

## CHALLENGES FACING THE PENNSYLVANIA DEP IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS

### *An Interview with Secretary John Hanger*

To assist us and our *etCETera* readers in gaining a better understanding of the environmental issues of greatest concern to the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), we requested and were recently granted the privilege of interviewing Mr. John Hanger, the Department Secretary. The interview only consisted of one question, "What are the challenges facing the Department in the next 10 years?" In Mr. Hanger's response, he expressed his viewpoint on a variety of environmental challenges. His comments on these issues are paraphrased below.

#### **On Climate Change and Clean Energy**

The Department will be involved in every aspect of this critical issue. There is no dispute that carbon is increasing in the atmosphere and that six gases trap heat in our atmosphere. Temperatures have increased 3-4 degrees compared to the 1970's in the Northeast United States during winters.

The result is that there are changes in the animal environment, the plant environment, and ice is melting. The seasons are changing.

Unfortunately, there is no free lunch when it comes to what to do about it.

The question for all of us is: Can we get out of the partisanship and ideology, or are we prepared for, as we are seeing in our economy, a near environmental collapse?" I believe we have a moral responsibility, and if we act properly, the environment will improve, plus it is economically smart. We must avoid being so self-absorbed.

*"If we act properly, the environment will improve, plus it is economically smart."*

The Commonwealth's new Clean Air Act approach is a better one. Pennsylvania has thirteen power plants that are installing scrubbers that should be operational in 2011 – 2012. The California Clean Car Rule that was adopted by Pennsylvania and 15 other states has been extended.

We must convert to clean energy production. By the end of the 21st Century, solar energy will be what oil was at the end of the 20th. Marcellus Shale gas production will be another key because it can be a

bridge between oil and solar. Gas is less carbon intensive and cleaner than oil.

Pennsylvania has experienced a 50 percent increase in drilling rigs exploring for Marcellus Shale gas in the past year. Nationally, the number of active drilling rigs has declined. The problem is the market price of fossil fuels; it is a very volatile market. In December 2008, a barrel of crude was \$33. Last July it was \$147. When one considers that we import 60 percent of our oil, 60 percent at \$150 a barrel is not sustainable. Our country has to get out of the economic peaks and valleys that go with importing oil.

Energy independence means cutting petroleum oil imports and our own consumption, by using cellulosic ethanol, biodiesel fuels, natural gas, and electricity for transportation.

The Governor has restarted the Energy Office. We now have a more vital policy to protect public health and the economy. Act 129 of 2008, which imposes new requirements on electric distribution companies with the overall goal of reducing energy consumption and demand, is an example of the Commonwealth's improved energy policy.

I believe we need leaders that understand a coherent energy policy if we want a cleaner environment and a more stable economy. The last 40 years has been a failure to create an energy system that protects our national security, our environment, and economy from ruinous price shocks and volatility. These matters can't be postponed to the future

### On the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay challenge has not been met. EPA is not willing to allow the Clean Water Act to be circumvented. I believe Pennsylvania and other states have one more opportunity to establish a plan for compliance.

*“The Chesapeake Bay challenge has not been met.”*

### On Our Wastewater Systems Infrastructure

We have underinvested in the infrastructure of our Commonwealth. It is time to come to grips with the fact that communities have to reach into their pocketbooks and invest in infrastructure improvements. The Commonwealth is partnering by putting \$1.2 billion into water and wastewater projects in 2009 – 2010. There are big dividends.

Pennsylvania leads the country in sewage overflows into streams. The bacteria counts in some streams are at dangerous levels because of sewage overflows. This is simply appalling for our state and it must change. Our goal must be no sewage overflows.

*“Our goal must be no sewage overflows.”*

### On Water Resources

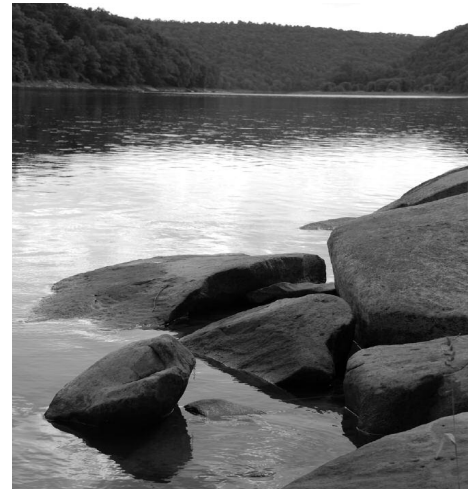
The Commonwealth has an abundance of water in terms of quantity and probably a strategic advantage compared to other states. For example, in the Western states, a significant portion of their water quantity is based on snow pack. Snow pack is decreasing. Therefore the quantity of water available to them is decreasing.

The Northeast may see even more water because of climate change. Short term, severe storms may be more frequent with the result that what used to be a 100-year flood event, may become a 25-year event as intense storms quickly move in and out.

### On the Need for Good Environmental Regulations and Acid Mine Drainage

A lesson of what can result from the lack of good environmental regulations is acid mine drainage. It continues to be a significant challenge. There are at least 13 subsurface mine fires in the state. There are more than 1,000 miles of streams that are polluted from mine drainage.

There is probably more than \$100 billion worth of remediation that must be done, and it will likely take more than 100 years to deal with it.



With that statement, Secretary Hanger concluded his remarks, which clearly indicate that the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and surrounding states face a number of environmental challenges that must be met with thoughtful determination, commitment, and substantial financial resources. We trust his thoughts are of assistance in helping you to better understand the scope of the challenges and in planning for your particular contribution in meeting them.

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