



ENVIRONMENTAL News

SPRING 2007

A Semi-Annual Publication of the Environmental Advisory Board

Meet the Members

Ron Dahlen
Chairman

Richard Mulstay
Vice Chairman

Chris Townsend
Secretary

Tim Brennan

Morell Smith

Peter Lukens

Robert Wood

Planting A Tree This Spring?

Consider planting an Elm tree this year. As you may recall the mighty American elm tree was very plentiful in the Northeast for centuries in many urban settings. The elm tree is known for its height, beauty and shade. It eventually succumbed to the dreaded Dutch Elm Disease (DED), but is now making a comeback with the help of a strain resistant tree called the Liberty Elm Tree. The American Liberty Elm was born in 1983 from 6 strain resistant elm trees. These trees have the classic vase-shaped canopy and can grow up to 80 feet tall. With your planting you can help restore the 100 million elm trees that were lost to DED.

For more information please visit:

www.libertyelm.com

www.elmrenaissancetreefarm.com

www.elmcare.com



Young Elm trees



Two of our local Blue Heron population

NEW HANOVER Great Blue Heron Rookery

Many people in the area are already aware of the fact that a great blue heron rookery exists in New Hanover Township. This significant natural feature was first observed by local residents over twenty years ago! By the time that you read this, the birds will have returned to the nests along the banks of Swamp Creek to set up housekeeping for the season. Presently, this colony is thriving and increasing in size; a 2006 census established that there were 41 nesting pairs! The need to protect these birds in the face of intensive development pressures in the immediate area has resulted in a coordinated collaborative effort to insure that this important natural area is not negatively impacted. This is the only documented rookery in Montgomery County and as such it has received considerable attention and support from public agencies at the local, county and state level as well as from private non-profit organizations. Following is a summary of the many ongoing efforts devoted to insuring that these wonderful animals continue to call New Hanover Township their home.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has assumed the responsibility for overseeing the protection of the rookery. PGC officials have been working with the developer in an attempt to schedule future construction activity so as to avoid undue disturbance during the critical mating and nesting season. Additionally, the developer has committed to the establishment of a conservation easement for a large natural area surrounding the rookery. Montgomery County Lands Trust has agreed to establish and hold the easement. After visiting the site, the president of the Delaware Valley Ornithological Club went to his membership and, recognizing the importance of the birds, they decided to make a significant financial contribution to MCLT in order to help cover the expenses associated with the establishment of the easement. The Montgomery County Planning Commission is in the process of updating the county's Natural Areas Inventory. Scientists contracted by the County visited the site in the spring of 2006 and are strongly recommending inclusion. Lastly, an application has been made to the Audubon Society to designate the rookery an Important Bird Area.

When all is said and done, we can only hope that all of these efforts enable these birds to continue to remain a part of our natural landscape.



When It Rains, It Drains

Mother nature has provided us with forests and wetlands that protect streams, rivers and groundwater resources. This natural infrastructure acts as a filter, trapping and filtering out most contaminants and impurities, slowing down stormwater runoff, and helping to infiltrate the water back into the soil, protecting both the quality and quantity of drinking water resources.

Development, on the other hand, increases demand for drinking water and simultaneously generates nonpoint source pollution that contaminates water supplies.

What you don't know can hurt the environment. When rain falls or snow melts, the seemingly negligible amounts of chemicals and other pollutants around your home and premises get picked-up and carried via storm drains to surface waters. The ramifications of this include polluted drinking water, beach closing and endangered wildlife.

What can you do to protect surface and ground waters from this type of pollution? Begin by taking a close look at practices around your home or business that might be contributing to polluted runoff. The following are some specific tips to help you become part of the solution rather than part of the problem:

- * Use fertilizers sparingly and sweep up driveways, sidewalks, and gutters.
- * Never dump anything down storm drains.
- * Vegetate bare spots in your yard.
- * Compost your yard waste.
- * Avoid pesticides; learn about Integrated Pest Management.
- * Direct downspouts away from paved surfaces.
- * Take your car to the car wash instead of washing it in the driveway.
- * Check your car for leaks and recycle motor oil.
- * Pick up after your pets.
- * Inspect and pump your septic tank regularly.

Finally, many communities are realizing that while land conservation may be expensive, it reduces the long term costs of water contamination and treatment

Pavement Sealants

Single source polluters are often easily identifiable, make the headlines and eventually are targeted for remediation. However, non-point pollution is probably more widespread and environmentally devastating. Often, this involves routine activities that we don't think much about until it is brought to our attention. This article will focus on a group of chemicals that most of us have never heard of, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons or PAH's. These chemicals come from a variety of sources and have been shown to be highly toxic to aquatic animals and carcinogenic in humans.

One of the sources of PAH's that has, until recently, been overlooked are pavement sealants, widely used to help preserve parking lots and residential driveways. While no one really knows the quantity of sealants being used nationally, a recent government study in Texas found that more than 600,000 gallons were

being applied annually in that state alone. These sealants, especially those that are coal tar based, erode from paved surfaces and the particles are carried both directly and indirectly (by way of stormwater basins) to our streams. The Texas study found that PAH concentrations in run-off from parking lots sealed with coal tar emulsions were 65 times higher than from unsealed surfaces. Regular application as recommended by the manufacturers ensures that a steady supply of these toxins will be carried into local waterways. It is important to note the same study showed that the other commonly used asphalt-based sealants, which do not abrade nearly as easily, cause only 10 percent more PAHs than unsealed surfaces.

As a homeowner, you can choose to make a difference. If you decide not to go so far as forgoing sealing your driveway, choose an asphalt based sealant. This will certainly help to reduce the rate at which these dangerous chemicals are released into our environment.

Why Recycle??

The earth is a closed system meaning that no resources are received from the outside. All materials essential to everyday life must be recycled, including the air we breathe, water we drink and the fabric from which our clothing is made. Since the world has limited resources, it is important we recycle everything we possibly can, ecologically and economically, in order to preserve the quality of life we lead.

A great deal of waste which could be recycled ends up in landfill sites, many of which are harmful to the environment. As much as 16% of the money spent on products pays for the packaging and it is estimated that as much as 50% of waste in trash cans could be composted or recycled.

Recyclable items collected weekly by township licensed haulers include aluminum and bimetal cans, glass (clear and colored), newspaper, magazines, junk mail, flake board (cereal boxes etc.), and plastics No. 1 and 2. Paper products should be collected inside a brown grocery bag or per the specifications of the individual hauler. Please do not include ceramics, dishes, broken glass, aerosol cans, wire hangers, tin foil and pots and pans.

Montgomery County offers a program for the collection of Household Hazardous Waste and Computers at designated locations five times each year. Further information can be obtained by visiting their website at www.wsaemc.org and clicking on Recycling and HHW links or by calling 610 278-3618.