

**Reminder:
Open
Enrollment
ends
May 15!**

It's Official: First Biweekly Paycheck Will Be June 10

After months of debate, biweekly paychecks coming to DEP employees

by Jake Glance

On April 13, the Enterprise Resource Planning Board (ERP) passed a resolution to move forward with switching approximately 25,000 state employees - including all of DEP's staff - to a biweekly paycheck system.

The ERPB is comprised of Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin, Treasurer John Perdue, and Auditor Glen Gainer.

Beginning June 10, instead of being paid twice per month, or 24 times per year, workers will be paid every other Friday, or 26 times per year.

That means workers will be paid more often but will receive less per paycheck.

On Saturday, May 14, the Oasis financial management system will begin pulling data such as time cards and leave requests from Kronos, the

online timecard entry system.

DEP employees will be paid on May 16 and May 31 from the old system. Then, starting June 10 - and then on every other Friday from then on - they'll be paid through Kronos.

Denise Truman, with the Human Resources group of the DEP's Business and Technology Office, said one question she has received often has to do with the deductions employees have set for a certain amount to come from each paycheck. Unless edited, those deductions will not change, she said.

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Earth Day 2016

Hundreds of students celebrate Earth Day at Clay Center

by Jake Glance

Nearly 600 students visited the Clay Center in Charleston to learn about the environment and their part in keeping it clean at the DEP's Make It Shine Earth Day celebration.

Students could learn from the DEP's Watershed Improvement Branch, Watershed Assessment Branch, Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan, the Division of Air Quality, and the Homeland Security and



Students got a hands-on experience at the DEP's Make It Shine Earth Day celebration at the Clay Center on April 21. The students could hold turtles, salamanders, pet snakes, and see the fish of West Virginia up close - all while learning how they interact with each other in a delicate ecosystem.

Emergency Response unit. The WVDEP's mobile aquarium was also at the Clay Center to give students an up-close look at some of the fish species that call West Virginia's lakes and rivers home.

Kim Maxwell, an environmental resources specialist with the Watershed Improvement Branch, showed students a red-eared slider turtle and a spotted salamander.

"The salamander can breathe through its skin, so it's really important that they don't live in polluted water," she explained as the students touched the salamander.

"It feels weird!" one student said. "Slimy!" another said.

"I want to hold it too!" came the shout from the back. "It's so cute!"

See **EARTH DAY**, Page 6

Environmental Awards Set For May 16

by Jake Glance

On May 16 during a special ceremony at DEP headquarters, 19 organizations from across the state will be honored for their exemplary environmental stewardship.

The Environmental Awards will take place on that day at 1:30 p.m. in the Cooper's Rock training room.

DEP Cabinet Secretary Randy Huffman will present the awards.

This year, awards will be presented in 12 categories: the Cabinet Secretary Award, Clean Energy, Education and Community Involvement, Environmental Partnership, Environmental Stewardship, Improvement to Air Quality, Land Revitalization, Landuse Development, Municipal Stormwater, Outstanding Litter Control, Sewage Treatment, and Water Conservation.

A complete list of award recipients and pictures from the event will appear in next month's edition of the inDEPth newsletter.

“Take Our Daughters or Sons To Work Day” at DEP



On “Take Our Daughters or Sons To Work Day” at the DEP, 36 children got an up-close look at what their parents do every day. The children got to build birdhouses with the Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan, learn about watersheds and pollution sources, and visited the DEP’s rain garden. The “Take our Daughters and Sons To Work Day” began as “Take Our Daughters To Work Day” in 1992 and expanded to include boys in 2003. More information about the organization can be found at <http://daughtersandsonstowork.org/>.



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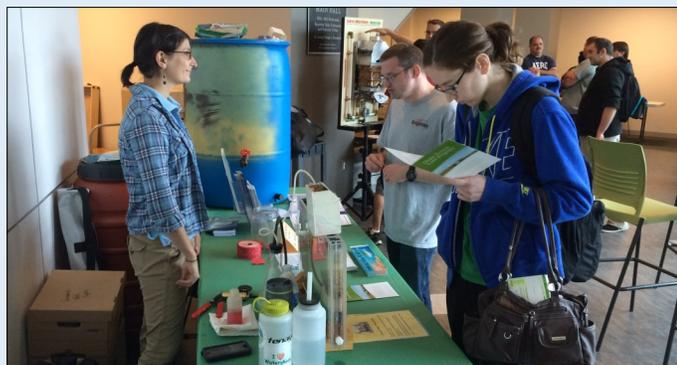
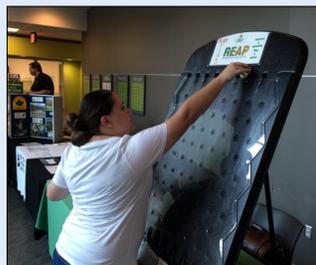
Earth Day at BridgeValley CTC

The DEP’s Division of Air Quality, Division of Water and Waste Management, Youth Environmental Program, and the Rehabilitation Environmental Action Plan were all represented at BridgeValley Community and Technical College’s Earth Day celebration on April 19.

In the picture to the right, Ed Andrews with the DAQ explains how an energy efficient tankless hot water heater works.

Also to the right, a student plays REAP’s “Environmental Pinko” game to win a prize.

Below, Tomi Bergstrom speaks with students about the importance of installing a rain barrel to reduce strain on stormwater systems.



KRONOS

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“These are voluntary deductions, such as a direct deposit, the Smart 529 plan, or the 457 retirement plan. If you have specified that you want \$20 to come out of every paycheck toward the Smart 529, because you’re getting 26 paychecks per year rather than 24, you’re actually going to be putting more money toward that plan than before.”

Truman said those deductions can be changed at any time.

“But there are a lot of deductions that will automatically be prorated,” Truman said.

“Deductions like PEIA health insurance, or FBMC, or your regular CPRB retirement, for example. If the employee is paying \$100 per paycheck on PEIA, that will be less per pay period because you’re paying the same amount for the whole year.”

Truman said it is imperative that temporary employees fill out their time card in Kronos, since they will not be paid if their time card is incomplete.

And even though regular DEP employees have their time sheet already populated with their schedule, they still have the responsibility of approving their time sheet every other week.

“It is of the utmost importance that employees approve their time sheets and their supervisors review them to make sure that they’re correct, and that the supervisors then approve their employees’ time sheets. The time sheet drives the pay.”

Truman said another difference employees will notice is how they accrue leave. For example, if an employee accrued six hours of leave for each of 24 pay periods, they will only accrue about 5.53 for each of 26 pay periods.

“The employee will accrue the same amount of leave over the long term but they will accrue less leave per pay period,” Truman said.

Questions about the Kronos system or about biweekly pay can be emailed to DEPHumanResources@wv.gov.

“Quotable”

“We’ve been residents here for the blink of an eye. If we’re gone tomorrow, the earth will not miss us.”



- Michael Crichton

Comic Book Storytelling is McGee's Creative Outlet

A childhood interest turned into a lifetime of storytelling

by Colleen O'Neill

It's amazing how a child's activities and interests can reveal something about their future selves.

For James McGee, a childhood interest in comic books morphed into



James McGee

an opportunity to create stories of his own.

"I write because I just love stories," said McGee, an office assistant III with Environmental Enforcement's Oak Hill office.

"Whether it be comics, prose, movies, theater, I have just always loved stories, no matter how they are told."

The character that really sparked this ambition was featured in the 1982 flick that starred actress Adrienne Barbeau.

"One of my favorite movies as a kid was 'Swamp Thing,' which was based on a comic book," McGee said.

He explained how his mom must have rented the movie a hundred times.

"One day, my mom brought home a copy of 'Saga of the Swamp Thing #14,'" he said. "That was my first comic, and he is still my favorite character. At the time, I hadn't even learned to read yet, but I loved the images of monsters fighting other monsters."

McGee gravitates toward the atypical and unique comics.

"I love superheroes as much as anyone, and read a little bit from every genre, but I have always been drawn to books like 'Swamp Thing' that are a little different, experimental, whatever you want to call it," he said.

"'Swamp Thing,' or 'Swampy,' as it's often referred to by fans, was also one of the first books to deal with environmental issues, so it seems fitting that I ended up working for the DEP."

McGee creates the written story and works with an artist to bring it to life.

"Comic books are especially rewarding because I have absolutely no artistic ability, so seeing the final product is always like magic to me," he said. "How did these artist take my words on a page and turn them into something so cool? It's kind of like I get to be the writer and the reader at the same time, because the end result is always so much better than what I saw



James McGee, seen here at a book signing, said his interest in storytelling was born after seeing the sci-fi film "Swamp Thing."

in my head."

In addition to writing sophisticated, alternative-type comics, he also writes prose. And he is published.

"My comics have all been published in anthologies from Red Stylo Media," he said. "I have also had one published by Action Lab Entertainment, and can be found in most bookstores and some comic shops."

McGee's prose fiction has been published in Issue 6 of "Fireside" and "Super Flash Fiction #1." He also has a story in "This Mutant Life," and anthology available on Amazon.

McGee's future plans involve broadening his writing horizons.

"I have several ideas that I am developing, ranging from horror, to fantasy, to superheroes. I am planning to attend San Diego Comic Con this year, and hope to pitch some of those ideas to other publishers."

Lunch-N-Learn Teaches How to De-Stress Without Leaving Your Desk

by Jake Glance

According to the American Institute of Stress (AIS), job stress - more than worries about family or money - is the major source of stress for adults.

The AIS also reports that 80 percent of workers feel stress on the job and nearly half say they need help in learning how to manage stress.

In addition, 42 percent say their coworkers need help managing stress.

Salina Lyter, of PEIA Pathways to Wellness and Marshall University, recently led a Lunch-N-Learn where attendees learned simple relaxation techniques that they can do without even leaving their desks.

"I think it is extremely important to get up and stretch, or just to focus on your breathing at your desk," said Lyter, who also holds a master's degree in exercise science and is a certified yoga instructor.

"You're sitting down all day, staring at a computer, maybe wanting to pull your hair out. If you can just get up, focus on your self and recharge your battery, it will help both your physical health and your emotional wellbeing."

One calming exercise in the 4-7-8 breathing exercise. Pressing the tongue to the gums right behind the front top teeth, breathe in through the nose for four seconds. Then, hold your breath for seven seconds and breathe forcefully out through the mouth for eight seconds.

Lyter also recommends keeping a stress journal where you write down events and times of the day where you feel most stressed. Simply taking a short walk outside also can help relieve stress.

More information about stress management can be found online at www.peiapathways.com.



Simple stretching exercises can help to alleviate stress during the work day.

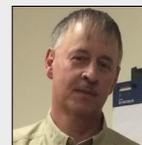
Congrats to Employee of the Month and Rewards & Recognition Award Winners!

The January 2016 Employee of the Month is Jerry Righman of the Office of Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation's Philippi office.



He has been described as being very meticulous, always engaged in his work, and as someone who always goes the extra mile whenever necessary. His extensive knowledge of mining reclamation construction and exceptional work ethic is invaluable to the AML program. In addition, he has done an excellent job of training the AML construction inspectors, which has resulted in cost savings to both AML and the contractors. He has set a very high standard in the area of job performance. For these reasons and more, Jerry Righman has been selected as the agency's January 2016 Employee of the Month.

The recipient of the March 2016 Rewards and Recognition Award is Dan Johnson of the Division of Mining and Reclamation's Philippi Office.



He has been described as an inspector supervisor who truly cares about the members of his unit. He often puts in long hours filling in and covering for people who have family obligations, appointments, or emergencies. He often sacrifices his own family time for the sake of others and promotes harmony and unity among unit members and their families. He is also known to often call his employees on evenings or weekends to see how they (or their family members) are doing and to see if there is anything they need. For these reasons and more, Dan Johnson has been selected to receive a Rewards & Recognition award.

DEP's Rain Garden Undergoes Spring Cleaning

by Jake Glance

The rain garden at the DEP's headquarters in Kanawha City is ready for summer, thanks to a handful of dedicated volunteers.

The rain garden, located in a natural low spot beside the parking lot, funnels water through a collection of shrubs and other plants. The rain garden is protected by barriers that keep rocks

and other sediment out.

"When we do these work day cleanups we remove any solid waste that has blown or been washed into the garden, dig out the sump before the storm drain at the end of the garden, and remove nonnative weeds, grasses, and saplings," said Tomi Bergstrom, an environmental resources specialist with the Division of Water and Waste Management.

"This all allows the rain garden to function at a high capacity, keep the native plants alive and healthy, and it looks nice when we conduct tours."

The benefit of a rain garden in a parking lot the size of DEP's is that when a heavy rainstorm comes, it prevents a large amount of water carrying sediment, oil, antifreeze, and other pollutants



Joe Cochran and Chris Gatens work hard to clean up the DEP's rain garden. The rain garden, located next to the DEP headquarters parking lot, adds a greenspace to provide habitat for insects, birds, reptiles, and plants.

into storm drains.

Last fall, new erosion eels were placed around the rain garden to stop all of the pollutants from making their way to the rain garden.

The erosion eels are long black tubes, seen in the picture to the left, which are full of chunks of recycled tires.

The eels trap the sediment and

pollutants, but allow the water into the rain garden.

Rain gardens can be placed in any area that absorbs water after a storm. Used in conjunction with a rain barrel, they can be easy to maintain and inexpensive ways to add beauty to a landscape, reduce the strain on stormwater systems, and save money on water spent watering flowers and lawns.



Jon Michael Bosley, Rick Adams, Chris Gatens, and Joe Cochran do some spring cleaning in the DEP's rain garden.

As Weather Warms, Watch Out for Pedestrians and Bicyclists

DWWM engineer shares story about a close call

by Jake Glance

In 2013, 4,735 pedestrians and 743 bicyclists were killed in motor vehicle crashes, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Now that the weather has turned warm, many people are going to be out enjoying the fresh air and there is an increased chance of an accident.

And those chances increase in urban settings. The NHTSA reports that 68 percent of all bicyclists who died in motor vehicle crashes died in crashes in cities.

Alcohol - on the part of the driver and the part of the bicyclist - also plays a role, according to the NHTSA. Alcohol was reported as a factor in more than 34 percent of all fatal accidents nationwide.

However, in 2013 - which is the most recent year for which data is available - West Virginia was one of just four states that saw zero bicyclist

fatal accidents.

John Lockhart, an engineer in the Division of Water and Waste Management, said he and another bicyclist had a close call earlier this spring on Loudon Heights Road in South Hills.

"I was doing about 15 miles per hour on a curvy section of the road, with light traffic in both directions. There was a gap of about six or eight bike lengths between me and the person I was riding with."

Lockhart said both he and his riding partner were riding close to the white line on the side of the road.

"A lady in an SUV passes me and I can see in front of my buddy a vehicle coming the other way. Instead of slowing and waiting between us and allowing the other car to move on through, she decided she was going to pass my buddy, too, which she does while accelerating into the oncoming lane. The car coming in the other direc-



tion had to completely stop off on the shoulder and the SUV driver swung in front of my buddy - missing both him and the other car by about a foot or two - trying to return to the right lane."

The situation was made worse by what Lockhart's riding partner saw the driver of the SUV doing as she zoomed past.

"He said he looked at her as she passed and she was in la la land with her left hand on the steering wheel, right hand on her cell phone texting or picking music or something, and had absolutely no cognizance of her surroundings. She had no clue of how close she had been to possibly killing someone—which was actually somewhat lucky for my buddy because if she had realized she was about to have a head-on collision she likely would have swerved over sooner, right into him, and it wouldn't have been pretty."

Lockhart said the driver turned at the next light, after gaining only a few seconds by driving recklessly.

He said a good investment would be in a GoPro helmet camera, in order to film reckless drivers who might injure a cyclist and then leave the scene of the accident.

"Environment Matters" Airing on New Channel

by Jake Glance

"Environment Matters," the DEP's monthly 30-minute newscast, is now airing on West Virginia Public Broadcasting's new channel.

The "West Virginia Channel" took the place of the former "WVPBS2" on Jan. 1 and features programs about West Virginia and Appalachia, as well as educational and news shows.

"Environment Matters" already has a dedicated viewership on the YouTube channel, but this allows us to be on thousands of TVs in homes across the state alongside very popular programs like "Newshour," said Mike Huff, the show's executive producer.

"Environment Matters" has been scheduled to run on the West Virginia Channel on Thursday, May 5 at 9:30 p.m.; Friday, May 6 at 11:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.; and Saturday, May 7 at 6 p.m.

To check the channel's complete listings, visit <http://wvpublic.org/tvschedule>.

New and previous episodes of "Environment Matters" are also [available on YouTube here](#).

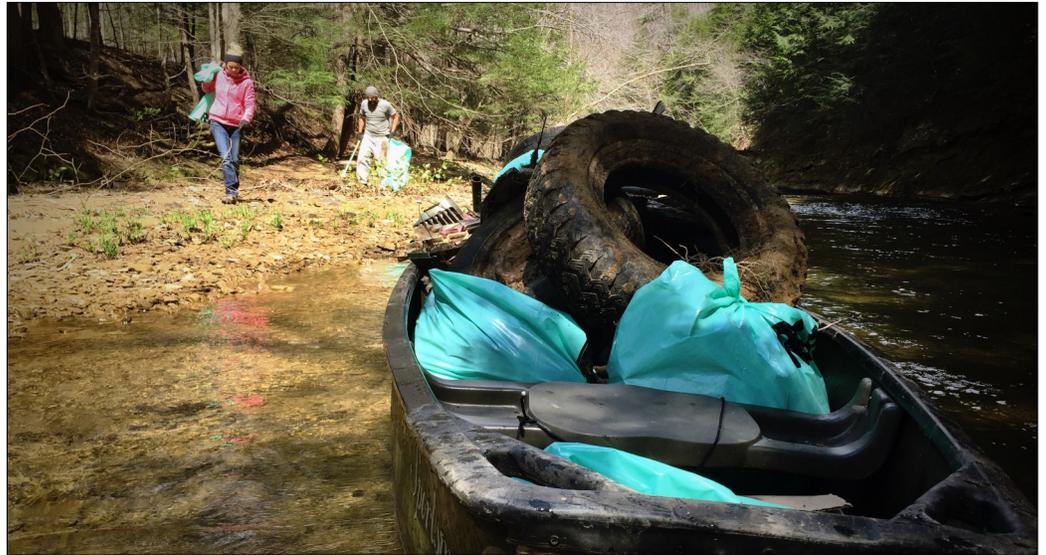
West Virginia Make It Shine Volunteers Keep Mountain State Clean

Thousands of volunteers across West Virginia picked up tons of trash during the West Virginia Make It Shine event during the first two weeks of April.

Make It Shine cleanup events can be on any publicly owned lands including waterways, parks, and schools.

Here are a few pictures of the wonderful work - and long hours - put in by the volunteers that make cleanup events like Make It Shine possible.

Another major event, the Adopt-A-Highway spring cleanup, was held April 30. Check out next month's edition of inDEPth for pictures from that cleanup.



EARTH DAY

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"I love doing this," Maxwell said after the students moved to another display.

"This is one of my favorite days, to get to come here and hang out with these kids all day long."

Two West Virginia Timber and Wood products pageant winners even posed for a selfie with the salamander.

Jason Morgan with the DEP's Division of Water and Waste Management was helping teach students the different fish species in the mobile aquarium.

"We have the river red horse, the small mouth bass, blue gill, catfish, and the long-nosed gar," he said.

"It looks like a swordfish!" one student observed.

Appalachian Power, West Virginia American Water, the West Virginia Division of Forestry, the West Virginia Solid Waste Management Board, Three Rivers Avian Center, the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources' Wildlife Diversity Program, the West Virginia Department of Agriculture, and the Kanawha-Charleston Health Department also had interactive displays highlighting environmental stewardship.



Mrs. West Virginia Timber and Wood Bryanna Williams (L) and Miss West Virginia Timber and Wood Charlie Clayton (R) check out at a spotted salamander during the Earth Day celebration at the Clay Center on April 21.



Rebecca Wiseman of the DEP's Homeland Security and Emergency Response group shared how first responders handle emergencies that involve hazardous waste.



DNR's Jim Fregonara allows students to pet a snake, next to his "If the eyes are round, no venom found. If the eyes are slit, don't get bit" sign.



Jason Morgan with the DEP's Division of Water and Waste Management shows students some of the types of fish that live in West Virginia's waterways.

Water Bottle Filling Station Reduces Pollution

by Jake Glance

Bobby Boucher, the lead character from the 1990's sports comedy movie "The Water Boy" would probably say: "That's some high quality H2O."

A water bottle filling station has been installed in the water fountain on the first floor of the DEP headquarters, near the mail room.

The filling station contains filters that reduce chlorine taste, odor, and sediment, said Jeremiah Johnson of the DEP's Administrative Services group.

The filters are also serviced by people at DEP.

To use the water bottle filler, just place your empty plastic water bottle in the machine, and the machine will automatically begin filling it.

When the bottle reaches the desired level, simply take the bottle out of the machine and the water supply will be cut off.

Wider mouth containers, like the stainless steel Junior Conservation Camp bottles, work especially well.

The machine also has an electronic counter, to display the number of plastic bottles that have been evaded by using refillable containers instead. Plastic bottles fill up our landfills, litter our landscape and take approximately 1,000 years to degrade.



Reduce, reuse, refresh: The water bottle filling station is located near the first floor mail room.



New Hires

Steven Cook, Environmental Enforcement
 Blake Davis, Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation
 Venisha Flesher, Division of Land Restoration
 Brittany Hunt, Environmental Enforcement
 James Nicholson, Office of Oil and Gas
 Ronald Ray Rose, Business and Technology Office
 Christina Whitt, Environmental Enforcement
 Chester Wright, Division of Land Restoration

Upcoming/Recent Retirements

George Dasher, Division of Water and Waste Management
 K. William Hauer, Division of Mining and Reclamation
 Joe Hickman, Division of Water and Waste Management
 Michael Kromer, Division of Mining and Reclamation
 Barbara Moore, Division of Mining and Reclamation
 Darrell O'Brien, Division of Mining and Reclamation
 Lester Pritt, Abandoned Mine Lands and Reclamation