NEWS AND VIEWS

TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK McDONNELL, DEP SECRETARY

Municipalities Tackling Stormwater Pollution
By Patrick McDonnell, Secretary

Streets, parking lots, and roofs are an integral and ever-increasing part of our communities. The result? Rain that would naturally soak into the ground instead rushes over these impervious surfaces and into drains, taking sediment, oil, fertilizers, pesticides, and other pollutants into streams and rivers, where they can harm aquatic life.

Other problems arise as well. For example, wells and springs can go dry because the groundwater table is lower, the risk of flooding increases, and municipalities have to foot the bill to cover the cost of flooding damage.

In any case, rainfall amounts have been above normal in many counties. This takes an extra meaning now, as almost 1,000 municipalities across Pennsylvania are working to create and submit federally mandated stormwater management plans to DEP in September for their municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit.
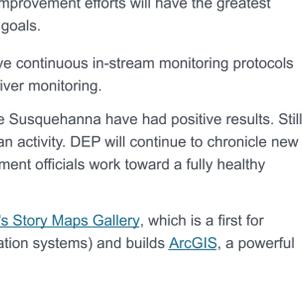
DEP has provided training; technical assistance; resource suggestions; and some funding to help cover the cost. Some municipalities are thinking proactively and outside the box, generating collaborations and other solutions to meet the imperative.

For more information, visit DEP's Municipal Stormwater page.

TOP STORIES

Get the Susquehanna River Story on New Interactive Website

The Susquehanna River has a story to tell. DEP has built a new tool that uses maps, videos, charts, photos, and narrative to help tell that story. The Susquehanna River Story website shows locations and impacts of mining, agriculture, stormwater, dams, and other activities on water quality and fish, macroinvertebrates, and plant life.

Clicking and zooming into maps identifies:

- streams in the Susquehanna River Basin that have been impaired by agricultural activities;
- streams that have been impaired by acid mine drainage and locations of treatment projects; and
- sites where DEP has determined water quality improvement efforts will have the greatest impact on Chesapeake Bay watershed cleanup goals.

To analyze water quality, DEP has developed innovative continuous in-stream monitoring protocols that have made the agency a national leader in large-river monitoring.

Initiatives to restore water quality and aquatic life in the Susquehanna have had positive results. Still, the river continues to face many challenges from human activity. DEP will continue to chronicle new developments as staff, partners, residents and government officials work toward a fully healthy Susquehanna River.

The Susquehanna River Story is also featured on Earl's Story Maps Gallery, which is a first for DEP. Esri is a global leader in GIS (geographic information systems) and builds ArcGIS, a powerful mapping and spatial analytics tool.

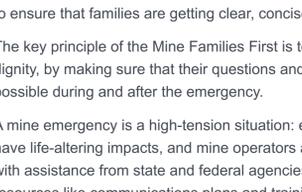### DEP Among Three Go-TIME Initiatives Selected as Finalist for National Tech Awards

Modernizing inspections at oil and gas sites has earned DEP national recognition. Governor Wolf announced that three technology initiatives, undertaken as part of Go-TIME, have been selected as finalists by the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) for its 2017 recognition awards.

DEP developed an iPad app that enables staff to conduct electronic inspections of surface activities at oil and gas sites. Previously, staff completed paper forms and then entered information into a database.

The app makes the inspection process more accurate and efficient, thanks to improved data quality, easier photo documentation, elimination of duplicate entries, electronic supervisor approval, and other features. In addition, the number of oil and gas field inspections that DEP staff can perform yearly is increasing.

Electronic inspections also mean citizens can see surface inspection reports sooner, since results and are posted on the O&G Oil and Gas mapping website within days, rather than weeks.

DEP is developing a similar app for its 32 oil and gas sub-surface activities inspectors. The app will be configured for other DEP programs as well, with the goal of equipping 350 inspectors by 2020.

Mine Families First a Result of Quecreek Rescue

The dramatic Quecreek mine rescue in August 2002, when nine miners were successfully rescued from a flooding mine, turned the eyes of the world toward Somerset County. All nine miners were rescued safely, but for a time, that happy ending was far from guaranteed. Amid the frenzy, and the close eye of the media, then-Governor Mark Schweiker made it a rule that the families of the miners would receive any updates on the conditions of their loved ones from DEP first – not from the media.

This "Mine Families First" mentality was later codified into law with the Mine Families First Act in 2007, which helps the families of miners trapped or awaiting rescue in a mine emergency. In the years since Quecreek, news can come from more than just TV or radio – social media has expanded the reach of information, and, unfortunately, misinformation. As a result, it is more important than ever to ensure that families are getting clear, concise information without speculation or innuendo.
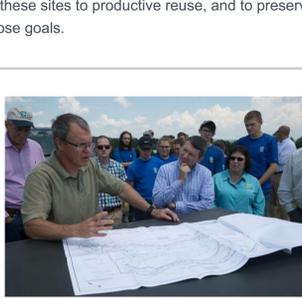
The key principle of the Mine Families First is to treat the families of trapped miners with respect and dignity, by making sure that their questions and concerns for their families are addressed as fully as possible during and after the emergency.

A mine emergency is a high-tension situation: emergency crews must make quick decisions that can have life-altering impacts, and mine operators are responsible for providing information to families, with assistance from state and federal agencies as needed. The Mine Families First Act established resources like communications plans and training exercises for mine operators, local emergency responders, and state employees in order to be ready in case of a mine emergency.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Coatesville Gateway Project Breaks Ground

On June 17, employees from DEP's Southeast Regional Office attended a groundbreaking ceremony for the Coatesville Gateway project in Coatesville, Chester County. DEP joined staff of Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), Representatives Harry Lewis and Tim Hennessey, staff for Senator Andrew Dinniman, all three county commissioners, and a variety of county and local economic development officials to commemorate the construction for this project. This site is part of a $23 million project to create new mixed-use development and associated parking in the borough.

Funding for the Gateway project comes in part from an Industrial Sites Reuse Grant (ISRP) granted by DCED, and has DEP's approval to be treated as an Act 2 Special Industrial Area (SIA) under the Land Recycling Program. DEP Land Recycling Program has three purposes: to clean up contaminated sites based on sound science, to return these sites to productive reuse, and to preserve farmland and green space. This project exemplifies those goals.

Cooks Run Restoration Launched

On August 1, representatives from DEP, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and a host of local partners celebrated the launch of a $7 million coal mine reclamation project in Sproul State Forest, near Renovo, in Clinton County, during a ceremony and project site tour.

"Many anglers and other fans of the beautiful Sproul State Forest have waited a long time for this, and some have dedicated many hours of effort," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell, as he recognized the local volunteers and current and retired state employees who gathered alongside Cooks Run to celebrate its rebirth.

The project will turn 40 acres of former mining land into a productive resource. Like the late 1970s, back into a forest setting, with habitat and food plots for wildlife. It will help to restore these stream segments to their designated use as a High-Quality Coldwater Fishery. This project will take two years to construct and is the second of three projects required to restore the health of the watershed.

The Cooks Run Restoration Project is part of the Abandoned Mine Land Reclamation Pilot Program, funded by the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement (OSMRE), U.S. Department of Interior.

Falcons Have Fledged

Two of three falcons have fledged from DEP's headquarters in Harrisburg this year, and have likely left the area. The third falcon remains at the wildlife rehabilitation center. The true-banded falcon is flying well, but still underprized. "Blue" will be having additional x-rays to examine the falcon's liver development. At this point, it appears that "Blue" may become an educator's bird, supporting endangered species outreach programs.
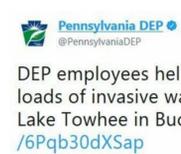
Stay tuned for more updates at Falcon Wire News.

ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS

5 ways to save water in the garden:

1. Choose native plants and plants that require less water
2. Check the weather for rain and only water as needed
3. Collect water from storms for your garden in a rain barrel
4. Water plants in the morning to reduce evaporation
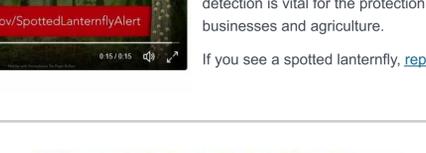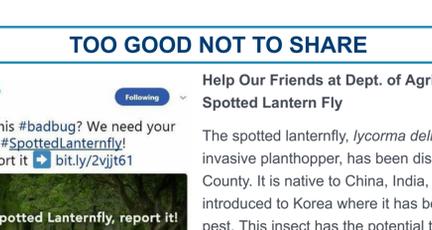5. Cover exposed soil with mulch to prevent runoff

SOCIAL SCENE

Pennsylvania DEP
This work will pay dividends for years for the people & communities of the Wyoming Valley - @SecMcDonnell ow.ly/atlV30dJx7K

By working together, local governments in Luzerne County are reducing pollution less expensively than they could if they were each making these efforts separately. They are treating stormwater as a resource, rather than a waste.
PATRICK McDONNELL

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Hear the latest on Pennsylvania's transition to our local waters in our part of the #GoodwillFiveInitiative waterbird in an interview with the Secretaries of Environmental Protection, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, and Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources on WITF SmartTalk: http://ow.ly/OWm30dhP7Au

Pennsylvania DEP
DEP employees helped pull 23 pickup truck loads of invasive water chestnut plants from Lake Towhee in Bucks County. ow.ly /6Pqb30dXSap

NEW ON THE WEB
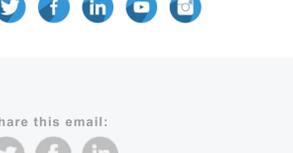
SunShot Initiative Projects Take Off in Pennsylvania

The U.S. Department of Energy SunShot Initiative is a national effort to support solar energy adoption by making solar energy affordable for all Americans through research and development efforts in collaboration with public and private partners.

SunShot funds cooperative research, development, demonstration, and deployment projects by private companies, universities, state and local governments, nonprofit organizations, and national laboratories to drive down the cost of solar electricity.

To learn more about Pennsylvania's 21 current and past SunShot Initiative projects, visit www.dep.pa.gov.

TOO GOOD NOT TO SHARE

PA Agriculture
Have you seen this #SacBug? We need your help! If you see it, report it. bit.ly/2uhYmC8 ...

Help Our Friends at Dept. of Agriculture Track the Spotted Lanternfly

The spotted lanternfly, Lycorma delicatula, an invasive planthopper, has been discovered in Berks County. It is native to China, India, Vietnam, and introduced to Korea where it has become a major pest. This insect has the potential to greatly impact the grape, hops, and logging industries. Early detection is vital for the protection of Pennsylvania businesses and agriculture.

If you see a spotted lanternfly, report it.

Chesapeake Bay Program
"During a storm, that stream network (sic. 'said storm' storm, hunter and all) around the Chesapeake Bay Program. "We've made very difficult improvements, that we don't even need to treat our water anymore."

Hunters, anglers and water quality - Chesapeake Bay Program

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

So what, besides the heat, are still leading culprits to having air quality issues on action days?

The heat really is one of the number-one-culprits. Ozone production is a photochemical process, so lots of sunshine, along with the longer summer days, contribute to higher ozone levels. Additional weather conditions such as light winds and air-inversion can also contribute to keeping less horizontal and vertical mixing) can lead to higher ozone levels as well. Human activity, like vehicle exhaust and power plant emissions, also contribute to ozone creation.

Have a question you would like to see featured as a question of the month? Submit your questions to ra-epnews@pa.gov.