

# Conservation Committee Report

Volume 25 Issue 7

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

July 2023



## The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an

American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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## House Democratic Leadership Blocks Environmental Committee Action On Bills Increasing Safety Zones Around Natural Gas Facilities, Cryptocurrency Permit Moratorium

Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware), Majority Chair of the [House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee](#), announced to the Committee-- "Five minutes ago I was called by my [Democratic] leadership and asked to not run

these bills" to increase safety zones around natural gas facilities and enacting a cryptocurrency permit moratorium.

"I am deeply disappointed by this decision, but I'm going to comply with the wishes of my leadership and not run these bills," said Rep. Vitali.

"That's all the business I have. Marty [Rep. Causer], do you have any thoughts?" said Rep. Vitali.

Minority Chair Rep. Martin Causer (R-Cameron) responded, "Well, I have a lot of thoughts [audience laughter], but I will (c)ontinued on page 2)

## Drought Task Force Maintains Drought Watch Status for All of Pennsylvania

Following a meeting of the Commonwealth Drought Task Force this week, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) will maintain a

statewide drought watch. While not required, residents and non-farm businesses are encouraged to voluntarily conserve water by reducing their non-essential water use.

At this time, 18 public water suppliers are asking for voluntary water conserva-

tion in their communities. For a map of daily drought status and a weekly list of public water suppliers that are requesting or requiring water use reduction, see the [DEP drought web page](#).

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## House Democratic Leadership Blocks Environmental Committee Action On Bills Increasing Safety Zones (continued)

keep it brief and say I'm glad we're not considering these bills."

"Great, with that, this meeting is adjourned," said Rep. Vitali.

The Committee was scheduled to consider--

-- Increasing Gas Facility Setbacks: [House Bill 170](#) (Otten-D-Chester) establishing 2,500 foot setbacks from natural gas compressor stations, well pads, pits, storage tanks, wastewater, chemicals, condensate and other waste as recommended in Attorney General Shapiro's Grand Jury Report ([sponsor summary](#)); and

-- Cryptocurrency Air Permits: [House Bill 1476](#) (Vitali-D-Delaware) establishing a 2-year moratorium on issuing air quality permits to cryptocurrency data mining facilities ([sponsor summary](#)).

Rep. Vitali's related bill-- [House Bill 1282](#) exempting cryptocurrency data mining facilities from the state tax credit for data centers ([sponsor summary](#))- was reported out of this Committee June 6 and is now in the House Rules Committee.

### Natural Gas Safety Zones

There have been multiple studies by academic institutions on the health and environmental impacts of conventional and unconventional shale gas development in Pennsylvania released since fracking began in Pennsylvania in 1963. [Read more here](#).

The [Environmental Health Project](#) has made recommendations for increasing setback safety zones for 10 years based on health studies. [Read more here](#). [Read more here](#).

There have been state Senate hearings on health studies. [Read more here](#).

There is an annual conference by the [University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health](#) and the PA League of Women Voters reviewing the latest health studies. [Read more here](#).

The [Physicians for Social Responsibility](#) release a Compendium of Scientific and Medical Studies On Risk, Harms of Fracking and Oil and Gas Infrastructure periodically. The 2022 Compendium had a collection of 2,000 abstracts. [Read more here](#).]

[Click Here for a video of the meeting](#).

Rep. Greg Vitali (D-Delaware) serves as Majority Chair of the [House Environmental Committee](#) and can be contacted by calling 717-787-7647 or sending email to: [gvitali@pahouse.net](mailto:gvitali@pahouse.net). Rep. Martin Causer (R-Cameron) serves as Minority Chair and can be contacted by calling 717-787-5075 or by sending email to: [mcauser@pahousegop.com](mailto:mcauser@pahousegop.com).

Source: PA Environmental Digest

## **Drought Task Force Maintains Drought Watch Status for All of Pennsylvania (continued)**

Drought watch declarations are not based on one indicator alone, such as precipitation. DEP assesses information provided by public water suppliers and data on four hydrologic indicators: precipitation, surface water (stream and river) flow, groundwater level, and soil moisture. While the recent rainfall has been welcome, there are still persistent precipitation deficits statewide. Persistent rain will be needed for more consistent meaningful improvement to groundwater levels.

DEP monitors the indicators in close partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), which maintains gages in streams and wells in many locations across Pennsylvania.

There are normal ranges for all four indicators. DEP makes drought status recommendations after assessing departures from these ranges and comparing this information to historical data.

For a map that's updated daily to show the status of each indicator for each county, see the [USGS Pennsylvania drought condition monitoring website](#).

DEP provides data and recommendations to the state and federal agencies and other organizations that make up the Commonwealth Drought Task Force. Drought watch and warning declarations are determined by DEP, with the concurrence of the task force.

Drought emergency declarations follow the same process, with final approval by the Governor. No county is in drought warning or emergency status at this time.

For more information on how DEP monitors conditions and makes drought status declarations, see the [DEP drought management fact sheet](#).

Residents and businesses are encouraged to reduce their nonessential water use. For example, at home there are many simple ways to use less water:

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## **Drought Task Force Maintains Drought Watch Status for All of Pennsylvania (continued)**

Run the dishwasher and washing machine less often, and only with full loads.

Don't let the faucet run while brushing your teeth or shaving. Take shorter showers. For example, consider not washing your hair daily.

Water your lawn only if necessary. Avoid watering on windy and hot days. Watering grass lightly and efficiently will encourage healthier, deeper grass roots. Overwatering is wasteful, encourages fungal growth and disease, and results in shallow, compacted root systems that are more susceptible to drought.

When mowing your lawn, set the blades 2-3 inches high. Longer grass shades the soil, improving moisture retention.

Water your garden less often. If necessary, water only in the cooler evening or morning hours, and direct the water to the ground at the base of the plant. Focus on new plantings, which have shallow root systems. Older plants may endure dry conditions longer.

Skip the car washing. If you have to wash your car, it's better environmentally to go to a drive-through car wash that recycles the water.

Sweep your sidewalk, deck, or driveway, instead of hosing it off.

Check for and repair household leaks. For example, a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water daily.

Set up a rain barrel to be ready to repurpose rain when it does fall. For helpful information, see this [Penn State Extension guide](#). Or just set out a bucket to capture water in the event of rain, and reuse it to water plants or the bird bath.

For more tips for residents as well as fact sheets on how businesses such as lawn care services, landscapers, hotels, and restaurants can reduce water use, see the U.S. Environmental [Protection Agency Drought and WaterSense web page](#).

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen Lead Paint Standards to Protect Against Childhood Lead Exposure**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a proposal to strengthen requirements for the removal of lead-based paint hazards in pre-1978 buildings and child care facilities, known as abatement activities, to better protect children and communities from the harmful effects of exposure to dust generated from lead paint, advancing President Biden's whole-of-government approach to protecting families and children from lead exposure. If finalized, this rule is estimated to reduce the lead exposures of approximately 250,000 to 500,000 children under age six per year.

Aligning with the [Federal Action Plan](#) on reducing lead exposure to children, these stronger standards would go further to protect children from the dangers of lead exposure, in support of the Biden-Harris Administration's historic [investment](#) to reduce lead exposure and [EPA's strategy](#) to address the significant disparities in lead exposure along racial, ethnic and socioeconomic lines.

EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe, EPA Assistant Administrator for Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michal Freedhoff and EPA Region 2 Administrator Lisa Garcia announced the proposal alongside elected officials and community leaders in Newark, New Jersey, one of the nation's leading cities in reducing lead exposure.

"The Biden-Harris Administration is taking a whole-of-government approach to ensuring that the most vulnerable among us — our children — are protected from exposure to lead," **said EPA Deputy Administrator Janet McCabe.** "This proposal to safely remove lead paint along with our other efforts to deliver clean drinking water and replace lead pipes will go a long way toward protecting the health of our next generation of leaders. I am proud to stand alongside the City of Newark, New Jersey, and all our partners across the United States in our critical efforts to reduce childhood lead exposures."

"There is no safe level of lead. Even low levels are detrimental to children's health, and this proposal would bring us closer to eradicating lead-based paint hazards from homes and child care facilities across the U.S once and for all," **said Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michal Freedhoff.**

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## Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen Lead Paint Standards to Protect Against Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)

“The City of Newark is honored to be selected by the EPA as the location for their important announcement of these new actions to protect Americans everywhere – and especially children – from the dangers of lead in paint,” **said Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka**. “We moved mountains in Newark to remove lead from every water line throughout the city because we value the health and wellbeing of every resident and understand that no amount of lead exposure is acceptable. We are grateful to the EPA and the Biden Administration for strengthening regulations for lead removal we’re committed to supporting their efforts.”

If finalized, the proposed rule would strengthen EPA’s regulations under section 402 of the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) by revising the dust-lead hazard standards (DLHS), which identify hazardous lead in dust on floors and window sills, and the dust-lead clearance levels (DLCL), the amount of lead that can remain in dust on floors, window sills and window troughs after lead removal activities.

Today’s proposal would reduce the DLHS from 10 micrograms per square foot ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$ ) for floors and  $100 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  for window sills to any reportable level greater than zero in recognition of the fact that there is no level of lead in dust that has been found to be safe for children. Today’s proposal would lower the DLCL from  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  to  $3 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  for floors, from  $100 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  to  $20 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  for window sills, and from  $400 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  to  $25 \mu\text{g}/\text{ft}^2$  for window troughs, which are the lowest post-abatement dust-lead levels that the Agency believes can be reliably and effectively achieved.

Property owners, lead-based paint professionals and government agencies use the DLHS to identify dust-lead hazards in residential and childcare facilities built before 1978. If a lead-based paint activity such as abatement is performed, [EPA's Lead-Based Paint Activities Program](#) requires individuals and firms performing the abatement to be certified and follow specific work practices. Following such an abatement, testing is then required to ensure dust lead levels are below the DLCL before an abatement can be considered complete.

Historically, EPA’s DLHS and DLCL have been set at the same levels. This action proposes to decouple the DLHS and the DLCL, which were last updated in 2019 and 2021, respectively. This is being done in accordance with a May 2021 Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals [opinion](#), which explains that DLHS must be based solely on health factors, while the DLCL must consider the additional factors of safety, effectiveness and reliability.

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen Lead Paint Standards to Protect Against Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)**

Today's proposal aligns the DLHS and DLCL with the best available science, further strengthening EPA's efforts to protect children from lead hazards.

Although the federal government banned lead-based paint for residential use in 1978, it is estimated that 31 million pre-1978 houses still contain lead-based paint, and 3.8 million of them have one or more children under the age of 6 living there, creating health and developmental risks for children. Lead-contaminated dust is one of the most common causes of elevated blood lead levels in children. Lead dust commonly occurs when lead-based paint deteriorates or is disturbed. Due to normal behaviors such as crawling and hand-to-mouth activities, young children are at particularly at risk of higher exposure to ingesting lead-containing dust. Lead exposure can pose a significant health and safety threat to children and can cause irreversible and life-long health effects, including behavioral problems, lower IQ, slowed growth and more.

Communities of color and those of lower socioeconomic status are often at greater risk of lead exposure because deteriorated lead-based paint is more likely to be found in lower-income areas. Additionally, communities of color can also face greater risk due to the legacy of redlining, historic racial segregation in housing, and reduced access to environmentally safe and affordable housing. Eliminating lead-based paint and the proposal announced today reflect EPA's commitment to advancing environmental justice.

EPA will accept public comments on the proposal for 60 days following publication via docket EPA-HQ-OPPT-2023-0231 at [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov).

[Learn more about EPA's dust-lead hazard standards and clearance levels.](#)

### **What they are saying about EPA's proposal**

"When children are exposed to lead, their health can be irreversibly affected through impacts to their brain and nervous systems and delays in their growth and development," **said U.S. Senator Robert Menendez**. "This is why I have fought tirelessly to ensure children across the U.S., and all Americans, are further protected from the dangers of lead exposure, especially those in underserved communities that are more likely to find lead-based paint and dust in their homes and neighborhoods."

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen Lead Paint Standards to Protect Against Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)**

I applaud the Biden-Harris Administration for strengthening these critical health and safety standards to complement our historic investment of \$4 billion to protect children from exposure to lead, and secure a healthier and happier future for them.”

“New Jersey families should not have to worry about lead exposure in their homes and childcare facilities harming their children,” **said U.S. Senator Cory Booker**. Lead exposure is an environmental injustice that threatens the health and development of children, often in low-income, Black and Brown communities like mine in Newark. I am grateful to the EPA for taking important steps to keep our children safe.”

“No child in Newark, the Eighth Congressional District, or anywhere in our country should be at risk of lead exposure because of residential and commercial buildings that pre-date modern lead paint regulations,” **said U.S. Representative Rob Menendez**. “As Newark continues to grow, the EPA’s new lead paint standards will help working families be assured that the homes they live in and the child care facilities they utilize are safe from lead hazards. I applaud the Biden Administration’s commitment to the public health of our communities and our children.”

“I am proud to hear the EPA is taking direct action to protect children from dangerous exposure to lead paint,” **said U.S. Representative Donald M. Payne, Jr.** “Lead exposure is one of the greatest threats to children’s health across the country. I have been a strong advocate for efforts to reduce children’s exposure to lead, especially in drinking water. I introduced the Test for Lead Act to make sure states had a plan to deal with lead contamination in school drinking water to be eligible for federal drinking water funds. These new standards show that the Biden-Harris Administration has stepped up to reduce children’s lead paint exposure, especially in low-income areas. American families should be able to send their children to schools or childcare facilities that are clean and free of lead contamination.”

“Lead-based paint poses the greatest risk of lead exposure, especially in our most vulnerable communities, where lead-based paint is often found in older or deteriorating buildings,” **said Sean Moriarty, Deputy Commissioner for the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection**.

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Proposes to Strengthen Lead Paint Standards to Protect Against Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)**

“The NJDEP commends and supports the USEPA for this proposal, which in addition to the federal and state investment in Lead Service Line replacement, will go a long way toward protecting the health and safety of New Jersey’s residents.”

“There is no level of blood lead that is safe for children. Lead exposure disproportionately affects young children, causing serious medical and behavioral issues into adulthood. We know that low-income communities and communities of color are most at risk from lead exposure due to systemic inequities,” **said Debbie Mans, co-chair, Steering Committee, Lead-Free NJ.** “We applaud the USEPA for taking this important step in reducing lead exposure in homes across New Jersey, bringing us closer to ensuring our children are free from lead poisoning.”

### **Upcoming Lead-Based Paint Virtual Workshop**

EPA and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are also planning a virtual public workshop for October to hear stakeholder perspectives on specific topics related to low levels of lead in existing paint, including the potential health effects, the relationship between lead-based paint and dust-lead, possible exposure pathways, and technologies for detection, measurement, and characterization of low levels of lead in paint. EPA and HUD are also interested in any available information on lead-based paint characteristics and medical evidence related to low levels of lead in paint. EPA and HUD will use information shared during the workshop to inform their joint effort to revisit the federal definition of lead-based paint and revise it, if necessary.

Additional information on the [Lead-Based Paint Virtual Workshop](#)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

## Rich Negrin Confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection

The Pennsylvania State senate voted to confirm **Governor Josh Shapiro's** nomination of **Rich Negrin as Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection**. In this role, Secretary Negrin leads the Department's mission to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment, while increasing permitting efficiency to better serve Pennsylvanians.

"I am deeply honored to serve the Commonwealth as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection," **said Rich Negrin, Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection**. "Governor Shapiro has worked tirelessly to assemble a dynamic, diverse and modern team to lead our Commonwealth and protect our environment. Under the leadership of Governor Shapiro, we are dedicated to ensuring all Pennsylvanians will enjoy their right to drinkable water, breathable air and the preservation of the many values of our environment.

Secretary Negrin, the first Latino Secretary of DEP, brings more than 35 years of public and private sector leadership to the Department. Negrin's extensive management track record includes his service as City Manager & Deputy Mayor of Administration & Coordination of the City of Philadelphia. His past roles as a General Counsel, Vice President of Regulatory Policy and Strategy allow him to bring private sector best practices into the public sector, including an increased focus on customer service excellence.

Since being nominated by Governor Shapiro, Secretary Negrin has worked with the Governor, and other agencies to quickly respond to and assess the [impact of the East Palestine Derailment](#), and to secure the health and wellbeing of [Pennsylvanians impacted](#) by the derailment. Secretary Negrin also led the response to the chemical [spill in the Delaware River](#) working quickly to ensure drinking water was safe and hold polluters accountable. He has worked with the US EPA to secure millions of dollars to fight climate change with funds from the Inflation Reduction Act, and has brought in significant funding through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act to cap orphaned and abandoned wells.

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## **Rich Negrin Confirmed as Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection (continued)**

Most recently, Secretary Negrin spearheaded the [DEP consent order and agreement](#) (COA) with Shell Chemicals Appalachia, LLC, for exceeding total emission limitations for air contaminants at its petrochemical facility in Beaver County. Shell agreed to make repairs to reduce future exceedances and to pay one of the largest civil penalties in Pennsylvania history, nearly \$10 million, to DEP and to benefit the environment, health, and quality of life in the community near the facility. The settlement also included a first of its kind \$5 million community fund and a public process to benefit the impacted community. The DEP Office of Environmental Justice will collaborate with local leaders on this effort to ensure this funding benefits local communities.

Secretary Negrin is also spearheading new efforts at DEP, including the launch of the 2023 Permit Plan, the expansion of environmental justice efforts statewide, and the creation of a new Center of Environmental Excellence to drive operational excellence in the department.

Source: PA> Department of Environmental Protection.

## **Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs that Lower Energy Costs for Families and Advance Environmental Justice Through Investing in America Agenda**

### **EPA seeking applications through the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund to bring solar to millions of homes in low-income and disadvantaged communities, funded by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) launched a \$7 billion grant competition through President Biden's Investing in America agenda to increase access to affordable, resilient, and clean solar energy for millions of low-income households. Residential distributed solar energy will lower energy costs for families, create good-quality jobs in communities that have been left behind, advance environmental justice, and tackle the climate crisis. The Solar for All competition, which was created by the Inflation Reduction Act's Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund (GGRF), will expand the number of low-income and disadvantaged communities primed for residential solar investment by awarding up to 60 grants to states, territories, Tribal governments, municipalities, and eligible nonprofits to create and expand low-income solar programs that provide financing and technical assistance, such as workforce development, to enable low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy and benefit from residential solar. EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan announced the grant competition for communities with U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (VT), who championed the program, in Waterbury, Vermont while touring a residential solar project.

"For too long, overburdened communities on the front lines of the climate crisis have been left behind and locked out of clean energy investments and climate solutions," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. "Thanks to President Biden's Investing in America agenda, this historic boost in solar investments will advance millions of residential solar projects nationwide, protect people and the planet, deliver environmental justice, save families money, and create good-paying jobs. All communities deserve to participate in America's growing clean energy economy and under this competition, we will bring more communities along, working together to build a healthier and cleaner future for all."

"At a time when people are struggling to make ends meet, all while dealing with the existential threat of climate change, we must make residential rooftop solar a reality for low-income and working families that need it most," **said U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders (VT)**. "This \$7 billion residential solar program that I introduced and the EPA is administering is a major step in the right direction. I look forward to working with the EPA on this program to make it more affordable for low-income and working-class families to install solar on their homes and save money on their electricity bills, as well as help create millions of good jobs in Vermont and across the country."

"EPA's Solar for All competition is building a future where clean, cheap, reliable energy is for everyone," **said John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation**.

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs (continued)**

“I commend Administrator Regan and Senator Sanders for their leadership in making sure all Americans, regardless of zip code, have access to low-cost solar energy and its benefits for health, jobs, and justice.”

The new grant competition will provide funds to expand existing low-income solar programs as well as develop and implement new Solar for All programs nationwide. Solar for All programs ensure low-income households have equitable access to residential rooftop and residential community solar power, often by providing financial support and incentives to communities that were previously locked out of investments. In addition, these programs guarantee low-income households receive the benefits of distributed solar including household savings, community ownership, energy resiliency, and other benefits.

Residential solar cuts home energy bills and provides families with resilient and secure power, and Solar for All will help low-income and disadvantaged communities experience these meaningful benefits, such as guaranteeing a minimum 20% total electricity bill savings for households benefiting from the program. By investing in residential solar, the program will reduce the pollution produced from powering our homes to improve air quality and public health outcomes, all while creating good-paying, clean energy jobs.

“Solar for All will accelerate the deployment of residential solar in communities that for too long have lacked access to the cost-saving benefits of clean energy generation at home,” **said Senior Advisor and Acting Director of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund Jahi Wise.** “The Solar for All program strengthens low-income and disadvantaged community-focused solar programs across the country, bringing long-needed cost-savings and pollution reduction to American communities.”

The Solar for All program advances President Biden’s [Justice40 Initiative](#), which aims to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution. The program will also help meet the President’s goal of achieving a carbon pollution-free power sector by 2035 and net zero emissions economy by no later than 2050.

This investment was made possible by President Biden’s Investing in America agenda, which is growing the American economy from the middle out and the bottom up – from rebuilding our nation’s infrastructure, to driving over \$470 billion in private sector manufacturing and clean energy investments in the United States, to creating good paying jobs and building a clean-energy economy that will combat climate change and make our communities more resilient.

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs (continued)**

Solar for All will play a critical role in developing quality clean-economy jobs by funding high-road workforce development programs across the nation. These workforce development programs will invest in training workers from low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy residential distributed solar, creating opportunities in high-quality, long-term careers in the clean energy industry

“Last Congress, Senate Democrats, working with President Biden, transformed America’s approach to climate change and the clean energy economy with the Inflation Reduction Act,” **said U.S. Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (NY)**. “In less than a year since it was signed into law, Americans have already felt its effects – in lower energy costs and in new, high-paying jobs. The Solar for All grant program is just the latest example of how this legislation will transform the lives of those most affected by the disastrous effects of climate change and promote environmental justice.”

“As we work to build a clean energy future, we must do so in a way that benefits all Americans—no matter their zip code or income,” **said U.S. Senator Tom Carper (DE), Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee**. “When developing the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, we intended for \$7 billion of the program’s investments to target residential and community solar projects in communities with the greatest need. I’m pleased that the Biden-Harris administration’s Solar for All grant program is going to help deploy clean energy to millions of households, lowering energy costs and creating good-paying jobs across our nation.”

“We will never achieve our clean energy future without taking steps to support our low-income, frontline communities and ensure they have the investments and resources they need to thrive,” **said Congressman Paul Tonko (NY-20)**. “As the former Chair of the Environment and Climate Change Subcommittee, I was proud to work with the Biden Administration to develop and enact historic programs for the EPA in the Inflation Reduction Act, including the Solar for All grant program. I thank President Biden and Administrator Regan for their commitment to environmental justice and look forward to continuing to bolster programs that foster our clean energy transition, tackle the climate crisis, create good-paying jobs, and cut costs for all American families.”

### **Solar for All Eligibility and Application Information**

The deadline to apply to this competitive grant competition is September 26, 2023. Eligible applicants to Solar for All include states, territories, Tribal governments, municipalities, and eligible nonprofit recipients. Coalitions, led by an eligible lead applicant, are also eligible to apply to this competition. Additional detail on eligibility can be found in Section III of the [Notice of Funding Opportunity \(NOFO\)](#).

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## Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs (continued)

EPA intends to make up to 60 awards under this competition with three award options for applicants. These award options will include:

1. State and Territory Programs: Awards for programs that serve a specific state or territory geography
2. American Indian and Alaska Native Programs: Awards for programs that serve American Indian and Alaska Native communities
3. Multi-state Programs: Awards for programs that serve similar communities that face similar barriers to residential distributed solar deployment in multiple states

EPA anticipates issuing awards of varying amounts, calibrated to the number of households the applicant intends the program to serve. Applicants for all three award options can apply for a small-sized program (\$25 - \$100 million), a medium-sized program (\$100 - \$250 million), or a large-sized program (\$250 - \$400 million). Applicants to Solar for All can submit separate applications to one or multiple of the three options. The final quantity of awards will be determined by the number and quality of the applications as well as the optimal combination of awards across the three award options to achieve maximum geographic coverage and benefits of the Solar for All competition.

EPA has published the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for this competitive grant competition on [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov).

To compete in this competition, all applicants are required to submit a Notice of Intent (NOI) to apply to this competition. The deadline for the NOI differs by applicant type and are:

- **July 31, 2023** for states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico;
- **August 14, 2023** for territories (specifically, The Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), municipalities, and eligible nonprofit recipients; or
- **August 28, 2023** for Tribal governments and Intertribal Consortia.

Tools and resources for prospective grantees, including webinar links and helpful templates, can be found on EPA's GGRF webpage.

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## **Biden-Harris Administration Launches \$7 Billion Solar for All Grant Competition to Fund Residential Solar Programs (continued)**

### **Additional Background:**

The President's Inflation Reduction Act authorized the EPA to create and implement the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund, a historic \$27 billion investment to combat the climate crisis by mobilizing financing and private capital for greenhouse gas- and air pollution-reducing projects in communities across the country. In addition to the \$7 billion Solar for All competition, EPA will also launch a \$14 billion National Clean Investment Fund (NCIF) grant competition to expand deployment of clean technologies at a national scale and a \$6 billion Clean Communities Investment Accelerator (CCIA) grant competition to build local clean financing capacity through community lenders. EPA plans to release the NOFOs for these two competitions in the coming weeks.

Together, the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund's National Clean Investment Fund, the Clean Communities Investment Accelerator, and Solar for All competitions will spur the deployment of residential solar energy to lower energy bills for millions of Americans, provide resilient and clean power to communities, and catalyze transformation in markets serving low-income and disadvantaged communities. Each of these competitions advances President Biden's Justice40 Initiative while expanding good-paying job opportunities in domestic industries.

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

## **EPA Requires Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority to Upgrade Sewage Infrastructure Under Modified Agreement**

### **Agreement Will Reduce Sewage and Wastewater Pollution and Protect Public Health Across the Island**

Pursuant to a settlement modification with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Justice, the Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority (PRASA) has agreed to make major improvements and upgrades to the island's sanitary collection system and wastewater treatment plants. These upgrades will allow the water utility to focus its resources on a reduced number of better-operated and more efficient facilities; meet certain revised schedules for specified wastewater infrastructure projects; and execute 17 new wastewater projects, which, on their own, are estimated to cost \$534 million. PRASA has also agreed to increase transparency with the public regarding the occurrence of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).

This modification updates and expands upon several obligations contained in a 2016 Consent Decree. EPA and DOJ agreed to modify the 2016 agreement in consideration of damages caused by hurricanes Irma and Maria, as well as changed financial circumstances that made it difficult for PRASA to comply with certain requirements and deadlines. The improvements will supplement projects that are currently being implemented and part of PRASA's Capital Improvement Program.

"The people of Puerto Rico deserve access to clean water and major improvements to their water infrastructure are overdue," said **Larry Starfield, Acting Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance**. "This revised agreement requires PRASA to improve the collection and treatment of domestic sewage and wastewater, which is key to public health."

The injunctive relief in the Consent Decree and this modification is estimated to amount to over \$1.2 billion of infrastructure projects, including consolidation of several facilities that were affected by the hurricanes into more resilient plants, and construction or improvement of sanitary sewer infrastructure at underserved communities to address environmental justice concerns. The agreement ensures the decommissioning of antiquated and ineffective wastewater treatment plants at Arecibo and Camuy along with the diversion of the wastewater to the Barceloneta Wastewater Treatment Plant, a secondary and more efficient treatment facility.

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## **EPA Requires Puerto Rico Aqueduct and Sewer Authority to Upgrade Sewage Infrastructure Under Modified Agreement**

Certain of PRASA's previous obligations remain unchanged, including its obligation to undertake a comprehensive operation and maintenance program in the Puerto Nuevo sanitary sewer system and a comprehensive analysis of the system to determine whether further investments must be made to ensure that the system is brought into legal compliance, and to conduct immediate repairs at specific areas of concern. For the Puerto Nuevo sewer system, the public will be provided with information on PRASA's website concerning where CSOs occur within the system, and there will be extensions of time to complete reconnaissance and cleaning activities for priority areas of concern identified within the sewer system.

The settlement, lodged on June 29, 2023 in the U.S. District Court for the District of Puerto Rico, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and subsequent approval by the federal court. [Read the settlement on the Department of Justice website.](#)

Source: the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

## EPA Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz Statement on Bay Settlement

In a court filing, EPA and plaintiffs asked for dismissal of a 2020 lawsuit in which plaintiffs claim EPA violated the Clean Water Act by failing to hold Pennsylvania accountable for not meeting commitments to reduce pollution to the Chesapeake Bay.

On July 10, all the parties executed the final settlement agreement resolving all claims brought by the plaintiffs.

The plaintiffs include five governmental parties (Delaware, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, and Anne Arundel Co., MD), two citizens groups (Chesapeake Bay Foundation and Maryland Watermen's Association), and two individual plaintiffs who own livestock in Virginia (Robert Whitescarver and Jeanne Hoffman).

### **EPA Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz has issued this statement:**

*"This settlement closes a chapter of division and allows EPA, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other parties involved to continue giving our full attention to the work needed to accelerate restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its vast watershed. We're all in this together and, thanks to the Biden Administration, will seize the momentum we have with unprecedented funding going to Pennsylvania and other Bay states and building on the strong partnership we now have with Pennsylvania's agricultural leaders and farming community. The opportunities in front of us set the Chesapeake Bay Program partnership up for success as we emerge stronger in this next chapter."*

For further information: [r3press@epa.gov](mailto:r3press@epa.gov)

Source: U.S. EPA

## **Community Demands Accountability From EQT Natural Gas On 1-Year Anniversary Of Greene County Frack-Out Incident; Families Still Without Clean Water; No DEP Investigation Results**

Time and time again, EQT [natural gas drilling company] shows that they don't care about the communities they operate in.

Since the corporation's pollution incident last year [in New Freeport, Greene County], an entire community's water supply has been at risk of being unusable due to exposure to harmful chemicals.

EQT has done nothing to directly inform impacted residents of their risk, nor have they helped local families access clean, safe water.

The company has not provided a sufficient alternative source of water since the frack-out that occurred in New Freeport, PA on June 19th, 2022.

One day after the anniversary of the frack-out, area residents joined a rally and water drive outside of the EQT offices in Southpointe, Washington County.

An [open letter to EQT CEO Toby Rice](#) was hand-delivered to their headquarters making five requests--

- A long-term alternate water source for all who need it (NOT jugs and bottles);
- A halt to all activity at the Lumber well pad until the DEP investigation is complete and safe water is secured;
- Transparency, respect, and open communication from EQT in all remaining stages of the investigation and until safe water is restored;
- If water is found to be contaminated, a permanent solution for drinking wells and springs; and
- A system to alert residents in the future and assurances that measures have been put in place to prevent this kind of incident from happening again.

The letter continued--

"The frack-out in New Freeport resulted in the contamination of well water with toxic chemicals, rendering it unsafe for consumption and leaving the community without access to clean and safe drinking water for over a year.

"This has negatively impacted their well-being and quality of life: For twelve months, they have been unable to turn on the faucet with the peace of mind that their water is safe to consume.

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## **Community Demands Accountability From EQT Natural Gas On 1-Year Anniversary Of Greene County Frack-Out Incident; Families Still Without Clean Water; No DEP Investigation Results (continued)**

“New Freeport is a working-class community full of hard-working people who have spent their lives making it a place to call home. They are now facing negative impacts to their property values, as their only source of water has been negatively impacted.

“The people of New Freeport have endured significant hardships as a direct result of EQT's actions.

“We believe that through responsible action, EQT can rectify the harm caused, rebuild trust, and demonstrate a commitment to the well-being of the communities in which it operates.”

[Click Here for a copy of the letter.](#)

The Center encourages you to donate to the New Freeport Water Drive to provide clean water to families affected. [PaEN]

Source: By Lisa DePaoli, [Center for Coalfield Justice](#)

## Shapiro Administration Secures \$10 Million Payment from Shell, Including \$6.2 Million for Local Community to Resolve Air Quality Violations

Shell acknowledges company exceeded emission limitations, agrees to repair facility and set aside millions for environmental improvement projects in Western Pennsylvania

The Shapiro Administration and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) entered into a [consent order and agreement](#) (COA) with Shell Chemicals Appalachia, LLC (Shell), in which Shell formally acknowledged that the company exceeded total emission limitations for air contaminants, agreed to make repairs to reduce future exceedances, and agreed to pay nearly \$10 million to DEP and the local community. The COA resolves air quality violations during commissioning of Shell's petrochemical facility in Potter and Center Townships, Beaver County.

Under the COA, Shell will pay a civil penalty of \$4,935,023 – and as required by Act 57 of 2011, 25 percent of this penalty will be directed to local communities. Additionally, Shell will spend another \$5 million for environmental projects to benefit the local communities. In total, communities in Western Pennsylvania will directly receive \$6.2 million for projects to benefit the environment, health, and quality of life of the community near the facility because of the COA. DEP's Office of Environmental Justice will collaborate on this effort. Shell will also pay additional monthly civil penalties for the rest of 2023 for any further exceedances. Following the COA, Shell plans to restart operations at the facility on Wednesday, May 24, 2023.

"Pennsylvanians have a constitutional right to clean air and pure water, and my Administration will hold all companies – no matter how big or small – accountable when they violate the laws and regulations protecting our air and water," said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. "Shell recognizes that as a company, it must do better, and this \$6.2 million commitment to the people of Western Pennsylvania is a down payment on that progress. My Administration will continue to work with Shell to ensure they live up to this agreement, and we will be prepared to hold them accountable for any future violations."

"With this agreement, the Department of Environmental Protection is taking steps to hold Shell accountable and protect Pennsylvanians' constitutional right to clean air and water while encouraging innovation and economic development in the Commonwealth," said **Rich Negrín, Acting Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection**. "We know that Shell can operate a state-of-the-art facility that helps grow our economy without harming the environment, and we are going to hold them to the requirements laid out in their permits. We are going to make sure that they are good neighbors to this community, and we will be hearing from and working closely with the residents of Beaver County to make sure this \$5 million is an investment into the community and the people that live there."

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## **Shapiro Administration Secures \$10 Million Payment from Shell, Including \$6.2 Million for Local Community to Resolve Air Quality Violations (continued)**

Shell exceeded its rolling 12-month total emission limitations for volatile organic compounds (VOC) beginning in October 2022 through April 2023, carbon monoxide (CO) from February through March 2023, Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) from December 2022 through April 2023, and Hazardous Air Pollutants (HAP) from December 2022 through April 2023. Shell attributed some of these emissions to malfunctions and anticipates additional exceedances of its 12-month total emission limitations during the commissioning phase into autumn 2023, but not during normal operations.

In addition to emission limit violations, DEP cited Shell for flaring violations from June 2022 through April 2023, malodor violations from its wastewater treatment plant in January, February, and April 2023, and other violations from July 2022 through April 2023.

The COA requires Shell to obtain approvals to repair its totally enclosed ground flares, requires an engineering evaluation on the efficacy of pollution controls, and requires Shell to obtain approvals to install any additional controls. Shell will also continue to report emissions from the facility on a monthly basis.

On March 25, 2023 Shell suspended ethylene and polyethylene production to make repairs and perform maintenance. Results of a recent simulations showed that adequate steam can be provided to the elevated flare prior to restarting operations in order to prevent unlawful smoke emissions. The COA requires the situation be monitored and requires Shell to renew the compliance guarantee monthly until the flares are repaired. A detailed simulation report on the steam system is also required by the COA.

[Permitting and compliance information on this facility is available on DEP's website.](#)

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)