



# CONSERVATION TIMES

Newsletter of the McKean County Conservation District  
17137 Route 6, Smethport, PA 16749  
www.mckeancountypa.org

2010 Issue 1

## Are You Polluting Your Local Waterways?

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Whether you are aware of it or not, the answer is probably “Yes.” Most of us do - through **Non Point Source Pollution**.

**Nonpoint source pollution**—also known as “runoff pollution, is a major contributor to water pollution in the United States. Unlike point source pollution, which enters the water from specific locations (such as a discharge pipe from a factory or wastewater facility, an oil or chemical spill) nonpoint source pollution comes from a broader area. Nonpoint source pollutants are picked up and transported during rain and snowmelt events. The rain and/or snowmelts pick up human-made and/or natural pollutants and transport them into lakes, rivers, wetlands, and groundwater. *Courtesy of Nebraska Department of Environmental Quality*



As raindrops begin to pitter patter on the roof overhead, the cycle begins. After collecting in your gutters and gushing of drain pipes, one of two things happens. The collective drops either infiltrate into your lawn or find themselves pouring onto an **impervious** surface.

**Impervious vs. pervious**—an impervious surface includes concrete, asphalt, compacted soil and tight-set landscaping blocks or stone versus a pervious surface such as turf, mulch, gravel and loose-set landscaping materials.

Once on an impervious surface and assisted by gravity, the water continues to rush downhill and frequently into a velocity-charging chute such as a ditch or collection drain. Along with the addition of thousands and thousands of additional raindrops still falling from the sky and sometimes joining up with your neighbors run-off contributions, this mini-torrent (and in some cases not-so-mini) reaches its destination and joins others like itself in the nearest stream or river.

Unfortunately, along the way, pollutants such as oil, grease, fertilizers, chemicals, pet waste, and eroding soil hitch a ride and join in on this journey. With no other choice, the once soothing rain drops have turned into a contaminant transit system with the potential to dump a multitude of pollutants into the nearest receiving waterway.

This process is not inevitable, however. As homeowners, we can give rain a chance to complete its cycle without becoming contaminated by our backyard pollutants. To learn more, please see **page 2**.

## \* Reduce Water Runoff

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First, by letting water infiltrate back into the ground as much as possible, you can reduce the overall quantity of available runoff. This is where your understanding of impervious and pervious surfaces comes to the forefront, since the more mulch, loose-set landscaping materials, turf and gravel you use in place of cement or concrete, the less runoff your property will create.



So while you are sitting in your house dreaming of Spring and fighting cabin fever, come up with creative ways that you can incorporate pervious surfaces into your landscaping. In addition to reducing overall runoff, **natural landscaping** projects can result in a very aesthetically pleasing outdoor area that costs less than traditional concrete and cement. Many publications are available on this subject.

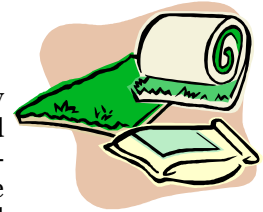
**Natural Landscaping**—outdoor design utilizing methods to reduce water runoff, reuse collected runoff, and incorporate plants, shrubs and trees that require little or no watering, fertilizers and chemicals.

Runoff reduction is also the concept where **rain barrels** come into play. **Rain Barrel**—a drum or barrel advantageously placed to collect the rainwater gathered by your gutters and discharged by your downspouts. By placing a rain barrel under your gutter you not only reduce the amount of runoff produced by your impervious roof, you also secure yourself an excellent source of irrigation water for your garden, flowers, shrub and trees. Unlike treated tap water, rain barrel water is free from chlorine and other additives which is better for your plants anyway! Rain barrels are often available through extension programs and county conservation districts. Plans for building your own are also readily available.

Second, by reducing the amount of oil, grease, fertilizers, chemicals, pet waste, and eroding soil around your home, you reduce the amount of pollutants available to collect in the runoff water still making its way off your property. Potential pollutants can be broken into the three general categories below;

## \* Reduce Pollutants Around Your Home

**Excess Nutrients**— this category includes fertilizers introduced to your property to enhance the growth of ornamental plants, vegetable gardens, and lawns and animal waste which results from pets or livestock residing on your property. Reducing the amount of fertilizers used on your lawn is a very effective way to reduce excess nutrients and goes hand in hand with planting ornamentals that are derived from plants native to your region, as mentioned above under Natural Landscaping. Proper disposal of animal waste is also a very effective strategy.



**Chemicals**— this category includes household cleansers, oil, gas, grease, and antifreeze leaking from your vehicles, and pesticides you may apply to your flowers and lawns. Reading the labels of household chemicals and following the proper disposal methods, absorbing chemicals from your vehicles and equipment with kitty litter, sawdust and other absorbents and disposing of this material properly, and reducing the amount of herbicide and insecticide applied to your lawn will go a long way towards reducing the most common chemical pollutants on your property.

**Soil Erosion**— this category represents the most prevalent form of water pollution existing in Pennsylvania and serves to degrade the quality of more streams than any other pollutant. Stabilizing areas of bare ground with vegetation, properly installing diversions, and avoiding the creation of steep banks and slopes all serve to reduce accelerated soil erosion. Information abounds on this topic and several programs through the Conservation District address erosion prevention and stream bank stabilization.

**By implementing just one of these practices, you can make a significant impact. An abundance of resources are available to assist you with reducing non-point source pollution and much of it is free. Please contact the McKean County Conservation District or Penn State Extension Office for more information. Your local streams will appreciate it!**



## ESM Dirt & Gravel Roads One-Day Course

Following an excellent turnout last year, the McKean County Conservation District will once again hold a specialized course on Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance of Dirt and Gravel Roads on March 23 from 7:30 AM to 4:00 PM at the Courtyard Restaurant in Smethport, PA.

This unique, one-day event is open to the general public and everyone who maintains unpaved roads, including: municipalities, oil and gas operators, timber operators, private and commercial landowners, and employees of state and national forests are invited and encouraged to attend. Sponsors for the event include Open Flow Gas Supply Corporation, St. Mary Land & Exploration Company, Hancock Forest Management, the State Conservation Commission and the Penn State Center for Dirt & Gravel Road Studies.

With an emphasis on promoting practices which reduce maintenance costs while reducing sediment pollution, the experienced staff of the Pennsylvania Dirt and Gravel Road Maintenance Program will openly share their valuable insights and proven methods. A small sampling of what the course covers includes; the affect of natural systems on roads, the influences of right-of-ways, the management of roadside vegetation, ditch outlets, road and stream interfaces, and effective use of driving surface aggregates. The course qualifies for PA SFI Continuing Ed Credits (2) Years and additional forestry credits may also be offered.

A nominal fee of \$15 per participant covers course materials, morning snacks, refreshments and lunch. In addition, each participant attending the entire program will receive a certificate of attendance. **For more information, please contact the McKean County Conservation District by phone at 814-887-4001 or email at [sdthompson@mckeancountypa.org](mailto:sdthompson@mckeancountypa.org).**

## District Now Accepting Dirt and Gravel Roads Grant Applications

The McKean County Conservation District is currently accepting applications for the 2010 McKean County Dirt and Gravel Roads project grants. In order to be eligible for funding, the municipality must have at least one staff member who has attended the 2-Day Environmentally Sensitive Maintenance training within the previous five years. Unfunded project proposals from previous years can be resubmitted for consideration under this round of funding.



The Quality Assurance Board and the Conservation District will review and rank all applications and reward funding based upon pre-established program priorities. Applications are due at the Conservation District Office by March 26, 2010.

**For more information, please contact Carol Riedmiller, Resource Conservation Technician at (814)887-4002.**

## Caterpillar Predictions—2010



According to a recent Press Release from the DCNR Bureau of Forestry, McKean County will likely be facing another year of defoliation in 2010 caused by the hungry hordes of Eastern and Forest Tent Caterpillars. Two days of defoliation flights in June in combination with numerous ground checks confirmed defoliation on about 320,000 acres of private and public land spread across McKean and Potter Counties with up to 500,000 acres showing indications of feeding damage.

Unfortunately, egg mass surveys conducted from September through early winter of 2009 indicate that defoliation in McKean and Potter Counties may actually be more widespread in 2010 than last year. According to the Bureau of Forestry, the 2010 “infestation and resulting defoliation may spread into new areas, collapse in some areas, and repeat in others.” Typically, tent caterpillar outbreaks run their course in a 3 to 5 year cycle.

Both species are native to North America and are preyed upon by fungal and viral disease, native wasps and flies, birds and some mammals. Consecutive years of defoliation combined with environmental factors such as drought and poor growing conditions can lead to branch dieback and eventual mortality.

Although the DCNR does not provide a spraying program for native insects such as tent caterpillars, concerned landowners can obtain a list of qualified contractors capable of conducting aerial spray applications on their lands by contacting the Bureau of Forestry office in Coudersport at (814) 274-3600. Although costly, treatment may be deemed appropriate in stands composed of sugar maple, beech, red oak, aspen or black cherry. In addition, Keith Horn Consulting Foresters, Inc. of Kane is providing a spraying program available to private landowners interested in spraying blocks of 50 acres or more. More information and the criteria of this program can be obtained by contacting Ken Kane at (814) 837-9391.



## 13th Annual Northwest Grazing Conference Focuses

The annual Northwest Pennsylvania Grazing Conference will be held on Tuesday, March 16, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the Tri-County Church just off Interstate 80 near Treasure Lake

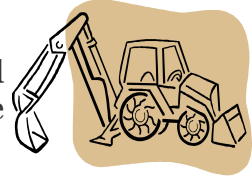
in Dubois.

This year’s conference features topics designed to assist both new and veteran farmers with lowering input costs and meeting the increasing demand for locally-grown grass fed meat and dairy products. Topics covered include; agricultural products marketing, multi-species grazing, maximizing yield at processing, and renewable energy watering systems. Breakout sessions will address a variety of grazing-related topics.

Pre-registration is required by March 1, 2010. The registration fee is \$25 per person and includes a continental breakfast and hot buffet lunch. Additional information can be found at [www.headwaterspa.org](http://www.headwaterspa.org) or by contacting Headwaters RC&D at (814) 375-1372 ext. 4.

## Changes to the PAG-02 NPDES General Permit

Pennsylvania's NPDES General Permit has recently been reissued and will be in effect for the next two years. Listed below are some of the major changes effective as of December 8, 2009.



- ◆ The permit fee for the NPDES General Permit has increased from \$250.00 to \$500.00
- ◆ Two new conditions have been added regarding applicability. The PAG-02 may not be used under the following conditions:
  1. Discharges to surface waters identified as impaired waters where the proposed discharge will result in a net change *pre-condition to post condition* in volume or rate, or water quality of the stormwater.
  2. Persons are not eligible for coverage under this permit for discharges of pollutants of concern to waters for which there is a total maximum daily load (TMDL) established or approved by EPA unless the E&S and PCSM Plans include implementation measures or controls that are consistent with the as this general permit, persons must implement conditions applicable to their discharges necessary for consistency with the assumptions and requirements of such TMDL. If a specific wasteload allocation has been established that would apply to the discharge, persons must implement necessary steps to meet that allocation.
- ◆ New requirements have been added for permit modification, termination, or revocation and re-issuance.



The general permit will expire 2 years from the date of its issuance. The department will publish a notice in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin* of the draft, renewed, or reissued general permit or of any amendments to this general permit, and after a comment period notice of the final, renewed, reissued or amended general permit will be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. Any person with an un-expired approval of coverage under the general permit shall be responsible for complying with the final renewed, reissued or amended general permit. Such persons shall be covered by the general permit even if the discharger has not submitted a separate NOI to be covered by such final renewed, reissued or amended general permit. Such person may request coverage under an individual permit. See 40C.F.R. § 122.28(b)(2)(vi); 25 Pa. Code § 92.81(c) and (d)

- ◆ A new requirement has been added regarding completion of certificates and final plans.

*Continued on page 6*

## Changes to the PAG-02 NPDES General Permit cont. from page 5

- ◆ New conditions have been added as requirement to the E&S Plans:
  1. Upon the installation or stabilization of all perimeter sediment control BMPs and at least 3 days prior to proceeding with the bulk earth disturbance activities, the permittee or co-permittee shall provide notification to the department or authorized conservation district.
  2. The E&S Plan must be consistent with the assumptions and requirements of any available Wasteload Allocations (WLAs) for the discharges as set forth in any applicable Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) established for the receiving waters.
- ◆ New Clean Fill requirements have been added with regard to Spoil and Borrow areas.
- ◆ Phased project guidance has been revised with the addition of the following statement; "subsequent phases commenced after termination of the PAG-02, 2009 Amendment, shall be responsible for complying with the final renewed, reissued, or amended general permit."
- ◆ Revisions have been made under Part C, Infiltration as follows; "Where infiltration BMPs are being utilized, the permittee and co-permittee must ensure that soil compaction is avoided or minimized in those areas. If the areas planned for infiltration BMPs are compromised, additional soil testing must be performed to verify that the BMP will perform as planned."
- ◆ Revisions have been made under Part C, Stabilization as follows; "Upon completion or temporary cessation of the earth disturbance activity the project site shall be immediately stabilized in accordance with the recommendations contained in the *Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control Program Manual (E&S Manual)*, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Department of Environmental Protection No. 363-2134-008, April 2000, as amended and updated."
- ◆ An addition, mandating that "earth disturbance will not commence until all related Act 537 Sewage Facilities Planning approvals, " has also been added to the revised permit..



For more information and the updated forms associated with the NPDES General Permit, please go to our website [www.mckeancountypa.org](http://www.mckeancountypa.org).

# Vernal Pool Management Plans for Private Landowners

**Sign-up period ends May 15th, 2010**

Vernal pools are unique wetlands that are extremely important to the wildlife that depend upon them – and individual landowners can play a critical role in their protection. Also known as seasonal pools, vernal pools are depressions in the forest that, during wet periods, fill with water from precipitation, runoff or snowmelt, and/or ground water, and then dry during the summer months. Vernal pools are often the only wet areas found in otherwise dry upland forest habitats. The seasonal nature of these pools is important because it excludes fish that would otherwise prey upon the eggs and young of salamanders and frogs. In the mid-Atlantic states over a quarter of all state-listed threatened and endangered salamanders and frogs are dependent on vernal pools (Colburn 2004).

*Vernal pools support a wide variety of wildlife. Game animals such as deer, turkey, and bear visit pools to find food and water. Bats and a variety of waterfowl and songbirds including wood ducks, thrushes, and warblers feed on the rich insect “buffet” emerging from vernal pools. However, vernal pools are most critically important as breeding and feeding habitat for certain frogs, toads, salamanders, turtles, insects, snails, fingernail clams, and crustaceans. Many of these species have special adaptations to live in vernal pools and do poorly in permanent waters.*

Because these small, sensitive wetland habitats can easily be disturbed or destroyed by human activities, the Vernal Pool project of the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP) provides free management recommendations that encourage best management conservation practices for seasonal wetlands. This service is available to private landowners in Pennsylvania who have vernal pools on their properties.

Landowners who enroll will be asked to list and prioritize the land use goals for their properties. A biologist knowledgeable about vernal pools will visit each property to assess the natural resources present in and around the vernal pools. The biologist will then write a management plan that recommends specific management practices the landowner can use to reach sustainable land use goals while protecting the property’s vernal pools and the surrounding upland habitats.

There are no fees or commitments associated with these recommendations and the advice is non-binding. If you would like a vernal pool management plan developed for your property, please contact us.

*Literature cited:* Coburn, E. A. 2004. Vernal Pools, Natural History and Conservation. The McDonald & Woodward Publishing Company, VA.

## **Contact Information:**

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**Vision:** The McKean County Conservation District will encourage all citizens to adopt a way of life which results in conserving, protecting, and practicing the wise use of our natural resources.

**Mission:** The McKean County Conservation District will provide leadership, education, and guidance to ensure the wise use and protection of our valuable natural resources.

*The McKean county Conservation District was organized at the request of the County residents. The County was declared a District by the board of County Commissioners on August 19, 1959, according to provisions of the Soil Conservation Law of 1945, Act 217 of the General Assembly, as amended. This Act gives districts broad powers to provide services, employ and manage staff, charge fees for services, own and manage property, and authorizes Commonwealth agencies (including Counties) to cooperate with District in carrying out programs.*

*The primary goal of the District is the development, improvement and conservation of the County's Soil, water and related resources as well as educating the community in various conservation and environmental practices and methods.*

*The District is administered by a board of seven (7) Directors—three (3) farmer members, three (3) public (non-farmer) members and one(1) County Commissioner. District Directors are appointed by the County Commissioner from a list of names submitted by countywide nominating organizations. The Commissioners also designate one of their members to serve as a Director.*

## Asian Carp Knocking On the Great Lakes Door

A new player posing a very immediate threat to the immense commercial and sport fishery of the Great Lakes has arrived in the form of a plankton-sucking, jaw-breaking behemoth known as the Asian carp.



***Alarmed by the boat motor, this bighead carp leapt from the Illinois River and actually broke the jaw of the woman, above, who was sport fishing with a bow.***

These voracious fish can grow to 4 feet long, weigh up to 100 pounds and consume 40 percent of their body weight daily in plankton—the foundation of the Great Lakes food chain. In addition, these fish have a very bad habit of wildly launching themselves out of the water in response to whirring boat and jet ski motors. Once introduced, this species has proven impossible to eradicate. After being “accidentally” introduced into the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers decades ago, they have steadily made a destructive procession north to the Chicago Sanitary Ship Canal, where DNA water tests have confirmed their presence less than 1 mile from Lake Michigan. This man-made shipping canal links Lake Michigan to the Mississippi River and provides an entryway to the entire great lakes ecosystem.

Realizing the very real threat facing the all of the Great Lakes fisheries and recreation industries, New York, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Ohio and Ontario have joined in a lawsuit filed by Michigan's Attorney General against the state of Illinois demanding closure of two lakeside navigation locks in the Chicago area. A White House Summit is scheduled for Feb. 8 to discuss the issue while the Supreme Court debates whether it will hear the case.

More information and updates can be viewed at: [www.protectyourwaters.net](http://www.protectyourwaters.net)