

PA Environment Digest Daily blog

An Update on Environmental Issues in Pennsylvania

FRIDAY, APRIL 19, 2013

➔ April 22 PA Environment Digest - Earth Day Edition



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Five To Receive Western PA Environmental Awards May 23

Five environmental protection and conservation programs from throughout Western Pennsylvania will share \$25,000 from [Dominion](#) and the [Pennsylvania Environmental Council](#) for innovation and effectiveness in making a positive impact on the Western

Pennsylvania environment.

The winners will be honored at the Western Pennsylvania Environmental [Awards Dinner and Awards Ceremony](#) on May 23 at the Westin Convention Center Hotel downtown.

The five programs are this year's winners of the 2013 Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards, presented annually to local organizations that demonstrate leadership, effectiveness and results in making an impact on the environment.

These five programs include a number of volunteer and student programs related to water quality monitoring near shale gas drilling sites, as well as a river stewardship program and industrial brownfield remediation. All five were chosen by a group of independent judges of environmental experts and PEC staff in response to a call for entries earlier this year.

With these awards, each winner will designate a \$5,000 cash prize to be used in support of a nonprofit environmental program of their choice.

The winners are:

-- **Beaver Valley Slag, Inc. – Aliquippa (Beaver County):** The former J&L Aliquippa Works had fallen into decay after it closed in 1983, leaving behind large amounts of scrap metal along with 100 million tons of slag. Contaminants in the slag were leaching into the Ohio River and a creek on the site was contaminated from a hazardous landfill and slag piles which had virtually destroyed all aquatic life.

[Beaver Valley Slag, Inc.](#) assumed all environmental liability for the site, including the remediation obligations previously held by J&L. BVS improved the environmental quality in the creek and reclaimed the reusable materials left at the site, specifically the mountains of slag. BVS worked to develop a market for the slag and has so far been able to remove several million tons of this material from the site, which has been put to productive use in other construction markets.

-- **Evergreen Conservancy – Indiana (Indiana County):** With the start of unconventional deep well natural gas drilling in Indiana County, water quality in local waterways became a growing concern.

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About Me



 [David E. Hess](#)

This Blog is a companion to [www.PaEnvironmentDigest.com](#), the weekly online newsletter published by Crisci Associates, Harrisburg, PA. I can be contacted at 717-234-1716 or by sending email to: DHess@CrisciAssociates.com. I served as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection from 2001 to 2003, as staff in the Pennsylvania Senate and in the

So the [Evergreen Conservancy](#) began a water quality initiative to continuously monitor streams, examine potential non-point source pollution and establish guidelines for reporting potential pollution problems. They installed 31 monitoring devices in streams throughout the county where problems with Marcellus shale, acid mine drainage, sewage, erosion, sedimentation, or other potential non-point source pollution may occur in order to monitor the streams for potential pollution events. If a spike in conductivity is noted, Evergreen representatives could notify state and local officials to pinpoint the source of the problem and the responsible party.

-- Pennsylvania Senior Conservation Corps – DuBois (Clearfield County): Water quality monitoring is a critical requirement to protecting Pennsylvania's watersheds and their ecosystems. But with budget issues and shortage of staff, Pennsylvania's environmental agencies must rely on trained volunteers to collect water quality samples and to educate the public about protecting the Commonwealth's streams and rivers.

The [Pennsylvania Senior Environment Corps](#) (PaSEC) combines the needs of the community and the Commonwealth with the passion of our senior population. They have been collecting water quality data since 1997, and have collected data on over 13,000 monitoring events on streams across the Commonwealth.

Since 1997, these trained volunteers have dedicated over 2 million hours to protecting and restoring the Commonwealth's environment. In one year alone, the estimated value of the PaSEC program to the Commonwealth is estimated at over \$3 million. The program is now administered by [Nature Abounds](#).

-- Shenango River Watchers – Sharon (Mercer County): The Shenango River spans 23 miles under a mature canopy forest near Pennsylvania's second largest state park. Unfortunately, an accumulation of downed trees made the river impassable and dangerous to recreational paddlers.

Paddling club blogs and websites warned kayakers to avoid the Shenango totally due to this condition. Consequently, outfitters could no longer do business along the river and local boat retailers gave up carrying canoes or kayaks.

So the [Shenango River Watchers](#) used Amish loggers and their draft horse teams to haul away the debris and clear the river. This method avoided disruption to the river bank and private property and resulted in minimal impact on the environment.

The river is now open and paddler friendly. Scores of blockages have been reduced while nesting eagles were protected, endangered mussels unaffected, stream banks reinforced, and water quality improved.

-- Tyler Umstead and Lance Jubic – New Wilmington (Lawrence County): Tyler Umstead and Lance Jubic, both undergraduates at Westminster College, have [created a website](#) that allows water quality data and information to be shared among those who monitor hydraulic fracturing activity in the region.

Their website provides local communities with scientific tools to assess, protect, and restore waterways. With increased hydraulic fracturing activity in Pennsylvania, one of the features of this web site focuses on monitoring of contaminants associated with shale gas extraction.

These students are now working to develop a smartphone application that links to the web site and will allow volunteers to upload data to the site right from remote locations.

All entries were judged on the basis of their relevance to local environmental priorities, evidence of their impact on the environment, their approach to solving an environmental problem, and the environmental benefit of their work.

The Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards program is open to individuals and organizations that demonstrated a commitment to environmental excellence, leadership and accomplishment, and made significant contributions toward improving Western Pennsylvania's environment.

Dominion and the Pennsylvania Environmental Council sponsor the Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards each year to encourage the community to emulate the achievements of the winning entries, thereby promoting innovative environmental efforts and enhancing the quality of life in Western Pennsylvania.

former Department of Environmental Resources for over 30 years.

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