To: Bartos, Myles[Bartos.Myles@epa.gov]; Ventura, Dominic[Ventura.Dominic@epa.gov]
From: Towle, Michael
Sent: Fri 3/21/2014 2:29:59 PM
Subject: Re: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - FRIDAY, March 21, 2014

... And cherry Kool Aid for you.

From: Bartos, Myles
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 9:47:23 AM
To: Towle, Michael; Ventura, Dominic
Subject: RE: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - FRIDAY, March 21, 2014

The last time I checked, only one of us has initiated a response due to the effects of climate change… I can send you a mirror if you'd like.

From: Towle, Michael
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 9:43 AM
To: Bartos, Myles; Ventura, Dominic
Subject: Fw: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - FRIDAY, March 21, 2014

Can either of you interpret the important information contained herein. We need a technical liaison to help OSCs benefit from the valuable tools offered by your guy.

From: Smith, Bonnie
Sent: Friday, March 21, 2014 9:31:21 AM
To: R3 EVERYONE
Subject: EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines - FRIDAY, March 21, 2014

EPA Mid-Atlantic Region Headlines

Friday, March 21, 2014

*** DAILY HOT LIST ***

White House unveils one-stop website for climate change data

Climate Data Initiative portal collates information from federal agencies to help Americans plan for the effects of global warming

BALTIMORE SUN/LA TIMES +

WASHINGTON — As part of its campaign to address climate change, the White House on Wednesday unveiled a website to serve as a one-stop location for the enormous amount of climate data housed at different federal agencies. The initiative to make the information easily accessible to communities, researchers and industries trying to adapt to global warming is the White House's latest move to deliver on a pledge President Obama made in June: to use his executive authority to confront climate change in light of congressional inaction. With climate change fueling storms, droughts and wildfires, "people are going to need to understand what is happening and what is going to happen," said John P. Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are spearheading the new Climate Data Initiative. The beta version of climate.data.gov will provide data sets on rising sea levels and coastal flooding. The site will eventually provide information about the effects of climate change on the food supply, public health and energy sources. The initiative also will include projects launched by the private sector to provide the data about climate change through apps, cloud computing and Web tools. The portal will "make clearer what the risks are of inaction," said John Podesta, a senior advisor to the president and former chief of staff for President Clinton. "Localizing this information will give people a sense of how this will affect them." Over the last few weeks, the White House has rolled out climate change initiatives at a rapid clip.

Environmental activists block access to Lycoming County drilling site

STATE IMPACT PA

A group of environmental activists has chained themselves to concrete barrels in an effort to block access to an Anadarko Petroleum drilling site in Lycoming County, according to a spokesman for the group. Marcellus Shale EarthFirst spokesman Mathew Louis-Rosenberg says between eight to ten activists were involved and two have been arrested so far. “Folks blockading access to the well pad were in place before people showed up for work,” he says. “Workers were unable to access the site.” A spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania State Police says troopers have been on the scene at Dam Run Road in the Tiadaghton State Forest since 7:45 a.m., but could not confirm how many people were involved, or whether any arrests have been made. “It’s still ongoing and we’re working through it,” says Trooper Angela Bieber. “We respect everyone’s right to express

their views, as long as it doesn't jeopardize the safety of the community or our personnel," says Anadarko government relations representative Patrick Marty. "We asked the state police to respond as appropriate." The activists are protesting Anadarko's plans to expand gas drilling in the Loyalsock State Forest, as well as Governor Corbett's proposal to allow more leasing of public parks and forests for gas development. Another group of activists held a separate "solidarity rally" at Anadarko's Williamsport offices. Marty says as of about 12:30 p.m. there were around 20 protesters outside.

Recovering from a heavy dose of winter

HEALTHY WATERS FOR THE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Is this winter over yet? Fortunately, we've had a few days in the mid-Atlantic that make me think spring could be just around the corner. Even as we prepare to turn the page weather-wise, some remnants of winter will stick around. This year, one of those remnants is salt…lots of salt. A couple of years ago, we brought you some information on smart ways to apply salt to keep the roads safe in winter weather and protect water resources at the same time. While that winter was relatively mild, winter 2014 has been another story. Municipal salt supplies are running low, and recently it's been tough to find "snow melt" of any kind in neighborhood hardware stores. With the snow now melting, the leftover salt is headed right toward our water supplies. Here are some of the impacts that increased salt can have: Road salt runoff can increase levels of conductivity (a substitute measure of "saltiness") in streams and cause stress to aquatic life like fish and macroinvertebrates – in high enough concentrations, salt runoff can be toxic to sensitive organisms

---

PENNSYLVANIA

PITTSBURGH POST-GAZETTE

Leak in 100-year-old gas well emptied Southeast Regional Medical Center for months

An old natural gas well is the suspected cause of a gas leak that has kept a Waynesburg medical building empty for three months. Southwest Regional Medical Center's two-story medical arts building was first evacuated for the day on Jan. 14, when Peoples Natural Gas discovered high concentrations of methane while inspecting its pipeline there. Two days later, officials detected gas again and the building has been vacant since. The leaking well belongs to Vantage Energy, a Colorado-based oil and gas company that drills shale gas wells in Greene County and inherited the 100-year-old shallow well last year. The well, named J&B Miller 600725, was drilled more than 100 years ago and sits about 800 feet from the medical arts building.

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE REVIEW

Council enacts one-time sewer amnesty program Penn Hills council voted unanimously at Monday night's council meeting to institute a one-time amnesty program aimed at addressing the large number of residents who received collection letters last year for five-year-old delinquent sewer bills. About 700 residents received collection letters from Norristown, Pa.-based Portnoff & Associates stating that they owed billing charges, late fees and penalties. More than half of those bills date back to the final 2008 bill from Penn Hills' previous billing company, Central Tax Bureau. Residents criticized the municipality for contracting with a collection agency to go after bills which many homeowners said they never received. The municipality sent out a 2008 letter after the billing-company switch, alerting residents that they would receive a bill for the final Central Tax Bureau billing period as well as a new bill from the local water authority. Several who spoke at council meetings said they were happy to pay what they owed, but never received the final Central Tax Bureau bill.

STATE IMPACT PENNSYLVANIA

Environmental activists block access to Lycoming County drilling site A group of environmental activists has chained themselves to concrete barrels in an effort to block access to an Anadarko Petroleum drilling site in Lycoming County, according to a spokesman for the group. Marcellus Shale EarthFirst spokesman Mathew Louis-Rosenberg says between eight to ten activists were involved and two have been arrested so far. “Folks blockading access to the well pad were in place before people showed up for work,” he says. “Workers were unable to access the site.” A spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania State Police says troopers have been on the scene at Dam Run Road in the Tiadaghton State Forest since 7:45 a.m., but could not confirm how many people were involved, or whether any arrests have been made. “It’s still ongoing and we’re working through it,” says Trooper Angela Bieber. “We respect everyone’s right to express their views, as long as it doesn’t jeopardize the safety of the community or our personnel,” says Anadarko government relations representative Patrick Marty. “We asked the state police to respond as appropriate.” The activists are protesting Anadarko’s plans to expand gas drilling in the Loyalsock State Forest, as well as Governor Corbett’s proposal to allow more leasing of public parks and forests for gas development. Another group of activists held a separate “solidarity rally” at Anadarko’s Williamsport offices. Marty says as of about 12:30 p.m. there were around 20 protesters outside.

WFMZ-TV ALLENTOWN/READING

Residents fight back against gas plant (Wednesday) South Heidelberg community members oppose EmberClear natural gas to gasoline plant. More than 100 people gathered in South Heidelberg Township Tuesday night, all in opposition to a natural gas plant. Last week, the township board of supervisors voted to give preliminary approval to EmberClear Corporation to build a natural gas to gasoline plant on a 63-acre plot of land. "I was shocked just by the opposition that was there. And there were a lot of logical facts; zoning concerns, emotional concerns, safety, environmental. And the township supervisors did not seem to take any of that into account," said Tom Byrne of South Heidelberg Township. That is why some community members are not giving up. They met at SpringRose Childcare to form a plan of attack on how they can dismantle

the plant. "They are totally disregarding what the residents feel and they are trying to push this plant through," said Brian Cutts of South Heidelberg Township. But township supervisors say they are listening, however they say the only residents vocally opposing the plant are the people who live close by. "Overall, they represent a very small percentage of the population of the entire township. And I think the supervisors, particularly at this early stage in the game, are looking at the township as a whole," said Township Supervisor Ronald Seaman. Although the plot of land has been zoned industrial for the past 30 years, residents say they do not understand why it is a good idea to put a gas plant there after the township approved bringing in numerous homes and a daycare. They also have safety and environmental concerns. But the township says this is not a done deal. "I would love to be able to work in harmony with all these people and whatever happens happens. If it cannot be stopped legally, then let us make it the best plant it can possibly be," said Seaman. The people in the township have decided to start a non-profit organization and form several committees so they are more prepared to fight the gas plant at the next township meeting on April 1.

Community members come together to stop natural gas plant (Tuesday) SOUTH HEIDELBERG TWP., Pa. -
People in South Heidelberg Township are starting a grassroots effort to try to block a natural gas plant from coming to the area. A 63-acre plot of land could be the home of a natural gas processing plant. Last week, South Heidelberg Township supervisors gave preliminary approval to EmberClear Corporation to build a plant that would convert natural gas to gasoline. But people who live across the street from the property have concerns that it will not be safe and could decrease their property value. "They can stop the preliminary plans based upon the fact that it does not take the well being of the residents. They do not know all the environmental issues it is going to have. There is not one plant like this that is anywhere in this country," said Brian Cutts, of South Heidelberg Township. Township supervisors, however, said the plot of land has been zoned industrial for the past 30 years. and safety concerns with natural gas already exist. "How much is too much? All the homes of the people that are objecting currently are heated by natural gas, they have natural gas cooking facilities, dryers, water heaters. There are four pipelines running through the middle of that development now," said Ronald Seaman, the township's manager. Although the township board of supervisors gave approval to this project last week, the township manager said in no way is this a done deal. "I would love to be able to work in harmony with all these people and whatever happens. If it cannot be stopped legally, then let us make it the best plant it can possibly be," said Seaman. People in the county, however, are hoping that, through forming a non-profit organization and seeking legal council, they can put a stop to the project. A citizens meeting on the issue will be held at 7 p.m. Tuesday at the Spring Rose Child Care Center in South Heidelberg Township.

HARRISBURG PATRIOT NEWS

Should Pa. Game Commission, Fish and Boat Commission merge? Pennsylvania likes when it can been unique, and it loves dividing up political authority into as many units as possible. So of course Pennsylvania would be the last state in the union to still have

separate agencies overseeing outdoor life you can hook (the Fish and Boat Commission) and shoot (the Game Commission). The Legislative Budget and Finance Committee heard a report Wednesday asking if, perhaps, Pennsylvania should join the crowd that has combined these responsibilities. The report, drafted in response to a state House resolution last year, found that the Fish and Boat Commission and Game Commission could eliminate 52 staff positions by merging, saving the new agency around $5 million a year. The move would cut several upper level positions, like press secretary and legislative liaison, that would become redundant, the report found. It would also create a unified law enforcement agency to police both the woods and water, unlike the current split jurisdiction. The $5 million in potential savings is a rough figure. It doesn't include possible costs like working out differences in union contracts between officers of the two commissions, cross training employees, creating unified regulations, the report said. The commissions don't think much of merging. Both note that they receive the bulk of their funding from license and permit holders, and get no tax dollars. The current structure, they say, helps each to be efficient. The Fish and Boat Commission boasts the lowest expenditure-per-license ratio in the country, at $26.48. Even after adding in the Game Commission's expenses, Pennsylvania's expenditure-per-license ratio would still be below average.

STATE COLLEGE CENTRE DAILY TIMES

Commentary: Climate science isn't necessarily 'settled' Why do we argue about climate change? The reason there is so much contention regarding "global warming" is relatively simple to understand: In climate change science we basically cannot prove anything about how the climate will change as a result of adding extra greenhouse gases to the atmosphere. So we are left to argue about unprovable claims. We can measure and prove that greenhouse gases are increasing. And, in the laboratory, we can measure and prove that adding greenhouse gases to a jar of air will lead to further warming. But when it comes to how the actual climate system might respond to extra greenhouse gases, we're out of luck in terms of "proof" because the climate's complexities are innumerable and poorly understood. Climate science is a murky science. When dealing with temperature variations and trends, we do not have an instrument that tells us how much change is due to humans and how much to Mother Nature. Measuring the temperature change over long time periods is difficult enough, but we do not have a thermometer that says why these changes occur. We cannot appeal to direct evidence for the cause of change, so we argue. The real climate system is so massively complex we do not have the ability to test global-size theories in a laboratory. Without this ability, we tend to travel all sorts of other avenues to confirm what are essentially our unprovable views about climate. These avenues tend to comfort our souls because we crave certainty over ambiguity.

SUNBURY DAILY ITEM

Dust-up over dirt in Northumberland NORTHUMBERLAND — Neighbors who live near what is now the C.W. Rice Middle School demolition site on Hanover Street are concerned that dust and debris might be harmful to their families. At Tuesday night's Borough Council meeting, residents wondered if some of what is being torn down might have contained asbestos. Complains were also registered about debris blowing onto the

yards of adjacent homes. While two homeowners raised those arguments at Borough Council, another neighborhood homeowner, Harold Noecker, who lives directly across from the construction site, said he hasn't had any problems with either blowing dust or debris. "I guess it all depends on which way the wind is blowing," he said Wednesday afternoon. Flynn Wrecking, of Pottsville, has a crew tearing down the school in preparation for construction of a new middle school. Demolition is expected to be complete by summer. The $17 million project has a completion date of December 2015. Several attempts to reach Flynn Wrecking by phone on Tuesday were unsuccessful. Borough code enforcement officer Ted McCollum and Councilman Adam Klock both drove by the demolition site Wednesday morning before the afternoon rain.

WEST CHESTER DAILY LOCAL NEWS

Pipeline meeting slated for Thursday WEST PIKELAND – The next round of discussions on gas pipelines in Chester County will be held Thursday evening and focus on land planning and pipelines. The meeting will start at 7 p.m. at the West Pikeland Township building at 1645 Art School Road. Township officials said they believed the meeting would last around an hour and a half. According to the township, the next West Pikeland Technical Assistance Grant Project Workshop will feature three guest speakers and is open to the public. John M. Gaadt of the American Institute of Certified Planning will facilitate the workshop and discuss "Pipelines and the Role of Municipalities in Zoning and Land Planning," the township said. Attorney Vince Pompo will discuss "Pipelines, Communities and Safety – Land Use Issues and Act 13." Finally, according to the township, Ronald T. Bailey, the executive director of the Chester County Planning Commission, will discuss the county's proposed website, "Pipeline Information Center." The meeting is part of a larger Technical Assistance Grant awarded to West Pikeland by the U.S. Department of Transportation.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

WASHINGTON POST

One farmer's new mission: To explore the world and write about how to feed it For three years, Joneve Murphy has been growing food for a living at the whim of chef Patrick O'Connell, a gig that comes with a steady paycheck, praise and plenty of microgreens. Yet this summer, the farmer is leaving her dream job at the Inn at Little Washington (which is hiring another farmer) to live another dream: She'll spend a year satisfying her wanderlust and curiosity about foreign farming methods. Beginning in June, Murphy, 34, will travel much of Europe and Southeast Asia, farm-hopping and offering her labor in exchange for the chance to learn, grow and cook in a variety of cultures. Murphy hopes to bring new life to the ideologies she has championed while growing for the area's quintessential farm-to-table restaurant, and she hopes to expand her followers' perceptions about the best ways to feed the world.

Use of public transit isn't surging (Opinion)

The American Public Transportation Association reported this month that U.S. transit ridership hit an all-time high last year. The March 10 report came with a caveat — "all-time" means "after 1956," but the numbers nevertheless sound impressive. Transit users took 10.65 billion trips in 2013, topping the previous record of 10.59 billion trips in 2008. These numbers were widely reported in the media, including in The Post, often with commentary suggesting a fundamental change in American travel behavior: a nation moving away from driving and toward more efficient and sustainable public transit. But the association's numbers are deceptive, and this interpretation is wrong. We are strong supporters of public transportation, but misguided optimism about transit's resurgence helps neither transit users nor the larger traveling public. Transit trips did rise between 2008 and 2013. But so did the U.S. population, from 304 million to 316 million , as did the total number of trips made. Simple division suggests that, if anything, transit use fell between 2008 and 2013, from about 35 trips per person annually to 34. Many numbers look impressive without denominators, but anyone who examines transit use as a rate — whether as trips per person or share of total travel — will find that transit is a small and stagnant part of the transportation system.

DELAWARE

STORMWATER REPORT - WATER ENV. FEDERATION

Delaware Governor Announces Clean Water Initiative

In Delaware, 377 water bodies are impaired, and 30 state waterways are not fishable. However, Gov. Jack Markell announced a plan March 4 to pay for stormwater, wastewater and drinking water infrastructure upgrades. The initiative, Clean Water for Delaware's Future, would impose a "clean water fee" on residential, commercial, and industrial property owners. Over the next five years, more than $500 million in wastewater facility upgrades are needed statewide along with more than $150 million in stormwater upgrades, more than $75 million for removing toxics, and more than $75 million in upgrades at industrial facilities. To supplement the State Revolving Fund and pay for these upgrades, the clean water fee would generate $30 million annually, leveraging more than $120 million in total financing annually for clean water investments and supporting more than 1,000 jobs per year in science, engineering, and construction. Annually, the fee would cost households about $45 to $85 based on lot size. Commercial and industrial facilities could pay up to $25,000 a year. If passed, the initiative would: Remove toxics and restore streams and rivers; Repair and update wastewater and drinking water treatment plants; Modernize stormwater infrastructure in communities to improve flood and storm resilience; Support conservation/agricultural practices that prevent pollutants from reaching surface and ground waters; Protect and restore critical natural resources like wetlands and forests that help purify water and mitigate flooding; and Make important upgrades to industries, which will systematically reduce impacts to water resources.

Delaware Business Daily (link unreliable)
The Delaware State Chamber of Commerce has a new president and Newark's .....
Bruce Myatt on *EPA* official says Data Centers heat and power system will cut ...

WEST VIRGINIA

CHARLESTON GAZETTE

MSHA cites company in coal slurry death CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Mine management tried to expand a coal-slurry impoundment faster than was considered safe, and continued the work despite warnings that the site was becoming unstable, according to a new federal government report being issued this week. U.S. Mine Safety and Health Administration investigators cited Consolidation Coal Co. for three alleged violations as a result of their investigation into the November 2012 collapse of a Harrison County slurry embankment that killed a miner, according to a report provided to family members on Wednesday. Dozer operator Markel Koon, 58, of Shinnston, was swept into the impoundment shortly after noon on Nov. 30, 2012, when a "saddle dike" being built as part of the expansion of the Nolan Run impoundment near Lumberport, so the site could continue to accept waste from the nearby Robinson Run Mine's preparation plant. In its new report, MSHA concludes that the embankment was raised faster than the strength of the coal waste it was being built on top of could support. MSHA said that the mine operator waited too long to install a pressure gauge to monitor the stability of the site. And even after the gauge was installed, the mine operator "continued to place fill on the saddle dike after additional stability analysis indicated a factor of safety lower than what was specified in the approved plan," MSHA said in its report.

ASSOCIATED PRESS (W. VA.)

State gets snapshot of agriculture from feds CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- New federal data show that the value of West Virginia's agricultural products increased 37 percent over the past five years to a total of $809 million. The West Virginia Department of Agriculture says officials recently met with federal officials to review preliminary results from the Census of Agriculture. The findings are produced every five years and the latest information is from 2012. Officials say West Virginia had nearly 21,500 farms in 2012. That's down 9 percent from 2007. Land in farms decreased by only 2 percent to 3.6 million acres during that time. State officials also noted that West Virginians are consuming more than seven times more food than the $800 million currently being produced in the state.

COMMON DREAMS (org not news outlet)

Residents Still Not Drinking Tap Water Two Months After West Virginia Spill
TRNN's Shaghayegh Tajvidi travels to Charleston to investigate the impacts of the massive West Virginia chemical spill (video)

MARYLAND

BALTIMORE SUN

Letter: The poultry industry's dirty secret I was disgusted to read Bill Satterfield's wrongly titled commentary on the poultry industry's role in Chesapeake Bay pollution ("Md. farmers are wrongly blamed for bay troubles," March 13). The handful of large chicken companies like Perdue on the Eastern Shore are not "farmers." They are large corporate entities that take the lion's share of the profits and leave their own contract growers to deal with the problems caused by the chicken manure they generate. It's a way of distancing the corporations from the waste and degradation their system creates. Mr. Satterfield throws a lot of numbers around to try to confuse the issue, but it's really quite simple: You can't have more than 300 million chickens concentrated in a geographic area the size of the Delmarva Peninsula without creating more manure than the ecosystem can handle. Mr. Satterfield also fails to mention the unique and very advantageous relationships Perdue and other large chicken companies have with their growers. The companies control all aspects of the contract, own the birds and their feed, and dictate every aspect of the process of growing the birds. By design, the only thing they don't own is the waste — dead chickens and manure.

White House unveils one-stop website for climate change data

Climate Data Initiative portal collates information from federal agencies to help Americans plan for the effects of global warming.

Sun/LA Times and dozens of outlets

WASHINGTON — As part of its campaign to address climate change, the White House on Wednesday unveiled a website to serve as a one-stop location for the enormous amount of climate data housed at different federal agencies. The initiative to make the information easily accessible to communities, researchers and industries trying to adapt to global warming is the White House's latest move to deliver on a pledge President Obama made in June: to use his executive authority to confront climate change in light of congressional inaction. With climate change fueling storms, droughts and wildfires, "people are going to need to understand what is happening and what is going to happen," said John P. Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are spearheading the new Climate Data Initiative. The beta version of climate.data.gov will provide data sets on rising sea levels and coastal flooding. The site will eventually provide information about the effects of climate change on the food supply, public health and energy sources. The initiative also will include projects launched by the private sector to provide the data about climate change through apps, cloud computing and Web tools. The portal will "make clearer what the risks are of inaction," said John Podesta, a senior advisor to the president and former chief of staff for President Clinton. "Localizing this information will give people a sense of how this will affect them." Over the last few weeks, the White House has rolled out climate change initiatives at a rapid clip.

VIRGINIA

RICHMOND TIMES-DISPATCH

Henrico eyes funding solutions for stormwater regulations Henrico County's decision to allot all tax revenue from new construction in 2013 to a stormwater reserve fund will likely put off the need to fund stormwater improvements from new taxes or fees, possibly for as long as five years, county officials told the Board of Supervisors on Wednesday. The county expects to get a draft of its new stormwater permit from the Environmental Protection Agency this summer. Dedicating that chunk of tax revenue will provide an estimated $2.3 million reserve in the coming budget year, with new funds coming in every year. County officials said they won't know exactly how to spend the money until the permit comes in, but based on permits already released for other localities, including Chesterfield County, the county expects to need the funds. The county expects to be required by the federal government to reduce levels of several pollutants in the outflow from its storm sewer system by 5 percent over five years.

CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

Environment groups want role in ash spill case (possibly a blog)

Four environmental groups filed court papers Thursday to take part in North Carolina's enforcement case against Duke Energy over the Dan River ash spill. The groups claimed that state officials have ignored numerous discharges from the retired Dan River power plant's two ash ponds. They say the leaks continue well after the Feb. 2 spill. A broken stormwater pipe under the main ash pond dumped up to 39,000 tons of ash into the Dan. State environmental officials cited Duke for illegal discharges and not having a stormwater permit after the spill but have not levied fines. Duke said last week that it will permanently close the plant's ash ponds.

NEWS AND OBSERVER(NC)

Duke Energy cited for illegally pumping coal-ash water into Cape Fear River

RALEIGH, N.C. - Duke Energy's pumping of two coal-ash ponds for maintenance work at its Chatham County plant - discovered last week by environmentalists and regulators - illegally put 61 million gallons of wastewater into the Cape Fear River over the past several months. The N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources on Thursday notified the utility the pumping violated its wastewater permit, which subjects it to fines of up to $25,000 a day. More bad news came from the closed Cape Fear Steam Station before the day was over: Late in the afternoon, Duke Energy reported finding a crack in the earthen dam on one of the site's coal ash lagoons. State dam safety inspectors headed to the plant Thursday evening, but said initial reports indicated it wasn't in imminent danger of failing. Meanwhile, a Wake County Superior Court judge

denied Duke Energy's request to postpone a ruling that would require the utility to immediately get rid of the toxins leaking from its coal ash plants in North Carolina. DENR says it has notified downstream cities of the illegal discharge from the pumping into the Cape Fear River, but so far has not heard of any problems with water quality. The river provides drinking water for Sanford, Dunn, Fayetteville and other communities. The 61 million gallons, pumped into a tributary of the Cape Fear River, is more than twice the size of the Feb. 2 Dan River spill, but it happened over several months instead of days, and it didn't include the 39,000 tons of coal-ash sludge that accompanied the disaster in Rockingham County. The Cape Fear plant in Moncure, which is the coal-ash facility closest to the Triangle, operated for 89 years until it was closed in 2012. It has five lagoons where it stores the ash, which is a byproduct of coal burned for electricity, mixed with water.

LA TIMES

White House unveils one-stop website for climate change data **-Climate Data Initiative portal collates information from federal agencies to help Americans plan for the effects of global warming**

WASHINGTON — As part of its campaign to address climate change, the White House on Wednesday unveiled a website to serve as a one-stop location for the enormous amount of climate data housed at different federal agencies. The initiative to make the information easily accessible to communities, researchers and industries trying to adapt to global warming is the White House's latest move to deliver on a pledge President Obama made in June: to use his executive authority to confront climate change in light of congressional inaction. With climate change fueling storms, droughts and wildfires, "people are going to need to understand what is happening and what is going to happen," said John P. Holdren, director of the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. NASA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration are spearheading the new Climate Data Initiative. The beta version of climate.data.gov will provide data sets on rising sea levels and coastal flooding. The site will eventually provide information about the effects of climate change on the food supply, public health and energy sources. The initiative also will include projects launched by the private sector to provide the data about climate change through apps, cloud computing and Web tools. The portal will "make clearer what the risks are of inaction," said John Podesta, a senior advisor to the president and former chief of staff for President Clinton. "Localizing this information will give people a sense of how this will affect them." Over the last few weeks, the White House has rolled out climate change initiatives at a rapid clip.

NEWPORT NEWS DAILY PRESS

Hampton City Council candidates discuss flooding HAMPTON — Fort Monroe, flooding and stopping development on wetlands were high priorities among the discussions Wednesday evening during the first public forum held for mayoral and City Council candidates. As uncertainly about the effects of rising sea level on Hampton and Fort Monroe loom in the upcoming years, a cool-tempered slate of candidates said they support the Sierra Club's pro-environment issues. The Sierra Club's York River Group hosted the event Wednesday at Sandy Bottom Nature Park.

ROANOKE TIMES

Risks to coal ash pipe apparently cast aside As federal officials convene a grand jury this week to investigate the Dan River coal ash spill, they might want to look in an unlikely spot before pointing fingers of blame. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency failed to seize an opportunity in September 2009 that might have prevented last month's disaster near the retired Dan River Steam Station in Eden, the third-worst coal ash spill in United States history. The spill on Feb. 2 occurred after a drainage pipe ruptured under the ash basin for that closed coal-fired plant. It's one of two such pipes mentioned as potential problems in a detailed report prepared almost five years ago by an EPA consultant. The EPA later sent Duke Energy and state officials an "inspection letter" about the plant in Eden that never mentioned recommendations by its own consultant for both pipes to be checked regularly, said Steve McEvoy, North Carolina's chief dam-safety engineer. That stymied state regulators, keeping them from addressing the pipes in their later examinations of the site, said McEvoy, whose program is part of the state Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

BRISTOL HERALD COURIER

Southwest Virginians voice concerns about air quality in video Proximity to a heavily traveled interstate, surface coal mining operations and a proposed truck stop have some Southwest Virginians concerned about air quality, according to a video produced by the American Lung Association in Virginia that was released Wednesday. "It's frustrating to a lot of us down here in Southwest Virginia that when air pollution does affect us, we think that maybe no one in Washington cares," Ed Davis, a professor at Emory & Henry College who teaches geography and science classes, said in the video. The video is aimed at getting the attention of state and federal legislators to encourage them to support the Clean Air Act and clean air initiatives in the state, said Laura Kate Bender, coordinator of the Virginia Healthy Air Coalition for the American Lung Association. "People in Southwest Virginia are suffering from air quality issues and their stories are not often told," she said. "We really wanted to focus on an area that doesn't get a lot of attention on its air quality issues." Southwest Virginia is monitored by three ambient air quality monitors, which monitor large areas, said Crystal Bazyk, air compliance manager for the Southwest Virginia region of the state Department of Environmental Quality. She said that in the past two decades, those readings have shown an improvement in air quality, as measured by national standards set by the Environmental Protection Agency, which she said have become more stringent over the years. Southwest Virginia has consistently met the standards for air quality, Bazyk said, and those numbers are published annually in reports produced by DEQ.

MISCELLANEOUS

GREENWIRE

Advocates' petitions seek ban of chemicals linked to bee deaths

Bee advocates today delivered more than half a million signatures to U.S. EPA

Administrator Gina McCarthy urging her agency to suspend the use of an insecticide linked to pollinator deaths. About 25 advocates from several different organizations, many dressed in yellow-and-black-striped costumes, posed in front of EPA's entrance this morning before heading in to deliver the signatures. The event marked the one-year anniversary of a lawsuit filed by the Center for Food Safety and four beekeepers against the agency over registration of the insecticide. "We'd like EPA to suspend them until they're proven safe and protect pollinators," Larissa Walker, policy and campaign coordinator at the Center for Food Safety, said outside EPA's headquarters. "We feel like right now EPA is failing to do its job." The groups delivering the petitions included Friends of the Earth, Pesticide Action Network North America, Beyond Pesticides and Food Democracy Now. Populations of honeybees and other pollinators have declined precipitously in recent years due to a phenomenon known as colony collapse disorder. EPA and the Department of Agriculture last year found that pesticides were a factor in colony collapse disorder, although the departments also cited genetics, habitat loss, poor nutrition and disease.CropLife America, which represents agribusiness interests, says there's no demonstrated link to bee die-offs when neonicotinoid-based insecticides are used properly and that it is monitoring the use of the chemicals. But environmentalists are seeking a complete ban on the products until additional reviews are completed. They allege that EPA rushed the neonicotinoids to market without proper review and has not done enough to incorporate new findings.

EPA budget proposal signals major changes ahead for state regulators

President Obama has packed cash for state air regulators in his U.S. EPA budget proposal, pointing to a leading role for states in shaping rules for curbing greenhouse gas emissions from existing power plants. The fiscal 2015 proposal would provide $24.3 million to help states prepare for the climate rule -- offering $19.8 million in Clean Air Act grants for writing implementation plans and $4.5 million for greenhouse gas permitting, including the collection of emissions data. The proposal is bittersweet for state air regulators who would get a significant down payment on the existing-power-plant rules -- a centerpiece of Obama's Climate Action Plan due for a June 1 release -- at the expense of funding for the regulation and enforcement of traditional air pollutants like ozone, particulate matter and carbon monoxide. Opposite the robust climate request is a proposed $9.3 million cut in grants for "core" air quality programs in fiscal 2015. "What the administration is acknowledging in this budget -- and we give them significant credit for this -- is that this is a very important and challenging program for state and local governmental agencies," said Bill Becker, president of the National Association of Clean Air Agencies, or NACAA. "And it's going to require a lot of new and comprehensive responsibilities of state and local governmental agencies." The Obama budget also seems to signal, he said, a renewed federal commitment to provide grant assistance to states under the Clean Air Act's Sections 103 and 105, which allow EPA to pick up as much as 60 percent of the tab for state monitoring, enforcement and permitting. That funding has lagged in recent years. "Our only chagrin," Becker said in an interview, "is that much of it is coming at the expense of other very important, health-based air quality programs." The proposed weakening of the administration's support for state implementation and enforcement related to smog, fine particulate matter, carbon monoxide, lead and other criteria pollutants comes as the federal government is already picking up less than 25 percent of the tab for those programs, Becker said.

INSIDE EPA WEEKLY

EPA Says FY15 Risk Analysis Funding Cuts May Hinder Regulatory Agenda

EPA is proposing to reduce fiscal year 2015 funding for core risk analysis programs including its influential Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) and research efforts for its ambient air standards, and says the cuts could hinder its regulatory agenda by delaying rules that depend on the research or reducing scientific support for some rules. The agency's recently released congressional justification for President Obama's FY15 proposal includes a drop from $40 million enacted in FY14 to $37.8 million for the Human Health Risk Assessment (HHRA) program, which includes a host of research efforts including IRIS, the Integrated Science Assessment (ISA) criteria air pollutant research program, the Provisional Peer Reviewed Toxicity Value (PPRTV) program, and general research work to support those programs. The justification is available on InsideEPA.com. (Doc. ID: 2464585) Among the cuts is a $1.55 million funding reduction for IRIS, whose risk assessments underpin many regulatory decisions such as site cleanups or drinking water rules. The agency is also proposing a smaller cut of $491,000 for ISAs which inform EPA's review of the six national ambient air quality standards (NAAQS). In many instances, the budget document does not specify the existing enacted FY14 funding levels for specific programs such as the ISAs, nor the proposed overall funding -- instead detailing only the amount of the cut. In the congressional justification, EPA notes the constraints that those funding cuts may place on its regulatory agenda. For example, in describing the proposal to reduce the overall funding for IRIS, the agency says, "This reduction is a resource realignment due to agency priorities and may delay the start, review and completion of IRIS assessments, reducing the number of regulatory decisions which use these peer-reviewed assessments."

Similarly, EPA says that reducing funding for ISA assessments of NAAQS pollutants may delay completion of those analyses, in turn "reducing support for NAAQS decisions" and data collection efforts.

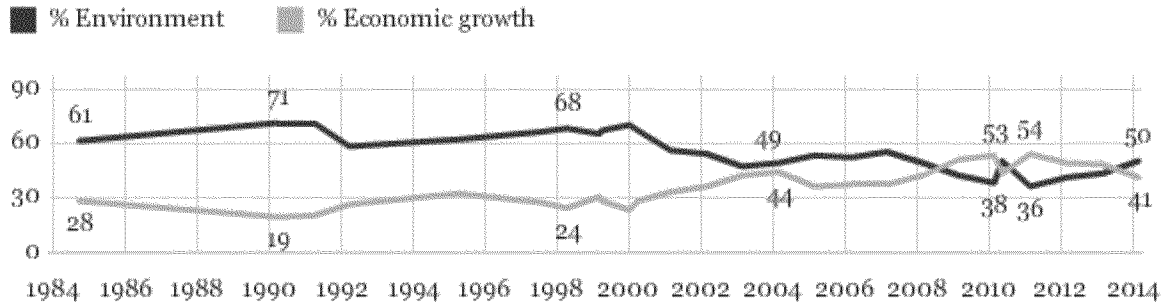
GALLOP POLITICS

Americans Again Pick Environment Over Economic Growth - -Partisan gap over priority largest recorded

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Americans are more likely to say protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth. Since 2009, during the economic downturn, Americans generally prioritized economic growth over the environment, except for immediately after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in May 2010.

Prioritizing Environmental Protection vs. Economic Growth, 1984-2014

With which one of these statements about the environment and the economy do you most agree -- [ROTATED: protection of the environment should be given priority, even at the risk of curbing economic growth (or) economic growth should be given priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent]?



GALLUP

In a March 6-9 Gallup Poll Social Series survey on the environment, Americans said the environment is a priority over economic growth by a 50%-to-41% margin. In the 30 years that Gallup has asked this question, Americans have almost always chosen the environment over economic growth as a priority.

THE GUARDIAN

China deploys drones to spy on polluting industries

China is using drones to spy on polluting industries in its attempts to battle the lung-choking smog that frequently engulfs many of its cities. The deputy minister of environmental protection, Zhai Qing said drones have recently been used in Beijing, Shanxi and Hebei provinces to inspect for pollution. These are some of the worst affected areas of China, with a high number of coal-fired power stations, steel mills and cement plants. The unmanned aircraft can cover 70 sqkm during a two hour flight. According to the state-run China Daily newspaper the drones have helped the ministry "resolve" over 200 environment-linked cases, and the ministry is considering more drone inspections in other areas. The ministry has four drones, first introduced in 2012 at a cost of approximately $1.3m (8m renminbi), according to Yang Yipeng, a ministry official. "You can easily tell from the color of the smoke – black, purple and brown – that the pollution is over the limit, because if smokestack scrubbers are operating properly, only white smoke is emitted," said Yang in an interview with the Hong Kong based South China Morning Post. "There were too many chimneys like these, and the drones also captured pictures of flames in the open air ... and that is still only the tip of the iceberg." While the drones are mainly used to gather evidence about environmental breaches they are also employed to evaluate the performance of local governments in enforcing environmental protection.

TRIPLE PUNDIT

UN World Water Day Report Highlights Risks (And Rewards) At The Water-Energy Nexus (blog)

The United Nations (U.N.) shines a light on the critical issue of freshwater

resources – and linkages with energy – with the March 21 release of the 2014 World Water Development Report (WWDR). Produced by the U.N.'s World Water Assessment Program (U.N.-Water), WWDR 2014 is being released in conjunction with special events sponsored around the world as part of this year's World Water Day celebrations on Saturday. Forecasting that the global population will need 40 percent more water by 2030, the ambitious report highlights the threat to water supplies posed by the conflicting interests of a growing global population for energy and food, as well as water itself. The list is extensive, including regulations and governance that lead to perverse outcomes, along with threats from water contamination, pollution, climate change and the often profligate ways in which we use and manage freshwater resources. WWDR 2014 also offers potential solutions, focusing in particular on governance at the water-energy nexus. "Energy and water are at the top of the global development agenda," Rector of United Nations University David Malone, this year's coordinator of World Water Day on behalf of U.N.-Water together with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), said in a press release.

Chesapeake Bay News Headlines

Weather limits blue crabs catch for Gloucester watermen
The (Hampton Roads, Va.) Daily Press

Revealing the true value of cover crops
The Gettysburg (Pa.) Times

Stafford Residents, Leaders Wrangle With Paying for Storm Water Plan
Potomac Local News

Relax. Winter's over. The ospreys are back
Southern Maryland Newspapers Online

Editorials

When money talks . . .
Rappahannock News

Opinion

Md. poultry farmers contribute to bay pollution
The Baltimore (Md.) Sun

Wind turbines and Pax River
The (Easton, Md.) Star Democrat

Bondi's article is really about defending Florida's right to pollute
TCPalm

EPA Killing Business
The (Mesquite, Nev.) Citizen Journal

Bonnie Smith

US Environmental Protection Agency

Regional Press Officer

Phone = 215-814-5543
On iTunes: EPA Mid-Atlantic Podcasts -Environment Matters