

Conservation Committee Report

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Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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Pennsylvanians Encouraged to Protect Themselves Against Tickborne Diseases When Venturing Outdoors

Deer Tick Virus in ticks detected at high levels in additional locations around Pennsylvania

Pennsylvanians experiencing “spring fever,” that perennial urge to venture outdoors to hike, hunt, fish and explore, should plan now to protect themselves and their families

against potentially serious tickborne diseases—including Lyme disease and the rare but dangerous Deer Tick Virus (DTV), which has been found in ticks at high levels for the first time in multiple locations around the state.

“Lyme disease has been present in all 67 counties for some

time, and unfortunately, the prevalence of the very serious Deer Tick Virus appears to be increasing in some tick populations,” said Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

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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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Invasive Species in Pennsylvania

Plants

The Council has developed a list of 149 invasive plant species in order of their impact on our economy and environment. This list includes other important information like whether a spe-

cies is currently listed in the Pennsylvania Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Law and the relative importance each species has in the landscape and nursery industry. You can see the full list [here](#).

The Council has also developed a Top

10 style list of invasive plant species that it recommended to the Controlled Plant and Noxious Weed Committee for addition the law. You can see the list [here](#). Several species like common buckthorn,

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Pennsylvanians Encouraged to Protect Themselves Against Tickborne Diseases When Venturing Outdoors (continued)

“Pennsylvanians should learn about the threats posed by tickborne diseases and take commonsense precautions so they can enjoy our abundant natural resources—and the many wonderful physical and mental health benefits of outdoor recreation—as safely as possible,” said Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn.

DEP’s Tick Surveillance and Testing Program has detected unusually high infection rates of the dangerous and rare Deer Tick Virus in adult tick samples recently taken from three sites: Fisherman’s Paradise public fishing area on Spring Creek in Centre County; Iroquois Trail near Tunkhannock in Wyoming County; and Lawrence Township Recreational Park in Clearfield County. At each of these three locations, the infection rate exceeded 80% of ticks sampled. DTV has been detected in a total of 15 Pennsylvania counties, and the statewide infection rate outside of the three “hotspot” locations is currently 0.6% of ticks sampled.

“By learning where ticks live, seeking treatment if experiencing symptoms, and following the best practices for prevention, we can avoid cases of Lyme disease and other tickborne illnesses,” said Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) Physician General Dr. Denise Johnson. “The Department of Health estimates that there is at least one Lyme disease case for every 100 people in Pennsylvania every year. Lyme disease can cause flu-like symptoms and a rash in the early stages, but the infection could spread to joints, the heart, and the nervous system if not addressed. If you are experiencing symptoms, I encourage you to see your health care provider right away.”

“In addition to bringing about increased outdoor recreation overall, springtime plays host to one of Pennsylvania’s most-anticipated hunting seasons, the spring turkey season,” said Pennsylvania Game Commission Executive Director Bryan Burhans. “Hunters and other users of Pennsylvania’s state game lands system are among those who should always be sure to take protective measures against ticks.”

“Treating clothing and gear with tick repellent, and thoroughly checking for ticks after returning from the field, are among the steps hunters can take to prevent tick bites and stay safe while enjoying their favorite pursuit,” Burhans said. “Days spent in the spring woods are exceptional-ly enjoyable, and even more so for those who know they’ve safeguarded against ticks.”

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Pennsylvanians Encouraged to Protect Themselves Against Tickborne Diseases When Venturing Outdoors (continued)

“Anglers and boaters should take note of this warning as they make plans for the start of trout season and other adventures on the water this spring,” said Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Executive Director Tim Schaeffer. “Just as we urge boaters to always wear a life jacket, you can further protect yourself by wearing tick repellent clothing or keeping a bottle of tick repellent spray in your tackle box.”

Blacklegged ticks, also called deer ticks, are active even in winter when temperatures are in the mid-30s and above. DEP has posted signage to alert the public and will conduct control measures and additional testing to reduce and monitor the number of ticks present in the recreational areas with high positivity rates for DTV.

Recommended precautions for anyone venturing outdoors include:

Apply tick repellents containing [permethrin](#) to clothing and [EPA-registered insect repellents](#) such as DEET to exposed skin before entering the outdoors. Reapply as needed according to product label instructions.

Wear light-colored outer clothing and tuck shirts into pants, and pants into socks.

Walk in the centers of trails, and avoid wooded and brushy areas with low-growing vegetation and tall grasses that may harbor ticks.

After returning home, remove all clothing, take a shower, and place clothing into the dryer on high heat to kill any lingering ticks. Examine gear such as backpacks for ticks.

Conduct a full-body tick check using a hand or full-length mirror, including hidden areas such as the scalp, ears, armpits, belly button, and between the legs.

Check over any pets exposed to likely tick habitats each time they return indoors.

If a tick is found attached to your skin, use tweezers to remove it carefully, including the head. Monitor for symptoms and contact your doctor with any questions.

For more information about tickborne disease prevention, visit DOH's [Tickborne Diseases](#) website.

The DTV-positive ticks were discovered during routine testing as part of DEP's active [tick surveillance program](#), a five-year pilot program that began in 2018. Surveys are conducted in every county in Pennsylvania to track ticks' habitats, life stages and peak activity levels and to test them for human pathogenic diseases.

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Pennsylvanians Encouraged to Protect Themselves Against Tickborne Diseases When Venturing Outdoors (continued)

Fall and winter surveillance focuses on analyzing adult blacklegged ticks for emerging and changing disease burdens in public use habitats across Pennsylvania, such as parks, playgrounds, recreational fields, and state game lands.

The previous highest DTV infection rate found at a single location in Pennsylvania was 11%, and the highest infection rate reported nationally in scientific literature was approximately 25%. The statewide average infection rate for DTV was 0.6% in 2021 when adult tick samples were collected.

The Deer Tick Virus, which is a type of [Powassan virus](#), is rare in the United States, but positive cases have increased in recent years. It is spread to people primarily by bites from infected ticks and does not spread person-to-person through coughing, sneezing, or touching.

Powassan virus can be transmitted from tick to human in as little as 15 minutes after a bite occurs, while other tickborne diseases, such as Lyme disease, take much longer to cause infection, often 24 hours or more after the tick attaches to the host. There are no vaccines to prevent or medicines to treat Powassan viruses. Preventing tick bites is the best way to reduce risk of infection and disease.

Initial symptoms of a DTV infection may include fever, headache, vomiting, and weakness. Some people who are infected with DTV experience no symptoms, and therefore infection may go undetected. However, 91% of patients treated for DTV infections develop severe neuroinvasive disease.

Those who exhibit severe disease from Deer Tick Virus may experience encephalitis or meningitis and require hospitalization, with symptoms including confusion, loss of coordination, difficulty speaking, or seizures. About 12% of people with severe disease have died, and approximately half of survivors of severe disease have suffered long-term health impacts. For more information about the health impacts of DTV, visit the [CDC Powassan Virus website](#).

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Invasive Species in Pennsylvania (continued)

glossy buckthorn, and Eurasian watermilfoil were recently added to the law.

Insects

- [Spotted Lanternfly](#)
- Emerald Ash Borer
- Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
- Lymantria dispar
- Elongate Hemlock Scale
- Brown Marmorated Stinkbug
- Asian Longhorned Beetle (not yet in Pennsylvania)

Aquatic Animals

- Round Goby
- Northern Snakehead
- Silver Carp
- Red Swamp Crayfish
- New Zealand Mudsnail
- Zebra Mussels
- Quagga Mussels
- Black Carp
- Bighead Carp
- European Rudd
- Ruffe
- Rusty Crayfish
- Red-eared Slider

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Invasive Species in Pennsylvania (continued)

Diseases

- Sudden Oak Death
- Beech Leaf Disease

Mammals

- Wild boar

Other

- Asian Jumping Worms
- Didymo
- Mystery Snail

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture

EPA Proposes Stronger Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles to Promote Clean Air, Protect Communities, and Support Transition to Zero-Emissions Future

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is proposing new, stronger standards to promote clean air and reduce pollution from heavy-duty vehicles and engines starting in model year (MY) 2027. The proposed standards would reduce emissions of smog- and soot-forming nitrogen oxides (NOx) from heavy-duty gasoline and diesel engines and set updated greenhouse gas (GHG) standards for certain commercial vehicle categories. This proposed rule would ensure the heavy-duty vehicles and engines that drive American commerce and connect people across the country are as clean as possible while charting a path to advance zero-emission vehicles in the heavy-duty fleet.

“Seventy-two million people are estimated to live near truck freight routes in America, and they are more likely to be people of color and those with lower incomes. These overburdened communities are directly exposed to pollution that causes respiratory and cardiovascular problems, among other serious and costly health effects,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “These new standards will drastically cut dangerous pollution by harnessing recent advancements in vehicle technologies from across the trucking industry as it advances toward a zero-emissions transportation future.”

Consistent with President Biden’s Executive Order, “Strengthening American Leadership in Clean Cars and Trucks,” the proposed action would reduce NOx emissions from trucks by as much as 60 percent in 2045. It would result in widespread air quality improvements across the United States, especially in areas already overburdened by air pollution and diesel emissions. The benefits of the proposed rule would exceed its costs by billions of dollars. EPA estimates that by 2045 the most ambitious option outlined in today’s proposal would result in the following annual benefits:

- Up to 2,100 fewer premature deaths
- 6,700 fewer hospital admissions and emergency department visits
- 18,000 fewer cases of asthma onset in children
- 3.1 million fewer cases of asthma symptoms and allergic rhinitis symptoms
- 78,000 fewer lost days of work
- 1.1 million fewer lost school days for children

Today’s action is the first step in EPA’s “Clean Trucks Plan” – a series of clean air and climate regulations that the agency will develop over the next three years to reduce pollution from trucks and buses and to advance the transition to a zero-emissions transportation future.

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EPA Proposes Stronger Standards for Heavy-Duty Vehicles to Promote Clean Air, Protect Communities, and Support Transition to Zero-Emissions Future (continued)

EPA's goal is to deliver significant and needed public health benefits by designing a program that sets ambitious standards and that are feasible for the trucking industry after giving appropriate consideration to cost and other factors, while supporting the American economy. To accomplish this, EPA has engaged with stakeholders and identified several options in the proposal that address the robustness of the standards, timing for phasing in the standards, options to incentivize early clean technology adoption, and improvements to emissions warranties. EPA is seeking input on these options and looking forward to continuing engagement through the public comment process.

The proposed revisions to existing GHG standards for MY2027 and beyond would set updated GHG emissions standards for subsectors where electrification is advancing at a more rapid pace. These sectors include school buses, transit buses, commercial delivery trucks, and short-haul tractors. In a separate action, EPA will be setting new GHG emissions standards for heavy-duty vehicles as soon as model year 2030. This action will more comprehensively address the long-term trend towards zero emissions vehicles across the heavy-duty sector.

Today's proposal reflects input from stakeholders including community groups, manufacturers, and state, local, and tribal governments. EPA looks forward to hearing from all stakeholders involved in this important rulemaking. A public comment period and hearing will give stakeholders and the public an opportunity to comment on the proposal announced today and we look forward to engaging through this process.

For more information on the rule on the public comment process, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/regulations-emissions-vehicles-and-engines/proposed-rule-and-related-materials-control-air-1>

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

EPA Publishes State-Level Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data, Resources to Promote State Action on Climate

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is releasing new and updated resources to support states as they work to address the climate crisis and reduce climate pollution. These resources include new state-level data on greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) and sinks, updates to EPA's existing State Inventory Tool to help states compile their own emission and sink estimates, and information on state-level opportunities to reduce emissions of highly-potent greenhouse gases.

"Tackling the climate crisis requires action across all levels of government, and our partnership with states has never been more important to reduce emissions and deliver solutions," said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. "The high-quality, peer-reviewed data and analyses released today will support our state partners as we work to track climate trends and confront this challenge together."

Many states are working to improve their state-level greenhouse gas data to help identify opportunities to reduce emissions. The resources EPA is releasing today will complement and supplement official state data and provide states more information to identify pathways to reduce highly potent greenhouse gases. EPA's peer-reviewed data sets provide comprehensive, consistent, and comparable data for every state — providing state governments, the public, and stakeholders with high-quality information for policy assessment and development. EPA will also continue providing technical assistance to help states develop inventories of GHG emissions and execute strategies that reduce those emissions.

The data released will also allow researchers and the public to better understand emissions and mitigation potential in their state. While climate change is a national and international issue, states play a vital role in helping advance solutions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The new data and updated tools announced today include the following:

- State-level data on greenhouse gas emissions and sinks: The *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks by State* provides state-by-state emission and sinks data consistent with the national greenhouse gas inventory, and with international standards. The state-level GHG Inventory provides annual emissions estimates from 1990 through 2019 and will be updated each year.
- Updates to the State Inventory Tool: EPA's existing State Inventory Tool helps states to compile and analyze their own estimates of GHG emissions and sinks. The new version of the tool updates and extends calculations through 2019 and better aligns the tool with the new *Inventory by State* estimates.

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EPA Publishes State-Level Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data, Resources to Promote State Action on Climate (continued)

- Information on state-level opportunities to reduce emissions of potent greenhouse gases: The *U.S. State-level Non-CO2 Mitigation Analysis* provides states with improved data to better understand the costs and opportunities for reducing emissions of potent greenhouse gases, including methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gases. This report looks at projected emissions of these gases through 2050 and provides comprehensive technical and economic data on the opportunities and costs for reducing emissions.

These data and supporting technical reports draw on data and findings from EPA's *Inventory of U.S. Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Sinks*. EPA works in collaboration with numerous experts from other federal agencies, state agencies, research and academic institutions, and industry associations to compile the Inventory.

To explore State-by State greenhouse gas emissions and sinks data, please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/ghgemissions/state-ghg-emissions-and-removals>

To download the latest State Inventory Tool (Tool), please visit: <https://www.epa.gov/statelocalenergy/state-inventory-and-projection-tool>

To explore new State-Level Mitigation of Non-CO2 Potential data, please visit: <https://cfpub.epa.gov/ghgdata/nonco2/usreports/>

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

PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To ‘Unleash’ PA’s Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence

Pennsylvania is squarely in the middle of a national debate over “unleashing” our considerable reserves of natural gas to help supply the parts of Europe now dependent on natural gas from Russia.

Based on what we know now-- as of March 6-- here’s where the debate stands.

Sen. Gene Yaw (R-Lycoming), Majority Chair of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, put out an op-ed last week-- [“Are We Nuts? American Energy Is Key To Undermining Putin’s War.”](#)

Sen. Yaw said, “Putin spent years bolstering Russia’s economy with oil and gas exports, knowing full well the West’s race to renewables left them vulnerable and dependent.”

“... short-sighted climate policies – like forcing Pennsylvania into the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) and canceling natural gas and oil infrastructure, the Keystone XL pipeline [Canadian oil, not in Pennsylvania] chief among them – are so very dangerous. People across the world, not just in Ukraine, will die from the leverage Russia holds over global energy exports.”

“Some analysts believe crude oil prices may reach \$150 per barrel this summer, up from roughly \$50 just two years ago when American energy policy prioritized independence.”

“Our elected officials must set aside their allegiance to green energy lobbyists and turn up gas production so that we can crush Putin’s war machine without setting a single foot on foreign soil. As a nation that prides itself on its staunch defense of liberty, we must not undermine Ukraine’s fight for freedom by bankrolling their aggressor. And natural gas is the most valuable commodity Russia has – for now.”

Rep. Daryl Metcale (R-Butler), Majority Chair of the House Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, [issued a press release](#) calling on Gov. Wolf to “unleash PA’s full potential to power the free world” and “end his job-killing, punitive crusade against the production and exportation of Pennsylvania natural gas and other abundant fossil fuels.”

“You know of our immense potential, yet the State has been hamstrung by regulation, bans, time-intensive permitting, RGGI, and further taxation while you support energy means that cannot possibly power the needs of the 21st century.”

“Just as the shallow [conventional] oil and gas wells of Pennsylvania fueled the allies of the first World Wars, we should currently make use of our advanced production methods and technologies to provide Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) and other resources to Europe and abroad.”

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To ‘Unleash’ PA’s Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

Divert Existing Exports Of LNG

First, to the extent Europe needs natural gas now, the ability to export liquified natural gas in the U.S. is nearly at full capacity. It would take years to build new capacity. [Read more here.](#)

Action Item: The natural gas industry should be called on to divert existing shipments of LNG to fill emergency needs in Europe to help with this life-threatening humanitarian crisis.

Doing whatever they can to divert existing LNG exports is the only option we have for getting help to Europe immediately and in the coming months.

Does Europe Want Our Gas?

The European Union is set to unveil an energy plan this week to accelerate a transition to clean, renewable energy and to “reduce permanently our dependence on imports of natural gas.” And they meant all natural gas imports. [Read more here.](#) [Read more here.](#)

Germany has taken the extraordinary step of freezing the Nord Stream 2 gas project worth \$11 billion to avoid becoming even more dependent on natural gas. [Read more here.](#)

Again, acting now to divert existing U.S. LNG shipments to Europe would help ease, but not eliminate any gas shortages.

Action Item: But the real question is does the European Union-- our potential customer-- want to be dependent on natural gas in the future?

Doesn’t look that way, but we’ll know more when the EU unveils their plan.

Unleashing Gas/Oil Development In PA

Both Sen. Yaw and Rep. Metcalfe called for an increase in natural gas production in Pennsylvania. Rep. Seth Grove (R-York) [announced plans](#) to introduce legislation to “reform the drilling permit process,” fund pipeline development and also end RGGI carbon pollution reduction program. [Read more here.](#)

DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said during his House budget hearing, “The brake that you see on the natural gas industry has been the price of natural gas in terms of pulling things out of the ground. We have wells that are being drilled that are not producing, or unable to produce simply because there's no need for that value.” [Read more here.](#)

The natural gas industry could increase production today because many wells have been shut-in waiting for higher natural gas prices before companies will open them for production.

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To ‘Unleash’ PA’s Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

The Independent Fiscal Office reported during the fourth quarter of 2021, 10,322 horizontal gas wells were producing natural gas. [Read more here.](#)

DEP reports as of February 18 there are 12,769 active unconventional wells in the Commonwealth. [Read more here.](#)

Action Item: So today, the industry could start taking the steps needed to start opening 2,447 natural gas wells for production. No new wells have to be drilled.

On March 1, PA Environment Digest reported Pennsylvania’s unconventional natural gas industry failed to drill 40 percent of the wells it had been issued permits for by DEP. [Read more here.](#)

Action Item: So today, the industry could develop an action plan to start revisiting many of those well sites to determine if they can be drilled and brought back into production, since they were already permitted once by DEP.

The natural gas industry could even start drilling on the 65 percent of State Forest land it leased in 2008 and 2010, but never developed for gas. [Read more here.](#)

With respect to the [RGGI carbon pollution reduction program](#), it relates to controlling pollution from electric generation power plants, it has no relationship to increasing natural gas production itself.

It seems to have been thrown in as an afterthought because the natural gas legislators involved have always opposed it.

Nationally on the oil side, the CEO of the top shale oil company in the U.S. said they could not ramp up production of oil this year due to supply chain issues and Wall Street demanding more dividends with the spike in the price of crude oil. [Read more here.](#)

More Pipelines

Responding to questions at DEP’s House budget hearing about delays in issuing permits for natural gas pipelines, Secretary McDonnell said, “Not on our end.” [Read more here.](#)

In fact, natural gas legislators frequently point to the cancellation of the Keystone XL pipeline as an example of a project delayed, but-- 1) that’s a Canadian oil pipeline; and 2) it’s not in Pennsylvania.

The Senate budget hearings last week spotlighted the fact Pennsylvania’s experience with new pipeline construction shows state laws are not strong enough to prevent environmental damage and protect public safety. [Read more here.](#)

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To 'Unleash' PA's Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

The brand new Revolution natural gas pipeline in Beaver County exploded in 2018 due to very poor construction practices, which resulted in criminal charges and stiff penalties by DEP and the Public Utility Commission. [Read more here.](#)

The cross-state Mariner East Pipelines were issued hundreds of notices of violation, penalties were assessed to the limits of state law, but still construction resulted in the contamination of private water wells, major spills in two recreation facilities-- [Raystown Lake](#) and [Marsh Creek State Park](#)-- and dozens of other spills to local streams, sinkhole damage as well as criminal charges related to environmental violations. [Read more here.](#)

There is no state law or regulation that requires natural gas and hazardous liquids pipelines to carry something as basic as insurance or show they can pay for the deaths they cause or damages if pipelines explode, leak or kill someone, something every vehicle owner has to do. [Read more here.](#)

Frustration in the ability of state law to prevent damage caused by pipeline construction related to the Mariner East Pipeline can be illustrated by a 2018 quote from Republican Sen. Don White (Indiana County) at a Senate Committee meeting-- "We should be able to deal with that company and put them out of business." [Read more here.](#)

DEP and the Public Utility Commission, the Attorney General and Gov. Wolf have all called on the General Assembly to toughen laws regulating pipelines to no avail. [Read more here.](#)

Action Items: All these pipeline issues need to be fixed before more pipelines are built. [Read more here.](#)

Oil & Gas Drilling 2.0

Pennsylvania's experience with shale gas drilling and conventional oil land gas drilling have highlighted significant flaws in the state laws regulating their development.

What Pennsylvania needs, while the natural gas industry is taking up its own slack and responds to the immediate crisis as outlined above, is to develop an Oil & Gas Drilling 2.0 Program.

Here are a few fundamental things that need fixing--

-- Reduce Taxpayer Liability For New Abandoned Wells: DEP records show 256 conventional oil and gas drillers [\[Read more here\]](#) and 12 unconventional drillers with drill pads in 17 counties [\[Read more here\]](#) received notices of violation for abandoning wells without plugging them.

Abandoning wells by the conventional oil and gas drillers is pervasive and routine in the industry.

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To 'Unleash' PA's Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

In addition, oil and gas wells drilled before April, 1985 require no bonding at all to cover plugging costs and the existing amount of bonding in no way equals today's taxpayer costs for plugging.

Wells not plugged are left to taxpayers to pay for and represents billions of dollars in taxpayer liability. [Read more here.](#)

Action Items: To protect taxpayers, we need to--

-- Close the pre-1985 well bonding exemption, but state law needs to be changed; and

-- Have real bonding for all active conventional wells that reflect today's costs for plugging and there is a proposal before the Environmental Quality Board now to do just that. [Read more here.](#)

-- Plug The Hole In Funding DEP's Oil & Gas Regulatory Program: DEP is expecting a \$10.5 million deficit in revenue to cover the estimated \$25 million it costs the agency to regulate conventional and unconventional oil and gas drilling. [Read more here.](#)

DEP receives only \$46,100 in fee revenue from conventional operators to cover the \$10.6 million it costs the agency to regulate that industry. [Read more here.](#)

Action Item: Update the way the Oil and Gas Program is funded to provide a dedicated, predictable source of revenue paid for by the industry.

-- Accelerate Update Of Conventional/Unconventional Drilling Regs: DEP is now in the process of updating both the conventional and unconventional drilling regulations to incorporate new information they have learned about drilling since 2016. [\[Read more here\]](#)

Action Item: This process needs to be accelerated to make sure Pennsylvania has the latest environmental protection requirements.

-- Ban Road Spreading Oil & Gas Wastewater: The conventional oil and gas industry is still allowed by DEP to spread its production wastewater on dirt and gravel roads without any controls or limits. [Read more here.](#)

Over the last three years 2.3 million gallons of their wastewater has been disposed of by this method. [Read more here.](#)

DEP received a significant study of the water quality impacts of road spreading of conventional oil and gas wastewater from Penn State on December 30. It is one in a series of studies in the last two years on this topic. The study is expected to have a major impact on how DEP deals with this issue. [Read more here.](#)

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To 'Unleash' PA's Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

Other Penn State studies have clearly shown road spreading conventional oil and gas wastewater is a threat to the environment and public health.

[Click Here to read articles on this issue.](#)

Action Item: DEP has banned the practice for the unconventional drilling industry, but so far has not taken the same action on the conventional side, even though it has the same chemical and physical characteristics.

DEP needs to ban road spreading of conventional oil and gas wastewater.

Beginning Of A Responsible Oil & Gas Agenda

So a responsible agenda for helping Europe in the short run and chart a longer term True Energy Independence policy would include--

-- Divert Existing LNG Shipments: The natural gas industry should be called on to divert existing shipments of LNG to fill emergency needs in Europe to help with this life-threatening humanitarian crisis.

-- Does The EU Even Want Our Gas? The European Union-- our potential customer-- is set to unveil a plan this week to transition more quickly to clean, renewable energy and "reduce permanently our dependence on imports of natural gas." And they meant all natural gas imports, so will the EU want our gas in the longer run?

-- Take Up The Slack With Existing Wells: So today, the industry could start taking the steps needed to start opening 2,447 natural gas wells for production. No new wells have to be drilled.

-- Take Up The Slack By Relooking At Existing Permitted Wells: So today, the industry could develop an action plan to start revisiting many of those well sites to determine if they can be drilled and brought back into production, since they were already permitted once by DEP.

-- Strengthen State Pipeline Laws Based On PA's Experience: Our experience shows the state's pipeline laws haven't prevented environmental damage or protect public safety. They need to be strengthened.

-- Protect Taxpayers From Increasing Liability For Plugging New Abandoned Wells: The state needs to--

-- Close the pre-1985 well bonding exemption;

-- Have real bonding for all active conventional wells that reflect today's costs for plugging and there is a proposal before the Environmental Quality Board now to do just that.

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To 'Unleash' PA's Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

-- Fund The Oil & Gas Regulatory Program: Update the way the Oil and Gas Program is funded to provide a dedicated, predictable source of revenue paid for by the industry.

-- Accelerate Update Of Conventional/Unconventional Drilling Regs: DEP is now in the process of updating both the conventional and unconventional drilling regulations to incorporate new information they have learned about drilling since 2016. This process needs to be accelerated to make sure Pennsylvania has the latest environmental protection requirements.

-- Completely Ban Road Dumping Of Drilling Wastewater: DEP has banned the practice for the unconventional drilling industry, but so far has not taken the same action on the conventional side, even though it has the same chemical and physical characteristics.

DEP needs to ban road spreading of conventional oil and gas wastewater.

True Energy Independence

Like the European Union, Pennsylvania and the United States need to think about what True Energy Independence would look like.

True Energy Independence is not only developing homegrown energy resources-- and the jobs along with it-- but those energy resources based on commodities where foreign energy markets do not dictate what we pay for energy and energy prices don't move at the whim of despots.

The most concrete example of this concept today is-- while gasoline in Pennsylvania just crossed the \$4 per gallon mark, drivers of electric vehicles saw no change in what it costs to "fill up" their tanks.

It's a long term goal, but the transition is already happening as a result of market-driven changes and changes in investment strategies by private industry and governments.

It's not going to be easy.

There are lots of issues to work out-- like critical minerals, sustainable sourcing, grid reliability-- but the better direction seems very clear.

Continuing to go down the same path of promoting more and more of the same commodity energy resources means we only guaranteed we'll continue to be held hostage to the whims of international energy markets and despots for what we pay at the gasoline pump, what we pay to heat our homes, power our businesses and farms and pay for electricity.

Why not determine our own future through True Energy Independence?

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PA Natural Gas Politicians Want To 'Unleash' PA's Gas Industry - What We Need First Is For Industry To Take Up The Slack; Oil & Gas 2.0; True Energy Independence (continued)

Get The "Big Picture"

[Posted: March 6, 2022] PA Environment Digest

Wolf Administration Announces Nearly \$3 Million for Water Cleanup Projects in Southwestern Pennsylvania

Projects include watershed restoration and protection, Abandoned Mine Drainage (AMD) set-aside grants, and Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) bond forfeiture.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced that 12 projects in the state's southwest region were awarded a total of \$2,998,875 through DEP's [Growing Greener Plus grant program](#), which restores impaired waters and protects waterways from nonpoint source pollution. Statewide, this year's awards exceed \$20 million.

Representatives from DEP's Southwest Regional Office, Loyalhanna Watershed Association, and stakeholders visited sites along Mill Creek and Fourmile Run in Cook and Ligonier townships, Westmoreland County. This visit highlights how DEP partnerships and a watershed-based planning approach not only improve water quality and aquatic habitats, but also benefit the economy through waterway recreation and tourism.

"When you're out here and can see the streambank erosion and sediment in the channel, the need is clear," said DEP Southwest Regional Director Jim Miller. "We're thrilled to highlight Loyalhanna Watershed Association's approach to watershed restoration and support each of the fantastic projects funded this round."

Growing Greener is the largest single investment of state funds in Pennsylvania's history to address critical environmental concerns. Entities eligible for Growing Greener grants can be watershed groups, local or county government, municipal authorities, county planning commissions, county conservation districts, council of governments, educational institutions, or non-profit organizations. Grantees have up to three years to implement their projects. Governor Wolf has proposed additional funding for new Growing Greener projects using existing funds available under the American Rescue Plan Act.

"Ninety-six percent of impaired watersheds in Pennsylvania are polluted because of non-point source pollution," added Miller. "The problem comes from many different sources, but we need a collaborative approach along with state funding to make a lasting impact."

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Wolf Administration Announces Nearly \$3 Million for Water Cleanup Projects in Southwestern Pennsylvania (continued)

Some of the primary activities that generate nonpoint source pollution include, abandoned mine drainage (AMD), urban and agricultural runoff, earthmoving, and stream hydromodification. The purpose of Growing Greener, Surface Mining Conservation and Reclamation Act (SMCRA) bond forfeiture, and AMD set-aside grants is to address nonpoint source pollution through local, watershed-based planning, restoration and protection efforts.

The full list of approved Growing Greener Plus projects in southwestern Pennsylvania include:

Allegheny

Borough of Castle Shannon: Total Daily Maximum Load (TMDL) Plan Implementation, \$108,000

Allegheny County Conservation District: Findlay Township Activity Center Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs), \$150,417

North Fayette Township: Pollutant Reduction Plan Implementation, \$70,125

South Fayette Conservation Group: Fishing Run Diversion, \$90,000

South Fayette Conservation Group: Gladden AMD Treatment Plant – Operation and Maintenance, \$836,815

Cambria

Cambria County Conservation District: Cambria County Chesapeake Bay Watershed Sediment and Nutrient Reduction Program in Cresson and White townships and Hastings and Northern Cambria boroughs, \$580,916

Fayette

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: Back Creek Stream Restoration Project in Saltlick Township, \$30,891

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Wolf Administration Announces Nearly \$3 Million for Water Cleanup Projects in Southwestern Pennsylvania (continued)

Western Pennsylvania Conservancy: Spruell Pipe 2 and Acid Seep Remediation Project in Stewart Township, \$368,539

Greene

Greene County Conservation District: Willis Farm Stream Stabilization and Fencing in Cumberland Township, \$111,578

Washington

North Franklin Township: Streambank Restoration – Construction Phase, \$262,500

Washington County Watershed Alliance – Ten Mile Creek Restoration Project in Morris Township, \$156,094

Westmoreland

Loyalhanna Watershed Association, Mill Creek and Fourmile Run Stream Improvement Project in Cook and Ligonier townships, \$233,000

More information on the Growing Greener Plus grant program, application guidance, and sign up for notifications when grant programs reopen are available on DEP's webpage, <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Citizens/GrantsLoansRebates/Growing-Greener/Pages/default.aspx>

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

DEP Celebrates \$30 Million Invested in Low-Interest Loans for High-Impact Commercial Energy Efficiency Projects

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced today that the Green Energy Loan Fund has reached a milestone of \$30 million invested in low-interest loans for high-impact energy efficiency projects on commercial properties.

DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell made the announcement at an event with leaders from the Leon H. Sullivan Charitable Trust and the Reinvestment Fund at the Leon H. Sullivan Human Services Center in Philadelphia.

“Energy efficiency drives positive impacts across our lives,” said Secretary McDonnell.

“Every time a company or organization installs an energy-efficient heating, cooling, or lighting system, it’s another step for Pennsylvania and the nation toward independence from fossil fuels. It creates good-paying jobs in energy efficiency system manufacturing and installation. It lowers operating expenses, allowing an entity to focus more resources on its mission. It makes air quality healthier in the community. And it helps lower greenhouse gas emissions to slow climate change and its negative effects.”

The [Green Energy Loan Fund](#) prioritizes local community development efforts and seeks to support projects in Environmental Justice areas. Nearly 30 percent of funded projects have been in buildings owned or controlled by persons of color or with low income, and more than half have been located in low-income census tracts. Local governments, businesses, school districts, hospitals, and nonprofit organizations are eligible to apply.

The fund helps commercial building owners take energy efficiency projects above and beyond building code standards, which many other lenders are less willing to do. New equipment must reduce a building’s energy use at least 25 percent, and whole-building projects must reduce energy use more than 10 percent over current building energy code.

The Green Energy Loan Fund has supported a range of cutting-edge energy efficiency approaches in everything from new buildings and gut rehabs to installation of HVAC systems, geexchange systems, boilers, chillers, windows, white roofing, insulation, smart elevator motors, LED lighting and controls, water heaters, water conservation plumbing, and an ultra efficient laboratory exhaust system.

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DEP Celebrates \$30 Million Invested in Low-Interest Loans for High-Impact Commercial Energy Efficiency Projects (continued)

The [Leon H. Sullivan Trust](#) received \$742,410 in low-interest financing to install a state-of-the-art HVAC system, including boilers and chillers, and upgrade lighting at the Sullivan Center. These measures will cut electricity use by over 51,000 kilowatt hours annually.

“The Leon H. Sullivan Human Services Center serves hundreds of Philadelphians every day, and the services have become even more crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Mable Welborn, Board Chair of the Leon H. Sullivan Charitable Trust. “This program allows us to operate a more energy efficient Center for the providers of services and the communities we serve. These improvements will allow us to continue making affordable and accessible office space available to a large number of services providers, which is the reason this Center was built by Dr. Sullivan in 1978. That has been and continues to be the mission of the Trust because the community needs it.”

DEP and Reinvestment Fund launched the Green Energy Loan Fund in 2009 with \$12 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Since then, the fund has financed 18 projects statewide, totaling \$30 million in loans supporting improvements to 2.3 million square feet of building space.

“The Green Energy Loan Fund is more than just funding. It’s a model that not only improves environmental sustainability, but is also itself sustainable,” said Nancy Wagner Hislip, Reinvestment Fund’s Chief Investment Officer. “Since its founding, the program has suffered no losses, and has in fact revolved its capital more than once to continue to drive energy savings—all at no additional cost to taxpayers.”

With 15 projects completed so far, the fund has supported carbon dioxide emissions reduction of 110,000 tons over the life of these projects, equal to taking 22,000 cars off the road for a year.

Fifteen projects are in the Philadelphia region, including projects at Drexel University; Esperanza College; 990 Spring Garden, a retail/maker/office space; the Tower Place and Coventry House residential buildings, and others. Three projects are in Pittsburgh, Punxsutawney, and Bethlehem. [See project stories.](#)

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DEP Celebrates \$30 Million Invested in Low-Interest Loans for High-Impact Commercial Energy Efficiency Projects (continued)

The Green Energy Loan Fund is always open for applications. As money returns to the fund through loan payments, new projects are considered.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)