

JULY 2010

PENN¹lines

Learning on the fly

*Fly-fishing teaches environmental
awareness, appreciation for
natural resources*

PLUS

Is it summer yet?

Declare your independence

Metal roofs

PENN *lines* JULY

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ON THE COVER

Bill Amspacher, a retired general serviceman from Adams Electric Cooperative, fishes for trout in Pine Grove Furnace State Park. Photo by Peter Fitzgerald



A fishing license decrease?

IF THE TITLE of this article didn't get your attention, you must have thought it was a misprint. No, it isn't a mistake. In fact, as I have promised, I am going to tell you about some of my priorities as the new director of the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission (PFBC). It has become obvious to me that inflation is catching up with the commission, much like it catches up with all of us in our personal lives.

The cost of personnel services, fish feed for our hatchery programs, gasoline for our vehicles, electricity due to deregulation, a looming pension plan deficit, and all of the other costs of survival in the 21st century continue to rise. Therefore, if we are expected to provide the same level of service, we must find additional revenue or cut programs.

In my interview with our board of commissioners for this position, I explained the need to diversify our funding portfolio much like we are personally advised to diversify our investment portfolio. It makes sound fiscal sense not to put all of your eggs in one basket, which makes one less vulnerable to impact if something happens to your funding.

In our agency's case, we have always depended upon fishing license sales and boat registration fees and the federal funds that go along with them to sustain our agency. These sources of revenue have always been the core funding for our programs and the reason why we have stayed an independent agency. We don't receive general fund (tax) money contrary to the popular belief of many. However, there are other ways to fund our agency's programs and that involves acquiring alternative funding revenue — something other than fees from fishing licenses and boat registrations.

We need to get serious about looking

at other revenue sources and that's where I need your help. We know that most anglers, boaters and conservationists are not part of organized groups that we traditionally ask for help to support our cause. We are getting close to pricing ourselves out of the market and continue to hear complaints about the rising costs of licenses and registrations. For many of us, the cost of a license or registration is a bargain. However, there are a lot of us who don't use our privileges quite as often for a variety of reasons, which is why our license sales drop every time we raise license fees. Therefore, I suggest that we look at ways to generate funds by other non-traditional means.

Unfortunately, most of us are apathetic when we are happy with the way things are going. It is good that anglers and boaters are happy with our programs, which is a sign that we continue to do good things for you. However, I am concerned about the future, and you should be, too. My staff and I are working on innovative funding ideas that will support our agency programs, but all of these options will require action by our General Assembly. We are finishing a revenue calculator that will project how various amounts of funding from alternative revenue sources will carry us into the future without the need to increase fishing license or boat registration fees, and possibly reduce them.

We need to start thinking outside that proverbial box. The time for action is now before it's too late for our children, our grandchildren and us. It's time to support the idea of alternative revenues for the PFBC, and I am ready to discuss my ideas with our legislators. Together, we may be able to put together a plan that will allow us to lower the cost of your license. See you on the water. 🌊



JOHN ARWAY Executive
Director Pennsylvania Fish &
Boat Commission

CREP program protects environment, pays landowners

MANY Pennsylvania residents living in areas where non-forested streams — even small, intermittent waterways — meander through their property are eligible to participate in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP).

At the same time they are elevating the water quality of local streams (and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay) and benefiting wildlife through habitat development, participants are earning an annual income.

CREP is a voluntary conservation program that rewards landowners for planting native trees and shrubs along the edge of a non-forested stream in an attempt to cut down on sediments, pesticides and nutrients in the water. It offers up to 100 percent reimbursement for installation and subsequent maintenance, plus it provides a one-time incentive payment followed by annual payments to the landowner. The program also covers expenses for high-quality fencing, crossing and watering systems for livestock owners to keep livestock out of waterways if they are needed.

CREP is a partnership of 16 federal, state and private conservation organizations. CREP also has other options besides buffers, such as planting native grasses and establishing wildlife habitat, but the Chesapeake Bay Foundation works only with forested buffers. The foundation has been working with CREP's stream buffer efforts since 2000.

Correction

Carolyn Stafford was incorrectly identified in a photo caption in the July issue of *Penn Lines* in the article, "Pedaling through Pennsylvania." Carolyn and her husband, Joe, members of Adams Electric Cooperative, are avid bicyclists.



GREEN PASTURES: This farm in Bradford County is one of many in Pennsylvania taking part in the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP). CREP is a voluntary conservation program that reimburses landowners for the costs associated with planting native trees and grasses near non-forested streams. Photo provided by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation.

To date, roughly 24,000 acres of forested buffers have been enrolled in the program. Of the \$90 million that the program has brought to Pennsylvania so far, about half is for project installation (creating jobs and tree nurseries) and half is rental payments to landowners.


According to Dave Wise, the watershed restoration manager of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation based in Harrisburg, participants are not required to be farmers. They simply must be landowners in a rural area who can use a little extra spending money and are concerned about the environment.

"The Environmental Protection Agency has estimated that every \$1 spent to prevent water pollution is worth \$29 that would otherwise be spent to clean up the water

after it is already polluted," Wise reports.

Because clean water is so important, CREP is well funded, Wise reports.

"CREP has lots of resources — roughly \$500 million — to be put toward doing good things for the environment," he notes. "We need to make serious progress toward meeting the goals we have been mandated to meet in terms of cleaning up the nation's streams. Voluntary, profitable conservation through CREP is far more attractive than some of the alternatives we could be faced with if EPA doesn't see measurable results in cleaning up the streams."

To learn more about how to help the environment while earning extra money through CREP, call 800/941-CREP or visit www.cbf.org/CREP. 

A greener way to a green lawn

BY BRIAN SLOBODA
Cooperative Research Network

MOST summer weekends are filled with the sounds of splashing in swimming pools, kids riding on bicycles and the din of lawn mowers. Lawn mowers and other gas-powered lawn equipment roar to life in most neighborhoods to keep yards looking pristine.

However, these small engines emit a surprisingly large amount of pollution. By some U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates, engines used to maintain lawns and gardens account for 5 percent of total U.S. air pollution. Although regulation of small engines has not been a priority for the government, new rules will go into effect in the next year or two governing emissions from small engines.

The gasoline engines powering lawn mowers and other yard equipment emit carbon monoxide, a colorless and odorless gas that is toxic to humans. They also emit hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxide that contribute to the formation of

ground-level ozone. Operating a gasoline-powered lawn mower for one hour produces the same amount of smog-forming hydrocarbons as driving an average car almost 200 miles, according to the EPA.

What's more, gas lawn mowers are noisy.

Luckily for your lawn (and neighbors), options do exist to help keep grass groomed while reducing air and noise pollution.

A manual reel mower is a great option. These mowers have no engine, no fuel, and use human power to operate. They have zero emissions and operate with very little noise. These mowers can last years with proper care. They are best-suited for smaller lawns.

Electric and battery-powered mowers offer a clean alternative to the reel mower. Like gas mowers, electric and battery-operated mowers have a motor that spins a blade, which cuts the blades of grass. They are quiet, emit no direct pollutants, and can either be corded or cordless.

Costs for a corded mower are similar to that of a gas-powered mower. They do have one very limiting feature: they must be connected to the house via an extension cord.

Cordless rechargeable mowers are more convenient than their corded counterparts. Some cordless mowers have a removable battery that can be charged inside the home.

Rechargeable mowers are limited by the life of the battery pack. When shopping for a cordless mower, look for information on the size of



GREENER MOWING: Reel mowers rely on time-tested technology to cut grass with little more than sharp blades and elbow grease.

lawn the mower can handle or the minutes the mower will be able to run on a single charge. Actual times will vary depending on the age of the battery, height of the grass, and how quickly the user can get the job done.

In recent years, the choice in cordless mowers has expanded, but cordless mowers continue to receive mixed reviews. Given the high cost of the mowers, careful attention should be paid to the brand and model being purchased. Online reviews of cordless mowers are a helpful resource in picking the right one. Many retailers offer customer reviews of products and these should be viewed prior to purchasing.

Gas-powered lawn mowers can be found on almost every street in America. However, because of rising fuel costs and environmental concerns, more people are switching to human-powered reel mowers or electric mowers. These alternatives are a reliable and attractive alternative to gas-powered models. They pollute less, and perhaps most importantly, they won't disturb your neighbor's summer nap. 🌿

Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of the Arlington, Va.-based National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



QUIET ALTERNATIVE: Battery-powered mowers run on rechargeable batteries.

Learning on the fly

*Fly-fishing teaches environmental awareness,
appreciation for natural resources*

BY PETER FITZGERALD
Editor

FOR MANY fly-fishermen, a day in the stream can be a lesson in nature, where paying close attention to your surroundings can land you that prize trout.

The lessons come in many forms to the observant angler. It may be an early morning hatch of mayflies, tipping you to what's on the menu. Or that babble in the brook, telling you the water level is low; look for deeper pools to fish.

For Joe Humphreys, the lessons come from a lifetime in the water, where he developed not only fishing skills, but also a great love for the natural environment.

"The stream was my classroom," he

says. "That's where I developed a fly-fishing education. When I was old enough to ride a bicycle, I'd ride out and fish."

Pennsylvania's babbling brooks could probably tell a story or two about Joe Humphreys. The legendary angler has fished many of the Commonwealth's waters since he was a boy growing up in Centre County in the 1930s.

"I caught my first trout on Spring Creek," he recalls. "It was an 8-inch trout on a bamboo fly rod, which was what everybody had in those days. Since then, I've been hooked."

Humphreys went on to capture the Pennsylvania record brown trout, a 34-inch monster he landed in 1977 that was featured in a past issue of *Penn Lines* (see inset, page 11). The record stood for several years until the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) changed the record standard from length to weight.

Humphreys took that early love of the sport and turned it into a lifelong career, going on to teach fly-fishing for more than four decades. In 1968, he introduced fly-fishing to the physical education program at Bald Eagle Area High School in Centre County. He then went on to teach at Penn State University, and directed the angling program there for close to 20 years, passing along his knowledge of fly casting, fishing techniques and tactics to generations of students.

While he learned some things from fishing veterans like George Harvey, who created the angling program at Penn State, most of what he knows he picked up on his own in and along Pennsylva-



LEARNING TO FLY: Fly-fishing guide Dave Cardellino, a member of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, demonstrates proper casting on Kettle Creek in Potter County.



HOOKED: Bill Amspacher, retired Adams Electric Cooperative general serviceman, works his line onto his fly rod for a day in the stream.

nia's many trout streams.

"Fishing can be funny sometimes — fishermen, too," he notes. "Some don't want to share what they know and give up their secrets."

If fishing is Humphreys' first love, teaching is his second, and he doesn't mind sharing a secret or two. Though retired now, Humphreys maintains a busy



That's just what Bill Amspacher, a retired general serviceman from Adams Electric Cooperative, did one day when a friend introduced him to the sport several years ago: he just watched and learned.

While some people might be intimidated when they see the back-and-forth motion of fly casting, Amspacher encourages people not to get too caught up in the casting process.

"Casting is easy," he says. "I can have someone casting in five minutes. The easiest way is to watch someone who knows how to do it. But I wouldn't worry about it so much. Besides, you can't catch a fish if your line's in the air all the time."

Another piece of advice Amspacher offers: keep it simple. While it can be easy to get caught up in all the fancy (and expensive) equipment available for fly-fishing, it's best to start with the basics of a rod and reel and some flies.

"In the end, you're getting all geared



PRIZE: An angler works a fly off a recently landed brown trout.

schedule and continues to share his knowledge through charity events, youth programs or with people he meets along the stream. A big part of his message has always been care for our natural resources.

"I enjoy seeing people learn," he says. "But it's not just about techniques and tactics. We need to stress the importance of the environment."

That lesson, Humphreys believes, goes hand-in-hand with picking up a fishing rod. After all, knowing a little about the environment might help you

become a better fisherman.

"If I want to catch a fish," he says, "I should know something about the insect population."

Getting started

While he was mainly self-taught, Humphreys says today people wishing to learn fly-fishing have access to many resources — including books, instructional videos, even professional guides.

For many beginners, the best way to learn still is to tag along with someone who knows the sport.

up to go after something that has the brain the size of a peppercorn," Amspacher says with a laugh. "And most of the time, the fish wins."

Amspacher has a cabin in Pine Grove Furnace State Park in Cumberland County, with lots of trout fishing in the area. It's there he discovered the joys of being in the stream.

"You just notice so many things when you're out there," he explains. "For me, it's the catching, not the keeping."

Amspacher has since passed along his love for the sport to his son.

"It's something we can do together," he says.

Cooperative spirit

Passing along the pastime of fishing serves as the inspiration for the Yellow Creek Coalition (YCC), a nonprofit organization established to preserve a stretch of the stream in Bedford County. Concerned that the purchase of land along the stream for a private fishing club might prohibit fishing to the general public, the coalition formed in 2005 to ensure future generations in the area would be able to enjoy the sport.

"I have fished the stream all my life," explains YCC President Fred Sherlock, a member of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative. "I want to make sure my grandkids have a place to fish. We want to keep it open to the public."

The coalition serves to protect a 1.25-mile stretch of the stream that is designated as a fly-fishing only project. The project was established in 1957 through the efforts of then-state Fish Warden Bill McInay. Working in cooperation with local landowners, McInay helped secure this portion of Yellow Creek to serve as a catch-and-release area for fly-fishing.

That spirit of cooperation continues today at the project, which is thriving, thanks to the coalition. Formed by members of three local chapters of Trout Unlimited (an international nonprofit organization dedicated to the conservation and enhancement of streams, waterways and trout resources), the coalition has worked

to improve the infrastructure at the site, including adding a bridge, access roads and a parking lot — all through volunteer efforts. Today, the parking lot bears McInay's name, and was developed from land donated by his daughter and her husband.

Charles Whitman, McInay's son-in-law and a member of New Enterprise Rural Electric Cooperative, says none of this would be possible without the help of volunteers.

"In 2009, we put the bridge in," Whitman relates. "It took about 5,000 hours of labor — all volunteer."

Volunteers also help keep the creek and feeder streams clear of trash and debris. Yellow Creek is a well-known trout

stream that draws people from outside the state. In addition to keeping this stretch of the stream open to the public, the goal of the coalition is to conserve the natural resource and preserve the water quality.

"Some of the old-timers here say the stream is healthier today than it's been in the past," Whitman relates. "They say there's more insect life for the fish to eat."

Over the years, the YCC has raised about \$60,000 for its various efforts. Because it doesn't rely on any state or government money, the coalition supports itself through donations, raffles and various fundraising events. To help

PRESERVATION: New Enterprise Rural Electric members, from left, Charles Whitman and Fred Sherlock, overlook a stretch of Yellow Creek in Bedford County designated for fly-fishing only. The two are members of the Yellow Creek Coalition, which works to preserve this part of the stream.

maintain the fly-fishing project for people to enjoy, the members always welcome more support.

"This stream was open long before I was here," says Whitman. "It should stay that way."

Trout economics

Maintaining projects like this also serves to enhance the state's rural economies, explains Randy Buchanan, YCC vice president and Trout Unlimited/Mountain Laurel chapter president.

"In terms of bringing people to restaurants and hotels, a project like this does a lot for the local economy," he says. "People come from all over to fish this stream."

The story seems to be the same along trout streams all across the Commonwealth. According to the American Sportfishing Association, Pennsylvania, at \$1.8 billion annually, ranks fifth in the nation in terms of fishing expenditure. And that's behind states with considerably more shoreline — Florida, Texas, Minnesota, California and Michigan.

PFBC Executive Director John Arway says the impact of fishing and fishing-related activities is considerable, especially in rural parts of the state where people go to enjoy these activities.

"Fishing and boating contribute signif-



DEDICATION: The parking lot at the Yellow Creek fly-fishing project is dedicated to the memory of former Pennsylvania Fish Warden Bill McInay.

ificant revenues to local, regional, and statewide economies, particularly in rural areas,” Arway notes. “Over 870,000 anglers and 2.5 million boaters together contribute nearly \$3.4 billion to the Commonwealth’s economy every year. One of the most popular activities is fly-fishing. In fact, Pennsylvania has a national reputation as home to some of the best fly-fishing streams in the country.”

Humphreys agrees, pointing out the fact that the state has more trout streams than any state in the nation.

“Think about this,” Humphreys says. “Tourism is the second biggest industry in Pennsylvania; fishing is tourism. People fly here, drive here, they need gas, lodging, food, a tackle shop, equipment ... It is really fueling our economy.”

According to a 2007 Congressional Sportmen’s Foundation report, fishing also adds 23,000 jobs to the Commonwealth’s workforce.

Giving back

Organizations like Trout Unlimited, which has 11,000 members in 51 chapters across the Commonwealth, understand

Joe Humphreys, a legendary fly-fisherman who has written books, taught fly-fishing at Penn State University and hosted a fly fishing series on ESPN, was featured in the May 1983 edition of *Penn Lines*, giving his common-sense approach to the sport.

Included in the article was a photo of Humphreys with a fish he caught in 1977. And not just any fish, but the speckled monster he had been stalking for years – Pennsylvania’s record brown trout that measured in at 34 inches long and 19 1/2 inches around.

For three summers, Humphreys had chased the huge trout, trying to ascertain its feeding patterns while hoping no one else beat him to it.

He describes the record-breaking trout as “a railroad tie with spots” that he had to pick up with both arms and throw up on the bank because his net wasn’t big enough to capture it.



the importance of maintaining streams as precious natural resources.

Dave Cardellino, Trout Unlimited/Kettle Creek chapter president and member of Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative, says he got interested in Trout Unlimited through his work with the Kettle Creek Watershed Association in north-central Pennsylvania.

“Trout Unlimited is an extension of that because we share similar goals in working to improve the fishing habitat and enhance the area,” he explains. “I saw a need for getting involved and wanted to help out the community. I think it’s important that we give back to the environment and not just take from it.”

Cardellino started coming to this area in the early 1980s and fell in love with its natural beauty. Today, he and his wife, Brenda, run Kettle Creek Adventures, a lodge and bed & breakfast in Cross Fork, Potter County. The lodge brings in all kinds of outdoor enthusiasts, from hunters and fishermen to golfers and canoeists.

Cardellino, who has a forestry degree, says he heard the “call of the outdoors” at an early age. An avid fisherman, he brings that love of nature to his work as a fly-fishing guide.

“A lot of fishing is trying to understand what the fish is thinking,” he explains. “It comes from knowing where they are and why they’re there. I like to take everything in when I’m out on the stream. For me, a successful day is just being out in nature.”

Over the years, he’s come to know the waters and the land well in his neck of the woods — woods that have seen a lot more traffic lately associated with natural

gas development of the Marcellus Shale formation in Pennsylvania. That development has generated much concern among residents who rely on the state’s natural resources not only for their simple enjoyment but their livelihoods.

“It’s coming, we know,” Cardellino says. “Trout Unlimited is very concerned about the Marcellus Shale. We would like to see any detriment to the ecology kept to a minimum.”

Humphreys, who has seen development dry up many creek beds in his time, finds Marcellus activity particularly worrisome.

“It could ruin things,” he says. “It’s scary. That’s why we need to promote the conservation of resources.”

Though well past retirement, Humphreys continues to encourage people to fish for this very reason. It’s the one lesson he hopes people will remember.

“The more people that partake in it,” he explains, “the more people there are that are aware of what we have — and what we have to save and protect. Without clean water, we don’t have a future.”



ADVENTURE: Tri-County Rural Electric Cooperative members Brenda and Dave Cardellino welcome outdoor enthusiasts to Kettle Creek Adventures, their lodge and bed & breakfast in Potter County.

For more information:

PENNSYLVANIA FISH AND BOAT COMMISSION

www.fish.state.pa.us

TROUT UNLIMITED

www.tu.org

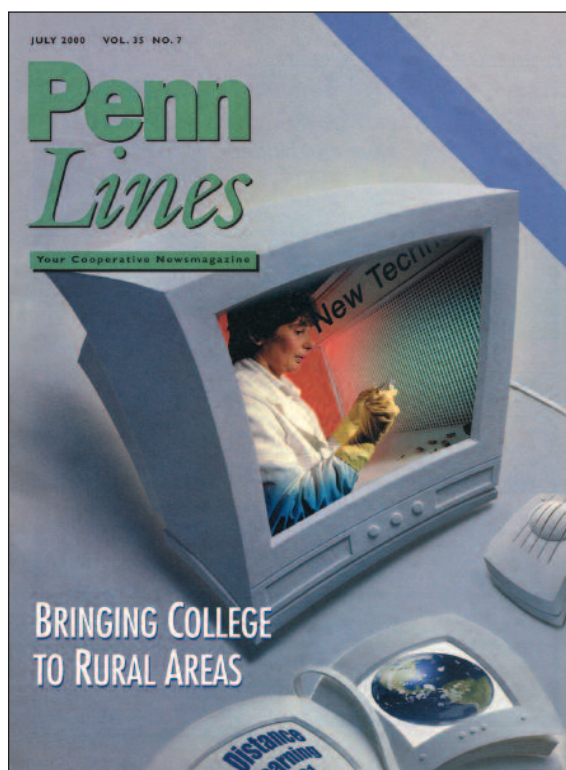
YELLOW CREEK COALITION

www.mltu.org/yellowcreek.shtml

KETTLE CREEK ADVENTURES

www.pavisnet.com/kcadvntures

2000



BY CUTTING down or eliminating commuting hassles, internet- and interactive-based education encouraged many rural residents — especially adults — to “attend” college.

In the summer of 2000, Indiana University of Pennsylvania offered 11 online courses to students who lived too far from campus to commute. The latest technology at the time allowed students to type messages to each other on university-provided online chat rooms, post questions and assignments to a virtual classroom, read lectures on screen, surf the web to research papers and ask questions of their instructors via email.

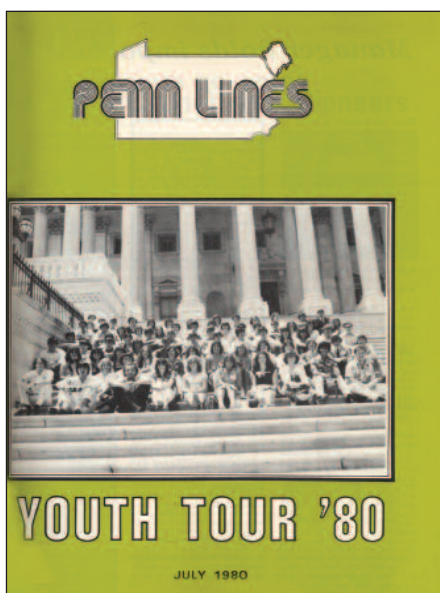
Gary Miller, Penn State University’s associate vice president for distance education, reports the original distance learning environment — the correspondence course — was developed by the university in 1892 with rural students in mind.

College students weren’t the only ones who were benefiting from distance education. Using two-way television, high school students in rural Pennsylvania participated in classes in advanced science, math, language, and history that were previously unavailable at their own high schools because there were too few students enrolled. Meanwhile, their elementary school counterparts began taking “field trips” to educational and historic spots throughout the nation through distance learning — all without leaving their classrooms.

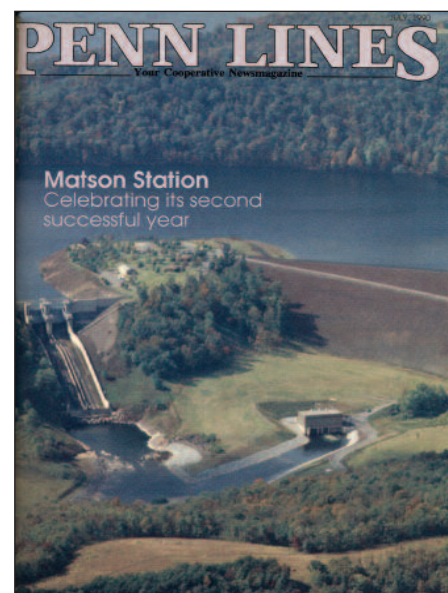
Today, distance learning is offered by most colleges and universities. Penn State University offers hundreds of online courses that can lead to more than 70 online degree and certificate programs. Students from all over the world are tied to teachers through the latest 2010 technology.



1970 Swimming is just one of many activities available at Laurel Hill State Park in Somerset County. The recreational development is served by Somerset Rural Electric Cooperative.



1980 Meeting with President Jimmy Carter is the highlight of the Youth Tour. Carter tells the 900 tour participants that his family was served by a rural electric co-op in Georgia.



1990 The 2-year-old hydroelectric project at Raystown adds safe, environmentally sound and affordable energy production to the recreational and flood control benefits of the lake.

Is it summer yet?

WE PLANT our vegetable gardens with such anticipation and expectation. Our taste buds are in high gear as we seed the rows or gently poke seeds into carefully mounded hills of soil. We weed, we water, we watch and we wait.

Harvest dates are different every gardening year. We can use the “days to harvest” number listed on the label as a guide, sure, but ripening depends on the growing season. Some plants grow best in an extra warm summer; some seem to thrive in a cooler-than-normal summer. Soil temperature and moisture, degree-days (a cumulative heat measure) and sunny vs. cloudy or rainy days will affect the process. The microclimate for your garden will influence plant growth, as will your setout or seeding date.

So we gardeners learn to apply those wonderfully inexact rules of thumb, the subtle tips and tests for gauging ripeness and readiness and knowing when the crop “is ready” to pick. Experienced gardeners



BARBARA MARTIN, who says she began gardening as a hobby “too many years ago to count,” currently works for the National Garden-

ing Association as a horticulturist. A former member of Gettysburg-based Adams Electric Cooperative, her articles appear in magazines and on the internet.

have their own system of what to watch for and how to tell when to begin harvesting each vegetable. Beginners will learn this through trial and error. Luckily, many vegetables can be harvested for fresh eating while still on the immature side, including the thinnings of carrots, beets and leafy greens, pulled baby onions, and even “new” potatoes. The benefit: you enjoy them on the table sooner and you stretch their season.

You might notice that some vegetable varieties seem to ripen all at once while others stretch their productivity over a longer period. If you want to make cucumbers into pickles or tomatoes into paste, or expect to can string beans, it is best to grow a variety that matures in a short window.

If you record your experiences in a garden journal, you can track your observations about ripening, yield quantity and quality over time. This data becomes an invaluable, ongoing reference, like an owner’s manual to your vegetable garden.

By now, the early season vegetables including peas, red radishes, cole crops, spinach and lettuces are “gone by.”

What’s ready next?

Cucumbers and their relative, the zucchini, are fast growers, so keep an eye on them. You will notice cukes and zukes begin developing about 10 days after the first bloom. Watch closely: these seem to double in size overnight. Both of these vegeta-



bles will continue producing as long as they are harvested promptly, so keep picking. If you dread the “baseball bat” zucchini squash, keep in mind that tiny zucchini are quite tender and delicious, so don’t hold back! And yes, squash blossoms are edible, too.

Ripe green beans have sized up but are still tender and moist. Pick them before the inner seeds bulge out and the exterior hardens. Check often once the plants begin to flower because the beans elongate quickly.

Sweet corn is sweetest when cooked within a few minutes of picking, so don’t waste time. When the silks begin to turn brown and dry, check for ripeness. Pierce a kernel with your finger nail; when the inner juice is milky, it’s time. To preserve the sweetness, keep the corn cool between harvest and cooking.

Tomatoes! Ah, tomatoes! These babies are ripe when a

ARE WE THERE YET: Like an impatient child on a car trip, anxious gardeners have a difficult time waiting for their home-grown produce.

gentle “tug with a twist” separates the fruit from the vine. Although we picture fully vine-ripened tomatoes as red, it depends on the specific variety. Ripe tomato colors range from gold to orange-red to deep red to nearly black!

Many homegrown favorites — heirloom tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, melons and winter squash — ripen in late summer, thus requiring patience.

Gardeners who desire a constant supply of produce to show for our efforts know that Swiss chard produces steadily week in and week out. Snip individual stems from the outer edge of the plant, cutting low to the ground and leaving the center leaves to continue growing. You’ll never come in empty-handed. 🍷

Sharing space with a snake

5-foot-long black rat snake provides entertainment, eats rodents

THE BLACK rat snake that sometimes dens in our Boy Scout troop's cabin on the mountain finally showed itself when I was there. Others had spotted the reptile several times before this, and on one occasion even found a shed skin on one of the cots in the upstairs sleeping area.

It's not a giant by rat snake standards. Rather than the maximum for the species, which would measure in at about 100 inches, "our" rat snake is about 60 inches or so. But, it's a snake about 5 feet long and that tends to catch your attention.

I didn't spot the snake in the close quarters of the cabin, which I'm sure would have lent a much deeper sense of surprise to the experience. I met up with the snake along one of the trails near the cabin, in a passing

encounter that gave each of us a good look at the other, but left neither of us worse off because of the experience.

It might have been on its way back to the cabin. Adult leaders in the troop have carried it away from the cabin several times, only to have it show up back in the building weeks later. It's one of the milder-tempered rat snakes, willing to put up with some handling and not move to defend itself.

Others of its species are more prone to defensive machinations that attempt to present the image of a rattlesnake by vibrating their tails in the leaves, raising their heads as if preparing to strike, striking and biting. They also can release a foul-smelling musk.

Black rat snakes also are highly skilled climbers, which explains why the one at the cabin has been spotted sliding down the side of the big, rock fireplace at the end of the common room on the first floor. And, that's a slightly creepy thought to those of us who regularly sleep in the cabin, on cots easily reached from the floor under beams that could easily provide crawl space for a climbing serpent.

On the other hand — and this is the consideration that will trump all else — rat snakes are great predators of small rodents of all types. That reptile without a doubt is putting a dent in the local rodent population. They also eat other snakes, and put those arboreal abilities to use in finding and swallowing



birds' eggs, but those are small offenses for any snake that's cutting down on the number of tick-carrying rodents. (There was a time when I had a real phobia about snakes, but ticks and Lyme disease spirochetes now hold the top spot among my not-too-unrealistic fears.)

I doubt I'd feel the same way about this situation if the cabin-loving snake was a copperhead or a rattlesnake. Those reptiles also are good

A GOOD DEED: Snakes drastically cut down on rodents living in the same area.

mousers, but they have that downside of poisonous venom. We couldn't have one of those species frequenting the cabin. I guess we'd just have to transport the offending reptile farther from the cabin, as killing any snake in these days of declining herp populations is not an option. 🐍



MARCUS SCHNECK, outdoors editor at *The Patriot-News* (Harrisburg) and outdoor blogger at www.pennlive.com, is the author of more than two dozen outdoors books and a contributor to many state and national publications. You can reach him at mschneck@comcast.net

Declare your independence

JULY IS the perfect month to declare your independence from a hot kitchen, and strategic selection of recipes and cooking methods will assure your success.

Once you've placed the ingredients for Tangy Pulled Pork in your slow cooker, simply move it to the patio or garage. Plug it into a convenient outlet and let the slow cooker do the work while the great outdoors absorbs the extra heat. With the recipe for Sweet and Sour Slaw, the not-so-secret, time-saving ingredient is a bag of prepared slaw mix.

Be sure to complete your summer meal with a cool, light dessert. Cocoa Mousse fits the description. The heat required to boil the water can be confined to a microwave oven. For a finishing touch of flavor, garnish the mousse with shaved chocolate or crushed cookies.

Oh, say, can you see how much time and energy you've saved? 🍷

A trained journalist, **JANETTE HESS** focuses her writing on interesting people and interesting foods. She is a Master Food Volunteer with her local extension service and enjoys collecting, testing and sharing recipes.

TANGY PULLED PORK

- 1 boneless Boston butt pork roast (4-5 pounds)
- 1/2 cup water
- 1 teaspoon garlic salt
- 1 teaspoon celery salt
- 1 teaspoon salt-free seasoning
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 cup salsa



Place roast and water in a slow cooker. Sprinkle with seasonings. Cook on low until the meat is very tender, about 8 to 9 hours. Transfer to a large pan or cutting board. Shred meat with a fork, removing all fat. (Discard all fat and drippings.) Return the meat to the slow cooker and add barbecue sauce and salsa. Cook one hour longer, adding more barbecue sauce if the meat seems dry. Serve on buns with additional sauce.

CREAMY SLAW

- 1 16-ounce bag slaw mix (green cabbage, carrots and red cabbage)
- 6 tablespoons sugar
- 2/3 cup heavy cream
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon celery seed



Thirty minutes before serving time, combine the sugar, cream, salt and vinegar in order given. Blend with the chilled cabbage and stir in celery seed. Return to the refrigerator until serving time.

COCOA MOUSSE

- 2 teaspoons unflavored gelatin
- 2 tablespoons cold water
- 1/4 cup boiling water
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup cocoa
- 2 cups chilled whipping cream
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract



OPTIONAL TOPPINGS:

- Shaved chocolate
- Crushed chocolate sandwich cookies

Sprinkle gelatin on cold water to soften. Add boiling water and stir until the mixture is clear. Cool slightly, but do not allow the gelatin to set. In a cold mixing bowl, combine sugar and cocoa. Add whipping cream and vanilla extract and beat until stiff. Fold in the gelatin mixture and blend well. Spoon into individual cups and add a topping, if desired. Chill. Makes 8 servings.

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Additional words: _____ (use separate sheet if needed)

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MONTH DEADLINE

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October 2010..... August 18

November 2010..... Sept. 17

All ads must be received by the specified dates to be included in the corresponding month's issue. Ads received beyond the deadline dates will automatically be included in the next available issue. Written notice of changes or cancellations must be received prior to the first of the month preceding the month of issue. For information about display rates, continuous ads, or specialized headings, contact Vonnie Kloss at 717/233-5704, the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association.

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FREE Fence Guide/Catalog – High-tensile fence, horse fence, rotational grazing, twine, wire, electric netting – cattle, deer, garden, poultry. Kencove Farm Fence Supplies: 800-536-2683. www.kencove.com.

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AROUND THE HOUSE

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INDIAN LAKE – Somerset County, Pa. Two bedroom summer cottage, 760 square feet with partial basement, completely furnished. Includes 20-foot pontoon boat with boat dock. \$229,900. 717-737-6947 or email jwhart2@verizon.net.

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COOK FOREST Business and Property for sale. 46.7 acres. Includes restaurant/lodge, campground, ten cabins, three-bedroom house, maintenance barn, equipment, mobile home and pond. Call 814-752-2361.

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WORK CLOTHES

GOOD CLEAN RENTAL-type work clothes, 6 pants & 6 shirts to match, \$44.95. Men's jeans – 5 pairs, \$25. Lined work jackets, \$10.95. Walt's Wholesale 800-233-1853 or www.usedworkclothing.com.

Metal roofs keep things cool, and look good, too

MANY — but not all — metal roofs qualify for the federal energy conservation tax credit for 2010. Metal roofs save energy by keeping your house cooler during the summer, which can dramatically improve comfort inside and reduce electric bills if your home is air-conditioned. During the winter, a metal roof has a negligible impact on the energy efficiency of your house.

In general, in order to qualify for the energy tax credit, the roof must meet Energy Star qualification standards. For roofing, this means the TSR (total solar reflectivity) must be greater than 25 percent when new and 15 percent after three years of aging. To be sure the roofing qualifies, ask for the specifications and a manufacturer's certification statement (MCS). It pays to be diligent these days: I recently got quotes on a roof installation, and several roofers told me their asphalt shingles qualified for the tax credit. In actuality they did not qualify.

The amount of the tax credit is 30 percent of the material cost of the roof (not installation expenses) up to a maximum of \$1,500. Use IRS form 5695 to apply for the tax credit and save the payment receipt and MCS in case of a tax audit.

For my own home project, I eventually selected a Classic Metal Roofing Systems aluminum roof. It is made from 98 percent recycled aluminum, and the one-by-two-foot panels are formed to simulate a cedar shake roof. It's attractive and certainly unique: many neighbors were stumped trying to figure out exactly what it is.

To install the aluminum panel roof, a special film underlayment was nailed down with plastic clips and stainless steel fasteners over the existing shingles (which saved the expense of tearing off the old shingles). Each aluminum panel interlocks with the adjacent ones on all four sides.



The top of each panel is held down by a stainless steel nail through a hole in the upper corner and an aluminum clip attached midway across the top. It is designed to withstand up to a 120-mile-per-hour wind.

Although it is more expensive to install than an asphalt shingle roof, my new metal roof will never have to be replaced. From a lifetime cost comparison, it is cheaper than installing an asphalt roof every 20 to 30 years. I also get a 3 percent reduction on my homeowner's insurance because of reduced fire hazard.

Most metal roofs reflect more of the sun's heat than do asphalt shingles, particularly black shingles. My metal roof has a TRS of 0.43 whereas a black asphalt shingle roof has a TRS of only 0.05. This keeps the roofing materials cooler so less heat is radiated down through the ceilings to the living area. Also, the underside of the aluminum metal surface has lower "emissivity" (the ability to emit heat) than shingles, so even less heat radiates downward.

The final energy advantage is that the Classic Metal Roofing aluminum panels are relatively thin with the contour of shakes formed into them. This contour creates an air gap between most of the roofing and the

roof sheathing or shingles below it. This gap allows some outdoor air to circulate up under the metal roof panels to keep them cooler. I sealed off my gable vents so outdoor air is now drawn in the soffit vents and exhausted out the ridge vent.

One minor drawback to the aluminum shake panels is they can dent if you indiscriminately walk on the high points of the contour. This can be avoided by stepping on the lower nailed area of the panels. Contoured insulating foam pieces were placed under areas of panels to provide walkways on the roof to clean my skylight and service the ridge vents.

Steel roofing is another option. Painted standing seam or tile steel roofing is very durable. Instead of trying to simulate some type of standard roofing material, the bright colors and unique appearance are signatures of upscale homes. The finish coating on aluminum and steel often uses a Kynar-based paint with heat reflecting additives in a multistep process. ☀



JAMES DULLEY is a nationally syndicated energy management expert. You can reach him at James Dulley, c/o Penn Lines, 6906 Royalgreen Drive, Cincinnati, OH 45244.

Thoughts from Earl Pitts, UHMERIKUN!

Earl knows the difference between gardening, farming



Social commentary from Earl Pitts — a.k.a. **GARY BURBANK**, a nationally syndicated radio personality — can be heard on the following radio stations that cover electric cooperative service territories in Pennsylvania: WANB-FM 103.1 Pittsburgh; WARM-AM 590 Wilkes-Barre/Scranton; WIOO-AM 1000 Carlisle; WEEQ-AM 1480 Shippensburg; WMTZ-FM 96.5 Johnstown; WQBR-FM 99.9/92.7 McElhattan; WLMF-FM 103.9 Kane; and WVNW-FM 96.7 Burnham-Lewistown.

This whole back-to-nature, save-the-planet, eat-healthy, hug-a-squirrel business we got out there now — it just makes me laugh.

You know what I seen on the TV the other night? It was for some garden store somewhere. Only gardenin' ain't called "gardenin'" no more. No sir. It's now called "backyard farmin'." Ain't that cute?

Now, I can't tell if this is 'sposed to make people who grow their own vegetables feel more important. Or is it 'sposed to make real farmers feel stupid?

Yeah, I got news for you people. What you're doin' in the backyard ain't farmin'. An' if I might make the call here — the cut off would be if you used a roto-tiller. 'Cause that dude with 200 acres a' corn, he didn't use no stupid roto-tiller on his field. No sir. Yeah, if your biggest farm equipment is a roto-tiller, you ain't no dang farmer.

An' again, I hate to bust your bubble out there. That ain't your barn out there. That's a shed. Yeah, if you got your barn from Wal-Mart, you ain't no dang farmer.

Here's another thing. Real farmers don't grow their tomatoes upside down. You ever drove down along a wheat field? Yeah, it's right side up. You ever pass a field a' soy beans? Right side up. The way God meant it to be. You grow crops upside down, you ain't no dang farmer.

Oh, an' by the way, if you tell your better half you're goin' out to work the lower 40, an' you're talkin' about square feet an' not acres, you ain't no dang farmer.

An' another thing, if your irrigation system is a garden hose an' a sprinkler, you ain't no dang farmer.

Wake up, America. It takes more than a pair a' Dickies and a friend named Eb to make you a farmer. So don't go foolin' yourself, cause you ain't foolin' nobody else. You ain't no dang farmer.

OK, here's the deal. Some rat-tor-turin', toked-up science geek somewhere done a study, an' he says men lie more than women. Yeah, he says men lie three times a day. That's over 1,000 lies a year. Your average woman only makes two lies a day — less than 800 in a year.

Obviously, women don't gotta lie as much as men. That's because us men don't ask them if our jeans make us look fat.

Here's the part I like. What's the No. 1 lie a man tells? Accordin' to this science weasel, it's about how much he drank. An' what's the woman's No. 1 lie? It's when they tell us, "There's nothing wrong. I'm fine."

Yeah, any man will tell you them are the three scariest words in the female language. "There's nothing wrong." Course women don't say them words like there ain't nothin' wrong. They don't go, "There's nothing wrong." Naw. They shoot it out like a semi-automatic weapon (fast and loud). "There's nothin' wrong!!!" Which in woman talk means there's somethin' wrong.

That's like the guy that takes the piñata stick to the crotch. He buckles over like he was shot by a sniper an' goes (gasping), "I'm OK." Yeah, it's a little tough to believe.

Now for you new husbands out there, lemme 'splain somethin' to you.

When you think your better half is actin' stupid, an' you ask her what's wrong, that is essentially the same thing as puttin' a single bullet in a revolver an' spinnin' the cylinder. Yeah, cause five times outta six, she's gonna say, "there's nothin' wrong." An' you get to live another day.

An' then there's that one time she's gonna go off.

Wake up, America. There's only one way to keep your marriage together an' yourself sane. When your better half is agitated, kind a' off a bit, kinda a spoilin' for a fight, ignore her! Then she don't hafta lie, an' you don't hafta pretend to care.

I'm Earl Pitts, Uhmerikan. 🍌

RURAL*reflections*

The view from here

OUR VIEW of ordinary items sometimes is changed when we change the perspective we are viewing the items from, or the light we are viewing them in. Consider different perspectives, along with lighting and subjects, when you are taking photos for the “Rural Reflections” contest. At the end of the year, five lucky contest winners will receive a \$75 prize in the categories of: most artistic, best landscape, best human subject, best animal subject and editor’s choice.

To be eligible for the 2010 contest prizes, send your snapshots (no digital files, please) to: *Penn Lines* Photos, P.O. Box 1266, Harrisburg PA 17108-1266. On the back of each photo, include your name, address, phone number and the name of the electric cooperative that serves your home, business or seasonal residence. (The best way to include this information is by affixing an address label to the back of the photo. Please do not use ink gel or roller pens to write on the photo as they bleed onto other photos.)

Remember, our publication deadlines require that we work ahead, so send seasonal photos in early. We need fall photos before mid-July and winter photos before mid-September (save your spring and summer photos to submit for the 2011 contest). Photos that are not seasonal may be submitted at any time. Please note: photos post-marked after Jan. 1, 2010, will not be returned unless a self-addressed, self-stamped envelope is included. 🌞



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