory cycle to five years.

With that completed, Senate Resolution 81 was recently enacted directing the task force to look into other areas during this legislative session. Among these are:

- ⇒ the impact of federal and state policies and programs on the future of the timber and forest products industry;
- ⇒ forest management practices in state parks;
- ⇒ the forestry industry’s use of best management practices and its record of working in riparian areas; and
- ⇒ tax policies and valuations of forestlands in Pennsylvania.

It promises to be another busy legislative session for the task force.

## How to Contact The Joint Conservation Committee

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