

PACD Front Page eNewsletter • March 11, 2010



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PACD Information

PACD Capitol Day Room Change

The PACD designated room for Capitol Day on March 16 has been CHANGED. Please join us in **ROOM 18 EW** to pick up the fact sheets and receive a legislative briefing on conservation district issues. We will be there from 8:30 AM to noon with coffee and goodies, so please stop by!

Contact: [Brenda Shambaugh](#)

PACD Launches Revamped Affiliate Membership Program

PACD announces a revamped membership program inviting citizens to join Pennsylvania's voice for natural resource conservation. By becoming an affiliate member of PACD, for as little as \$25 per year, you can help preserve land, water, and wildlife for future generations. Members also receive a 10% discount in the [PACD store](#). Click [here](#) to join today!

Contact: [Jo Bitzer](#)

Funding Opportunities

2010-11 PACD Educational Mini-grant Program for Conservation Districts - April 1 Deadline

The deadline to apply for the PACD 2010-11 Educational Mini-grant Program for Conservation Districts is approaching. Submit your application online at the link below. Grants up to \$2,000 are awarded for educational projects that address Nonpoint Source Pollution (NPS) Prevention strategies. This funding allows conservation districts to implement adult educational programs to increase local awareness of water quality issues, promote the theme "We All Live Downstream," and encourage citizen participation in activities to improve water quality in local watersheds. Funding for this program is made possible through a grant from the PA DEP under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act, administered by the US EPA.

Link: [Online application](#)

Contact: [Hannah Smith](#) (717) 238-7223

EPA Accepting Proposals For 2010 Pollution Prevention Grants - April 6 Deadline

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is now accepting applications for \$4.1 million in Pollution Prevention Grants. These grants and/or cooperative agreements help businesses identify better environmental strategies and solutions for reducing or eliminating waste at the source, including the conservation of water and energy.

Link: [Request for Proposals](#)

Upcoming Events

PACD Capitol Day Quickly Approaching

MARCH 16 is the date conservation district representatives from across the Commonwealth will converge in the PA Capitol to meet with their state legislators. Conservation Districts are responsible for making their own appointments with legislators and staff. PACD will provide printed materials for distribution. Plan on joining us for this important legislative event! To RSVP for your conservation district, please contact [Brenda Shambaugh](#).

Link: [Agenda](#)

PACD Region Meetings

Please plan to attend your PACD Region Meeting. Click on the link for your region to view meeting details.

March 19	South East	Family Heritage Restaurant, Franconia	Meeting Info
March 25	North Central	DEP Williamsport	Meeting Info
April 6	South West	Westmoreland Conservation District	Meeting Info
April 9	North East	DEP Wilkes-Barre	Meeting Info

Chesapeake Bay TMDL Webinar for the Agricultural Community - March 22

A registration link is available below for you to join EPA and others on Monday, March 22 at 9 a.m. for a webinar on the Chesapeake Bay TMDL that will be particularly geared to the agricultural community. A host of speakers will outline key aspects of the Bay TMDL with a focus on the suite of Bay models and their role in helping develop agricultural components of the TMDL "pollution diet."

Link: [Registration](#)

DEP Announces Rescheduling of Regulatory Requirements Seminar for Marcellus Shale - March 31

NOTE: This is a rescheduling of the February 10 seminar. Attending this seminar does not satisfy the ESCGP permit requirement of completing a Department Training.

Location: Department of Environmental Protection, Rachel Carson State Office Building, 2nd Fl Auditorium, 400 Market Street, Hbg, PA 17101

Pre-Registration is not required. The Department does request that you contact [Jennifer Ohashi](#) (717-772-2199) and provide the number of people that will be attending from your organization. An approximate number of attendees are needed to ensure that adequate seating and informational materials are available for the training. If you have any questions or need additional information please contact the DEP's Bureau of Oil and Gas Management at 717-772-2199.

Link: [Announcement/Agenda](#)

For additional special events and training opportunities, please click [here](#) for the Conservation District Training/Special Events Calendar on the PACD website.

Legislative Update

House Appropriations Committee Approves Budget Bill

The House Appropriations Committee approved a budget bill, which may be considered by the full House by March 22. Members of the Appropriations Committee approved House Bill 2279 that mirrors Governor Ed Rendell's budget proposal introduced in February, but does not include any tax increases proposed by the Governor.

House Democratic Policy Committee Discusses Buffers

The House Democratic Policy Committee held a public hearing on the environmental impact of buffers on waterways. Dr. Bernard Sweeney, Director of the Ground Water Research Center, discussed how streamside forest buffers improve water quality. Grant Gullibon, Regulatory Specialist for the Pennsylvania Builders Association, said the Association opposes a mandatory statewide buffer requirement because it would "fail to provide necessary flexibility to meet the specific conditions that may exist on a given development site." He argued that the "stormwater BMP offset" they proposed at the PACD winter meeting in January would be a "much more flexible, efficient and cost-effective means of controlling water pollution throughout Pennsylvania." Marel Raub, Pennsylvania Director of the Chesapeake Bay Commission, said

the "Chesapeake Bay is impaired under the Clean Water Act" and indicated that the Environmental Protection Agency is in the process of developing a "Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) for the Bay." Raub said riparian buffers "can and will be part of our accelerated effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay" and affirmed that existing riparian buffers "will help us to maintain water quality as our region continues to develop." Finally, David Wise, Pennsylvania Watershed Restoration Manager for the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, discussed the Pennsylvania Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) and spoke about how it could help fund forested buffers.

State Forest Land Leasing

Several House members said Governor Rendell should abandon plans to lease more state forest land for drilling because the natural gas extraction could ravage the environment. The governor proposes using \$180 million from the leases to **help fill next year's budget, a plan similar to one used last year, when the state leased 32,000 acres to raise \$60 million for the current fiscal year's budget.**

"We simply can't lease any more land out responsibly," said Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware), head of the "Green Dog" caucus. He and other lawmakers centered their comments on concerns the leasing would short-sightedly damage one of **Pennsylvania's most precious resources, state forests, repeating mistakes that the state made decades ago that let industry damage wide swaths of state forest land.**

The leasing opponents said they would prefer to raise the revenue through a tax on the natural gas extraction. The governor has supported that idea by including it in his plan to create a reserve funding account this year, designed to cushion the blow when federal stimulus money expires. But the severance tax isn't **included in his proposal for next year's budget, and Senate Republicans have said they don't think now is the appropriate time to levy the tax on a still new industry in Pennsylvania.**

On a related note, Rep. Bryan Lentz (D-Delaware) introduced legislation that would establish a number of tax-exempt Keystone Green Zones in Pennsylvania, along with a severance tax on natural gas drilling to offset the exemptions. Rep. Lentz said businesses in the new Keystone Green Zones would be exempt from a variety of state and local taxes, but only if they manufacture green technologies and are located in areas served by community colleges with a science technology and engineering math program. If enacted, it would authorize the Department of Community and Economic Development **to create 15 Keystone Green Zones across Pennsylvania. Within those zones, businesses that manufacture "clean and energy-efficient products or products used in the renewable energy industry" would be eligible for 15 years of exemption** from certain taxes. To offset the lost tax revenue in the green zones, money from a new severance tax on natural gas drilling would be directed to reimburse the state and local governments.

Act 38 Questioned

A number of groups held a rally to urge the Legislature to make changes to Act 38, the ACRE law. They were concerned that the law is diminishing the quality of life by allowing sewage sludge to be spread on farmland. The groups want to see the law amended to enable local governments to enact safety regulations. They questioned whether land application of sewage **sludge is a "normal agricultural operation."**

Senate Environmental Resources & Energy Committee Met

The Senate Environmental Resources Committee met to consider six bills.

SB 1092 amends the Oil and Gas Act, stating any oil and gas well operator must provide DEP with a cement quality log to evaluate the adequacy of the cement meeting the prescribed regulation prior to drilling. The purpose of the bill is to **address the public's concern with groundwater** contamination caused by the increased drilling in Pennsylvania.

SB 1159 grants the Department of General Services the authority to make and execute contracts or leases for the mining or removal of any valuable mineral resources that may be found in the state lands or under the waters of the Commonwealth. The bill further provides for advertising, bidding and bonding and requires payments or royalties received by the department to be deposited into the Environmental Stewardship Fund. The purpose of the legislation is to give the Department of General Services the authority to enter into mineral leases for state-owned land. The minerals would include coal, oil, natural gas, coal bed methane, limestone and any other valuable minerals in state-owned lands or waters.

There were three bills allowing the EQB to adjust filing fees through the regulatory process.

SB 1250 amends the Air Pollution Control Act to require 25% of the air pollution fine awarded be transferred to the

municipality. If the damage exceeds 25% of the fine, more money from the fine may be transferred to the municipality by the department.

Environmental Programs Brief

Chapter 102 Update

In February, the Department of Environmental Protection provided the Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC) and Agricultural Advisory Board with an overview of the changes expected to be made to the Chapter 102 proposed rule. At next week's special WRAC meeting, scheduled for March 17th, DEP will review of the actual wording in the draft final rule. Based on comments from over 1300 individuals, organizations & agencies, revisions were made to several sections including a revised fee schedule that will be based on the size of the disturbance, modification to the buffer implementation criteria and deletion of the proposed permit-by-rule. The February WRAC overview presentation, as well as the draft final rule can be found on the WRAC website at <http://www.depweb.state.pa.us> (select Public Participation, then select Advisory Committees).

Initiative to Encourage Voluntary Fencing

The State Conservation Commission is working in cooperation with Lancaster Conservation District (LCCD) and Pennsylvania Farm Bureau (PFB) on an initiative to encourage farmers to voluntarily fence livestock out of streams. The SCC is asking conservation districts to complete the survey at the link below and email it back to [Roy Richardson](mailto:Roy.Richardson@pa.gov) no later than March 26, 2010.

Link: [Survey](#)

Other Information

Webinars 101 Self-Paced Learning Tool Now Available

Were you unable to attend the Webinars 101 training during the PACD Winter Meeting on January 20? Well, now you can! Peggy Hull Shuffstall with Penn State has graciously provided a self-paced Webinars 101 learning tool you can access at your leisure.

Link: [Webinars 101 Self-Paced Learning Tool](#)

Contact: [Peggy Hull Shuffstall](#)

NACD Outlines Importance of Technology in Delivering Conservation

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) today urged Congress to continue to invest in and improve the software and technology that enable conservation districts and their federal partners help landowners plan and implement appropriate conservation practices and programs on their land. Conservation district supervisor Jim Krosch from the Stevens Soil and Water Conservation District located in Morris, Minn., testified on behalf of NACD before the House Committee on Agriculture's Subcommittee on Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition and Forestry. The Subcommittee called today's hearing to review USDA's information technology systems. In his remarks, Krosch stressed the importance of the technology link between conservation districts and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in effectively serving landowners.

Link: [Krosch's Full Testimony](#)

Audubon Pennsylvania Requests Info on Conservation District Plant Sales

Audubon Pennsylvania is once again compiling a list of spring native sales across the state. They are requesting information from Conservation Districts on their sales particularly those that include native plants. Please e-mail [Steven Saffier](mailto:Steven.Saffier@pa.gov) with the date, time, location, contact info (phone, email, or URL) and types of plants for sale.