

OUR OPINION

Water company is refreshingly different

Watch the news or read the business pages, and you're likely to come across stories about businesses that disregard community values and citizens' sentiments while pursuing maximum profit. Aqua Pennsylvania stands out for its starkly different behavior in its Kingston Township operations.

Granted, the company is a regulated utility, and as such is virtually guaranteed a modest rate of return. But one need look no further than the company Aqua Pennsylvania took over from — the defunct National Utilities — to see that rogues exist even in this sector of business. Customers of neighborhood water systems in Trucksville were ignored or abused by National Utilities for years, their complaints about water quality and volume dismissed while leaks that flooded yards were blamed on mysteriously appearing springs.

Customers have received much better service since the systems changed hands in 2002, but improvements are limited by old, inadequate and worn-out infrastructure. One needed addition is a water storage tank, which could finally supply enough pressure and reserve capacity to make fire hydrants functional. But neighbors howled in protest — rightly so — when Aqua Pennsylvania suggested plunking a tower down at the intersection of Manor Drive and Howell Road. Refreshingly, the company didn't plow ahead with that plan, but immediately sought an alternative, less visible location, which they found several hundred feet away.

While even this site may not seem ideal to everyone, the company's approach to community relations is commendable, and one that more institutions, both private and public, should emulate.

New year, new hope

It's just another day, but the approach of January 1 always leads us to review the year just past and look ahead with hopefulness at the one ahead. We'll leave the "big picture" outlook to others, but here are a few local highlights and wishes.

It was heartening to see Kingston Township claw its way back from the brink of fiscal disaster, although those who now pay local property taxes may disagree. The township is not yet completely out of the woods, but it is on firmer footing that supports services at a high level. Now if the county, state and federal governments can show similar conviction, things may get even better.

A little to the north, aspirations still exist for an attractive solution to the congestion at the five points intersection in Dallas Borough. Hope, it seems, is all that was necessary for PennDOT to grant a permit that allowed developer J. Naparolo to begin work on the former Yalick farm property further up Memorial Highway. So, while the dream of a roundabout is still alive, traffic may get worse before it gets better. But if the end result is a pretty circle, the removal of an eyesore building and underground utilities, it will be worth the wait.

Continuing on to Harveys Lake, the sewer authority's response to overflows has set a positive tone. Questions are now likely to center on how the extensive upgrades that are needed will be paid for, absent a gift from Santa Claus.

As we've seen during 2004, these bumps in the road of the Back Mountain's life were far from mortal. If we all keep working in good faith through the years ahead, obstacles will be conquered, one day, week, month and year at a time.

MOMENTS IN TIME

The History Channel

- On Jan. 1, 45 B.C., New Year's Day is celebrated on January 1 for the first time in history as the Julian calendar, designed by Roman dictator Julius Caesar, takes effect.
- On Dec. 30, 1853, the final boundaries of the southern United States are established as James Gadsden, the U.S. minister to Mexico, and General Antonio Lopez de Santa Anna, the president of Mexico, sign the Gadsden Purchase in Mexico City. The treaty settled the dispute over the location of the Mexican border west of El Paso, Texas.
- On Dec. 29, 1890, in the tragic final chapter of America's long war against the Plains Indians, the U.S. 7th Cavalry kills 146 Sioux Indians, including 44 women and 18 children, at Wounded Knee, S.D.
- On Dec. 27, 1932, at the height of the Great Depression, thousands turn out for the opening of Radio City Music Hall, a magnificent Art Deco theater in New York City. Since its opening, more than 300 million people have enjoyed its movies, stage shows, concerts and special events. Today, Radio City Music Hall remains the largest indoor theater in the world.
- On Dec. 28, 1947, singer Wynonie Harris records the hit song "Good Rockin' Tonight." The hard-driving blues number popularized the word "rock" and associated it with the fast, exciting blues-based music that would dominate the charts in the 1950s.
- On Dec. 31, 1968, the bloodiest year of the Vietnam War ends with 14,584 Americans killed (a 56 percent increase over 1967). At year's end, 536,040 American servicemen were stationed in Vietnam.
- On Jan. 2, 1990, Alan Hale Jr., the Skipper on TV's "Gilligan's Island," dies of cancer at age 68. "Gilligan's Island" ran from 1964 to 1967, then aired in reruns for decades. Its characters were resurrected in three TV movies in 1978, 1979 and 1981.

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A window of hope in the first day of winter. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

GUEST COLUMN

WHIP applies to forest stewardship

By Allyson Muth

The Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) is one of several Farm Bill programs administered by the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of the United States Department of Agriculture. WHIP is a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to landowners to improve and protect wildlife habitat on private lands. Eligible land includes any form of privately held land (woodlots, farms, gun club lands, or other private open spaces). WHIP funding is also available on a limited basis for any non-Federal lands such as municipal, county, or state government lands. WHIP allocates cost-share monies to landowners for specific practices within each state's specific wildlife goals and priority areas. WHIP covers selected prac-

tices beneficial to fish and wildlife species, such as planting warm season grasses or stream bank fencing. NRCS in Pennsylvania cost-shares up to 75 percent of the approved practices and emphasizes practices that create or improve habitats for wildlife species experiencing declining or reduced populations. On Pennsylvania forestland, protecting and improving woodcock habitat is a priority.

"WHIP provides an option to fund some of the practices in a Forest Stewardship Plan geared towards wildlife," says Barry Isaacs, Pennsylvania's WHIP Manager. "In fact, in Pennsylvania, it is our priority to cost-share practices in an already existing stewardship plan," rather than just taking in new participants who have had little prior contact with natural resource professionals.

For the 2005 fiscal year there is \$170,000 available across the state. Once select-

ed, landowners work with the appropriate NRCS office for duration of the agreement (usually five to 10 years). The application process is continuous — submit applications anytime. Congress allocates these funds annually and the states don't know in advance how much they'll receive. However, funding allocations usually follow success: goals reached for priorities and application numbers.

In Pennsylvania the demand for WHIP cost share funds has exceeded allocations for private landowners. Land already enrolled in the Conservation Reserve Program, Wetlands Reserve Program, Water Bank Program, Grassland Reserve Program, or Emergency Watershed Protection Program is not eligible for WHIP.

To sign up or for more information on WHIP, contact any USDA Service Center. USDA Service Centers and

office locations are in the telephone book under the US Department of Agriculture or on the NRCS Pennsylvania website <http://www.pa.nrcs.usda.gov>. Specific programmatic information on WHIP is at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/prgrams/whip/>.

The Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program provides publications on a variety of topics related to woodland management for private landowners. For a list of free publications, call 1-800-235-WISE (toll-free), send e-mail to RNRExt@psu.edu, or write to: Forest Stewardship Program, Forest Resources Extension, The Pennsylvania State University, 7 Ferguson Building, University Park, PA 16802. The Pennsylvania Bureau of Forestry and USDA Forest Service, in partnership with the Penn State's Forest Resources Extension, sponsor the Forest Stewardship

70 Years Ago
Dec. 28, 1934

THIEVES ROB HOME, LEAVE PRESENTS

Several robberies have been reported in Kingston Township, the most serious having taken place on Christmas eve at the home of George Prater while the family was attending church services. The thieves took two watches, several rings and \$2 on a Christmas card, but did not touch the presents. Charles Hoffman of Hillcrest View also reported the theft of four rabbits several nights ago.



ONLY YESTERDAY

Aroused by disclosure of Dallas Water Company's intention to suggest a \$4 rate increase, the taxpayers' association planned to meet and plan testimony for an upcoming hearing. The minimum annual rate is now \$16.

The outstanding event of the social season here, the annual Yuletide Dance of Dallas Women's Club, will be held at the Irem Country Club on Saturday night. Mrs. Karl Kuehn is chairman.

60 Years Ago
Dec. 29, 1944

LT. DAVIS AWARDED SILVER STAR

First Lt. Irvin C. Davis of Dallas has been awarded the Silver Star Medal for gallantry

Only Yesterday is compiled from the back-issue files of The Post.

in action. Advancing several hundred yards into "no-man's-land" to within 200 yards of enemy machine gun nests, Lt. Davis directed artillery fire upon the enemy for seven hours.

Senator Andrew Sordoni was elected a Pennsylvania director of the American Automobile Association at its annual meeting held in Chicago. The Senator serves as president of the Wyoming Motor Club.

Howard Garbutt, 17, of Dallas, told a reporter he had trapped 59 muskrats, five skunks and six weasels last year. The muskrat pelts brought \$2.50 to \$3 each. But he expected prices this year to be one-third lower.

50 Years Ago
Dec. 23, 1954

ICE SKATING RINK OPENS FOR SEASON

The Tibus Sno Mountain Ice Skating Rink on Memorial Highway has opened for the season. Rates are 20¢ for children and 35¢ for adults. Between 250 and 300 skaters can be accommodated at one time. There is also music.

Carol Ann Pope, of Roushey Street in Shavertown, was the girls grand prize winner at Evans Drug in the Rexall prize contest for boys and girls. The boys grand prize winner was Edward Sidorek, of R.D. 3, Dallas. Both received Columbia bicycles.

Lake-Noxen students returned to school Monday morning at the usual hour, after missing fourteen school days because of a lack of water. Friday morning's test of the 257-foot eight-inch drilled well showed that the flow had been stepped up by recent rains and

melting snow.

40 Years Ago
Dec. 22, 1964

STRAY DEER BUSTS INTO HOME'S BREEZEWAY

The Hugh Kleber household at Munceytown Road, Lehman, was in an uproar Sunday morning when a large doe dived through a breezeway of the home near Smith's Pond, shattering window panes and nearly inflicting injuries to their young daughter, Theresa.

Lehman Township Supervisors have provided for maintenance of Hillside Avenue, Harveys Lake, as a sleighriding area for local children, according to Mike Godek of Oak Hill. Road men have been instructed not to plow the hill, and flares will be put out at each end as a warning to motorists, Police Chief Joseph Ide says.

Cave's Supermarket at Idetown Corners was advertising "strickly fresh" stewing oysters at 49¢ the dozen, arriving three times weekly.

30 Years Ago
Dec. 23, 1974

BOROUGH WANTS TO TEAR DOWN BURNED HOUSE

Dallas Borough Council will take action to demolish the "charcoal house on the hill," according to solicitor Charles Lemmond. The house, located on Huntsville Road, burned April 3 as a result of a gas explosion.

The Harveys Lake Sewer Authority has decided to sue their engineer, Glace and Glace, of Harrisburg. Chairman George Alles made the motion.

Among the "many areas of contention" is the firm's failure to apply for grants that could help with the cost of installing the sewer system.

Fourteen-year-old Kristin Schleich, of Oak Hill, will dance the role of the Sugar Plum Fairy in the Wyoming Valley Ballet Society's presentation of the Nutcracker. Other featured roles will be danced by Wendy Weir and Thomas Yarnal, both of Dallas, and by Mrs. Jonette Lancos Wentzel of Trucksville.

20 Years Ago
Dec. 24, 1984

CLEARY WINS CONTESTED SCHOOL DIRECTOR POST

Mr. and Mrs. J. Franklin Patton, of Noxen, were planning their 50th wedding anniversary. They were married December 29, 1934 at Alderson. Mrs. Patton is the former Ruth Casterline of Noxen. She was a teacher at the Noxen Elementary School. Franklin Patton worked at the Armour Leather tannery and was a dairy farmer. They've lived in Noxen their entire married life.

Lake-Lehman heavyweight wrestler Chris Van Gorder pinned his West Scranton opponent to give the Black Knights a 30-24 victory. Jeff Austin, wrestling at 112 lb., also won with a pin.

Mrs. Cathy Tasco's fifth grade class at the Dallas Intermediate School won first prize in a door decorating contest. Students were: Peggy Searles, Leah Lynch, Amy Merrill, Chris Williams, Jason Gainey, Wendy Vaughn, Jami Ambrose, Amy Nadzan, Megan Sheehan, Tamy Wortman, Lori Kranyak, Robert Achuff, Karin Wartella and Sherri Kaskey.

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