



NCAA BASKETBALL

## McNAMARA LINKED TO HEAD COACH JOB AT SIENA COLLEGE <sup>B1</sup>

We're *All* About It

TUESDAY, MARCH 26, 2024

\$2.00 NEWSSTAND

# CONGRESS PROVIDES \$15M FOR PROJECTS

## Money includes \$1.6M for passenger rail to NYC

BY MICHAEL P. BUFFER  
STAFF WRITER

The \$1.2 trillion spending package passed by Congress and signed into law on Saturday will provide \$15.35 million for various projects and local agencies in Northeast Pennsylvania.

According to U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright, D-8,

Moosic, the funding includes: \$8.84 million for infrastructure, transportation, water-treatment and flood-protection projects; \$2.9 million to further develop a Luzerne County-based industrial hemp research and manufacturing collaboration; and \$2.6 million for local law enforcement and

emergency responders.

The allocations for infrastructure and transportation include:

■ \$1.6 million for the return of passenger rail to New York City by providing the local share of a \$3.7 million state Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program grant for the replacement of

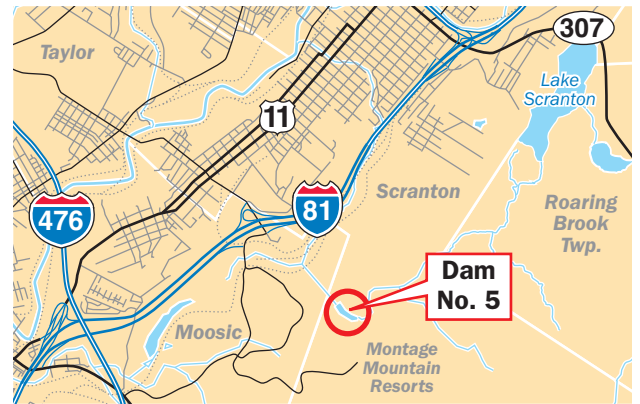
42,956 railroad ties on 40 miles of track between Delaware Water Gap and Gouldsboro on the Pocono Mainline.

Larry Malski, president of the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Rail Authority, said the additional \$1.6

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## Federal funds for flood protection

U.S. Rep. Matt Cartwright's Community Project Funding request, signed into law by President Joe Biden as part of the 2024 fiscal year spending package, earmarks \$1.3 million for the Lackawanna County Dam No. 5 Spillway Rehabilitation Project, which includes the reconstruction of the concrete spillway and rock walls. It will improve flood protection for 3,000 residents.



KEVIN O'NEILL / STAFF ARTIST

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES



JIM LOCKWOOD / STAFF PHOTO

The confluence of Roaring Brook, at right, with the Lackawanna River, at left, in South Scranton on Friday.

# WATER COMPANY SAYS IT WAS NOT AWARE OF SEDIMENT ISSUE

Pennsylvania American claims it did not know of the problems until it was alerted by the state.

BY FRANK WILKES LESNEFSKY  
STAFF WRITER

Pennsylvania American Water was not aware its dam rehabilitation project in Dunmore was polluting Roaring Brook with sediment in February until the state Department of Environmental Protection notified it about a complaint, the

water company said in response to a notice of violation from the DEP.

To lower the water levels at the No. 7 Reservoir in Dunmore for the dam project, PAW said it repaired an inoperable 48-inch outlet on Feb. 2. The discharge flowing through the 4-foot outlet into Roaring Brook was initially

clear, the water company said, but within two days, large quantities of sediment began to pour through it, turning the Roaring Brook and Lackawanna River a muddy, gray-brown color for miles.

PAW attributed the sediment to "recent heavy rain, lowering water levels and historic deposi-

tion." The utility company closed the dam's outlets on Feb. 12.

The DEP cited the water company with five violations on March 7, accusing it of violating department regulations and the Clean Streams Law of Pennsylvania, including for unpermitted

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## Good morning



Clouds, sun  
High: 55°  
Low: 41°

Weather, C6

# WATER: Company regrets the discharge, will work with the state

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discharge into the water, failure to notify DEP of the discharge and for the discharge occurring in a concentration sufficient enough to be harmful to human, animal, plant or aquatic life.

The department gave PAW 15 days to respond to the violation letter, addressing the cause of the unpermitted discharge, why PAW did not immediately notify DEP, what actions it has already taken and to provide a plan on how it will remediate the damage.

The utility company responded to the violations in a letter dated March 20. Lackawanna County distributed the response letter and PAW's accompanying plan for a waterway study to local media on Monday.

The water company said in its response that it did not provide a separate, formal notice to the DEP about the sediment discharge because the DEP was the one that notified PAW about the sediment.

The DEP and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission received a complaint about the sediment on Feb. 4, which DEP shared with PAW on Feb. 5, according to the response.

PAW said it "regrets the unanticipated discharge of sediment" and intends to

work with the DEP, Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, Lackawanna County Conservation District and other stakeholders to remedy the impacted water.

The DEP's violation letter requires PAW's remediation plan to include placement of bed gravel, stabilization of banks and beds, installation of stream improvement devices, revegetation of streams and banks, stocking fish and other aquatic life and the removal of the sediment from waters.

However, the water company said it is too early to provide a remediation plan for the damage caused by the sediment.

"While PAWC is fully committed to addressing and correcting this situation, respectfully, we believe it is premature to develop a specific remedial plan at this time," PAW manager of engineering for dams Kurt A. Staller wrote in the response. "Rather, the selection of specific remedial measures should be tailored to the findings of the stream study and follow its recom-

mendations."

To investigate the conditions downstream of the dam, PAW hired Harrisburg-based engineering and environmental consulting firm Skelly and Loy. The firm developed a plan for macroinvertebrate sampling, physical stream characterization and in-stream water quality monitoring, according to the response letter. The DEP conducted its own macroinvertebrate survey and sampling of water and sediment, and PAW asked if the department could share its findings for the Skelly and Loy study.

The proposed study identified two areas for likely remediation action: Roaring Brook between the Ash and Myrtle street bridges, and Roaring Brook at the confluence of the Lackawanna River.

Environmental advocates of clean waterways, including the Lackawanna River Conservation Association and Trout Unlimited, have expressed fears that ecological damage from the sediment will significantly

impair the waters and their aquatic wildlife of macroinvertebrates and fish for some time, perhaps years.

PAW's study would include nine sample stations along the Roaring Brook, Little Roaring Brook and Lackawanna River, but Tara B. Jones, executive director of the LRCA, contends there needs to be additional monitoring extending all the way to the Lackawanna River's confluence with the Susquehanna River. The proposed study only extends about 500 feet downstream of the Lackawanna River's confluence with Roaring Brook.

The LRCA received reports of cloudy conditions in the Susquehanna River as far as Exeter, she said.

"We believe that that amount of sediment impacted wildlife further than what is currently being proposed by Skelly and Loy," she said.

"We want to see macroinvertebrate testing farther downstream in the Lackawanna River so we can capture the downstream impacts, and not just limited to what's pro-

posed here."

The proposed testing isn't adequate to capture the impacts, she said.

"The entire lower portion of the Lackawanna River was impacted, and we want to know the effects on the wildlife," she said.

Jones also called it disappointing that it took until Feb. 5 for the water company to learn of the discharge. The LRCA received a photo from a Roaring Brook Twp. resident on Feb. 3 showing very cloudy water, she said.

Since then, the water has cleared up, but there are large amounts of sandy sediment along the waterways, including all over the Nay Aug Gorge and along the banks of the Lackawanna River, she said.

The DEP is reviewing the water company's response, department spokeswoman Colleen Connolly said in an email.

**JIM LOCKWOOD**, staff writer, contributed to this report.

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# FUNDS: Flood-protection measures included

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million "is the first major step in preparing the Pocono Mainline for the return of passenger rail and the establishment of intercity service by Amtrak between Scranton, the Poconos and New York City's Penn Station."

■ \$1.38 million for the Lackawanna County Dam No. 5 spillway rehabilitation project, which will improve flood protection for 3,000 residents.

■ \$980,000 to the Wilkes-Barre/Scranton International Airport for terminal expansion and improvements.

■ \$959,757 to upgrade the Lackawanna River Basin Sewer Authority's Clinton Twp. Wastewater Treatment Plant to allow biological sludge to settle outside of the

wastewater during the treatment process in order to produce clear, clean water suitable for discharge into the Lackawanna River.

■ \$959,757 to upgrade the Wyoming Valley Sanitary Authority's combined storm/wastewater system to reduce pollution from raw waste and other contaminants during rainstorms.

■ \$1 million for the creation of a health care center in Blakely, in which the Lackawanna County Department of Health and Human Services will use a combination of digital technology to diagnose and treat health risks and engage patients in wellness programs.

The allocations for industrial hemp research and manufacturing include:

■ \$980,000 for the Down-

town Hazleton Alliance for Progress to construct a center for plant science innovation, including a bioscience laboratory, a rooftop greenhouse with solar panels and an incubator that's designed to meet the needs of bioscience startup companies.

■ \$963,000 to Lackawanna College to fund hemp seed research for the development of construction and textile materials, all made with industrial hemp.

■ \$963,000 to Hazleton-based Vytal Plant Science Research for a mobile STEM education lab used by a consortium of school districts and higher education institutions to recruit, engage and educate students in scientific fields.

The law enforcement allocations include:

■ \$963,000 to Wyoming Area Regional Police Department for police cruisers, body cameras and other equipment.

■ \$637,195 to Scranton for a new emergency operations and training center to house emergency response personnel — police, fire and emergency medical services — and serve Lackawanna County and surrounding municipalities.

■ \$1 million for the Monroe County district attorney's office to fund information-sharing and upgrades to infrastructure and technology, moving the county emergency network to a digital system.

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