

## Environment

# ClearWater to remove McCoy-Linn Dam

By Delia Guzman

The ClearWater Conservancy of Central Pennsylvania's effort to spearhead the removal of the McCoy-Lin Dam was aided in early August by a \$100,000 Legacy Grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

The grant will go toward removing the dam, located on Spring Creek between Milesburg and Bellefonte, by December 2006.

The idea has been discussed for some time, according to project manager and ClearWater Conservancy conservation biologist Katie Ombalski. However, about two years ago, the Conservancy decided to make the project a reality.

"Many people and interest groups, both public and private, have advocated the removal of McCoy-Linn Dam, but for one

reason or another, it just never moved forward," Ombalski stated. "ClearWater formed a partnership with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, American Rivers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Spring Creek chapter of Trout Unlimited. We've pooled our resources to make it happen. We couldn't do this without the help of all these people. That's what is making this project a success."

Additional funding has come from the DEP's Growing Greener Program and another grant from the Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program. Ombalski says it's too early on to determine the total costs.

Ombalski stated that an engineer is currently doing the preliminary work to con-

struct strategies for safe and efficient removal of the dam. Then, says Ombalski, they will work on the actual design to remove the dam, put out a request for proposals from contractors, and take the structure down.

According to the Conservancy's information, the project will restore approximately 4,000 linear feet of stream habitat and riparian corridor, restore 1.5 acres of associated wetlands, and develop public access to a 1.3 mile stretch of a contiguous publicly owned section of Spring Creek.

The McCoy-Linn Dam, built in 1936 as a source of hydroelectric power for West Penn Electric, has not functioned as such since 1950, when it was shut down. In addition to posing a safety hazard for anglers, canoers, and kayakers, the dam has caused environmental damage to the habitat, a watershed for the Chesapeake Bay, raising

water temperatures and thus driving away native species as well as contributing to a build-up of trapped sediment. Pennsylvania's watersheds contribute a substantial amount to the bay's water supply.

Locally, proponents of the dam's removal hope to improve water quality both upstream and downstream and increase public access to Spring Creek.

In addition, the Nittany and Bald Eagle Greenways Plan, put in place to develop environmentally friendly habitats for recreational use, has recommended the construction of a trail connecting Milesburg and Bellefonte's Waterfront District.

"The removal of the dam will increase streamside habitat and create tremendous recreational opportunities while preserving historical resources," Ombalski stated. "It will be nothing but positive for the area."

# Energy bill includes tax incentives for new technology

By Andy Lau

The energy bill (H.R.6.ENR) passed Congress in late July and has some valuable incentives for purchasing renewable energy technologies and energy-efficient appliances and homes. Incentives are in the form of federal tax credits for individual purchases of renewable energy technologies, energy-efficient appliances and hybrid gas-electric cars. While the bulk of the funding increases are directed at restarting the U.S. nuclear industry, the credits should also boost the solar and energy-efficiency industries. The tax credits are funded from Jan. 1, 2006, through Dec. 31, 2007, and apply to purchases made during those two years.

## Solar technologies

Purchasers of solar technologies, including solar water heaters and photovoltaic systems, can receive a tax credit of 30 percent of the installed cost, with a total credit limit of \$2,000. A homeowner who installs a solar water heating (SWH) system for a cost of \$3,000 can receive a tax credit of \$900, bringing the net cost down to \$2,100. For a typical central Pennsylvania family with an electric water heater, an SWH system can save \$200 to \$300 annually and pay for itself in 7 to 10 years. Having the tax credit means less money invested (after taxes) and a quicker payback time.

Solar photovoltaic systems are quite expensive, with system costs of over \$10,000. Even with the 30 percent tax credit, simple payback times are around 50



years. Also, purchasers of these systems receive less of an incentive (as a percentage of total cost) because of the \$2,000 cap on the tax credit. However, solar photovoltaic systems provide significant indirect benefits such as reducing resource consumption and pollution, thereby improving health and helping future generations to meet their energy needs.

## Fuel cells

Tax incentives for fuel cells are also included, although it is unlikely that the technology is market ready. Unlike solar technologies, which have proven reliability, fuel cells for residential applications are very new. The tax credit is for 30 percent of the cost with a cap based on the total installed capacity, \$500 per half-kilowatt.

## Energy efficiency

The specifics in this part of the energy bill are difficult to sort out, and the following information is based on articles about the bill and the bill itself (found at <http://thomas.loc.gov/> and searching for H.R. 6, then selecting H.R.6.ENR from the

list). Homeowners are eligible for a 10 percent tax credit, up to a \$500 cap, for money spent on home energy improvements. Energy-efficient appliances including dishwashers, clothes washers and refrigerators can earn a tax credit of up to \$175. Other major appliances including air conditioners, heat pumps, furnaces and water heaters can qualify for a tax credit of up to \$300. Energy-saving windows can qualify for up to a \$200 credit. New energy-efficient homes can qualify for up to a \$2,000 tax credit.

## Hybrid cars

The federal budget includes \$875 million to

provide tax credits for buying hybrid gas-electric vehicles. For example, the purchaser of a Toyota Prius would receive a tax credit of about \$2,500. A limitation, and a reason to buy sooner, is that each manufacturer can apply the tax credits to only 60,000 vehicles each year (Toyota sells about 150,000 hybrids annually).

If you are thinking about investing in a solar water heater or a hybrid car or replacing a major appliance, consider the tax incentives included in the recent energy bill. Also, keep all of your receipts and the manufacturer's information to document your purchases at tax time.



Photo by Marcus Sheffer, Energy Opportunities

A Lancaster County energy-efficient home built by Bradley Builders uses one fourth of the energy of a conventional home.