



# Sierra Watch

Spring 2014

Newsletter of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Group

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## Pennsylvania Chapter Honors Two Southeastern Group Leaders at Annual Banquet

Jim Wylie and Robin Mann were recipients of awards at the PA Chapter's Annual Awards Dinner held at the Bonjourno Conference Center in Carlisle on April 5, 2014. Awards are given annually to recognize volunteers who have made outstanding contributions to the club's work.

"Supernova" awards recognize longtime volunteers who have considerable talent and have contributed on many levels of the club over many years. Our own Robin Mann received one such award this year. In addition to her work at SPG and the PA Chapter, she is a former president of the Sierra Club nationally. Her most important contribution is that she makes herself available as a resource and mentor for all of us.

Jim Wylie of Chester County was SPG's choice to receive a "Stargazer" Award. Each group in the

Chapter votes one person who Jim revamped the SPG website, made a significant contribution, thus bringing us into the 20th



Left to Right: Southeastern Group members Robin Mann, Anne Lovatt, Jim Wylie, and Bill Brainerd

a kind of "MVP" for the year. Jim certainly fills those shoes. He began working with the Chester County members conservation committee a few years ago and now volunteers for SPG and Chester County. A website designer,

century, and winning our Stargazer Award for 2014. Jim's knowledge and commitment to Sierra Club's priority issues (clean energy, mountaintop removal) is invaluable.

## Green Buildings Subject of March Educational Program

### What Makes a Building "Green?"

by Bill Brainerd

Holly Shields of the US Green Building Council spoke to about 35 people at a Sierra Club lecture Monday evening, March 10. USGBC designed the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) system of building certification which is one of the most common ratings systems in the field of green building certification.

In deciding whether a building should be LEED-certified, USGBC examines a building for five features and awards points for each.

#### **Sustainable Use: 14 points**

The building should be on a used rather than a pristine site. If the site is pristine, the building should disturb the land as little as possible. If on a hazardous waste site, the site should be remediated. Dust should be kept on site. The building should not contribute to a heat island effect. The site should be close to mass transit.

#### **Water use: 5 points**

Water should be conserved inside and outside. Storm water runoff should be

reduced.

#### **Energy 17 points**

Because USGBC is concerned about global warming, it weighs energy use above other features. A building should use less electricity derived from fossil fuels and more derived from renewables. Refrigerants shouldn't use CFCs.

#### **Materials: 15 points**

The building should use recycled materials. It should use local materials to lower material miles traveled. New wood should be from well managed forests.

#### **Indoor Environmental Quality: 15 points**

Cleaning products, rugs, paints, and building materials must not emit chemicals. Sunlight should be maximized. No smoking allowed.

Additionally, the latest version of LEED gives credit if all stakeholders including building users are involved in the planning process from the start.

Green buildings are good for the environment and profitable for their own-

ers. They save energy and water, have higher occupancy rates and charge higher rents than uncertified buildings.

In 2007 52 points earned platinum certification. Now the standard is higher. LEED standards are reviewed and raised every three years. Not even today's highest rated buildings have zero or positive impact on the environment, but that is the goal to which USGBC aspires.

LEED isn't the only system for rating green buildings, but it's the most common. People like it because it's consensus-based, asks for public input, and requires third-party approval before certification.

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#### **SPG Education Programs**

Programs are held six times a year. They are free and open to everyone. For future programs, check the calendar at:

[www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern](http://www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern)

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### **SPG EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

The SPG Executive Committee normally meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month in the offices of Clean Air Council, 135 S. 19th Street, Suite 300, Philadelphia, PA at 6:45 PM. All members are invited to attend. To confirm date and time, contact Chair Ann Lovatt, [annelovatt@verizon.net](mailto:annelovatt@verizon.net), or 610-308-2840.

### **BUCKS COUNTY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

Sierra Club members residing in Bucks County should contact Dave Meiser, [dhmeiser@comcast.net](mailto:dhmeiser@comcast.net). For information on local activities see: [www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern/AboutUs.html](http://www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern/AboutUs.html).

### **CHESTER COUNTY CONSERVATION COMMITTEE**

Sierra Club members residing in Chester County should contact Mary Ciarrocchi at [italiangrden@comcast.net](mailto:italiangrden@comcast.net) or Jim Wylie at [jim.wylie@verzion.net](mailto:jim.wylie@verzion.net), 484-753-3581. For information on local activities see: [www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern/AboutUs.html](http://www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern/AboutUs.html).

### **For information on all events and activities, visit:**

[www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern](http://www.pennsylvania.sierraclub.org/southeastern)

## Federal Rule Will Clarify Protection for Pennsylvania's and the Nation's Streams and Wetlands

Three cheers to the Environmental Protection Agency and US Army Corps of Engineers for recently proposing a new federal rule to clear up confusion about which of the nation's streams and wetlands are protected from pollution under the Clean Water Act. If finalized, it will clarify federal protection of streams and wetlands throughout Pennsylvania, including the Delaware River Basin. Altogether the rule will help to protect the drinking water for millions of Americans, preserve fish and wildlife habitat, and reduce the risk of flooding.

The Sierra Club applauds the Obama administration for this effort to restore a common-sense approach to protecting our nation's lakes, rivers and streams. Clean water is an undeniable necessity for the health of our families, our environment, and our economy, not to mention our enjoyment. The Environmental Protection Agency and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers have recognized that ensuring the protection of water bodies upstream is vital to keeping pollution out of our waters downstream.

To protect Americans' drinking water, health, and recreation opportunities, Congress passed the Clean Water Act in 1972. But, due to conflicting Supreme Court decisions in 2001 and 2006, and ensuing confusion in their interpretation, many of the small streams and wetlands that contribute to the health of downstream creeks and rivers have been denied protection from unnecessary filling and pollution.

The proposed rule would restore the federal protection historically in place until the Supreme Court rulings for an estimated 49,000 miles of Pennsylvania's smallest streams, or 59 per-

cent of the total stream miles in the state, plus hundreds of acres of wetlands.

The Clean Water Act provides that filling and discharging pollution into federally protected waters should be avoided wherever possible. And federal protection provides an important backstop to state level regulatory programs like Pennsylvania's.

The new rule would clarify, for



example, that the headwaters of Bucks County's Cooks Creek, a trout stream, would have clear protection under the Clean Water Act, which may not currently be the case.

As Thomas Au, Conservation Chair for the Pennsylvania Sierra Club, noted in welcoming the agencies' action, "With this rule, everyone including those wishing to develop in and around these waters will have a clearer picture of what they can and can't do under the law. The rule will help everyone comply with the Clean

Water Act. We look forward to seeing a strong rule finalized quickly."

It is vitally important for the EPA and Army Corps to hear strong public support for this proposal. The agencies will be accepting public comments directly once the proposed rule is published. In the meantime, to send a comment you may go here: <https://secure.sierraclub.org/site/Advocacy?cmd=display&page=UserAction&id=13249>

### Remember to Vote on Tuesday May 20th

Every election in a democracy is a critical one for the environment, our families, and the future...in Pennsylvania this is especially true for party primaries!



## Support Needed to Save Pennsylvania's Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (AEPS)

The AEPS is the mechanism that forces our electric utility companies to slowly transition the mix of energy source from primarily fossil fuels and nuclear to clean and renewable sources like wind and solar. The current requirements call for Tier 1 fuels (solar, wind, geothermal, hydro, methane from bio, biomass, fuel cells, coal mine methane and black liquor) to ramp up to 8% by 2021. And the solar specific portion to ramp to 0.5% by 2021. Sierra Club, and others, supports legislation that would increase these requirements to 15% by 2023 for Tier 1 and 1.5% for solar.

We've seen renewable energy projects create good family-sustaining jobs in the wind and solar industries, as a result of the stimulus created by the original passage of the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard in 2005. But since that time many of our neighboring states have adopted stronger renewable energy policies while we have languished. As a result, the good green jobs created by our AEPS are being lost to states like New Jersey, Delaware and New York.

To join the Phila/AEPS action team, contact Karen at [karen.melton59@gmail.com](mailto:karen.melton59@gmail.com)




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## A New Year and New Sierra Club Leadership in Harrisburg

January of this year brought momentous change to the Sierra Club in Pennsylvania. Jeff Schmidt, the Chapter's Director and lobbyist in the General Assembly retired after thirty years of dedicated service.

Aware of Schmidt's pending departure, the Chapter's personnel committee began a serious search in 2013 for a replacement. After a lengthy vetting process, the position was offered to, and accepted by Joanne Kilgour. Who stepped in to head the Harrisburg office on January 1st.

Schmidt began his leadership role in 1983 and came to the chapter position after serving a volunteer leader in the

Lehigh Valley Group based in the Allentown-Easton area. He talks about the job in Harrisburg as being somewhat lonely at first since he was the first Sierra Club lobbyist in Harrisburg. He worked with five different governors and was a common presence on the Hill working with our state legislators.

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Like Schmidt, Kilgour came up from her volunteer roles with the Allegheny Group in Pittsburgh. In the several months since her hiring, she has brought her own unique style to the role of Sierra Club's lead staff person in the Commonwealth.

Wendi Taylor, the Chapter Chair, and other chapter leaders expect Kilgour to leave as little void as possible in the huge footprints left by Schmidt.

