

PPL Prepares to Celebrate 75th Anniversary of Lake Wallenpaupack

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PPL this year will celebrate the 75th anniversary of its opening of Lake Wallenpaupack, one of the largest man-made lakes in Pennsylvania and a major center for tourism and recreation in the Poconos.

(Photo: <http://www.newscom.com/cgi-bin/prnh/19981015/PHTH025>)

PPL Generation, the parent of the company that runs the hydroelectric plant at Lake Wallenpaupack, will present a summer-long celebration that will include an expanded July 4 fireworks display, sponsorship of a Lake Wallenpaupack history book and exhibits at several community events. It will culminate with the opening of PPL's Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center.

PPL and the Hawley-Lake Wallenpaupack Chamber of Commerce will usher in the anniversary events with a dinner on May 18. The chamber also is observing its 75th anniversary this year.

"This gathering will kick off an exciting season of events and special projects in celebration of the history and significance of this scenic lake," said Dave Lamberton, PPL's superintendent at Lake Wallenpaupack. "It will bring together community leaders from across northeastern Pennsylvania, lake residents and representatives from PPL, providing an opportunity to show how PPL and the lake community have grown up together."

The opening of Lake Wallenpaupack in 1926 heralded a new era of enterprise and opportunity, sparking local businesses to start the Hawley-Lake Wallenpaupack Chamber of Commerce.

"By the 1950s, the organization had expanded to cover the now-thriving area around the lake," said Cindy Chumard, the chamber's executive director. "Through the years, Lake Wallenpaupack has continued to be a major tourism attraction and the backbone of the economy for this region. PPL is a tremendous community partner, and our chamber is honored to be celebrating this 75th anniversary year with them."

PPL's Lake Wallenpaupack project had its origins in the early 1900s, when engineers recognized the waterpower potential of the damming of the Wallenpaupack Creek, which flowed through the middle of a vast basin.

The former Pennsylvania Power & Light Co. began work in 1924. Thousands of people took two years to complete the 1,280-foot-long concrete dam, the powerhouse and the 3.5-mile flow line that carries the lake water to the plant. The plant and the land around it are now managed by a PPL Generation company, a subsidiary of PPL Corp.

"Besides providing electric generation for PPL and the region, the lake also generates significant benefits for the regional economy because it draws thousands of tourists and outdoor enthusiasts to its shores," said PPL Generation President Jim Miller.

Bob Uguccioni, executive director of the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau, credited PPL's care of the lake and its resources for sustaining tourism and creating "the hub of tourism activity" for the lake region and the Poconos.

"The stewardship that PPL has maintained of this beautiful lake has made it one of the main attractions for people visiting this part of Pennsylvania," he said. "We who have been in the tourism industry for a long time know that this lake has been a stimulus not only for our industry but for all businesses in Pike and Wayne counties."

PPL has more opportunities to explore its responsibility for managing the lake's resources during a federal relicensing project that began in the late 1990s. The company has been working cooperatively with government agencies, community organizations and the public to discuss issues about electricity generation, recreation and the environment at Lake Wallenpaupack.

PPL's Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license to produce power at the lake expires in 2004. Decisions about what PPL plans to do at Lake Wallenpaupack will be part of its recommendation to FERC in 2002 and will shape the new license. Relicensing is a routine part in the life of every hydroelectric power plant. Every 30 to 50 years, power companies that use dams to produce energy need to renew their licenses from the federal government.

Apart from the relicensing, PPL is joining its lake communities in a series of events to promote the Lake Wallenpaupack anniversary. The company is co-sponsoring an expanded fireworks display on July 4 and sponsoring displays and information at the Wayne-Pike Earth Day festival on Saturday, May 5, and Lake Awareness Day on July 25.

PPL is also working with the Hawley-Lake Wallenpaupack Chamber of Commerce and the Palmyra Pike/Wallenpaupack Historical Society to produce a hardbound book about the natural and human history of the lake and the lake's influence on the culture and development of northeastern Pennsylvania. The book is expected to be completed by early fall.

The anniversary celebration will culminate with the grand opening of PPL's 7,400-square-foot Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center.

Built using a \$500,000 matching state grant, the center will enhance PPL's environmental education programs in the Pocono region. It will house a 160-seat auditorium, a classroom, science lab, nature store, library and exhibits to accommodate a growing interest in the lake and the woodlands, wildlife and recreation it supports.

The center's exhibits, like the lake, will be free and open to the public.

PPL Generation is a subsidiary of PPL Corporation. Headquartered in Allentown, Pa., PPL Corporation (NYSE: PPL) generates electricity at power plants in Pennsylvania, Maine and Montana; markets wholesale or retail energy in 42 U.S. states and Canada; and delivers electricity to nearly 6 million customers in Pennsylvania, the United Kingdom and Latin America.

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