

PPL Susquehanna Works with Mother Nature to Solve Erosion Problem

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BERWICK, Pa.

PPL Susquehanna has found a simple solution for a chronic soil erosion problem near the plant. Let Mother Nature work.

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

During heavy rains, runoff from the plant complex cascades down the hillside with little resistance from the manicured lawns. The runoff makes its way into a lake at PPL's Susquehanna Riverlands Environmental Preserve, said Jerrold McCormick, environmental scientist with PPL Susquehanna.

Letting the grass grow will transform the sloped areas of the landscape into sponges that will soak up storm water and keep soil from washing away.

"PPL is constantly searching for ways to conserve natural resources and protect the environment," said Ron Ceravolo, general manager-Susquehanna plant support. "Often this requires creative approaches to land management, but sometimes we just have to get out of the way."

State and county conservation officials are strong advocates for this approach to erosion control, known as "vegetative mitigation," because it also enhances animal and wildlife habitats. PPL has used vegetative mitigation in the past, but never before on this large scale, said Skip Young, a senior environmental professional in PPL's Environmental Management Department.

About 65 acres of grassy areas will be left natural. These areas include the Route 11 entrances to the plant, access roads on the plant grounds and land bordering employee parking lots. The vegetation will be cut back to knee height occasionally in places where security or visibility is a concern, Young said.

PPL Susquehanna developed the plan in consultation with the plant's environmental consultant, Ecology III. Environmental studies students from King's College in Wilkes-Barre mapped the topography, and the Penn State Environmental Management Club in State College is considering a plan to introduce wildflowers into some of the grassy areas.

"PPL is a recognized leader in environmental stewardship and education," Ceravolo said. "We care for our land and waterways, work hard to enhance animal habitats and restore endangered species, and actively promote environmental education and awareness."

Since 1980, PPL's Susquehanna Riverlands Environmental Preserve -- encompassing approximately 1,200 acres on the east and west banks of the Susquehanna River -- has been evidence of that commitment.

The preserve includes a 400-acre recreation area for picnicking, group outings, hiking, sports and play; a lake for fishing and boating; a 100-acre tract of riverine forest, marsh, swamp and vernal pools for nature study and education; and an 800-acre expanse providing opportunities for hiking, hunting and fishing. Visitors to the nature center can get a close look at some of the area's wildlife, learn about wetlands and the river, and enjoy nature programs conducted by a resident naturalist.

Additionally, more than 40 schools in Berwick, Bloomsburg, Hazleton and Wilkes-Barre areas participate in Trees for the Future, PPL's environmental awareness program specifically designed for students in grades K-5 and teachers.

For more information about PPL Susquehanna's environmental programs, contact the Susquehanna Riverlands office at 570-542-2306 or visit <http://www.pplweb.com/seic>.

The Susquehanna plant, located in Luzerne County about seven miles north of Berwick, is owned jointly by PPL Susquehanna LLC and Allegheny Electric Cooperative Inc. and is operated by PPL Susquehanna.

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