



AUGUST 2013

The Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Association of Professional Soil Scientists  
PO Box 871, Mechanicsburg, PA 17055

**Inside:**

- 2 Onlot sewage systems – antidegradation analysis
- 3 Global soil biodiversity initiative
- 4 Report- hydric soil workshops
- 5 Fall tech session announcement

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**Nominations for  
2014-2016 Board  
of Directors are  
now being  
accepted**

**Licensing Bill Update:**

**Representative Petri Introduces House Bill 997  
Senator Schwank to Re-Introduce Senate Bill**

House Bill 997, an Act to provide for Soil Scientist Licensing in Pennsylvania, was introduced by Representative Scott Petri (R-Bucks) and was referred to the Professional Licensure Committee of the PA House of Representatives on March 14, 2013. The Committee is expected to hold a public hearing on the bill sometime in August or September. You are urged to write your local representative to share your support. Also, a note to Representative Petri can go a long way to moving the bill forward.

A successful “Day on the Hill” in March, organized by PAPSS lobbyist, Vince Phillips, laid the groundwork for re-introduction of the bill on the Senate side by Senator Judy Schwank (D-Berks). Prior to her election to the Senate, Senator Schwank worked as a Berks County horticultural agent for Penn State Cooperative Extension and served two terms as Berks County Commissioner. She also served as President of 10,000 Friends and as the Dean of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at Delaware Valley College. Due to a potential conflict of interest related to his past work in agronomy, Senator Brubaker chose not to be prime sponsor, but will work with Senator Schwank as co-sponsor of the bipartisan bill. Introduction is scheduled for this fall.

HB 997 is identical to Senate Bill 1506 introduced in the 2011-2012 session. Following discussions with Senator Boscola’s office, it is likely that a specific sunset provision will be added to subsequent versions of the bill to set a one year deadline for exemption from a licensing exam.

PAPSS Board members have been communicating with the PA Association of Sewage Enforcement Officers (PASEO) and the Society of Wetland Scientists (SWS) over concerns that the legislation would prohibit wetland delineators and SEOs from performing work that incidentally includes soil science. Revisions to the original bill language are in the works to make sure that the concerns of the two groups are addressed. ■

Find Your Legislator <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/findyourlegislator/>

**Hon Scott A. Petri  
107 Ryan Office Building  
PO Box 202178  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2178**

**Hon. Judy Schwank  
457 Main Capitol Building  
Senate Box 203011  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3011**

## Onlot Sewage Disposal Now Exempt from Anti-Degradation Evaluation in HQ/EV Watersheds

Beginning in 2008, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) began requiring land developers to perform an anti-degradation analysis for on-lot septic systems relative to potential impacts to special protections waters. This policy originated following a legal challenge to the approval of a planning module for new on-lot sewers to serve a residential subdivision in the Pine Creek watershed, Berks County, PA.

An environmental group challenged the planning module approval, filing an appeal and taking the case to the Environmental Hearing Board. The challengers argued that PADEP failed to consider PADEP's anti-degradation regulations, which are intended to ensure that "point source" discharges of wastewater within watersheds designated as high quality (HQ), or exceptional quality (EV) do not adversely impact the quality of those waters.

Subsequently, PADEP began requiring that applicants demonstrate that wastewater discharged to the soil on the site would not adversely affect the quality of the HQ or EV stream in the watershed where the site is located, no matter how distant or minimal the volume of wastewater. Single family homes on large lots in rural Pennsylvania were subject to the requirement. Previously, on-lot septic systems weren't subject to the anti-degradation regulations because the treated wastewater is not directly discharged to the stream through a pipe or other conveyance. Onlot systems were considered "non-point sources," which were not subject to the anti-degradation regulations. The challengers successfully argued that even though onlot septic system were not point source discharges, the groundwater receiving the wastewater would eventually enter the stream via the discharge of groundwater to the stream, creating an effective, though not a literal point source.



PAPSS awards  
\$25 to winner of  
the Montgomery  
County Science  
Fair

Helen Gerhold  
Germantown Academy

"Activated Charcoal  
and Peat Moss:  
cleanup of  
chemical/oil spills"

On July 2, 2013, Governor Corbett signed into law House Bill 1325 that removes the requirement to conduct an anti-degradation analysis when proposing onlot sewer systems. PADEP is working to resolve issues related to recently approved planning modules and permits that required denitrification systems or other advanced treatment. ■

NY Times Sunday Review:  
The Hidden World Under Our Feet

The *New York Times* published an article by Jim Robbins, author of "The Man Who Planted Trees," that outlines the biodiversity of the soil under our feet and stresses the importance of protecting it. He introduces readers to the Global Soil Biodiversity Initiative ([www.globalsoilbiodiversity.org](http://www.globalsoilbiodiversity.org)), a contributing group to the Global Soil Partnership. Overgrazing, acid rain, tillage, and development are some of the things impacting soil and soil life.

For the full article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/12/opinion/sunday/the-hidden-world-of-soil-under-our-feet.html?pagewanted=1&r=1&ref=opinion> ■

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Ultraviolet Disinfection No Longer Required for Shallow  
Limiting Zone Onlot Treatment and Disposal Systems

The following article is a reprint of an SEO News Item published on the PADEP webpage:

[http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/onlot\\_disposal\\_system/10583/seo\\_news\\_items/1107617](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/onlot_disposal_system/10583/seo_news_items/1107617)

"Please be advised that, as of the effective date of this memorandum [July 23, 2013], ultraviolet disinfection units are no longer required to be included as components of on-lot sewage treatment and disposal systems that may be sited on shallow limiting zone sites (sites with limiting zones less than 20 inches from the mineral soil surface.)

Research conducted and Delaware Valley College demonstrated that fecal organisms discharged into the upper aerobic soil horizons are sufficiently attenuated by naturally-occurring biologic and chemical processes without additional disinfection, and that disinfecting sewage effluent prior to final treatment and disposal into soil did not provide a measurable increase in safety. Investigation of various literatures did not produce any clear documentation of cases of illnesses within Pennsylvania that could be clearly attributed to properly functioning on-lot sewage treatment and disposal systems that did not include an ultraviolet disinfection unit component.

This decision impacts certain on-lot sewage treatment and disposal alternate technologies currently described in the Alternate Systems Guidance (<http://www.elibrary.dep.state.pa.us/dsweb/Get/Document-47722/362-0300-007.pdf>) and also specific technology listings posted on the Department's website at [http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/sewage\\_and\\_disposal/10583/onlot\\_alternate\\_technology\\_listings/607632](http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/sewage_and_disposal/10583/onlot_alternate_technology_listings/607632). As the alternate technology descriptions listed in the Alternate Systems Guidance are transitioned to the Department's website, the listings will be revised to reflect this change. Once the transition of these technologies to the website is complete, the Alternate Systems Guidance will be rescinded. The Sewage Enforcement Officer continuing education training curriculum will also be updated to reflect this change." ■

## Hydric Soil & Wetland Delineation Educational Workshops April 23 and April 24, 2013 Wysox, Bradford County, PA

PAPSS assisted staff from the USDA NRCS and the Army Corps of Engineers during an educational session covering hydric soil identification and descriptions, along with other areas of the Regional Supplement to the Corps Wetland Delineation Manual. The two sessions at the Stoll Natural Resource Center in Bradford County were well-attended.



Morning course instruction was provided by Frank Plewa of the Army Corps of Engineers, and John Chirbirka and Yuri Plowden of the USDA-NRCS. Several field stations were set up in an adjacent wetland area to provide hands-on instruction for identifying hydric soils and keying the appropriate indicator status on the wetland data forms in the Regional Supplement.

A second hydric soil/wetland workshop was planned for May 31, 2013 at the Powdermill Nature Reserve in Allegheny County. Unfortunately, this second round of workshops was postponed and may be rescheduled for 2014. Thanks to Laurel Mueller for setting up the Bradford County workshop and to Jackie Heintz for her work in Allegheny County. ■

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## NRCS Soil Survey meeting Sept 4, 2013 Harrisburg

The USDA NRCS will be hosting the 2013 Pennsylvania Soil Survey Work Planning Conference in Harrisburg on September 4, 2013. The conference will run from 9am to 3pm and will cover the status of the PA Soil Survey, changes to survey operations, and new tools available for obtaining and interpreting soils data. For more information, and to register for the conference, please contact State Soil Scientist Joe Kraft by August 28, 2013 at [Joseph.kraft@pa.usda](mailto:Joseph.kraft@pa.usda). ■

## PAPSS Fall Technical Session and Annual Meeting: Reclamation: Coal Refuse and Abandoned Mines

The PAPSS Fall Technical Session is scheduled for September 20, 2013 in Cambria County. The session will feature a tour of a cogeneration plant that uses coal refuse to produce steam and electricity. The steam provides heat and hot water to local businesses and the electricity is sold to Penelec. Waste coal is trucked to the plant from “boney piles,” low-volatile waste coals found throughout bituminous coal mining areas. The tour will include a visit to an active reclamation site, where waste coal is being removed for use at the plant and waste ash is returned to the reclaimed area for topsoil and seeding.

Mr. Eric Cavazza of the PADEP Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation will speak about problems such as mine fires, mine subsidence, dangerous highwalls, open shafts and portals, mining-impacted water supplies and other hazards that have resulted from past coal mining practices, and how Pennsylvania works to resolve the problems. A local landowner has offered the opportunity to excavate and examine test pits on his property in the afternoon.

The annual business meeting is scheduled following the field tour. As part of the incorporation of PAPSS in 2013, the organization’s bylaws must be re-adopted in their entirety. You may vote by absentee ballot or in person at the annual business meeting on September 20.

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|--------------------|--|
| 8:00 – 9:00 a.m.   | <b>Registration</b>  |
| 9:00 – 10:15 a.m.  | <b>Tour of Ebensburg Power Company, Cambria Industrial Park</b> Mr. Gary Anderson , Plant Manager        |
| 10:15 – 11:30 a.m. | <b>Tour of Nanty Glo Coal Refuse and Reclamation Site</b><br>Mr. Gary Anderson , Ebensburg Power Company |
| 11:30 – 12:45 p.m. | <b>Lunch</b>   |
| 12:45 – 1:30 p.m.  | <b>PA Abandoned Mine Reclamation</b><br>Mr. Eric Cavazza, Director –Abandoned Mine Reclamation           |
| 1:30 – 3:30 p.m.   | <b>Test Pits</b><br>Cavode, Cookport, Ernest series  |
| 5:00 p.m. –        | <b>PAPSS Annual Business Meeting</b>   |

Visit PAPSS online

[www.papss.org](http://www.papss.org)

Web Soil Survey

[websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx](http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx)

NRCS Digital Soil Survey App

<http://casoilresource.lawr.ucdavis.edu/drupal/node/886>

Comments or contributions?

[mlane@brickhouse-environmental.com](mailto:mlane@brickhouse-environmental.com)

**Title Photo:** NRCS Soil Scientist Yuri Plowden at the hydric soil meeting in Wysox, PA



## **“Reclamation: Coal Refuse and Abandoned Mines”**

### **2013 Annual Meeting & Technical Session Registration Form**

<b>PAPSS MEMBERS</b>	<b>\$75.00</b>
<b>NON-MEMBERS</b>	<b>\$100.00</b>
<b>STUDENTS</b>	<b>\$25.00</b>

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Company/Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Address1: \_\_\_\_\_

Address2: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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**REGISTRATION DEADLINE September 6, 2013**

Mail Registration and check (made payable to PAPSS) to:

**Sue Miller/ PAPSS**  
**1130 Boiling Springs Road**  
**Mechanicsburg, PA 17055**  
Email: [Sue6951@aol.com](mailto:Sue6951@aol.com)

- Fee includes tour, coffee/danish, box lunch, and pizza dinner