EPA Region III

Office of Public Affairs

EARLY BIRD HEADLINES

Wednesday, March 21, 2012

*** MORNING HOT LIST ***

So, is Dimock's Water Really Safe to Drink?

PROPUBLICA When the Environmental Protection Agency announced last week that tests showed the water is safe to drink in Dimock, Penn., a national hot spot for concerns about fracking, it seemed to vindicate the energy industry's insistence that drilling had not caused pollution in the area. But what the agency didn't say – at least, not publicly – is that the water samples contained dangerous quantities of methane gas, a finding that confirmed some of the agency's initial concerns and the complaints raised by Dimock residents since 2009. The test results also showed the group of wells contained dozens of other contaminants, including low levels of chemicals known to cause cancer and heavy metals that exceed the agency's "trigger level" and could lead to illness if consumed over an extended period of time. The EPA's assurances suggest that the substances detected do not violate specific drinking water standards, but no such standards exist for some of the contaminants and some experts said the agency should have acknowledged that they were detected at all. "Any suggestion that water from these wells is safe for domestic use would be preliminary or inappropriate," said Ron Bishop, a chemist at the State University of New York's College at Oneonta, who has spoken out about environmental concerns from drilling. Dimock residents are struggling to reconcile the EPA's public account with the results they have been given in private. "I'm sitting here looking at the values I have on my sheet – I'm over the thresholds – and yet they are telling me my water is drinkable," said Scott Ely, a Dimock resident whose water contains methane at three times the state limit, as well as lithium, a substance that can cause kidney and thyroid disorders. "I'm confused about the whole thing… I'm flabbergasted."

Plan finds state on track to reduce greenhouse gases

BALTIMORE SUN Maryland is largely on track to meet its goal of reducing climate-warming pollution 25 percent by the end of the decade, according to O'Malley administration officials, but still needs legislation being debated in Annapolis to put wind turbines off Ocean City, limit sprawl and increase funding for mass transit. A draft plan developed by the Maryland Department of the Environment and to be released Wednesday says the state has nearly all the measures in place to comply with a 2009 law requiring curbs on the state's emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases." The effort should create jobs in the process rather than hurt the economy, the plan says, and it will have the side benefit of improving air quality and helping restore the Chesapeake Bay. "I think everyone was real worried that we were going to have to do really crazy stuff to get to the law's requirements," said George S. "Tad" Aburn Jr., the MDE's air management director, "but a lot of stuff we're already doing."

PPG Industries sued over river pollution

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PITTSBURGH POST GAZETTE Two environmental organizations sued PPG Industries and Ford City Tuesday, saying they are not meeting obligations to keep pollutants from leaching out of old slurry ponds into the Allegheny River. The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court by PennEnvironment and the Sierra Club said that for decades, PPG Industries put glass polishing waste into lagoons that became contaminated with antimony, arsenic, lead and other toxins. The site was sold to Ford City for $1 in 1972. It said that a 2009 agreement negotiated by the state Department of Environmental Protection requires the glass and coating maker to monitor, report on and control pollution from the former dump site, and a later order demands the removal of the materials. Using data submitted by PPG to DEP, the environmental groups identified 162 discharge violations and 33 reporting violations in 2010 and 2011, according to the complaint. It seeks a court declaration that PPG violated the agreement with DEP, an order to follow the agreement and monetary penalties. "PPG has had five decades to properly remediate this site, stop its illegal pollution and protect the Allegheny River," said Erika Staaf, clean water advocate for PennEnvironment. "So the time for action to clean up the site is now. Our environmental laws are meaningless if polluters can violate them with impunity."

Clean-air efforts show results

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW Air pollution around the Clairton Coke Works has fallen to levels that for the first time meet federal standards set in the 1990s, Allegheny County officials said on Tuesday. The levels still haven't hit stricter requirements for daily measurements set six years ago, though. "I think it's important to acknowledge the progress that we've made," said Joe Osborne, legal director of the Group Against Smog and Pollution in Garfield. "This doesn't mean we can get complacent." The average level of soot in the air in Liberty from 2009 to 2011 was in line with the federal three-year standard set in 1996 -- 15 micrograms per cubic meter -- according to county Health Department data. The drop mirrors a trend around the rest of the county, where soot levels have dropped by nearly a third since 2000, bringing the air in Clairton, North Braddock, Harrison and Lawrenceville into compliance. "Air quality in Allegheny County is the best it has been since the industrial revolution began more than 100 years ago," county Air Quality Program Manager Jim Thompson said in a news release from the County Executive's Office. Health workers collect air samples from eight sites around the county several times a week, Health Department spokesman Guillermo Cole said. Short-term measurements account for just one day, while long-term measurements average those daily samples over three years. Despite the improvements, the area has problems with short-term pollution and isn't in compliance with daily standards put in place in 2006. The air in Liberty and in Avalon, near industrial sites on Neville Island, exceeded 24-hour maximums of 35 micrograms per cubic meter in 2011. Liberty had as much as 59 micrograms -- its lowest peak since at least 1999 -- and Avalon had 38. The county has spent years working with U.S. Steel, the coke plant's owner, to control pollution, and that -- along with tougher federal standards -- is starting to pay off, Osborne said. The company also has cut back on its use of the plant and started a $500 million improvement project. It shut down three batteries -- a set of coke ovens -- there in 2009 and started using natural gas as a coke substitute. It has scheduled construction of a battery to replace some 60-year-old batteries to finish in December and start operation by January, according to a company report."We are committed to running our operations in the most environmentally responsible and energy-efficient manner possible," company spokeswoman Erin DiPietro said in an emailed statement. "And, as always, we will continue to look for additional ways to reduce emissions and improve our operations."

Republican Budget Would Cut Environment Funds, Calls for Limits on EPA

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) unveiled his fiscal 2013 budget blueprint March 20, a sweeping proposal that would overhaul taxes and entitlements but make spending cuts the White House said would be far too deep. The plan is set to be marked up in the Budget Committee on March 21, with floor action expected in the March 26 week.Ryan and other House Republicans said the plan was a bold move to tackle the government's fiscal situation, in contrast to the continued budget inaction on the Democratic-held Senate. Democrats and White House

officials said the plan was unbalanced because it would rely too much on spending cuts. Anti-deficit groups praised the plan as making the needed hard choices, even though it faces little chance of being adopted in the current political environment. The plan contains approximately $3.5 billion in fiscal 2013 spending cuts for environment and natural resources programs. Spending on those programs would fall from $36.8 billion in fiscal 2012 to $33.3 billion in fiscal 2013. House Republicans criticized the president in a summary of the budget proposal for supporting "the Environmental Protection Agency's unilateral plan to impose emissions restrictions on American businesses." The budget resolution calls on Congress to "limit EPA's discretionary power" to implement a greenhouse gas emissions cap-and-trade program. The budget summary also called on Congress to expand domestic energy development, which House Republicans said would create jobs and lower the price of energy. House Republicans criticized the president's budget request to increase federal government spending on energy programs by almost 90 percent compared to fiscal 2012 enacted levels and 138 percent compared to fiscal 2011.Plan Would Leave Deficit of $797 billion For fiscal year 2013 beginning Oct. 1, the Ryan plan proposes $3.530 trillion in spending and $2.734 trillion in revenues, leaving a deficit of $797 billion.

PENNSYLVANIA

PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences celebrating its bicentennial Deep within the Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University - a hushed maze of often dark hallways - are birds collected more than 100 years ago by John James Audubon. Today, the manager of that collection, Nate Rice, is in the jungles of North Vietnam, doing studies that may help solve the puzzle of avian flu. More than half a century ago, water-quality expert Ruth Patrick analyzed single-celled aquatic organisms from the hull of a German U-boat and learned where it had been based. Today, Academy scientists are testing northern Pennsylvania streams to determine whether gas drilling in the Marcellus Shale is degrading water quality. Such is how the past and future intersect at the oldest natural history museum in the hemisphere, which Wednesday marks its 200th anniversary. Leaders are on a course to reinvent the Academy. They are reinvigorating the research, making the exhibits more relevant, and moving the Academy into the realm of public policy. "Our job is to provide comprehensive data that will allow people to make good decisions," said George W. Gephart Jr., president and chief executive, who joined the Academy in August 2010. Although the Field Museum in Chicago and the American Museum of Natural History in New York have more visitors and bigger endowments, the Academy is renowned for the incalculable value of its collection. More than 17 million specimens include herbs gathered on the Lewis and Clark expedition and fossils that belonged to Thomas Jefferson.

Northeast US Should Brace for Spike in Lyme Disease: Expert The northeastern United States may see a significant increase in cases of Lyme disease this spring, an expert warns. The reason is that oak trees produced relatively few acorns this year, part of a normal cycle of boom and bust years for the acorn crop. But the small crop means trouble for the white-footed mouse, which feeds on the acorns."We had a boom in acorns, followed by a boom in mice. And now, on the heels of one of the smallest acorn crops we've ever seen, the mouse population is crashing," Richard Ostfeld, a disease ecologist at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, N.Y., said in an institute news release. What does that have to do with Lyme disease? Mice are the preferred host for black-legged ticks, which transmit Lyme disease. Black-legged ticks need a bloodmeal at three different stages -- as larvae, as nymphs and as adults. As of the spring, the larval ticks that fed on 2011's large mouse population will be looking for their nymphal meal. "This spring, there will be a lot of *Borrelia burgdorferi*-infected black-legged ticks in our forests looking for a blood meal. And instead of finding a white-footed mouse, they are going to find other mammals -- like us," Ostfeld added. *Borrelia burgdorferi* is the bacterium that causes Lyme disease.

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

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Allegheny River. The lawsuit filed in U.S. District Court by PennEnvironment and the Sierra Club said that for decades, PPG Industries put glass polishing waste into lagoons that became contaminated with antimony, arsenic, lead and other toxins. The site was sold to Ford City for $1 in 1972. It said that a 2009 agreement negotiated by the state Department of Environmental Protection requires the glass and coating maker to monitor, report on and control pollution from the former dump site, and a later order demands the removal of the materials. Using data submitted by PPG to DEP, the environmental groups identified 162 discharge violations and 33 reporting violations in 2010 and 2011, according to the complaint. It seeks a court declaration that PPG violated the agreement with DEP, an order to follow the agreement and monetary penalties. "PPG has had five decades to properly remediate this site, stop its illegal pollution and protect the Allegheny River," said Erika Staaf, clean water advocate for PennEnvironment. "So the time for action to clean up the site is now. Our environmental laws are meaningless if polluters can violate them with impunity."

Locked and Dammed: Neglect erodes river commerce*This is the third of a four-part series.*There is a price to be paid for neglecting the nation's aging system of locks and dams, an economic engine in desperate need of a tune-up.On the Monongahela River, the price tag could be as high as $1 billion annually if the breakdown of a lock or dam puts the river off limits to barges delivering coal to power plants, according to a study performed last year for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.About 500 miles down the Ohio River from Pittsburgh, 18 months of delays caused by repairs needed at three troubled locks is expected to cost one utility alone $16 million, according to a company spokesman.

Environmental groups score lawmakers on impact fee votes Four environmental groups want Pennsylvanians to remember their lawmakers' votes on the new Marcellus Shale fee and regulatory measure, and have compiled a scorecard to tell residents how they view those votes.Those organizations -- Conservation Voters of PA, Clean Water Action, PennEnvironment and the Sierra Club -- released their first-ever collaborative voting scorecard on Tuesday morning. The document reviews the amendment and final votes taken on House Bill 1950, the shale drilling bill known as Act 13 since gaining Gov. Tom Corbett's signature last month. The document unsurprisingly gave high marks to many Democrats, including perfect scores for 42 state representatives and 14 senators.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

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spokeswoman Erin DiPietro said in an emailed statement. "And, as always, we will continue to look for additional ways to reduce emissions and improve our operations."

Penn State offers safe drinking water clinic Sessions for a safe drinking water clinic for people who rely on private wells, springs or cisterns will be held from 1-3 and 6-8 p.m. Tuesday at the Penn State Extension office, 214 Donohoe Road, east of Greensburg. Topics will include well location, construction, maintenance and testing, along with drinking water standards and treatments. Participants can bring samples of their drinking water for testing. Information on collecting water samples will be given upon registration. Space is limited to 30 households; fee is $10 per household; deadline is March 23. Information and registration: 877-489-1398 or www.cvent.com/d/pcqL29.

Environmental groups re-file lawsuit against PPG over Ford City dump PennEnvironment and the Sierra Club today re-filed a lawsuit asking a federal judge to force PPG Industries Inc. to comply with a 2009 state order that it monitor and collect seepage from covered waste lagoons at a 150-acre dump site in Armstrong County. The lawsuit names PPG and Ford City as defendants but the groups are not seeking damages from the borough. The site is owned by Ford City but sits in Cadogan and North Buffalo. PPG used the lagoons from 1950 to 1970 to hold waste from its Ford City manufacturing plant on the other side of the Allegheny River, the lawsuit says. The highly corrosive slurry contains arsenic, lead, antimony and other metals and is leaking through the surrounding rocks into the river, the lawsuit says. The groups originally sued in January but withdrew the complaint because they failed to give a required 60-day notice to one person affected by the lawsuit, said PennEnvironment spokeswoman Erika Staaf. The allegations in the new lawsuit are the same as those in the original complaint, she said.A PPG spokesman declined comment.

Pre-treatment plant for Latrobe brewery to begin in July The construction of a $7 million plant to treat organic waste from City Brewing Co.'s operations in Latrobe is on schedule to be completed this summer, with a trial run planned for the end of May, a Latrobe Municipal Authority official said on Tuesday. Clean water will be pumped into the five tanks of the pre-treatment plant on brewery property for a trial run to remove any "bugs" in the system to make certain it is operating properly, said authority Manager Tom Gray after the agency's meeting. The pre-treatment plant is expected to begin full operation in July. The plant, designed to remove the high-strength organic waste from the brewery -- yeast, hops, barley, malt and other ingredients of brewing beverages -- will have a capacity to treat 590,000 gallons a day, Gray said. The brewery now produces about 350,000 to 400,000 gallons of waste daily. The treatment plant should be sufficient to treat the amount of waste produced at the brewery, Gray said. The brewery's production reached about 700,000 barrels last year. City Brewing is expecting to increase production by 10 percent to 15 percent this year. To prevent the problem of organic overload at the municipal authority's treatment plant while the brewery's pre-treatment plant is being constructed, City Brewing is hauling the high-strength organic waste to another treatment facility, Gray said. The effluent had produced odors at the plant. American Water Works Co. Inc. of Vorhees, N.J., is managing the startup and operations of City Brewing's pre-treatment plant. The high-strength organic waste will be treated and then blended with other lower-strength waste from the brewery before being discharged into the municipal authority's system along Loyalhanna Creek.

Fayette to vote on Marcellus fee Fayette County commissioners will hold a special meeting to again consider adopting an ordinance imposing impact fees on Marcellus shale wells. The proposed ordinance was scheduled for a vote during Tuesday's board meeting. Commissioner Vincent Zapotosky rescinded his motion to adopt the ordinance after Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said it required an advertising period. "You can't pass it today. We have the time," Zimmerlink said. The board agreed to advertise the proposed ordinance and schedule a vote at 11 a.m. April 10. Gov. Tom Corbett signed the Marcellus Shale Act 13 into law on Feb. 14, with some provisions going into effect then and others becoming effective on April 14. The law creates a drilling impact fee and specifies how those fees are to be distributed. A significant portion of the fees generated will be used to cover the local impacts of drilling, while several state agencies would also receive funding for a variety of other purposes.

Snowy owl has birdwatchers flocking to Armstrong County Seeing any owl out in the open during the day isn't common in Pennsylvania, so a large, nearly pure-white owl soaking up the unseasonably warm March sunshine has

become a spectacle on the farm about a mile south of Worthington.

HARRISBURGH PATRIOT NEWS

Gov. Tom Corbett seeks to permanently get rid of Keystone Parks, Recreation and Conservation Fund Pennsylvania voters overwhelmingly supported a fund to help pay for parks, trails and open space in 1993, when they passed a referendum by a ratio of 65 percent to 35 percent. Since then the Keystone Parks, Recreation and Conservation Fund, paid from a share of real estate transfer taxes, has helped more than 3,000 projects in the state, including 73 in Cumberland County, 69 in Dauphin, 42 in Lebanon, 26 in Perry and 120 in York. Baseball fields, trout streams, hiking trails, community pools, bicycle paths, nature centers, scenic views and much more have benefited from the fund.Now Gov. Tom Corbett is seeking to permanently get rid of it, sending the money to the general fund budget instead.Activists say it is the largest proposed cut to conservation in the stateâ€™s history. This combined with other cuts to conservation over the past decade would amount to $1.8 billion in cuts, activists say â€" $1.4 billion under former Gov. Ed Rendell and $376.5 million under Corbett so far. â€œThis will have a devastating effect,â€ Andy Loza, executive director of the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association said. Of course, conservationists are not alone in protesting cuts at the state level, which Corbett have said are necessary to balance the budget in tough economic times without raising taxes, which he has pledged not to do. Advocates for public education, universities, the disabled, horse racing and the poor have all been protesting state cuts.

STATE COLLEGE CENTRE DAILY TIMES

Group urges county not to take drilling fees Environmental groups ranked state legislators on drilling votes. Members of an environmental group asked the Centre County commissioners Tuesday to reject the Marcellus Shale impact fee. Speaking out at a public hearing, several local members of the Sierra Club said the proposed drilling fee isn't enough. They said the legislation provides too little to cover damages caused by the drilling industry, and fails to address environmental concerns. Club members were the lone voices to speak up Tuesday morning during a public hearing held by the county commissioners. The commissioners can now vote on whether to enact the fee, a decision they said could come within the next two weeks. The legislation, signed into law last month by Gov. Tom Corbett, gives counties the power to decide for themselves whether to impose the fee. While the commissioners have publicly supported taking the money on the table, at least three county residents don't think it's enough. "The impact fee is a joke," local Sierra Club chairman Gary Thorn-bloom said after the hearing. "Research how much it costs to replace one mile of road, how much it costs to repair a bridge." The county would receive an estimated $500,000 under the plan. Additional money would flow into the municipalities, especially those with wells drilled between 2005 and 2011.

Environmental groups rank state legislators on drilling votes A coalition of environmental groups has handed out rankings of every state senator and representative based on their votes related to Marcellus Shale drilling. Representatives of Clean Water Action, the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, the Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania and PennEnvironment created a scorecard rating of every state legislator based on their votes leading up to the passage of Act 13, a law signed by Gov. Tom Corbett on Feb. 14 that enacted an impact fee on gas drillers. This legislation is a significant step in the wrong direction that leaves our communities, our health, and our environment at continued risk, the groups said in their announcement on Tuesday. Act 13 tramples on municipal rights by creating minimal setbacks for drilling from residential areas, preempts local zoning laws, enacts inadequate environmental provisions, and sets the rate of the extraction fee too low, the group complained. Legislators were scored based on floor votes that highlighted environmental issues. Senators were rated on eight votes, including amendments that would have preserved local control over gas drilling, protected state forests from further drilling, and their positions on the legislation creating Act 13. House members were graded on 13 votes, including amendments that limited environmental funding, protected drinking water, made drillers pay for road damage and House Bill 1950, which ultimately became Act 13. How the area's lawmakers did:

ERIE TIMES-NEWS

Former Millcreek landfill closer to development A former landfill is closer to being converted into a Millcreek

Township athletic complex and a site for industrial development. Millcreek Supervisors Joseph Kujawa and Brian McGrath voted Tuesday on a consent agreement with a state environmental agency and a developer that will clear the way for remediation and development of 15 acres of the former Currie Landfill. Millcreek officials said the site had been used primarily for household waste, but state Department of Environmental Protection spokesman Kevin Sunday said the concern was some industrial waste that caused contamination. The household and industrial waste will be moved and buried in the southwest corner of the site, near railroad tracks. Township Engineer Rick Morris said the property to be remediated is west of the west branch of Cascade Creek, east of Selinger Avenue, south of West 15th Street and north of the CSX Railroad tracks near West 19th Street. Morris said that Millcreek will get a total of about 19.6 acres, but 11 acres will be usable for athletic fields. Part of the rest will be for a stormwater detention basin and for parking, he said. DEP is paying the $4.1 million remediation costs, which will include putting a 2-foot soil cap on the 11 acres, building the detention basin and the parking, Morris said. Millcreek plans to develop the 11 acres for athletic fields, possibly for lacrosse, soccer and baseball, Millcreek Township Solicitor Evan Adair said. Adair said another 4.6 acres will be available for industrial or light industrial use. Morris said a 9-inch gravel layer will be placed on that part of the tract. Adair said the work is expected to begin soon and will be completed by the end of 2013. "They're ready to roll," he said. Moxie Nein, LLC, owned by local developer Rick Griffith, will buy the two properties for at least $45,000, and donate the 19.6 acres to Millcreek.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

Environmental groups release impact fee vote scorecard HARRISBURG - A series of votes leading to enactment of the Marcellus Shale drillers impact fee law is drawing scrutiny from a coalition of state environmental groups. The groups released a Pennsylvania Marcellus Shale Scorecard on Tuesday, giving each state lawmaker a grade for votes on bill amendments, chamber-approved bill versions and final passage of Act 13 between November and February. The groups, which include the Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter, Clean Water Action, PennÂEnvironment and Conservation Voters of Pennsylvania, hope the scorecard will provide debate fodder for this year's races for state House and Senate seats. The groups are critical of the impact fee law, which they say overturns local drilling ordinances, sets one of the nation's lowest natural gas extraction fees and makes only minimal improvements in environmental protections. "We do believe that when voters go to the polls, this is one of the important issues they need to consider," said Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club director. The groups plan a mass distribution of the scorecard and are posting it on their websites.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WAMU-RADIO

Are Fracking Fees The Future In Maryland? A bill in Maryland that would implement a fee on all land leased for the controversial natural gas drilling-technique "fracking" has passed the House of Delegates by an 88-49 vote. Democratic delegate Heather Mizuer of Montgomery County sponsored the bill that would take the money raised by the fees and spend it on a study of the effects of hydraulic fracturing. Opponents of the practice say the controversial drilling technique is responsible for poisoned water supplies and earthquakes in other states that lie on top of the Marcellus Shale. Companies want to extract natural gas from the rock formation. "It's a question of whether does the taxpayer pay or does the industry pay? And we think the industry should pay for this," says Mizuer. Mizuer dismissed claims that growth of the industry in the state would bring jobs with it, noting that gas companies bring in professionals on their payrolls from Texas, Louisiana and other oil producing states to do the work. One of the dissenters on the measure was Republican Wendell Beitzel, who represents Allegany and Garrett Counties, the only two counties that lie on top of the Marcellus Shale, a rock formation from which companies want to extract natural gas. "I'm fearful that what we're going to see is the companies that would even think of coming to Maryland to drill a well will say there's a big sign at our border saying 'Gas Companies Not Welcome,'" says Beitzel. Republican delegate Michael McDermott of the Eastern Shore took a different tacking, saying the Demoratic majority in Annapolis are picking and choosing which energy industries to support based on politics: "Would you say that it's

fair that we offer incentives for people to develop wind and solar, and yet we require this industry to pay us to study whether or not we should do it?"

WASHINGTON TIMES

Lack of infrastructure stalls natural gas use PITTSBURGH â€" With unprecedented amounts of natural gas in storage because of soaring supplies and plummeting prices, industry leaders and their political allies are mounting a major effort to find new uses to work down the glut. Replacing gasoline in the nationâ€™s automobiles is the ultimate goal, but building the necessary infrastructure - such as filling stations and a network of pipelines to move natural gas to metropolitan areas - remains a serious challenge. â€œThereâ€™s a whole host of [natural gas] applications. Itâ€™s almost limitless. We just have to play a very quick game of catch-up to create those opportunities,â€ said Pennsylvania Lt. Gov. Jim Cawley, a first-term Republican, after a speech here Tuesday at the Marcellus Midstream Conference, one of the largest oil and gas business gatherings in the nation. â€œOur biggest challenge right now is to get the infrastructure in place to get the gas to where the people are,â€ he said. As the epicenter of the Marcellus Shale drilling boom, Pennsylvania has taken a lead role in that effort. Legislation signed into law this year provides tax credits and other incentives for both private businesses and local transit agencies to convert their fleets to run on natural gas. Several major firms, such as grocery chain Giant Eagle, have already done so. The company has also opened natural gas fueling stations at several store locations.

DELAWARE

WILMINGTON NEWS JOURNAL

Dumping wastewater in ocean will do least harm, study says

DELAWARE CAPE GAZETTE

Bay coastal towns are especially vulnerable The Atlantic Coast bore the brunt of the Storm of '62, yet those who lived along the Delaware Bay paid perhaps the highest price: Six members of one family died in Bowers and another person died in nearby Slaughter Beach. As the storm battered the coast for five consecutive high tides, roads to the bay towns were cut off. Lonnie Field, who grew up in Bowers Beach and has written a song about the storm, said his mother was frantic calling to him as he was getting ready for school March 6. â€œWe looked out back and saw houses floating in the marsh," he said. It didn't take long for the family to evacuate the area to move in with friends in Milford. Thirteen at the time, Field said the state board of health required everyone to get a typhoid shot when they returned home. 'I remember I got really sick from the shot," he said. He also recalls a strange event, later that spring, when state officials burned off marsh phragmites. "We heard explosions from propane tanks that had washed out into the marsh. It sounded like bombs were going off," he said. The events of that week are etched in Field's mind, but it wasn't until about four years ago that he sat down and wrote a song about the storm. With his band, Sand Creek, Field has recorded" The '62 Stormâ€ and filmmaker Michael Oates has incorporated the song and band in a music video. Oates directed, wrote and produced the film â€œThe â€™62 Storm â€" Delaware's Shared Response."

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

Blog: New report: Coal power is not cheap power Over on Twitter, the State Journal's Taylor Kuykendall pointed out this morning an interesting new report from an Alaska non-profit group called Ground Truth Trekking. The report

concludes:

CHARLESTON DAILY MAIL

Editorial: Some cities have privatized recyclingIf citizens want to go greener, and for-profits can do it for less . . . The Kanawha County Solid Waste Authority closed its Slack Street recycling center because the building is unsafe. This left cities searching for cost-effective ways to handle recyclables. The authority recently spent about $350 to truck nearly four tons of recyclable paper to a recyling center in Beckley. The authority's executive director, Norm Steenstra, said continuing to do that could bankrupt the authority in six months. The city of Charleston has also made a test run to Beckley with about three tons of mixed recyclables. It used 25 gallons of fuel for the 124-mile roundtrip. Dunbar is trying a different experiment. Cash-in Recyle of Nitro will pay the city for all its recyclables and provide deposit bins at certain locations. Other cities across the country are privatizing trash collection or recycling or both. I n Lockport, N.Y., privatized its trash and recycling program in October and expects to save $10 million over 10 years, the Buffalo News reported. It said Modern Corp., Republic Services and Waste Management are the big three companies in western New York. In Ada, Okla., privatized garbage collection and added curbside recycling service Dec. 1. The contract went to WCA Waste Corp., which operates in 14 states. No city employees lost their jobs.

Quick solution sought for waste The Kanawha County Solid Waste Authority is hoping its current predicament qualifies as an emergency situation so it can avoid the bidding process for construction of a temporary shelter at Slack Street. Executive Director Norm Steenstra hopes to have the...

Logan County residents battle to pick up after flood CHARLESTON, W.Va. - Kim Butcher used to have one of the most picturesque lawns along Mud Fork Road in Logan County. Today, she has a mud pit. Butcher, 52, was one of hundreds along Mud Fork digging out and trying to recover Monday after floods swept th...

Editorial: Weatherization does not bear scrutinyAmerican taxpayers had for some time funded a $450 million-a-year weatherization program that provided insulation for the homes of the poor in the hope of reducing their utility bills. Then as part of the $787 billion stimulus, Democrats upped funding...

WEST VIRGINIA STATE JOURNAL

Marcellus shale informational meetings planned The West Virginia University Extension Service will help to educate community members on issues related to the Marcellus shale and its impact on the state. The program will be at the Ritchie County 4-H Camp Assembly Hall at 6 p.m. March 22 and at the Parsons Volunteer Fire Department in Tucker County at 6 p.m. April 26. This is the third year for the educational programs. Organizers say there's a continued need and demand for updated information regarding the natural gas industry and its drilling. Extension official Jennifer Williams said presenters will include representatives of the state health department, the Department of Environmental Protection and a fisheries biologist. Topics will range from who handles drilling permits to road damage and who handles repairs.

Analyst: Ethane solution imminent, propane needs attention PITTSBURGH - Natural gas liquids production in the northeast will increase about 50 times by 2020 based on what's expected in the Marcellus and Utica shales. What will happen to all those liquids? The question was posed by Kristen Holmquist, manager for natural gas liquids at BENTEK Energy at the third annual Marcellus Midstream Conference presented by Hart Energy March 19-22 in Pittsburgh. Range Resources Corp. Senior Vice President Rodney Waller had an answer for her. Production of natural gas liquids in the Marcellus and Utica shale region is expected to be about 645,000 barrels per day, or bpd, by 2020, Holmquist said. "Right now we produce in the northeast about 10,000, 15,000 barrels per day of natural gas liquids, so this is a huge and very dramatic change in natural gas liquids production," she said. Production in the Marcellus will rise to about 390,000 bpd in 2020, with about 250,000 coming from the Utica â€" totaling at that time about 15 percent of U.S. production. Two years ago, Holmquist said, the industry saw a huge wave of ethane about to come from this region. Pipelines out of the region were discussed. The possibility of a local cracker or crackers also was discussed. Today, she said, it has started to be clear which of the proposals are going to move forward. "There is no longer an ethane problem in the Northeast," she said. "There have been sufficient solutions proposed."

The natural gas liquids butane and natural gasoline have markets in Canada as diluents in the oil sands production, she said.

WEST VIRGINIA STATE PUBLIC BROADCASTING

Virus affecting bass in some WV streams Bass-fishing is big in several areas of the state, but the Division of Natural Resources has found bass in four West Virginia lakes infected with a virus that could be fatal. Itâ€™s not the first time itâ€™s been found in the state. The disease is called Largemouth Bass Virus and it targets bass species. Itâ€™s been found in lakes in Wayne, Ritchie, Lewis, and Braxton counties. It affects the fish like the common cold affects humans, according to Chris Oâ€™ Bara, a fisheries biologist with the West Virginia DNR. It can be especially dangerous in the summer months, when water temperatures are warmer. Oâ€™ Bara says it can be fatal, but as of now the DNR hasnâ€™t linked it to fish deaths. "The fish may die; initially it was thought it only caused mortality in larger fish, but with more investigation into the virus, weâ€™ve found it does cause mortality in smaller fish as well," he said. "We have found the virus in several populations within the state." This isnâ€™t the first time largemouth bass virus has been spotted in West Virginia streams.bout five years ago, Oâ€™ Bara says the DNR found it in a water body. Now Oâ€™ Bara says itâ€™s important to stop the virus from spreading. "It can be spread in numerous ways. One thing is moving fish; moving fish from one water body to another water body will definitely have effect in moving the virus, so we really stress that people donâ€™t move fish from one water body to another water body," he said.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. Va.)

Two state coal operators sued over water pollution CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Environmentalists are suing two more coal companies over pollution from mining operations in Boone and Nicholas counties. The Sierra Club, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy and Ohio Valley Environmental Council say that Elk Run Coal Co. and Alex Energy have contaminated headwater streams with sulfate and other dissolved solids. The case in U.S. District Court in Charleston says runoff affects the Laurel Creek and Twentymile Creek watersheds in violation of the federal Clean Water Act. It says Elk Run's White Castle No. 1 is polluting Mudlick and Stolling forks, while Alex's Robinson North Surface Mine is polluting Robinson Fork. The groups argue state and federal regulators have failed to address the problem. They're employing the same legal strategy they used to win a cleanup settlement last fall with Fola Coal Co.

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

House panel ok's 'flush' fee hike, runoff control mandate Gov.Martin O'Malley's bid to boost the "flush" fee every resident pays moved to the full House Tuesday, as did a measure requiring Maryland's largest counties and Baltimore city to start raising funds for curbing polluted storm runoff from streets and parking lots. The House Environmental Matters Committee voted to approve HB446, which would double the Bay Restoration Fund, aka the â€œflush tax.â€ The additional funds would help the state's Chesapeake Bay restoration effort by financing the completion of upgrades to the state's 67 largest sewage plants, so they discharge less bay-fouling nitrogen into creeks, rivers and the bay. The committee rejected a late administration bid to increase the fee beyond $5 a month per household that had been proposed, on average, in the governor's original bill. The amended measure also would waive the fee for up to 10 percent of the state's neediest residents who are receiving some sort of government financial aid. The House panel also endorsed HB987, which would require the state's nine largest counties - Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery and Prince Georgeâ€™s - plus Baltimore city to collect a fee for improving local storm-water drain systems and for treating polluted runoff. Officials from msot of those communities had testified in favor of a state-mandated storm-water fee, though all but Montgomery have balked at adopting one locally.

House OKs shale gas study fee, landowner protections Environmentalists hail compromise measure, industry still opposed. The House today passed legislation aimed at safeguarding western Maryland landowners from potential harm from drilling for natural gas in shale deposits in mountainous Garrett and Allegany counties.

Shore's Harris Creek targeted for oyster restoration Efforts to restore native oysters in Maryland's portion of the Chesapeake Bay are about to begin in earnest, as state and federal officials air plans to conduct large-scale reef rebuilding projects in Harris Creek on the Eastern Shore. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources, along with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the US. Army Corps of Engineers, are scheduled to present their plans for oyster restoration work in Harris Creek from 1 to 7 p.m. Wednesday at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum inSt. Michaels. Harris Creek, on the east side of Tilghmann Island and near the mouth of the Choptank River, has been targeted for major work starting later this year to reclaim and replant lost oyster reefs. "It was historically a very important harvest area," said Michael Naylor, DNR's shellfish director. Though surveys suggest perhaps 10 million oysters are still in the creek, he added, many reefs have been lost to disease and silt buildup. The creek was among many sanctuary areas in the bay the O'Malley adminstration set aside a couple years ago as part of its strategy for rebuilding native oyster populations.

Plan finds state on track to reduce greenhouse gases Maryland is largely on track to meet its goal of reducing climate-warming pollution 25 percent by the end of the decade, according to O'Malley administration officials, but still needs legislation being debated in Annapolis to put wind turbines off Ocean City, limit sprawl and increase funding for mass transit. A draft plan developed by the Maryland Department of the Environment and to be released Wednesday says the state has nearly all the measures in place to comply with a 2009 law requiring curbs on the state's emissions of carbon dioxide and other "greenhouse gases." The effort should create jobs in the process rather than hurt the economy, the plan says, and it will have the side benefit of improving air quality and helping restore the Chesapeake Bay. "I think everyone was real worried that we were going to have to do really crazy stuff to get to the law's requirements," said George S. "Tad" Aburn Jr., the MDE's air management director, "but a lot of stuff we're already doing."

Hearing on water bill woes Wednesday afternoon Baltimore residents who are frustrated over high or unusual water bills will have a chance to vent to city officials Wednesday afternoon.

Septic curbs clear Senate panel O'Malley environmenta bill likely due vote next week. Gov.Martin O'Malley's proposal to rein in development using septic systems took a step forward Friday as a Senate committee approved it.

SALISBURY DAILY TIMES

Ocean City home gets OK for wind turbines OCEAN CITY -- A family has permission to install a set of energy-generating wind turbines on the roof of their Boardwalk home. The set of three will comprise the first turbines on the roof of a single-family residence in Ocean City, and the Villa Santa family has been lobbying for permission to build them on top of their 14th Street house since 2011. The Town Council gave its unanimous blessing for the Villa Santas to be permitted this week, after municipal Planning and Development Director Jesse Houston recommended approval of the project. "They've been working on this a long time," said Council President Jim Hall. The approval comes with the caveat that the turbines must meet certain town requirements or they will have to be disassembled. Houston told the council the turbine set-up will be the same color as the building's roof, and the turbines will likely make less noise than the 55-decibel limit dictated by town law, which is roughly the sound of a normal conversation. "It should blend in quite well," Houston said. "It should be almost noiseless."

Volunteers needed for Del. dune grass planting project BETHANY BEACH -- Looking for something fun to do outdoors with the kids this weekend? If so, consider volunteering for the annual dune grass planting project that takes place annually along the Delaware shore. The state's Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control is looking for volunteers in Bethany and Dewey. The event, scheduled to take place from 9 a.m.-noon

Saturday, is now in its 23rd year. The goal is to stabilize the sand, which helps protect Delaware's shoreline. Last year, about 800 volunteers planted more than 150,000 stems of Cape American beach grass along four miles of coastline. According to Jennifer Luoma, event coordinator and an environmental scientist with DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section, most sites have enough volunteers, but Bethany and Dewey are lacking.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND ONLINE

Are Farmers Still the 'Original Environmentalists?'â€œFarmers are the original environmentalists.â€ Thatâ€™s the phrase I heard a few times during a recent Maryland state legislature committee hearing on a bill that would limit when farmers could apply manure and other fertilizers on croplands. Now, common sense would dictate that plants donâ€™t take up nutrients when plants are not growing. And science tells us that during the winter, these nutrients either seep into the water table or run off into the Chesapeake Bay. Every possible excuse was heard as to why farmers can't be asked to limit the application of manure on their fields. â€œPennsylvania pollutes more than anyone, why should we be responsible?â€ â€œFencing out livestock from streams is expensive!â€ â€œPoultry manure isnâ€™t as bad as everyone says! Itâ€™s not a waste product, itâ€™s a benefit!â€ It seems that farmers just do not want to take responsibility for the waste and manure produced on their farms. But are these excuses really valid? As a farmer in Carroll County, I understand the costs involved in starting up a farm from scratch. I also understand the challenges involved in farming in a traditional way, where the animals can graze and the manure is utilized responsibly. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office in Westminster was a huge help in getting us on our feet. The lessons Iâ€™ve learned, and what Iâ€™ve observed, apply throughout the mid-Atlantic.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Md.)

Md. House votes to charge energy companies for drilling studies ANNAPOLIS â€"Maryland would become the first state in the nation to charge energy companies a fee to finance studies on best practices for extracting natural gas from Marcellus Shale, under a bill approved Tuesday by the stateâ€™s House of Delegates. The House voted 94-41 to impose a $15-per-acre fee that supporters say would raise roughly $1.8 million to pay for the studies.Supporters cite health and environmental concerns about the drilling process as reasons to be careful, but opponents questioned why businesses that could help create jobs should have to pay for a study to determine whether they can do business in Western Maryland, where the Marcellus Shale is located.Del. Maggie McIntosh, D-Baltimore, pointed to water contamination, earthquakes and environmental damage from the drilling process in other states. â€œIt is important that when we eventually â€" probably â€" drill in Maryland that it is done in a safe way,â€ McIntosh, who chairs the House Environmental Matters Committee, said during debate.But opponents of the measure said the state is putting up roadblocks to economic development that could boost Western Maryland. â€œIâ€™m fearful that what weâ€™re going to see is the companies that would even think about coming to Maryland to drill a well will say thereâ€™s a big sign at our border saying: â€˜Gas companies not welcome,â€ â€™ said Del. Wendell Beitzel, R-Garrett.The measure now goes to the state Senate, where a similar bill stalled last year after clearing the House. Supporters acknowledge the bill could be a challenging sell in the Senate again. â€œI think that weâ€™re going to have challenges ahead, but weâ€™re showing more and more momentum every year on this,â€ said Del. Heather Mizeur, D-Montgomery, who sponsored the bill. â€œLast year, we werenâ€™t able to get it passed in part because it was a new topic.â€ Gov. Martin Oâ€™Malley signed an executive order last year that has effectively put drilling on hold until further review. The order requires a three-part study and a report on finding and recommendations.

Md. House panel approves flush taxA Maryland House committee has approved doubling the state's "flush tax" from $30 a year to $60 a year.The House Environmental Matters Committee passed the bill on Tuesday. The measure, which is one of Gov. Martin O'Malley's proposals, would enable the state to finish upgrading the 67 largest sewage plants in the state to reduce pollution in the Chesapeake Bay. The flush tax is now $2.50 a month. The committee decided not to increase the fee to more than $5 a month. The measure also was amended to provide a waiver for poor residents.

VIRGINIA

LYNCHBURG NEWS AND ADVANCE

Underground fire shuts down parts of Lynchburg's downtown A Tuesday night thunderstorm sparked an underground fire along Eighth and Main streets that shot flames 50 feet about street level, said Battalion Chief Jason Campbell. Fire crews responded at 9:36 p.m. after a bystander reported the blaze during the storm. By 11 p.m., the fire was contained but still smoldering through a sidewalk grate. No one was injured in the blaze. The fire likely originated from an electrical transformer located beneath the ground near a vacant parking lot by Eighth and Main streets, Campbell said. Fire crews, along with representatives Appalachian Power and Columbia Gas, were inspecting the area late Tuesday night to make sure the fire couldnâ€™t spread.

CHARLOTTESVILLE DAILY PROGRESS

Water authority awards dam contract to Thalle Construction Thalle Construction of Hillsborough, N.C., has been formally awarded the contract to build the new earthen dam for the Charlottesville-Albemarle County community water supply. The Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority finalized the agreement Tuesday.â€œWe have issued the notice of award and it was signed this morning,â€ said Thomas L. Frederick Jr., the RWSAâ€™s executive director. â€œThe notice to proceed [with construction] will be issued when all the contract documents are properly executed. Our best guess is that will take another two-three weeks.â€ â€œWe are excited for the opportunity to work with Rivanna and the residents towards the successful completion of this water supply project,â€ said Joseph M. Schiavone Jr., a senior project manager with Thalle. â€œWe enjoy this type of work. Itâ€™s very challenging.â€ In December, Thalle was announced as the low bidder among nine competing firms. Thalle bid about $21.5 million on the first phase of the dam. The earthen dam will be built downstream of the 1908 concrete dam at the Ragged Mountain Reservoir. The contract executed this week is technically for the damâ€™s first phase, which would raise the water level by 30 feet. However, in January the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County agreed to build the dam all at once and only fill it to 42 feet as water demand requires. Frederick said Thalle will submit a change order covering the extra work to build the dam to its full height. â€œ$26.9 million is our projection for the total project cost in the construction phase,â€ Frederick said. â€œIt is sufficient to cover those expenses.â€

ASSOCIATED PRESS (Va.)

Va. blue crab season off to strong start NEWPORT NEWS, Va. (AP) â€" Warmer temperatures have stirred the Chesapeake Bay's blue crab population, offering an unexpected early season bounty to Virginia watermen but overwhelming processing plants that are short on workers. The season opened this week with crabbers returning to docks with bushels full of crabs. Typically the season starts slowly because crabs are just emerging from their winter slumber on the bottom of the bay. "This is unprecedented. We've never seen it this early," Johnny Graham, president of Hampton's Graham & Rollins Seafood, told the Daily Press of Newport News (http://bit.ly/GABTwm). Picking plants in Newport News, Isle of Wight County, Poquoson, and other areas of the bay also reported strong opening day numbers. Some crabs are sent directly to restaurants, while others are picked and their meat frozen. The plants, however, said they are struggling to find people willing to work at meager salaries pulling meat from the sharp-edged crabs. As a result, the packing houses said, they're forced to hire migrant workers under the federal H2-B visa program. The program links workers across the United States to seasonal jobs, such as landscaping and hotel cleaning.

MISCELLANEOUS

PROPUBLICA

So, is Dimock's Water Really Safe to Drink? When the Environmental Protection Agency announced last week that

tests showed the water is safe to drink in Dimock, Penn., a national hot spot for concerns about fracking, it seemed to vindicate the energy industryâ€™s insistence that drilling had not caused pollution in the area. But what the agency didn' t say â€“ at least, not publicly â€“ is that the water samples contained dangerous quantities of methane gas, a finding that confirmed some of the agencyâ€™s initial concerns and the complaints raised by Dimock residents since 2009. The test results also showed the group of wells contained dozens of other contaminants, including low levels of chemicals known to cause cancer and heavy metals that exceed the agencyâ€™s â€œtrigger levelâ€ and could lead to illness if consumed over an extended period of time. The EPAâ€™s assurances suggest that the substances detected do not violate specific drinking water standards, but no such standards exist for some of the contaminants and some experts said the agency should have acknowledged that they were detected at all. "Any suggestion that water from these wells is safe for domestic use would be preliminary or inappropriate,â€ said Ron Bishop, a chemist at the State University of New Yorkâ€™s College at Oneonta, who has spoken out about environmental concerns from drilling. Dimock residents are struggling to reconcile the EPAâ€™s public account with the results they have been given in private. â€œIâ€™m sitting here looking at the values I have on my sheet â€“ Iâ€™m over the thresholds â€“ and yet they are telling me my water is drinkable,â€ said Scott Ely, a Dimock resident whose water contains methane at three times the state limit, as well as lithium, a substance that can cause kidney and thyroid disorders. â€œIâ€™m confused about the whole thingâ€¦ Iâ€™m flabbergasted.â€

TRUTHOUT

Fracking Fight: Activists Cry Foul on the EPA's *Dimock* Water Test Announcement Anti-fracking activists lashed out at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) last week after the agency released partial results of water tests taken from private wells in rural Dimock, Pennsylvania, where residents and activists are locked into an ongoing dispute with a gas drilling company accused of contaminating several families' wells while fracking in the area. Amid a media controversy and public outcry, the EPA announced in January that it would test well water at 60 homes in Dimock to determine if the residents were being exposed to hazardous substances. On March 15, the EPA reported preliminary results showing that water in 11 homes were contaminated - but not at levels of health concern. Water at two homes tested positive for arsenic and water at six of homes contained sodium, methane, chromium and bacteria at levels the EPA considers to be safe for drinking water.The EPA completed only a fraction of the testing it plans to do in Dimock, but industry groups and mainstream media outlets quickly jumped on the preliminary announcement as if it were proof that fracking was not to blame for Dimock's water troubles. Reuters, for example, ran a headline declaring that "fracking did not pollute water near homes" even though the EPA has not released the actual test results or drawn any conclusions from a study that has yet to be completed.

STATE IMPACT OKLAHOMA

How Fracking in the Northeast Could Impact Farmland in Oklahoma The federal government issues mortgages and loan guarantees to low-income Americans living in rural areas. But the U.S. Department of Agriculture is considering requiring environmental studies before issuing money to those leasing their land for oil and natural gas production. Why is this happening? U.S. Rep. Dan Boren says itâ€™s because the USDA is bowing to political pressure exerted by opponents of hydraulic fracturing ” particularly those in the Northeast, reports the *Tulsa World.* The USDAâ€™s Rural Housing Service generally doesnâ€™t require a down payment, and has been especially popular in the wake of tight credit markets, writes *New York Times* reporter Ian Urbina: ... the programâ€™s loans have roughly quadrupled since 2004.Much of the money has gone to states like Pennsylvania, Texas and Louisiana, which are booming with oil and natural gas drilling. The National Environmental Review Policy Act â€” NEPA â€” requires environmental reviews before federal money is spent, but home and rural business loans are generally excluded. The rural housing decision might also impact the departmentâ€™s Rural Business and Cooperative Program, which issues grants and loans to rural businesses. Hydraulic fracturing is an increasingly common drilling technique, and itâ€™s has had a big economic impact in Oklahoma and a lot of states. But there are environmental concerns about water contamination, spills and air pollution.

SHALE GAS REVIEW

EPA preliminary results on Dimock water cause stir (March 16) The quality of well water in Dimock, Pa. is the

center of national attention for activists, journalists, regulators, lawyers, policy makers, and industry officials â€“ all looking for the latest evidence from government studies that will support their cases for or against fracking. Dimock has become one of the most prolific places in the Appalachian basin for shale gas development, and one of the biggest examples of its impact on communities. Residents here were categorically optimistic about the prospects of leasing land to operators in 2007 and 2008. That began to change in on January 1, 2009, when a residential water well exploded soon after drilling began in the area. An resulting investigation by the DEP found methane had leaked from faulty gas wells into more than a dozen water supplies. Nearly two years later, as more problems were uncovered, John Hanger, then stateâ€™s top environmental official during the Rendell Administration, declared the aquifer that supplies certain Dimock homes to be permanently damaged. To make things right, Hanger ordered Cabot Oil & Gas to develop and pay for a pipeline from Montrose to deliver fresh water to the affected residents. The initiative was defeated after Tom Corbett was elected governor on a pro-drilling platform. Under Corbett, the DEP declared this year that Cabot Oil & Gas had met its obligation to compensate landowners for the pollution and no longer needed to deliver water to residents. The federal EPA responded with an own investigation after reviewing data from previous tests by Cabot and the DEP that, according to an EPA memo, showed "a number of home wells in the Dimock area contain hazardous substances, some of which are not naturally found in the environment." The memo identified drilling operations as a suspect.

BNA DAILY ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Republican Budget Would Cut Environment Funds, Calls for Limits on EPA
House Budget Chairman Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) unveiled his fiscal 2013 budget blueprint March 20, a sweeping proposal that would overhaul taxes and entitlements but make spending cuts the White House said would be far too deep.The plan is set to be marked up in the Budget Committee on March 21, with floor action expected in the March 26 week. Ryan and other House Republicans said the plan was a bold move to tackle the government's fiscal situation, in contrast to the continued budget inaction on the Democratic-held Senate. Democrats and White House officials said the plan was unbalanced because it would rely too much on spending cuts. Anti-deficit groups praised the plan as making the needed hard choices, even though it faces little chance of being adopted in the current political environment. The plan contains approximately $3.5 billion in fiscal 2013 spending cuts for environment and natural resources programs. Spending on those programs would fall from $36.8 billion in fiscal 2012 to $33.3 billion in fiscal 2013. House Republicans criticized the president in a summary of the budget proposal for supporting â€œthe Environmental Protection Agency's unilateral plan to impose emissions restrictions on American businesses." The budget resolution calls on Congress to limit EPA's discretionary power to implement a greenhouse gas emissions cap-and-trade program.

Barrasso Says Power Plant Closures to Have â€˜Devastating' Effects Decisions by electric utilities to retire coal-fired power plants rather than install pollution controls to comply with new EPA mercury standards will have â€œdevastatingâ€ consequences for local communities, Sen. Barrasso says during a Senate subcommittee hearing. However, Gina McCarthy, EPA assistant administrator for air and radiation, tells the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Clean Air and Nuclear Safety that the mercury rule is expected to lead to the retirement of just 4.7 gigawatts of electricity generation. Companies are closing their coal-fired power plants for reasons other than EPA's rules, including low natural gas prices, she says

EPA Proposes Significant New Use, Test Rules for Variety of ChemicalsEPA proposes a complex regulatory package that would require chemical producers and other manufacturers to notify the agency before they make, import, or process a variety of chemicals, including certain flame retardants, in ways the agency would designate as new uses. EPA's regulatory package consists of six elements, including revisions to existing significant new use rules (SNURs) covering a group of flame retardants called polybrominated diphenyl ethers and proposed revisions to existing SNURs for benzidine-based dyes. It also includes a proposed test rule for seven PBDEs

Advisers Suggest EPA Explore Certification Program for Biomass Fuels EPA should consider a certification process to ensure that biomass burned as fuel is carbon-neutral, rather than relying on complex calculations, the agency's

science advisers say in a draft report considered during a telephone conference. The Science Advisory Board's Biogenic Carbon Emissions Panel recommends that EPA consider the certification process as an alternative to the â€œbiogenic accounting factorâ€ advocated by the agency for assessing greenhouse gas emissions from biomass because it would be simpler. EPA is developing a method to account for emissions from biomass that is burned as fuel. Sources that burn biomass argue it is carbon-neutral and should not be regulated

BLOOMBERG NEWS SERVICE

Ex-EPA Head Carol Browner on U.S. Energy PolicyCarol Browner, former U.S. Evironmental Protection Agency administrator and a former White House adviser on energy and climate change, talks about U.S. energy policy. Browner also discusses fuel-efficient vehicles, tax breaks for the oil and gas industry, and TransCanada Corp.'s Keystone XL oil pipeline. She speaks with Mark Crumpton on Bloomberg Television's "Bottom Line."

EPA Proposes Significant New Use Rules, Test Regulation for Variety of Chemicals The Environmental Protection Agency proposed a complex regulatory package March 20 that would require chemical producers and other manufacturers to notify the agency before they make, import, or process a variety of chemicals, including certain flame retardants, in ways the agency would designate as new uses.

THE HILL

Blog: House Republican blasts *EPA* regs that will shutter PA power plant Rep. Tim Murphy (R-Pa.) on Tuesday morning criticized Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulations that he said will cause a coal power plant in his district to close its doors this summer. "We should be cleaning up, not shutting down these power plants," Murphy said on the House floor. "But new regulations aimed squarely at coal, oil and natural gas are making it harder for families to get by, for manufacturers to prosper, and making it more difficult for our country to become energy independent." The coal-fired power plant in Elrama, Pa., is slated to close in June, while the four other Pennsylvania coal-fired power plants owned by GenOn Energy Inc. will close by 2015. GenOn said last month that it would have to close these older plants because EPA air-quality regulations would make it unprofitable to operate the plants.

McCLATCHY NEWSPAPERS

As natural gas production grows, questions arise about methane leaks WASHINGTON As natural gas production in the United States hits an all-time high, a major unanswered question looms: What does growing hydraulic fracturing mean for climate change? The Obama administration lists natural gas as one of the "clean energy sources" it wants to expand. When burned, natural gas emits about half the heat-trapping carbon dioxide as coal. Yet natural gas production can result in releases of methane into the atmosphere. Methane, the primary component of natural gas, is 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas than carbon dioxide. Methane can enter the atmosphere when gas is stored or transported, but it's particularly a concern with shale gas production during flowback - when fracking fluids, water and gases flow out of a well after drilling but before the gas is put into pipelines. Companies often burn or capture the methane during flowback. How extensively or effectively that's done overall, however, isn't clear. The oil and gas industry is the biggest source of U.S. methane emissions, accounting for about 40 percent, according to the Environmental Protection Agency. Industry says that figure is inflated, because equipment is widely used to keep methane from entering the air.