EPA REGION III

Office of Public Affairs

Early Bird Headlines

Friday, December 17, 2010

MORNING HOT LIST

Dimock water settlement leaves town divided

PRESS CONNNECTS Gas firm to pay $4.1M in contamination disputeWhen the battle over a planned water pipeline to run between a pair of Susquehanna County, Pa., communities took an unexpected turn, no one was more surprised than Jean Carter and Julie SautnerThe Dimock Township residents -- whose water wells were ruined by nearby natural gas drilling operations, according to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection -- hopped on a conference call Wednesday evening with DEP Secretary John Hanger. They were expecting to hear an update on the project before Hanger is likely relieved of his position by year's end. What they heard instead was news of a settlement between the DEP and Cabot Oil & Gas, killing the $11.8 million project that would have provided water from Lake Montrose to 19 families in the Carter Road area of Dimock."We didn't know anything about it until we got on the call (Wednesday) night," Carter said. "We had no idea what was coming."

States taking a closer look at controversial natural gas drilling method

STATELINE Environmentalists have long contended that the natural gas drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing — or “fracking” — poses a danger to drinking water supplies for millions of Americans. Alarming reports of water contamination in states where such drilling is common, including Colorado, Pennsylvania and Wyoming, have exacerbated their fears. Residents in some areas have described abnormalities — from flammable tap water to dying livestock — after fracturing began, and other areas have reported public health concerns related to tainted water.

W.Va. Wants Action On Weirton Sewer Problem

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER WEIRTON - The Weirton Sanitary Board and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection are about 16 months apart on their timelines for a major overhaul to the city's aging sewer system. The DEP has "conditionally approved" the city's $12 million plan, Utilities Director Butch Mastrantoni told board members Thursday. But one of the agency's conditions for final approval, he said, is submission of a "compressed" timeline for the project. The massive upgrade is the result of a March discovery that 7-8 percent of the city's untreated sewage had been flowing into the Ohio River through an outfall on steelmaker ArcelorMittal's property. A temporary fix has been in place since August, but Mastrantoni said the DEP wants to see the work finished before the end of 2012. However, he and the engineering firm tapped to oversee the plan believe that request is unfeasible, noting the project almost certainly will stretch into 2014.

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Clairton air quality plan is better, but not good enough, advocates say

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Air quality will improve in the Liberty-Clairton area because of revisions to Allegheny County's pollution reduction plan, but it will not improve enough and not happen fast enough, according to environmental groups testifying at a county Health Department public hearing last night.Joe Osborne, legal director for the Group Against Smog and Pollution, said the revised county plan to meet federal 1997 airborne particle standards is better than previous proposals because it requires more emissions reductions from U.S. Steel Corp.'s Clairton Coke Works. The company will build two low-emission quench towers and upgrade other operations at the facility by the end of 2013. But the plan still leaves 80 families in Lincoln, across the Monongahela River from Clairton, in an emissions "hot spot" that does not meet the health-based pollution standards, he said, and urged the Health Department to install a monitor in Lincoln to better assess the air quality there.

'One of the worst' areas

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE In a region long affected by pollution, questions such as these get asked: Where is it best to breathe? And where should people consider holding their breath?"There are bad spots, and there are worse spots," John Graham, senior scientist for the Clean Air Task Force, said of southwestern Pennsylvania, where he has studied particulate pollution levels in work commissioned by the Heinz Endowments.Levels often are bad region-wide and fail to comply with federal Clean Air Act daily and annual standards.The air pollution levels overlap with results of a yearlong Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ecological study that shows that 14,636 more people died from heart disease, respiratory disease and lung cancer in 14 counties, from 2000 through 2008, than national mortality rates would predict. Those diseases have been linked to air pollution exposure.

'A basic human right'

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Coal generation of electrical power will not disappear anytime soon, but some energy experts say it gradually will be replaced in coming decades by natural gas, wind, solar and nuclear energies.Consol Energy officials foresee a different scenario. The nation's fifth-largest coal producer remains optimistic about the black rock and anticipates expanded use in coming years not only in India, China and other growing countries, but also in the United States."Energy is a basic human right," said P. Jerome Richey, vice president of Consol Energy, headquartered in Southpointe in Cecil.

Dangers from coal, cars

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Our particles aren't as bad as your particles. That's the claim of coal-fired power companies, based on research on particulate pollution the industry has funded. The debate centers on whether smokestack pollution could be less harmful to human health than vehicle pollution. And that answer, in turn, centers on whether sulfur compounds, or sulfates, found in high quantities in power-plant emissions, are dangerous or, as the industry contends, fairly harmless to human health. The future of coal could hinge on the outcome of the research.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education will be permanently preserved

The largest tract of privately owned green space in Philadelphia is now protected from development into perpetuity.

Officials at the Schuylkill Center for Environmental Education reached an agreement for a conservation easement on 325 acres of woods and fields in Upper Roxborough, virtually all the land the center owns.

Backing off an arsenic-eating claimAmid a flurry of criticism, a NASA-funded team on Thursday backed off the more extravagant, textbook-changing claims they'd made about a bacterium that had allegedly substituted arsenic for phosphorus in its DNA.The original announcement, made at a NASA news conference Dec. 2, seemed to break a cardinal rule of biology that all organisms need some phosphorus to survive. NASA researchers claimed to have discovered an exotic organism in California's Mono Lake that lived instead on arsenic, thus broadening the types of life that may exist in the universe. The news made headlines worldwide including a New York Times story that ran in The Inquirer on Dec. 3.

PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE

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Cheswick power plant gets OK to run during repairsGenOn Energy Inc., the new name of the company that owns the Cheswick coal-fired power plant, has been granted permission to temporarily operate that facility while its new pollution controls are turned off.According to a Dec. 7 GenOn letter to the Allegheny County Health Department, the emissions control equipment installed this summer at the 637-megawatt power plant is already so severely corroded it can't be used. The plant has been shut down since October, when during scheduled maintenance, the

company discovered the trouble with the equipment.In response to a power company request, the Health Department agreed last Thursday to allow GenOn to start up the power plant without the flue gas desulfurization equipment, commonly called a "scrubber," and emit pollutants at pre-scrubber levels. That approval to operate expires March 31.

WILKES BARRE CITIZENS' VOICE

DEP-Cabot settlement gets Rendell's approval HARRISBURG - Gov. Ed Rendell gave his personal stamp of approval today to the settlement between the Department of Environmental Protection and Cabot Oil and Gas Corp. to address water contamination problems in Dimock Township."It's a good settlement because they (Cabot) share the fiscal responsibility of making this right," Rendell said.Under the settlement, Cabot agrees to pay $4.1 million to residents affected by methane contamination attributed to faulty Cabot natural gas wells. In exchange, DEP has dropped its plan to build a 12.5-mile waterline from Montrose to Dimock Township to restore water supplies to 19 families affected by methane contamination in their water supplies.

Rendell laments lack of Marcellus revenues HARRISBURG - The failure to enact a state severance tax on natural gas production is dragging down efforts to keep the state budget balanced through the end of the fiscal year, Gov. Ed Rendell said Thursday."We will have a budget deficit at the end of this year at $63 million," Rendell said, referring to the estimated revenue yield if a severance tax had been enacted before the legislative session ended last month.House Democratic and Senate Republican leaders had set an Oct. 1 target date to pass a severance tax, but the effort bogged down in disagreement over a tax rate, revenue distribution, scope of drilling-related issues to address and the emergence of the severance tax as a key issue in the gubernatorial race.

Expert: Gas drilling about risks vs. rewards <>NANTICOKE - Natural gas drilling comes with risks to the environment and human health, and the issue is to determine whether those risks are worth the potential rewards. Dr. Anthony Ingraffea, a professor at Cornell University's School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, talked about what can go wrong with natural gas drilling and dispelled some myths about the process during a lecture Thursday at Luzerne County Community College. "No industrial activity, even building a toaster, is risk-free," he said. Ingraffea stressed the importance of calculating the level of risk: taking the probability of things going wrong and weighing them against the expenses, costs and benefits.

UGI's gas line purge left county EMA in the dark
Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency received hundreds of calls over the last two days about a natural gas odor, said coordinator Steve Bekanich. The odor was still prevalent throughout the area Thursday as UGI Penn Natural Gas continued to purge (read more)

PERKASIE NEWS HERALD - MONTGOMERY NEWSPAPERS

Council, residents agree Sellersville sale should be to public water co.
... The Sellersville system has struggled in recent years because of its age and the difficulty of meeting new, more stringent regulations, including a federal Environmental Protection Agency order to reduce the amount of arsenic in water from two borough wells, Randal White, Sellersville's solicitor, said. Sellersville spent more than $600,000, paid for with a state grant and about $400,000 of borough money received through part of the about $2 million of long-term debt the water system now has, on a filtration system for one of the wells, but, White said, the system has not worked as well as expected. Sellersville isn't alone in facing the problems of an aging infrastructure, said Alan Wohlstetter, who, like White, is a lawyer with Fox Rothschild. A study done by the governor's office has found that more than $113 billion of maintenance work is needed by Pennsylvania water and sewer companies during the next 20 years, Wohlstetter said. ... Another problem for the Sellersville system has been that it only had one certified water operator, although state regulations required two.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

Administration unveils solar energy plansThe Obama administration issued proposed guidelines Thursday for solar development on public lands in the West, a move that could speed renewable-energy projects that have been mired in environmental controversy. The detailed analysis, known as Draft Solar Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement, identifies 24 "solar energy zones" in six states that Interior Secretary Ken Salazar said would be most suited "for environmentally sound, utility-scale solar energy production." "We think it provides a common-sense and flexible framework through which to grow our nation's renewable energy economy," Salazar told reporters in a conference call.

Fairfax unveils plan to prop up aging school buildings
In preparation for a projected enrollment boom, Fairfax County education officials unveiled a plan Thursday to renovate a slew of aging schools at a cost of $805 million through the next decade.

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Georgetown voters approve water planA handful of Georgetown voters approved a $5.5 million referendum package Tuesday to overhaul aging water systems in townSeventy-seven residents and corporate property owners voted on three separate plans to borrow money for the water projects. The package includes interest rates as low as 1.5 percent, grants and principal forgiveness.One part of the project, which passed by a vote of 59 to 17, would fix aging water-pipe connections -- more than 50 years old -- that the town has been struggling with over the last few years.Fifty to 60 of the lead-soldered water connections break annually, meaning crews have to be called out on an emergency basis to fix them. Last year, repairs cost $102,895.

DuPont seed business licenses corn trait from Swiss company
Nonexclusive deal with Syngenta could be worth up to $400M Pioneer Hi-Bred, an Iowa-based DuPont Co. business that sells genetically modified agricultural seeds, has agreed to license a biotech corn trait from Swiss seed company Syngenta in a deal worth up to $400 million. ... Farmers in Delaware, and globally, plant crops engineered with bacteria to ward off pests like the rootworm that can ravage moneymaking crops.

MARYLAND

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BALTIMORE SUN

Baltimore landlord jailed over lead paint violations Judge orders owner held until units fixed or tenants relocatedA Baltimore landlord has been jailed by a city Circuit Court judge for failing after years of pressure to fix lead-paint poisoning hazards in all of his rental units, state officials said Thursday. Cephus Murrell, whose address is listed in court records as the 600 block of Laurel Hill Lane in Catonsville, was ordered jailed for contempt of court by Judge W. Michael Pierson until the landlord remedies lead-paint risks in all of his units or relocates the tenants to safe

housing at his expense. The judge acted at a hearing Wednesday in which state officials said the landlord had not fully complied with the judge's previous order to fix all his units or face jail. Murrell, who was ordered to report to jail Thursday morning, did not return phone calls.

ANNAPOLIS CAPITAL

New tools to help keep bay safer

Maryland's Natural Resources Police yesterday unveiled a new software system designed to provide real-time radar and information to enhance security and law enforcement on the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.The initial deployment of four radar stations and one long-range camera, all tied into an online network, is the first step toward covering the entire bay. When fully operational, the system, with up to 20 radar stations, will aid search and rescue, homeland security, and maritime and conservation law enforcement efforts.

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

River closed due to sewage leak

(yesterday) SALISBURY — Due to sanitary overflow from a sewer main on Fitzwater Street, the Wicomico County Department of Environmental Health has closed the Wicomico River until 8 a.m. tomorrow for fishing and contact sports.The closure is caused by a break in a 10-inch wastewater line, which allowed 10,000 gallons of partially treated wastewater to enter the storm drain system that flows into the river. The flow of the wastewater from the pipe has been stopped and repairs are being made.

MARYLAND GAZETTE

In a recession, it's not easy being green

Bay cleanup, stormwater management, wind power top the list. ANNAPOLIS — Trying fiscal conditions have environmental advocates approaching the 2011 legislative session with scaled-back expectations they say are essential to meeting federal Chesapeake Bay cleanup requirements and securing Maryland's energy future. As Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) and top lawmakers warn that the state's projected $1.6 billion shortfall will force unpleasant choices, environmental groups are hoping to protect programs that already have sustained budget cuts or seen revenues diverted to other areas.

Bethesda environmentalists hail Elrich's runoff bill

Bethesda environmentalists are heralding a proposal by a Montgomery County Council member to increase fines for sediment runoff violations, saying it is a major step toward cleaning up local waterways. The bill, proposed Tuesday by Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park, would bring the penalties levied against developers for violating county rules on stormwater runoff and construction site erosion to the highest allowed by law, a move advocates say is the only way to abate problems caused by harsh chemicals and soils entering nearby streams.

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CECIL WHIG

County gets more funds to upgrade septic systems

Cecil County has received $496,500 in "flush tax" funds to help residents upgrade their septic systems. County Health Officer Stephanie Garrity said the grants began two years ago - Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) awarded Cecil County with $650,000 in November 2008 in its first round of funding to improve septic systems and help clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

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VIRGINIA

CHARLOTTESVILLE DAILY PROGRESS

SELC seeks U.S. forest protections <>The Southern Environmental Law Center is joining nearly a dozen other advocacy groups in calling on the Obama administration to protect America's national forests. The Charlottesville-based law center and the other groups launched an ad campaign Thursday to deliver that message. The government is developing new national forest management rules, which are due in early 2011. They could have a direct impact on Virginia's George Washington and Jefferson national forests. The new rules will apply to 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands in 44 states.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Va. agency says Pilgrim's violating air permit TIMBERVILLE, Va. — State regulators say Pilgrim's Pride could face civil penalties if it doesn't correct odor problems at its processing plant near Timberville.The Department of Environmental Quality recently issued a notice of violation alleging the company isn't in compliance with its air quality permit.Deputy regional director Keith Fowler told The Daily News-Record that the agency hasn't seen much progress in reducing the odor's intensity or magnitude.Pilgrim's Pride has installed $200,000 worth of equipment and taken other steps to eliminate the odor. Company spokesman Gary Rhodes told the newspaper that Pilgrim's Pride will continue working to resolve the problem.

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

W.Va. Sen. Jay Rockefeller to push vote on bill to block EPA efforts to curb global warming This just in from the office of West Virginia Sen. Jay Rockefeller:*Senator Jay Rockefeller has informed Senate Leadership that he will insist on a vote on his EPA-suspension legislation this year. If left with no other option, Senator Rockefeller will seek to suspend the rules on the Omnibus Appropriations bill to bring up his legislation. "The time has come for us to make a decision on the energy future of our country," said Senator Rockefeller. "I have spent this year fighting to make sure that Congress, not the EPA, determines how best to reduce greenhouse gases in a way that protects West Virginia's economy.*

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

Judge could combine cases against DuPont
(yesterday) CLARKSBURG, W.Va. -- A judge is considering whether to consolidate 15 personal injury lawsuits from families blaming cancer and lesser ailments on long-term toxic exposure to a former DuPont zinc-smelting plantHarrison Circuit Judge Thomas Bedell has scheduled a hearing for Jan. 12 in Clarksburg. Earlier this month, a federal judge moved the case back to state court. The plaintiffs have already won a class-action lawsuit over pollution from the former plant in Spelter.

Metal dust may have ignited fatal New Cumberland blast CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Federal investigators are examining the possibility that explosive metal dust could have fueled last week's blast that killed three workers at a small Northern Panhandle chemical plant.Tiny particles of titanium and zirconium dust could easily have ignited the Dec. 9 explosion at the AL Solutions facility in New Cumberland, U.S. Chemical Safety Board lead investigator Robert Hall told reporters during a Thursday briefing.

DAILY MAIL

<>State helps power generators pay for equipmentThe West Virginia Economic Development Authority has

allocated $60 million in tax-exempt bonding authority to Appalachian Power for environmental projects at the John Amos power plant and $20.6 million to Longview Power for pollution control equipment on its power plant under construction near Morgantown. The allocations are the latest among many made to the two projects in recent years. Appalachian Power and other subsidiaries of American Electric Power have received numerous bond allocations to help finance the $1.6 billion spent on pollution control equipment at the John Amos plant.

STATE JOURNAL

Chesapeake Energy Speaks to Responders About Gas Drilling Safety

Chesapeake Energy hosted a natural gas drilling safety meeting in Wetzel County Thursday.PROCTOR -- Natural gas drilling is a growing industry to the Ohio Valley, and safety was the topic at a meeting Thursday night in Wetzel County.Officials from Chesapeake Energy came all the way from Oklahoma City, Okla. to talk with first responders from Brooke, Ohio, Marshall and Wetzel Counties. It is all to train and educate officials in drilling safety so accidents happen less often. Responders from emergency management, law enforcement, 911 dispatch, EMS and fire listened closely as Chesapeake's Energy Response Coordinator, James Pratt spoke about dealing with gas drilling emergencies. Responders also had the opportunity to ask questions.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

W.Va. awards recycling grants CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) - The state Department of Environmental Protection has handed out more than $1.55 million in recycling assistance grants. DEP Secretary Randy Huffman awarded the grants Thursday to 36 entities that included solid waste authorities, county commissions, municipalities, private industries and nonprofit groups. Funding for the program was generated through a fee of $1 per ton of solid waste disposed at in-state landfills.

WHEELING INTELLIGENCER

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MISCELLANEOUS

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Montrose to 19 families in the Carter Road area of Dimock."We didn't know anything about it until we got on the call (Wednesday) night," Carter said. "We had no idea what was coming."

NEW YORK TIMES

California Approves Stringent Pollution CurbsSAN FRANCISCO — California regulators on Thursday adopted the nation's most comprehensive rules to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and other heat-trapping gases, a move that will put the state far ahead of the rest of the country in energy reform.

Environmental Justice Activist Urges EPA Chief 'to Roll Up Your Sleeves' at Tense W. H. Forum Suzie Canales was visibly frustrated as she sat on a small couch with U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson yesterday, just outside the first-ever White House Forum on Environmental Justice. "The government has done nothing," said Canales, who had taken time off from her job as a cafeteria worker in Corpus Christi, Texas, to attend the forum.

Politics at Two Levels in Fight With the EPA... The Obama administration's E.P.A. has aggressively crossed swords with Texas air-quality regulators — especially since Al Armendariz, a hard-charging academic, took over the agency's south-central regional office a year ago. The E.P.A. has insisted that the state's air-pollution permitting system for big plants is too lax. It has told Texas and every other state to prepare for regulation of heat-trapping gases, a hated concept in these parts, where skepticism of global climate change as a man-made phenomenon runs deep.

Letter: Standards on Smog
Re "E.P.A. Delays Tougher Rules on Emissions" (front page, Dec. 10):It's not surprising that the coal and oil industries are seeking to block clean air progress, but that is no excuse for the Obama administration's delay of new lifesaving smog standards. By the Environmental Protection Agency's own estimate, putting off this decision for another half year means that between 2,000 and 6,000 Americans will die because of air pollution. Further, even the most stringent ozone standard that the E.P.A. is considering would still have a net economic benefit of billions of dollars, as the savings in health care costs would outweigh the costs of pollution controls.

WALL ST. JOURNAL

Battle Over Gas-Tainted Well Water
PARKER COUNTY, Texas—Holding a lighter to water from his well here, Steven Lipsky watched it catch fire. The question of how natural gas seeped into Mr. Lipsky's water has ignited a dispute between federal and state regulators over whether the contamination is related to nearby natural-gas drilling—and what should be done about it.

STATELINE

States taking a closer look at controversial natural gas drilling method
Environmentalists have long contended that the natural gas drilling method known as hydraulic fracturing — or "fracking" — poses a danger to drinking water supplies for millions of Americans. Alarming reports of water contamination in states where such drilling is common, including Colorado, Pennsylvania and Wyoming, have exacerbated their fears. Residents in some areas have described abnormalities — from flammable tap water to dying livestock — after fracturing began, and other areas have reported public health concerns related to tainted water.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Calif. regulators OK major greenhouse gas rules >
SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- Hoping other states will follow suit, California regulators overwhelmingly approved the nation's most extensive system giving owners of power plants, refineries and other major polluters financial incentives to emit fewer greenhouse gases. The Air Resources Board voted 9-1 Thursday to pass the key piece of

California's 2006 climate law - called AB32.

Fed. officials plan stepped-up fight against carp
TRAVERSE CITY, Mich. -- Federal officials promised a stepped-up fight Thursday to keep Asian carp out of the Great Lakes by better tracking their movements, blocking potential migration pathways and killing any that manage to evade a network of new and improved barriers.