

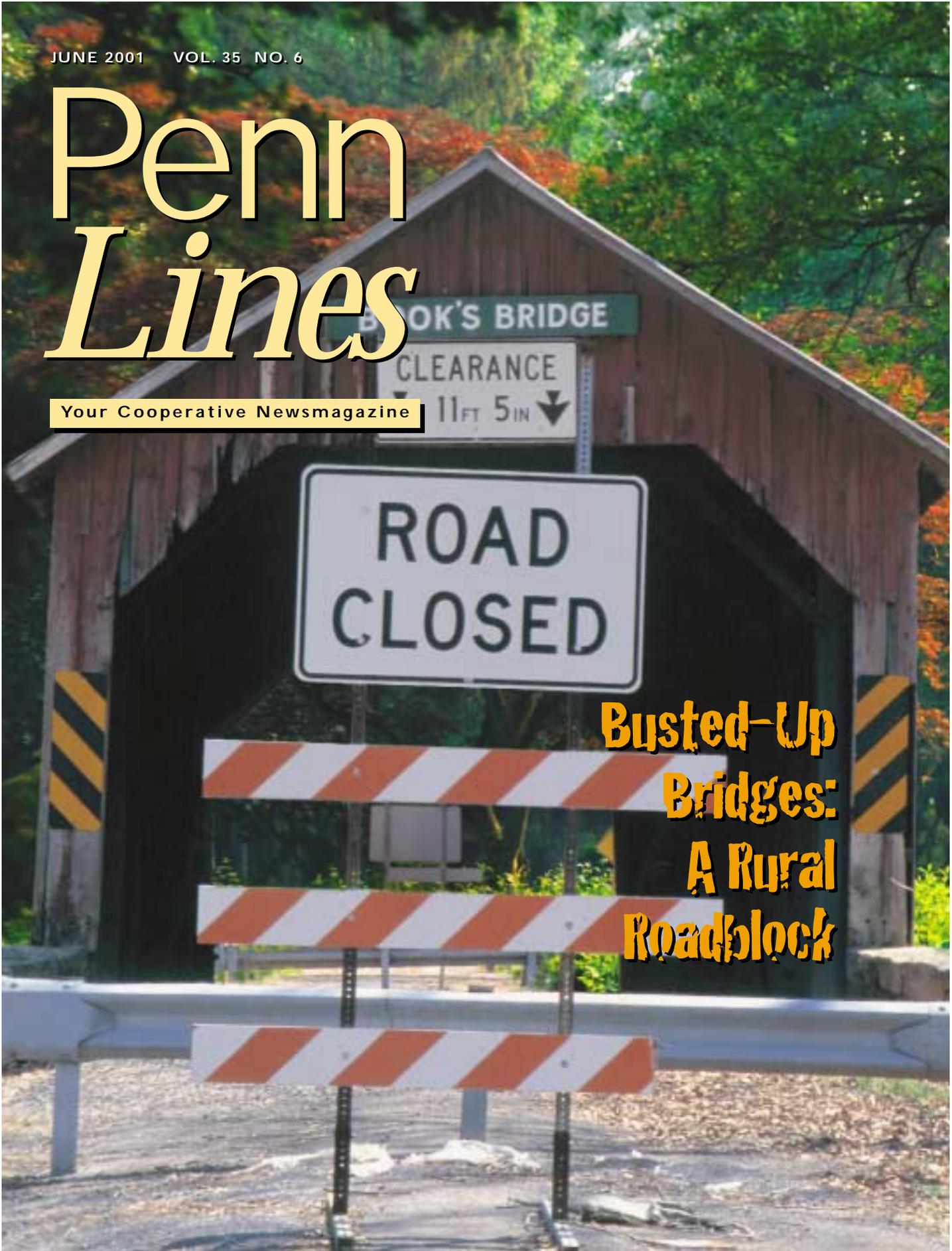
JUNE 2001 VOL. 35 NO. 6

Penn *Lines*

Your Cooperative Newsmagazine

BROOK'S BRIDGE
CLEARANCE
11 FT 5 IN ↓
**ROAD
CLOSED**

**Busted-Up
Bridges:
A Rural
Roadblock**





COMMENTARY

Opening Reader Mail



by Perry Stambaugh
Editor

As regular readers of *Penn Lines* know, every so often I leaf through the correspondence that

crosses my desk and share with you some comments and concerns expressed by your fellow electric cooperative members in Pennsylvania. So here it goes:

The February 2001 *Penn Lines* article “Wind Farming: A New Cash Crop?,” which discussed the economic benefits wind power projects could provide rural landowners and communities alike, generated huge interest from readers wanting to find out how they could get a wind farm on their property. An e-mail from James Day, a consumer of Indiana, Pa.-based REA Energy Cooperative (formerly Southwest Central Rural Electric Cooperative), was typical of most inquiries received.

“I have 200 acres of cleared, mostly level ground atop Penn View Mountain, at an elevation of 2,000 feet fronting Chestnut Ridge Road. There are two power plants [within seven miles] as the crow flies. I would like to site a wind farm on my property as a source of income for me and a source of electric power for consumers. Who should I contact to pursue this?”

As *Penn Lines* staff suggested to Mr. Day and others, contacting Conservation Consultants, Inc. (CCI) in Pittsburgh is a good starting point. CCI is conducting an educational program around Pennsylvania called “Wind Farm USA” and may be able to put interested landowners in touch with a wind power developer. CCI’s phone number is 412/431-4449.

Our recent switch to having *Penn Lines* mailing labels applied directly to the cover via ink jetting (rather than printed on a glued-on label) has drawn a favorable response, especially from

those who deliver the mail. A postcard from Donna

Stillwagon summed it up best.

“As a rural letter carrier, I have written to you in the past with concerns about your glossy-cover magazine and labels that never seemed to stay stuck on [or which had too much glue causing magazines to stick together]. I was so pleased you’ve changed [to ink jetting]. A great improvement — thank you!”

Commenting on “Where’s the Global Warming,” a column that appeared in the Somerset, Pa.-based Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative edition of *Penn Lines* in February 2001, cooperative consumer Mark Weakland chided, “I’ve always been impressed by electric cooperative support for alternate generation resources, such as wind and geothermal, and your promotion of energy conservation. [But] I find it disappointing that your magazine — which normally does a wonderful job of educating its readers — may mislead some into thinking that global warming is not a threat to future generations.”

He continued, “Maybe you think rural residents are overwhelmingly pro-fossil fuel, pro-energy consumption and primarily for President Bush’s agenda of ‘drill for oil, dismiss global warming and burn more coal.’ Please note that many country folk are pro-conservation, pro-mass transit and pro-greener fuels such as wind and ethanol. I’m not willing to bet that global warming is left-wing misinformation designed to slow down economic progress.”

“Bringing the Three Rs Home,” our September 2000 feature that looked at the explosion of home schooling across rural Pennsylvania, produced this e-mail from Elizabeth Kulish, a public school teacher from Tioga County and a member of Mansfield, Pa.-based Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative.

“Your article presented a very positive outlook on home schooling. I feel it is only fair that you give public schools the same chance. There are a lot of good things going on in our public schools; unfortunately, we seem to only hear about the negative side. I do not disagree with home schooling — when done the

right way, it can be very beneficial for a child. As teachers, we praise our children when they succeed. So can you.”

A difference in editing styles drew this sharp rebuke from Paul Marsteller, a former English teacher and member of Valley Rural Electric Cooperative based in Huntingdon, Pa.

“Having read the article ‘School Daze’ [March 2000, examining the two decades-long fight by the state’s rural school districts for equal funding], I am drawn to the conclusion that those responsible for the grammar and punctuation of the magazine are graduates of the same disadvantaged [rural] schools [cited in the article]. On page 11, we read ‘...to make state revenues for all children more equal.’ Sorry, either things are equal or more-nearly equal. And careful writers place a comma before the conjunction in words in a series, such as ‘with students from other districts, states, and counties’ [not students from other districts, states and counties].”

As a graduate of a rural school system in Pennsylvania, I certainly would never want to question an English teacher’s judgment. While I will concede the point made on usage of “equal,” contemporary and accepted editing guidelines call for eliminating the final comma before “and” in a series — a convention that *Penn Lines* will continue to follow.

Finally, my April 2001 editorial “Rural Us vs. Urban Them?,” which contended that rural and urban voters would likely polarize along distinct Republican and Democratic lines in future presidential and congressional elections — just as they did in 2000 — drew this thought-provoking observation from Duane Kanagy, an employee of Gettysburg, Pa.-based Adams Electric Cooperative.

“You indicate that George W. Bush relied heavily on the rural vote to make it to the White House. But you downplayed the fact that the entire presidential election hinged on just five votes from one of the nation’s largest urban centers — Washington, D.C. Those votes were cast by five justices of the U.S. Supreme Court, all but one of whom [Clarence Thomas] were born and raised in an urban area and live and work in an urban area.”

That’s all for now. Keep sending us those cards, letters and e-mails. 

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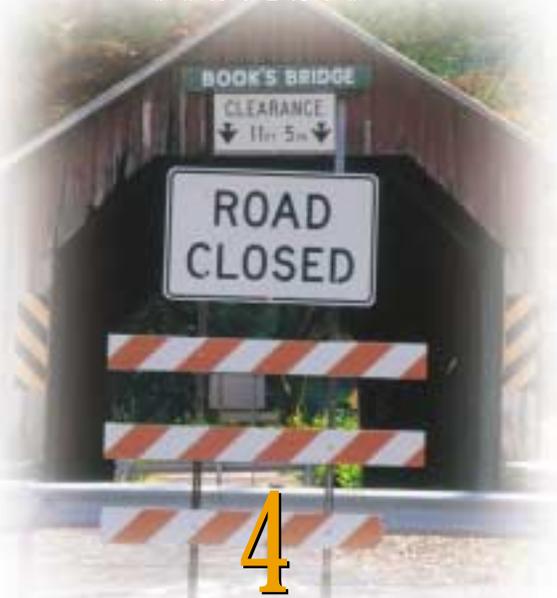
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ABOUT THE COVER: A sore point for local residents and an impediment to emergency crews, the scenic Books Bridge in Jackson Township, Perry County, has been closed for five years after being damaged by flooding. PennDOT hopes to finally repair the structure, built in 1884 of Burr construction, this year. Photo by David Toth, PREA.



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Rural Bridges are Falling Down

The Commonwealth's crumbling network of bridges is putting the squeeze on many rural communities and businesses

by Sharon O'Malley
Contributing Writer
with
David Toth
Assistant Editor

Steve Pelton, a member of Wysox, Pa.-based Claverack Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), does not buy lunch for each of his 90 employees. But he could afford to do so, for what one Bradford County bridge detour costs his milk delivery business every day.

"Because of reduced weight limits on the Ulster Bridge [which crosses the Susquehanna River], my drivers have to go about 10 miles out of their way to get around it," he reports. "Our 40-ton trucks are simply too heavy for the bridge's 20-ton weight limit. The extra drive time costs us between \$600 and \$1,200 per day."

He adds, "Bad bridge conditions in Ulster and elsewhere have been a problem during most of my 30 years in the trucking business. It's a problem made more acute because we operate across a 200-mile region."

School bus driver Lisa Warner, also a Claverack REC member, says narrowness of the 97-year-old, state-maintained Ulster Bridge — one of the longest in the Commonwealth at 2,011 feet — is a daily concern.

"It's a tight squeeze passing over and can be particularly scary when water is high," she comments. "Some parents even pick up their children to avoid bus trips over the bridge when the river rises."



A BRIDGE TOO FAR: Bus driver Lisa Warner, an electric cooperative consumer, stops on the narrow Ulster Bridge in Bradford County to make room for a passing car. Close encounters of this kind are a daily occurrence for motorists that frequent the 97-year-old structure.

The difficulties experienced by Pelton and Warner, unfortunately, are common throughout rural Pennsylvania. A recent Federal Highway Administration report found that the Keystone State has the fourth-highest number of broken-down bridges in the nation, behind only Hawaii, Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Roughly 270 have been closed, with another 3,038 hit with severe weight restrictions — some posted as low as three tons, which prevents most large vehicles from passing over safely.

In fact, Pennsylvania Department

of Transportation (PennDOT) officials estimate that 38 percent of the more than 15,000 rural bridges on state or township roads (compared to 30 percent on interstates and 29 percent on U.S. highways) are either structurally deficient (they cannot safely support the weight of truck traffic greater than 80,000 pounds) or functionally obsolete (meaning they are too narrow, have low clearances or require painfully sharp turns to get on or off). A significant total of functionally obsolete bridges have far exceeded their 50-year useful life expectancy.

The Road Ahead

For rural residents, a "bridge closed" sign can mean extreme hardship, as ambulances and other emergency vehicles; feed, grocery and fuel delivery trucks; milk tankers; tractor-trailers carrying goods; and average motorists are often forced to take detours of 20 miles or more to get around a problem spot.

"Because Pennsylvania has the nation's largest rural population and a watershed terrain, bridges provide a more vital transportation link than in most other states," says Frank Moretti, director of research for The Road Information Program, or TRIP, a Washington, D.C.-based group that tracks the condition of the nation's roads. "In rural areas, bridges are particularly critical to tying communities together and encouraging the free flow of commerce and tourism."

Marel Raub, director of regulatory

affairs for the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, agrees.

"When a bridge is closed, suppliers have great difficulty reaching farms and businesses," she says. "The question then becomes — how long can a farmer or small businessperson stay afloat when he or she becomes too difficult and too costly to do business with?"

The Camp Hill-based farm organization is backing state legislation that would require local governments to conduct an impact study before limiting the amount of weight that can cross a bridge, something the state already does. But many rural advocates believe that more money is needed to repair and replace ailing bridges, whether they are among the 16,000 on PennDOT's system or the 7,000 at least 20 feet long controlled by local governments.

In rural Carbon County, Pa., for example, a rickety single-lane township bridge — declared safe only for vehicles weighing up to five tons — had school bus drivers so concerned for their young charges' safety that they began unloading the kids before coasting buses across the structure. The school-aged commuters would then walk over the bridge and climb back aboard on the other side.

Since the buses weigh about nine tons when empty, Towamensing Township Roadmaster Rodney George reports some drivers refused to brave the crossing at all.

To fix the problem, the township scraped together \$196,000 to tear out the 50-year-old bridge and replace it with one that can support the weight of the community's traffic — including school children.

Battling the Problem

The Keystone State's sorry ranking on deficient bridges is partly a numbers game. With 25,000 bridges, Pennsylvania simply has more than most states.

"The sheer total has forced Pennsylvania to play catch-up with maintenance over the last few years," notes Moretti.

To speed up bridge work, state Sen. Roger Madigan (R-Bradford), who represents electric cooperative service areas, points out that state liquid fuels

taxes were raised four years ago (the gasoline tax, for example, by 3.5 cents, to 25.85 cents per gallon). With the extra money, PennDOT plans to spend about \$738 million over the next four years for repairs to 1,079 bridges — most of them in rural counties.

Gary Hoffman, PennDOT's chief engineer, stresses that Pennsylvania has a rigid inspection program that closes bridges or posts strict weight limits when they are deemed too risky for normal traffic.

"In addition, PennDOT also ensures that townships are inspecting their bridges on a regular timetable to bolster public safety," he relates.

Citing a limitation on dollars, Hoffman explains that most of the \$3.45 billion spent on replacing or rehabilitating more than 3,000 bridges since 1982 has been directed at roads most traveled — interstates, U.S. highways and major state routes.

"We're putting our dollars where there is the most traffic, so we can get the most bang from what we spend," he continues. "In some ways, this actually benefits rural areas because it steers heavy truck traffic away from small, quiet communities."

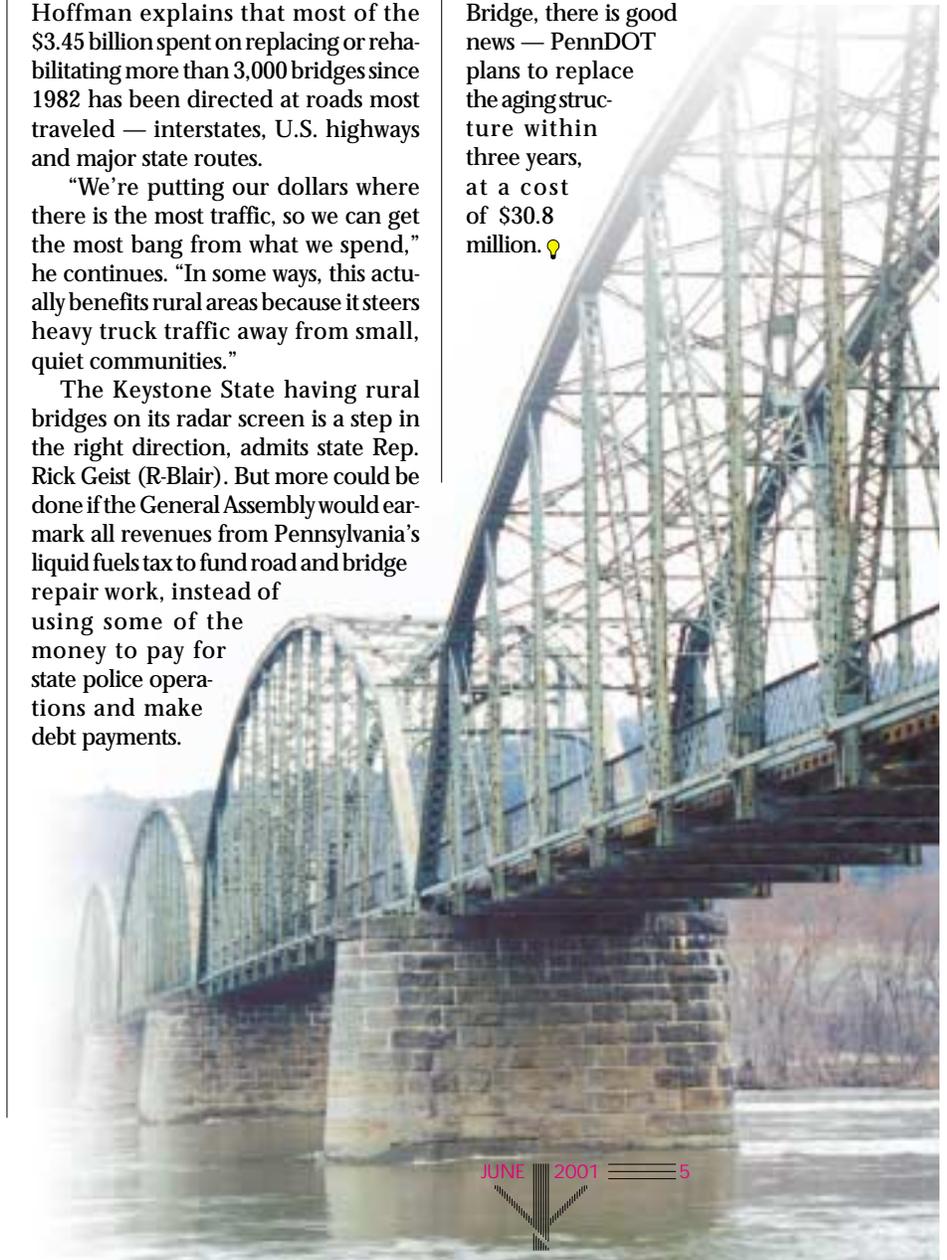
The Keystone State having rural bridges on its radar screen is a step in the right direction, admits state Rep. Rick Geist (R-Blair). But more could be done if the General Assembly would earmark all revenues from Pennsylvania's liquid fuels tax to fund road and bridge repair work, instead of using some of the money to pay for state police operations and make debt payments.

"Having state police and revenue-bond retirement line items paid for strictly out of the General Fund would free up 7 cents a gallon for bridge maintenance," he contends. "Right there, we would be able to fix a lot of bridges."

Still, Hoffman remarks, the state is making progress, even if it is slow.

"We have to upgrade 250 bridges to record a 1 percent improvement," he says. "Five years ago, 41 percent of rural bridges were structurally deficient or functionally obsolete. Today, we have cut that to 38 percent, so we are heading in the right direction."

Meanwhile, for Pelton, Warner and others who traverse the Ulster Bridge, there is good news — PennDOT plans to replace the aging structure within three years, at a cost of \$30.8 million. 



A SITE FOR SORE EYES

Sick of trash lining roadways and piling up in woodlands, rural residents are taking on illegal dumps

by David Toth
Assistant Editor

Armed with an old fish tank, a picnic basket and a bag of trash, Gail Rae, a consumer of Huntingdon, Pa.-based Valley Rural Electric Cooperative (REC), visits the local Beavertown Bible Church as part of a grand crusade — to rid rural areas of unsightly and unwanted garbage.

Surrounded by a circle of young smiling faces from Girl Scout Troop 1324, she fills the aquarium with water and asks audience members to toss in toy cars and food coloring. The demonstration effectively shows how quickly garbage and chemicals — when disposed of illegally and improperly — can destroy open water supplies.

ABOUT PA CLEANWAYS

Through local chapters across the Commonwealth, volunteers for PA CleanWays — a non-profit organization formed a decade ago to combat illegal dumping — remove trash from woods, fields, roadways and hillsides, separate recyclable materials and then truck remaining items to a landfill. Volunteers also make presentations on the dangers of improper waste disposal.

Since 1990, PA CleanWays chapters have eliminated 130 illegal dump sites containing more than 2,000 (10-ton single axle) dumptruck loads of trash. As part of this effort:

- More than 4,500 refrigerators and similar appliances were collected, with the refrigerants extracted and recycled.
- Around 21,000 Christmas trees were turned into mulch or sunk in public lakes for fish habitat.
- A total of 47,222 tires, 3,422 vehicle batteries, 204 tons of magazines and newspapers and 72 tons of paint and solvents were recycled.

For additional information on how to stop illegal dumping, contact PA CleanWays at 724/836-4121.

Through presentations like this, Rae — a member of the Huntingdon County Chapter of PA CleanWays, a non-profit statewide organization dedicated to trash removal — hopes to stamp out littering and illegal dumping.

“People do it because they have been taught that it is OK,” explains Rae. “Generations have done it and children follow their parents’ example. The bottom line is that too many people do not understand the importance of having clean air, land and water and that is what I hope to change.”

Squashing Litter Bugs

According to research from the Center for Rural Pennsylvania — the rural policy arm of the state General Assembly — there is no distinguishable pattern for where illegal dumping occurs. The most common places are wooded or mountainous areas (27 percent), sinkholes or farmland (20 percent) and parks and public lands (9 percent).

While no data exists for how many illegal dumps are actually located in the Commonwealth’s 42 predominately rural counties, the number likely runs in the thousands. Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) officials alone have identified 170 of them, containing up to 1,000-plus truckloads of trash, just within the 116 state parks and 20 state forests under its jurisdiction. Furniture is the most common waste found at these “ad hoc landfills,” followed by tires, appliances, household trash, bottles, construction and remodeling materials and animal carcasses.

“It’s a disgrace for piles of waste to be thrown out along highways and hiking trails,” laments Jim Garthe, an agricultural engineer for Penn State Cooperative Extension and Valley REC consumer. “Garbage laying in a ditch has a value — it’s all a matter of how you look at it. Used cars today are called previously owned vehicles. I like to call trash a previously owned resource.”



WEEKEND WARRIORS: Volunteers from PA CleanWays clear debris and trash from an illegal dumpsite in Rothrock State Forest, Huntingdon County.

A founder and board member of the Huntingdon County Chapter of PA CleanWays, Garthe notes that many rural residents are unaware of the health problems caused by illegal dumps. Drinking water, for one, can be easily contaminated by bacteria from rotting garbage, or chemicals from leaking paint solvents and motor oil. People poking around a site also risk getting tetanus from rusty metal or sharp objects.

Mosquitoes breeding in stagnant pools that form in old tires or appliances are another threat, one compounded by the spread of the potentially deadly West Nile Virus into Pennsylvania last year. The disease can also affect birds, livestock and household pets.

Why Illegal Dumps?

Roughly 70 percent of Pennsylvania’s 2,600-plus municipalities — most of them rural — report they have a serious illegal dumping problem, according to preliminary results taken from a statewide survey conducted by the non-profit Professional Recyclers of Pennsylvania (PROP), based in Bellwood, Pa. But most of the townships and boroughs with dumping problems also indicated they have a deficiency in local collection services, recycling programs or require residents to use a distant drop-off location.

“The lack of disposal alternatives or the high cost associated with them is certainly at play in the creation of illegal dumps,” confirms Helen Ostermiller, project manager of PA CleanWays. “Curbside disposal, recycling and spring clean-up programs that haul away bulky items — which can prevent the need for illegal dumping — must be universal and affordable and a priority for local government officials.”

Sometimes, Ostermiller remarks, people dump trash where they are not supposed to because a collection day was missed. In many cases, though, people simply fail to understand the damage caused. There is also some evidence that a few may do it strictly for profit — collecting trash as a paid service, dumping it in the woods and then pocketing the money that they would have had to spend on tipping fees to use a landfill.

“Out of site, out of mind, that’s the typical way trash is handled,” relates Rick Stahl, Huntingdon County planning director. “Since most illegal dumping incidents occur at night on rural roads, where garbage is usually thrown over an embankment, spring clean-up activities are a great way to tackle the problem.”

Using Huntingdon County as an example, Stahl points out that 15 of its 48 municipalities presently offer some type of clean-up program. Records show these efforts cost \$26,933 in 2000 but resulted in 422 tons of collected waste material — an average of 45 pounds of trash per capita.

John Frederick, executive director of PROP, acknowledges that in small rural townships and boroughs, cost makes active recycling and clean-up programs impractical. However, he encourages rural communities to consider developing inter-municipal compacts to provide for such services.

“Local and state officials need to become more proactive about addressing shortcomings when it comes to recycling and trash removal,” he says. “PROP and PA CleanWays can provide assistance in this area.”

Better Watch Out!

Those engaging in illegal dumping can face severe fines and penalties.

“Whether it’s on a back road, in state game lands, state forests or parks or

on private property, dumping garbage without a permit is illegal — plain and simple,” says Jeff McCloud, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. “Those convicted can face up to two years in jail and up to \$25,000 in fines, depending on the damage, location and necessary clean-up involved.”

State officials are working hard to stop “midnight dumpers” and will even sort through garbage to catch offenders. One reason for the stepped up enforcement is cost — a 1997 survey by DCNR discovered that state foresters spend more than 10,000 man-hours each year removing up to 2,500 tons of rubbish, rusty metals and even toxic chemicals.

As Rae and Garthe will attest, removing illegal garbage sites does seem to deter repeat dumping. In fact, a DCNR study at 14 well-used illegal dump locations found that they were less likely to accumulate more trash after being cleaned up.

“We hope that through education, people will come to believe that illegal dumping is not only unhealthy, but socially unacceptable,” Rae concludes. ♡



NEWS BRIEFS

compiled by Perry Stambaugh
Editor

Diesel Fuel From Coal

A \$300 million plant that converts anthracite coal waste into diesel fuel may soon be constructed in rural Gilberton, Schuylkill County, Pa., by an international consortium led by coal-fortune heir John Rich Jr., owner of Waste Management & Processors, Inc. The 20-acre synfuels facility — the first of its kind in the U.S. — hopes to produce 5,000 barrels of diesel fuel a day.



To get the coal gasification project moving, the U.S. Department of Energy

has invested \$7.6 million in clean coal technology funds for design work; the state General Assembly has already authorized up to \$47 million in tax credits once the plant is operational. Rich notes that similar efforts could help eliminate an environmental eyesore created by coal mining — the estimated 900 culm banks and slag heaps,

spanning 8,600 acres, piled up across the Commonwealth — as well as reduce demand for imported oil.



'Greener' Appliances On The Way

New energy efficiency standards for domestic appliances — among the plethora of regulations issued in the waning days of the Clinton presidency — were recently approved by the U.S. Department of Energy, with slight modifications. The controversial standards — which had been closely scrutinized by the Bush Administration — require washing machines to use 22 percent less electricity starting with the 2004 model year and 35 percent less by 2007; electric water heaters to use 4 percent less energy by 2004; and home central air conditioners and heat pumps 20 percent less power by 2006 (the original Clinton proposal had sought to make the units 30 percent more efficient).

The new rules are expected to raise the price of typical top-loading washing machines by \$240 (making super efficient front-loading models more cost competitive) and central air conditioners by \$213. Energy Department officials note that while the action will only provide the average consumer with a \$100 benefit over 18 years (in energy savings payback), the nation will experience a tremendous reduction in electricity demand.

Passing It On

Beneficiaries living in Pennsylvania's 42 predominately rural counties received only one-fifth the amount in inheritances as their urban counterparts during 1999, according to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania — the non-partisan rural policy arm of the state General Assembly.

Using estate tax data from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, the Center found that on average, rural beneficiaries inherited roughly \$52,000 per death, or \$1.4 billion overall. In contrast, the average urban beneficiary received more than \$75,000, a total of \$7.5 billion.

The sharp difference can be partly explained by the wealth disparity that exists between rural and urban

areas. "Combined personal property and income averages \$44,000 per rural resident versus \$57,000 for those living in a metropolitan region," points out Jonathan Johnson, senior policy analyst for the Center.

However, the inheritance gap between rural and urban is narrowing. Between 1991 and 1999, rural inheritances jumped 25 percent on average. Urban areas, on the other hand, experienced just an 18 percent increase.

The Center notes that over the next 25 years, as baby boomers age, rural beneficiaries may see inheritances climb dramatically — up to an average of \$125,000, with the typical city dweller pulling in \$140,000.



ENERGY ANSWERS

Lighting Up the Yard

by James Dulley
Contributing Columnist

If you want to add landscape lighting around your home and save a few dollars, check out the latest in fiber optics and low-voltage security light kits. They are very easy to install (a complete kit comes with transformers/timers, fixtures, wiring, etc.) and extremely energy efficient.

Since you can install these kits yourself, you will not have to worry about limiting the number of lights to minimize electrician fees. As a result, you can target lighting to specific points (instead of just flooding a large area), cutting your electric bills and reducing problems for passing birds and nocturnal animals.

Over the past several years, many ornate and contemporary types of landscape lighting have been introduced. Some redwood, cedar and die-cast metal models sport price tags ranging from \$50 to more than \$100 per light fixture.

Fortunately, low-cost durable plastic kits are still available. You can also mix and match various fixtures and add just a couple of expensive ornate lights in high-visibility locations.

Fiber Optics Options

Hi-tech fiber optics lights are the safest to install and use because the fixtures are not connected to a power source. Instead, a single projector box, housing only one light bulb, is plugged into a standard electrical outlet. You can then locate the projector wherever you wish—for example, you may want to attach it to a motion-sensor switch for times when you are not outside. This could frighten away an intruder.

Once the projector is installed, locate the light fixtures (each producing illumination equivalent to a 10-15 watt bulb) wherever you need them. Then connect the lights to the projector with thin fiber-optics cables (you can hide the cables by running them through your gardens, along walkways, etc.). Some kits allow you to install up to 24 bollard-style lights to a single projector.

Futuristic-looking fiber optics lights are also available, but they are limited to a maximum of 16 fixtures per projector. An optional, slow-spinning wheel inside the projector can even change colors of the lights.

For swimming pools, decks and patios, consider contour lighting using a side-glow fiber optics cable. The entire cable glows to outline an edge or a walking path.

Low-Voltage Possibilities

The variety of designs and applications for safe, low-voltage (12-volt) lighting kits is constantly expanding. In addition to deck and stair lights, new "let's edge it" kits can prove ideal for lining

walkways and driveways. They use plastic bricks that weather and look like the real thing. Complete with built-in wiring connectors, the bricks just snap together.

A 20-foot kit includes six lighted and 22 unlighted bricks. Swiveling connector pieces resemble real mortar and allow the bricks to be formed into a curve to follow a walkway. These kits can even highlight trees, as they will swivel enough to form a 42-inch diameter circle.

Most low-voltage lighting kits now offer features like automatic timers, electric eyes and dimmer controls. Many new all-metal models use frosted and decorative cut glass. You can even find inverted tulip-shaped lights and brands with planters built into the base, both perfect for flower gardens.

When purchasing low-voltage landscape lights, choose fixtures with halogen bulbs and built-in reflectors for an accent effect. Small incandescent or super-efficient five-watt compact fluorescent bulbs are good for pathway and area lighting. 



James Dulley is a nationally syndicated energy management expert. For more information on this subject, request Dulley's "Utility Bills Update No. 983," which includes a buyer's guide on 13 low-voltage/fiber optics lighting and brick kit manufacturers, listing styles, fixture materials, features, prices and outdoor lighting design tips. Send your request to: James Dulley, c/o Penn Lines magazine, P.O. Box 54987, Cincinnati, OH 45254. Please include \$3 and a business-size self-addressed stamped envelope. Or for quicker turnaround, check out www.dulley.com via the World Wide Web.





COUNTRY KITCHEN

Cooking for the 'Big Cheese'

by Kitty Halke
Contributing Columnist

Father's Day, June 17, is the perfect time to show Dear Old Dad — the "Big Cheese" of the house — just how much he is appreciated. One way is to make Dad the meal of his dreams featuring cheese, cheese and more cheese. Or even better, simply turn over the keys to the kitchen and allow Dad to create!

Cheesy Italian Bread makes a great appetizer or a fine first course when served with crunchy salad greens. Follow with the main dish — succulent chicken or turkey breast bursting with an apple-cheese filling. Fresh strawberries and smooth cream cheese layered in your favorite pastry shell make a satisfying end to a meal fit for the king of your castle.

Kitty Halke is a cooking professional and freelance writer from rural Pennsylvania. Send recipes and comments to her in care of: Penn Lines, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266.

CHEESY ITALIAN BREAD

- 3 ounces cream cheese, softened
 - 1/2 to 3/4 cup bleu cheese, crumbled
 - 3 tablespoons pecans, coarsely chopped
 - 4 slices crusty Italian bread (cut about one-inch thick)
 - 2 cloves garlic, peeled and halved
 - 2-3 large tomatoes, sliced about 1/8-inch thick
- salt and pepper to taste

Preheat oven broiler or heat toaster oven. Blend cheeses together with a fork while letting bleu cheese remain chunky. Mix in pecans and set aside.

Lightly brown both sides of bread in broiler or toaster oven. Remove and gently rub cut side of garlic over both sides of bread. Spread the cheese-pecan mixture on one side only of each bread slice and arrange tomatoes on top of the cheese mixture. Sprinkle with salt and pepper, if desired.

Return to broiler or toaster oven for about one minute or until cheese melts and tomato slices are heated through.



APPLE-STUFFED CHICKEN (OR TURKEY) BREASTS

- 4 boneless and skinless chicken or turkey breasts
- 1 to 2 cups apples, peeled, cored and finely chopped
- 3/4 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/2 cup bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1-1/2 cups apple juice or apple cider
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup cold water

Flatten chicken or turkey breasts between two sheets of plastic wrap using a meat mallet, rolling pin or other heavy object. Stir apples, cheese and bread crumbs together until combined, then mound equal amounts on each chicken or turkey breast.

Roll up each breast, securing with metal skewer or toothpick. Melt butter in skillet, add rolled up chicken or turkey breasts and brown on all sides. Add juice or cider to skillet, then cover and simmer for about 15-20 minutes or until chicken or turkey breasts reaches 170 degrees on meat thermometer.

Remove chicken or turkey from skillet and keep warm on plate or platter. Combine cornstarch with the cold water and stir into the pan juices. Cook until thickened and bubbly. Pour sauce over chicken and serve immediately.



CREAM CHEESE STRAWBERRY PIE

- 2, 8-oz. packages cream cheese, softened
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla
- 3-1/2 cups frozen whipped topping, thawed
- 1, nine-inch pie shell (graham cracker, chocolate, traditional pastry)
- 2 pints strawberries, sliced

Beat cream cheese until smooth; gradually adding in sugar. Blend in sour cream, lemon juice and vanilla. Fold in whipped topping. Spoon one-half of mixture into pie shell and arrange half of the sliced berries. Spoon remaining cheese mixture over arranged berries. Top with remaining sliced berries. Chill at least 4 hours before serving.





RURAL REFLECTIONS

June Is Bustin' Out All Over

June marks the arrival of summer, complete with outdoor activities of every kind. It is also a great time to capture Mother Nature in full bloom or the kids at work and play for our 2001 "Rural Reflections" contest.

Send your snapshots to: *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg, PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, please include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence.

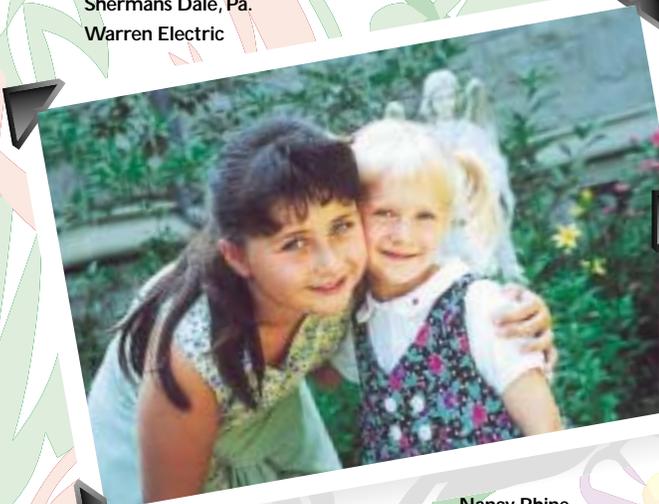
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