

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 21 Issue 1

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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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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DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Test Homes for Radon

Winter is the ideal time to test for this naturally occurring radioactive gas, the second leading cause of lung cancer

The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) en-

courages Pennsylvanians to start off the new year by conducting a simple test of their homes for radon, a naturally occurring radioactive gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Winter is a good time to test in the commonwealth because doors and windows are closed, providing more accurate results.

“Because of our geology, nearly every county in the commonwealth has locations of high radon levels, putting Pennsylvanians at risk of exposure,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

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Wolf Administration Announces State Investment to Improve Raccoon Creek in Beaver County

The Wolf Administration announced grant funding to install streambank stabilization and riparian buffers in Raccoon Creek. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded a grant of \$94,800 to

Stream Restoration Incorporated.

This 2019 Growing Greener grant will be used to stabilize 500 feet of streambanks and install 800 feet of riparian buffer. The project will reduce sediment pollution by an estimated 500 tons per year. The project

also includes an extension to a recreational trail and removal of invasive species.

“Improving stream habitat – by stabilizing streambanks and planting buffers – also improves

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DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Test Homes for Radon (continued)

“A radon test is a great way to protect yourself and your family. Fortunately, testing your home for radon is as simple as opening a can, and inexpensive do-it-yourself tests are available at hardware and home stores.”

“Radon is a leading cause of lung cancer in Pennsylvania,” Health Secretary Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Since we know that radon is prevalent in homes across Pennsylvania, it is important to test your home. It is a simple step you can take to protect your family’s health.”

Radon is an odorless, colorless, radioactive gas that occurs from the breakdown of uranium in the ground. It enters homes through cracks in the foundation or other openings. As a result, high levels of radon tend to be found in basements, but the gas can be found anywhere in the home.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has set 4 picocuries of radon per liter (pCi/L) of air as an Action Level. If your radon level is higher than this, EPA, DEP, and the U.S. Surgeon General recommend having a radon mitigation system professionally installed to lower it. Typically consisting of a pipe and exhaust fan, the system will vent radon to the outside.

All radon testers, mitigators, and laboratories in Pennsylvania must be certified by DEP, which provides a public [list of certified radon service providers](#). People can also obtain a hard copy or verify a company’s certification by calling DEP at 800-23RADON (800-237-2366).

DEP will send free follow-up test kits to Pennsylvanians who’ve tested their homes and have results higher than 100 pCi/L or who’ve installed an active mitigation system in the past year.

Compared with the associated risk of lung cancer, a radon reduction system is very affordable, generally in the price range of other common home improvements.

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DEP Encourages Pennsylvanians to Test Homes for Radon

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Having a system installed will also make the future sale of your home easier. If you're building a new home, DEP recommends installing a passive radon system during construction. There is no reliable way to test the ground in advance for radon, and the cost of installing the radon system during construction is typically much less than installing one after the fact.

For people buying or selling a home, Pennsylvania's Real Estate Seller Disclosure Act requires sellers to disclose the results of any known radon testing. The DEP website lists radon testing options for real estate transactions.

DEP provides several downloadable radon publications and is posting radon tips on Facebook and Twitter and airing a public service announcement throughout January, National Radon Action Month.

For more information, please contact the DEP Radon Division via phone at 800-237-2366 or 717-783-3594, or via email at ra-epbrpenvprt@pa.gov.

Source: The Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Wolf Administration Announces State Investment to Improve Raccoon Creek in Beaver County (continued)

recreation opportunities through better access and better habitat,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

One of the largest investments into Pennsylvania’s environment, Growing Greener projects have been instrumental in cleaning up abandoned mine lands, preserving farmland, and protecting and restoring watersheds throughout the commonwealth.

The Growing Greener grant program is supported by the Environmental Stewardship Fund, which receives its funding from landfill tipping fees.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Trump Administration Unveils Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposure

Highlights Ongoing Lead Work in Lancaster and Philadelphia

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler, U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Ben Carson, and U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Deputy Secretary Eric Hargan unveiled the Trump Administration's *Federal Lead Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposures and Associated Health Impacts (Lead Action Plan)*.

"The Federal Lead Action Plan will enhance the Trump Administration's efforts to identify and reduce lead contamination while ensuring children impacted by lead exposure are getting the support and care they need," said **EPA Acting Administrator Andrew Wheeler**. "EPA will develop an implementation plan by March 2019 that will enable us to track our progress and update the public as we work to carry out the action plan and mitigate childhood lead exposure."

"The Trump administration's new Lead Action Plan reflects our strong commitment to preventing future generations from being affected by lead exposure," said **HHS Secretary Alex Azar**. "We know that lead exposure at a young age can result in serious effects on IQ, attention span, and academic achievement. We need to continue taking action to prevent these harmful effects. Identifying lead-exposed children, connecting them with appropriate services, and preventing other children from being exposed to lead are important public health priorities for this administration."

"HUD is delighted to join the other members of the Task Force in issuing this cohesive Federal Lead Action Plan," said **HUD Secretary Ben Carson**. "Implementing this plan will help federal agencies, along with our state and local partners, advance efforts to remediate home health hazards and keep children safe from lead poisoning."

Administrator Wheeler, Secretary Carson, and Deputy Secretary Hargan released the *Lead Action Plan* in front of a crowd of more than 30 dedicated career employees from EPA, HHS, and HUD who helped develop the plan.

"By educating the public about the dangers of lead paint, we hope to increase awareness about the dangers of lead poisoning in children," said **EPA's Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio**. "One component of this initiative is raising awareness among parents and guardians about the actionable steps they can take to reduce exposure to lead and the importance of getting their children tested."

EPA's Mid-Atlantic Region has designed and implemented a creative place-based approach to reduce exposure to lead, focusing on increasing awareness of and compliance with EPA's Lead Renovation, Repair, and Painting Rule. The Region conducted outreach, compliance assistance, and inspection and enforcement resources for at-risk geographic areas, starting with Lancaster and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

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Trump Administration Unveils Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)

In Lancaster, EPA sought to reduce exposure to lead by working with State and especially local officials and organizations. This pilot led to the development of a collaborative Federal regional initiative with Housing & Urban Development and Health & Human Services.

EPA is also working with local partners to raise awareness of EPA's lead-based paint rules in Philadelphia neighborhoods. Outreach efforts include in-person meetings, distributing technical assistance information, visits to paint/hardware stores, awareness training for city inspectors and providing information to contractors and property management firms, as well as providing information to daycare centers, childcare and healthcare focused organizations.

About the Lead Action Plan

Developed through cross-governmental collaboration of the *President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children (Task Force)*, which includes 17 federal departments and offices, the *Lead Action Plan* is a blueprint for reducing lead exposure and associated harms by working with a range of stakeholders, including states, tribes and local communities, along with businesses, property owners and parents.

The four goals of the *Lead Action Plan* are:

- Goal 1: Reduce Children's Exposure to Lead Sources
- Goal 2: Identify Lead-Exposed Children and Improve their Health Outcomes
- Goal 3: Communicate More Effectively with Stakeholders
- Goal 4: Support and Conduct Critical Research to Inform Efforts to Reduce Lead Exposures and Related Health Risks.

EPA is committed to developing an implementation plan – by March 2019 – that includes performance metrics for monitoring progress and demonstrating accountability for EPA actions identified in the *Lead Action Plan*. The agency also commits to providing periodic updates on the progress of these actions.

The *Lead Action Plan* will help federal agencies work strategically and collaboratively to reduce exposure to lead and improve children's health. EPA and members of the *Task Force* will continue to engage with and reach out to community stakeholders such as non-governmental organizations.

Click [here](#) to read the full report.

Background

The *President's Task Force on Environmental Health Risks and Safety Risks to Children*, which was established in 1997 by Executive Order 13045, is the focal point for federal collaboration to promote and protect children's environmental health.

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Trump Administration Unveils Federal Action Plan to Reduce Childhood Lead Exposure (continued)

The Task Force is currently co-chaired by Acting EPA Administrator Andrew Wheeler and HHS Secretary Alex Azar.

Since the 1970s, the United States has made tremendous progress in lowering children's blood lead levels. Lead exposure, particularly at higher doses, continues to pose a significant health and safety threat to children, preventing them from reaching the fullest potential of their health, their intellect, and their future. No safe blood lead level in children has been identified.

Now, however, tackling the problem at this stage requires a coordinated federal-wide effort that evaluates the predominant sources of lead and also includes improving identification and treatment of children identified as lead exposed. It requires a more robust and coordinated communication with parents and others regarding the risks and methods to reduce exposure and a collaborative multi-agency research plan – as outlined by the *Lead Action Plan*.

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

EPA Awards \$1.1 Million to Chesapeake Conservancy to Track Environmental Impacts of Land Use in Bay Watershed

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced today it has awarded \$1,080,000 to the Chesapeake Conservancy so that it can update and improve land use data critical to Chesapeake Bay Restoration.

“This project will give states, counties and local jurisdictions critical information on how the landscape is changing over time and how these changes impact progress towards achieving restoration of local waters and the Chesapeake Bay,” said EPA Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. “It will also provide more accurate information about how water moves through the landscape which will help the partners plan restoration efforts.”

“The Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Partnership is at the national forefront of data-driven conservation and restoration,” said Chesapeake Conservancy President & CEO Joel Dunn. “Our work together is creating consistent and comprehensive information that leverages the latest technology and advances strong public and private partnerships. Chesapeake Conservancy is proud to help empower stewardship, from the smallest non-profits to state and federal agencies, and bring our common goal of a healthier and sustainable Chesapeake that much closer.”

The Chesapeake Conservancy, working with project partners and the CBP will provide state and local jurisdictions updated, high-resolution, high-quality data about changes to landscapes and the locations of headwaters streams and other water features to support continued progress in the restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and local waters within its watershed.

It will also provide:

- Detailed information on streams that is critical to understanding how water moves through the landscape and where restoration efforts could be located;
- Optimal siting for best management practices for maximizing water quality benefits;
- Tracking and reporting tools for partners to streamline project implementation; and,
- Mapping support to help partners integrate geospatial data into restoration efforts.

Partners involved in this effort include: University of Vermont Spatial Analysis Laboratory, University of Maryland, Baltimore County, Drexel University Academy of Natural Sciences, and Chesapeake Commons.

The projects undertaken as part of this agreement support the goals of the 2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed agreement.

For more information about this agreement, please visit:

https://www.chesapeakebay.net/what/what_guides_us/watershed_agreement.

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

University of Pittsburgh Receives Accolades From EPA For Food Recovery Achievements

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognized the University of Pittsburgh for its food recovery achievements that include composting more than 135 tons of food in 2017 that would have otherwise ended up in a municipal landfill.

“EPA is proud of the way the University of Pittsburgh students have developed an innovative program to reduce food waste,” said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Cosmo Servidio. **“Through EPA’s Food Recovery Challenge, EPA partners with municipalities, businesses, nonprofits and other entities to reduce the amount of food in landfills and help them save money on waste disposal.”**

In 2014, a student group known as the Food Recovery Heroes began recovering surplus food from a campus bakery when they noticed surplus food was being thrown out at the end of the night. Four years later, in 2018, after conversations with chefs and volunteers, students are recovering food from multiple campus-wide dining halls and cafeterias, including the basketball arena after games and concerts.

The awareness students brought to food waste also led to an increase in composting on campus. Student involvement in composting resulted in the University’s composting effort increasing nearly 600 percent from 2016 to 2017 - from 19.5 tons to 135.8 tons.

The University was among more than 1,000 governments, businesses and organizations nationwide that participated in the 2017 EPA Food Recovery Challenge. The University of Pittsburgh received the EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional award in the Data Driven category for colleges and universities. Nationwide, Food Recovery Challenge participants diverted nearly 648,000 tons of wasted food from entering landfills or incinerators in 2017, nearly 214,000 tons of which were donated to people and animal feed.

For more information on the Food Recovery Challenge, visit: <http://www2.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food>.

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

Wolf Administration Announces State Investment for Mehoopany Creek Stream Restoration in Wyoming County

The Wolf Administration announced grant funding to implement the Mehoopany Creek Rogers Hollow Stream Restoration Project in Wyoming County. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded a grant of \$471,276 to Mehoopany Creek Watershed Restoration, Inc.

This Growing Greener grant will be used to construct over 700 feet of stacked boulder along the right bank of the stream and another 267 feet on the left side. This project will alleviate flooding issues and remove sediment while stabilizing the banks of the stream. Heavy rains events over the last several years have led to flooding of nearby residences and to areas of State Route 87.

“This area of Wyoming County has seen its share of flooding events, and this project will help protect the residents from future flooding and improve water quality,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

The Mehoopany Creek Roger Hallow Stream Restoration is part of the 2007 Mehoopany Creek Watershed Plan. This project will meet the PA Nonpoint Source Management Plan which focuses on reducing water quality degradation from “polluted runoff.” Rogers Hollow Stream is part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Wolf Administration Announces State Investment to Implement the Bushkill Creek Restoration Project in Northampton County

The Wolf Administration announced grant funding to implement the Bushkill Creek Restoration and Habitat Enhancement Project in the Borough of Tatamy and Palmer Township, Northampton County. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded a grant of \$80,000 to the Bushkill Stream Conservancy.

“This work will help improve a stream that provides valuable outdoor opportunities for people who enjoy fishing or just watching Bushkill Creek flow,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “The health of the creek is vital to the community.”

The watershed group will use the funds to install structures in Bushkill Creek to create a better habitat for aquatic life. The money will also be used to install riparian buffers that will stabilize 1.5 miles of stream bank through the Borough of Tatamy. Once those buffers are installed, more than 6,500 feet of the stream will be restored allowing for better water flow.

Bushkill Creek, although designated as a “high-quality” cold water stream, is classified as “impaired” in this section of the borough for pathogens, which allows for special protections. The improved habitat from the project will help protect aquatic life from possible exposure to pathogens.

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Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Wolf Administration Announces State Investment to Install Green Stormwater Infrastructure in Montgomery County

The Wolf Administration announced grant funding to implement a stormwater infrastructure outreach program in Montgomery County. The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded a grant of \$100,000 to the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association.

This Growing Greener grant will be used to launch “Stream Smart”, an outreach program designed to recruit residents willing to learn about, install, and maintain green stormwater infrastructure on residential properties. Embracing actions such as rain barrels, tree planting, and rain gardens in the Sandy Run watershed are expected to reduce stream sediment by more than 3,500 pounds per year.

“Innovative projects such as this will likely serve as a demonstration for future outreach and residential projects”, said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “Working together as partners, neighbors and communities is vital to the long-term success of these efforts.”

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Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE IN PENNSYLVANIA

Although climate change may be more evident in some places, such as the Arctic, no place is considered immune to its effects.

Over the past 110 years, Pennsylvania has undergone a long-term warming trend of almost 2 degrees Fahrenheit and an overall increased trend in precipitation.

Models show this pattern will continue into the future at an accelerated rate.

Given these projected effects, it is likely that the plants, animals, and landscape in Pennsylvania will be impacted by climate change.

The challenge for conservation managers is how to adapt and mitigate.

Climate change will likely alter the distribution and abundance of plant and animal species in the commonwealth. Pennsylvania may even gain new species from surrounding states as ranges shift.

As part of its [Climate Change Adaptation and Mitigation Plan \(PDF\)](#), DCNR is working with partners to review and expand monitoring to ensure that changes in natural communities, species distribution, and populations are detected.

Data collected will inform conservation practices and priorities -- including protecting land and managing it -- to create a system of habitats that would allow species to move north and to higher elevations.

Biologists from the Pennsylvania Natural Heritage Program (PNHP) currently are monitoring to better understand how peatlands are changing, possibly in response to climate change.

[Peatlands](#) are a unique group of wetlands generally found at higher elevations. They are typically cooler and provide a special environment that supports plants normally found farther north in the U.S. They provide habitat for some of Pennsylvania's rarest bird species.

In 2010, PNHP established a long-term monitoring network that included targeting plant species believed to be vulnerable at 30 sites. They returned to all of the sites over the past several years, and are beginning to analyze data to determine what, if any, changes have occurred during the time between the sampling.

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UNDERSTANDING CLIMATE CHANGE IN PENNSYLVANIA (CONTINUED)

A beginning step for agencies responsible for conservation is to determine those species most vulnerable and the factors that influence that vulnerability.

To contribute, PNHP biologists are using the [Climate Change Vulnerability Index](#).

Assessments continue, but so far, more than 85 species in Pennsylvania have been examined to understand their sensitivity and exposure to climate change related factors. Some of those species include:

- Eastern hellbender
- White-fringed orchid
- Bog turtle
- Golden-winged warbler

Findings from these projects and other monitoring efforts will help guide the future management of natural resources.

WHAT CAN CITIZENS DO?

Learn more about climate change this month by watching National Geographic's new film, "[Paris to Pittsburgh.](#)"

As you are doing your garden planning this year, check information on [iconservePA](#) about incorporating native plants, which provide food and habitat for wildlife.

Be a citizen scientist by participating in the Audubon Christmas Bird Count. Find locations on the [DCNR Calendar of Events](#) or check the [Audubon map](#).

This information was gathered from a story by PNHP ecologist Mary Ann Furedi in the most recent Wild Heritage News. [Subscribe](#) to keep up with information about conserving biodiversity in Pennsylvania.

Source: PA DCNR