

# Conservation Committee Report

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Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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## Wolf Administration Promotes Environmental Education, Showcases Riverbend Environmental Education Center

### 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!

Inside this issue:

Deer Tick Virus Detected at Popular Wyoming County Trail	5
DEP Issues Approvals for Marsh Creek Lake Restoration Due to Mariner East 2	8
DEP Visits Dries Orchards in Northumberland County to View LED Lighting Pro-	10
District Court Upholds EPA Right to Enforce Against Illegal Imports from Chinese Vehicle Makers	12
Wolf Administration Celebrates Driving PA Forward Grant Impact on Franklin County's Air Quality	13
Wolf Administration Highlights Importance of Environmental Justice for	15

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Southeast Regional Director Pat Patterson visited the Riverbend Environmental Education Center in Gladwyne today to showcase its Aquaponics program, recently enhanced with the help of a \$20,000 DEP Environmental Education Grant.

### The DEP Environmental Education Grants pro-

gram supports formal and nonformal programs for youth and adults statewide, with priority given to programs on Environmental Justice, climate change, and water-quality improvement.

"It doesn't matter if you're school-age or retirement-age, pursuing environmental education is a life-long journey," said Regional Director Patterson. "As the world's climate changes, we must continue to grow, learn and adapt."

(continued on page 2)

## DEP and PennDOT Encourage Everyone to Join Litter Cleanup Events and 'Pick Up Pennsylvania'

The Pennsylvania Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP) and Transportation (PennDOT) joined a community litter cleanup as part of the spring [Pick Up Pennsylvania](#) campaign and encouraged resi-

dents, local leaders and businesses across the state to do the same in their communities.

"Clean green spaces and waterways factor into our physical and mental health and enable the function of the ecosystem we depend on.

They foster thriving communities that attract investment and support our recreation, tourism, and shopping economies. As the weather warms and we move outdoors, we benefit ourselves and our families by

(continued on page 3)

## **Wolf Administration Promotes Environmental Education, Showcases Riverbend Environmental Education Center (continued)**

Riverbend's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) Aquaponics program provides students with high quality, inquiry-based science lessons in aquaculture and hydroponics, the science of growing fish and plants together in a single integrated, soilless system. The program has been honored with a Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence.

Despite being closed to visitors due to COVID-19 restrictions, Riverbend was able to use their grant funds to adapt their lesson and engage directly in the classrooms. By purchasing smaller aquaponic systems and using virtual platforms, Riverbend was able to reach students with minimal curriculum disruption.

Located in Montgomery County, Riverbend serves southeastern Pennsylvania through a rich array of nature-based STEM education programs. Riverbend has created a strong framework for engaging students in learning science and STEM through outdoor experiences, emphasizing partnership-based programming. They teach environmental principles through a direct connection with nature, inspiring respect for our natural world and action as aware, responsible and caring citizens. Riverbend's preserve, made up of diverse natural habitats, is located on 30 acres and is open seven days a week for visitors.

"Parenting in the age of climate change is challenging. Riverbend firmly believes that every child and their family has the right to the benefits that nature can provide regardless of their ZIP code," said Riverbend's Director of Education and Strategic Initiatives Erin McCool. "All Pennsylvanians will benefit when students graduate with environmental literacy to navigate issues that impact our systems. This will also enable students to build resilient communities in the face of complex environmental challenges like climate change."

The DEP Environmental Education Grants Program was established by the Environmental Education Act of 1993, which mandates that five percent of all pollution fines and penalties collected annually by DEP be set aside for environmental education. Since its inception, this program has provided more than \$11.5 million to support environmental education throughout Pennsylvania.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **DEP and PennDOT Encourage Everyone to Join Litter Cleanup Events and ‘Pick Up Pennsylvania (continued)**

dedicating a morning or afternoon to Pick Up Pennsylvania,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

“PennDOT is responsible for maintaining 40,000 miles of roadway, roads that wind through some of the most beautiful, scenic landscapes in the country,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “Our Adopt A Highway Volunteers are very important to this effort, but as litter mounts, our multi-million-dollar cleanup efforts must continue – again taking our valuable resources away from highway maintenance operations.”

DEP Waste Management Director Ali Tarquino Morris and PennDOT Acting Deputy Secretary for Highway Administration Mike Keiser participated in a litter cleanup event in Waynesboro in Franklin County. They joined Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful, the borough council, Mainstreet Waynesboro, and Waynesboro High School National Honor Society students in picking up trash.

Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful coordinates the statewide Pick Up Pennsylvania campaign each spring and fall. Gloves, trash bags and safety vests are provided by PennDOT and DEP. In addition, DEP and the Pennsylvania Waste Industries Association sponsor no- or low-cost trash disposal for registered events at participating landfills for the month of April.

Volunteering is easy. People can organize their own local event and register it at [Pick Up Pennsylvania](#), or can sign up to participate in an already registered event. So far, 290 events are registered, with an estimated 21,000 volunteers.

“Cleanup activity is ramping up across the state. We’re honored to support the efforts of groups and individuals who are working hard to improve their communities,” said Shannon Reiter, president of Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful. “The Department of Environmental Protection and PennDOT have been dedicated partners of our Pick Up Pennsylvania program since its inception and have been instrumental in the provision and distribution of program supplies. It is our privilege to work with such committed partners and volunteers. Each one of you is integral to our program’s success.”

Hundreds of thousands of Pennsylvanians, including Scout troops, businesses, watershed

(continued on page 4)

## DEP and PennDOT Encourage Everyone to Join Litter Cleanup Events and ‘Pick Up Pennsylvania (continued)

organizations, Trout Unlimited, Rod and Gun Clubs, and others, have participated in Pick Up Pennsylvania events for over 20 years.

Groups in PennDOT's [Adopt-A-Highway program](#), which involves volunteers cleaning road-sides year-round, are longtime participants. Adopt A Highway volunteers collect litter on a two-mile section of state highway at least twice a year. In 2021, the program had over 4,250 participating groups, more than 103,300 registered volunteers, and nearly 8,800 miles of adopted state-maintained roadways.

"We see the great impact that volunteers have in reducing the litter polluting our roads, neighborhoods, and parks," McDonnell said. "It's unimaginable where we'd be without the help of these best of Pennsylvanians. However, cleanup is a very costly approach to the litter problem in the long term. We must move out of reactive mode and be more proactive to prevent littering."

[Governor Tom Wolf announced the first ever statewide Littering Action Plan](#) last fall. Reflecting the work of more than 100 stakeholders from state and local government, community organizations, businesses, and the legislature, the plan specifies many ways that all entities and individuals can prevent littering.

Education and outreach, infrastructure, laws and enforcement, and partnerships are key areas.

For example, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful has begun a study of the effectiveness of litter fine amounts and of challenges to enforcing anti-littering laws, and a team of state agencies is developing a public awareness campaign focused on littering prevention.

DEP is advancing a new [rulemaking](#) to provide convenient and affordable access to waste disposal and recycling services in rural areas of Pennsylvania, so that it is easier for all Pennsylvanians to responsibly dispose of their waste and recycling, rather than littering or illegal dumping.

Learn more about the [Littering Action Plan](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Departments of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Deer Tick Virus Detected at Popular Wyoming County Trail

### Visitors Encouraged to Protect Themselves

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), along with the Wyoming County Conservation District (WCCD), encouraged visitors to a popular trail to protect themselves against the rare Deer Tick Virus (DTV), a potentially serious tickborne disease. The announcement was made this morning at the Iroquois Trail trailhead in Wyoming County.

In the past several weeks, DTV has been found at high levels for the first time along the Iroquois Trail, a county-owned recreation area near Tunkhannock, and at two other locations across the state.

“The weather is getting nicer and more people are going out and enjoying trails near their hometowns, but they should also be aware that DTV is increasing in tick populations,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “They should plan now on how to protect themselves so they can avoid health complications in the future.”

DEP’s Tick Surveillance and Testing Program collected 50 samples at the Iroquois Trail, and a majority of them came back positive for DTV. Samples were taken from two other sites: Fisherman’s Paradise public fishing area on Spring Creek in Centre County and Lawrence Township Recreational Park in Clearfield County. At each of these 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.

“The county is working proactively with DEP to make sure outdoor recreation is safe and enjoyable for all,” said WCCD District Manager Doug Deutsch. “The conservation district is assisting DEP with tick sampling and surveillance and getting the message out that people should begin protecting themselves now.”

DEP and WCCD are also encouraging residents to protect themselves from another

(continued on page 6)

## Deer Tick Virus Detected at Popular Wyoming County Trail (continued)

tick-borne disease: Lyme disease. Blacklegged ticks, also called deer ticks, are active now and have been since mid-winter. 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. 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.

(continued on page 7)

## Deer Tick Virus Detected at Popular Wyoming County Trail (continued)

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.

DTV, 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 DTV 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: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## DEP Issues Approvals for Marsh Creek Lake Restoration Due to Mariner East 2 Spill

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced it has approved Sunoco Pipeline LP's (Sunoco) request for a major permit amendment for restoration activities after a spill of drilling fluid near Marsh Creek State Park in Chester County.

The restoration activities are required under the terms of a [Consent Order and Agreement](#) (COA) entered into between DEP, the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, and Sunoco on December 6, 2021, after Sunoco spilled approximately 8,000 gallons of drilling fluid that impacted a wetland, two tributaries, and Marsh Creek Lake in August 2020.

As outlined in the COA, Sunoco is required to dredge portions of the lake to remove drilling mud and sediment present as a result of the spill. This major amendment was requested to support the dewatering of sediment dredged from Marsh Creek Lake. Sunoco requested a 4.06-acre increase to the limit of disturbance to conduct these activities. Upon completion of the project, all areas will be restored.

DEP additionally issued Sunoco a Temporary Discharge Authorization associated with the dredging and dewatering activities which will allow Sunoco to return water to the lake after it has been processed.

"While steps were taken to protect natural resources immediately after the spill occurred, DEP, in coordination with a number of federal and state agencies, pursued a binding agreement to ensure a thorough and complete cleanup of the lake," said DEP Southeast Regional Director Pat Patterson. "The level of oversight, involvement, outreach, and coordination has been unprecedented, but has been necessary in order to restore this area."

In accordance with their Impact Assessment and Restoration Plan for Ranger Cove, Sunoco and its third-party contractors commenced this week with turtle trapping to relocate Northern Red Belly Cooters, a state-listed threatened species of turtle, from the identified work areas. Turtle traps will be baited and deployed for a period of 20 days and will be monitored once per day; captured turtles will be released into another part of the reservoir before the dredging commences. Additionally, a turbidity curtain will be installed to prevent turtles from entering the project area. Sunoco received the necessary clearances from the PA Fish and Boat Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service before beginning the activities.



## **DEP Issues Approvals for Marsh Creek Lake Restoration Due to Mariner East 2 Spill (continued)**

More information can be found on the [Marsh Creek webpage](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **DEP Visits Dries Orchards in Northumberland County to View LED Lighting Project and Discuss Agricultural Energy Efficiency Rebate Program**

Applications accepted through June 30, 2022

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) visited Dries Orchards today to tour their apple packing and storage facility and learn how a recent LED lighting upgrade, funded in part by a DEP Agricultural Energy Efficiency Rebate, has benefited their operation.

“Lighting presents one of the easiest energy-saving opportunities for farm buildings, and efficient LEDs use up to 70% less energy than traditional incandescent or high-pressure sodium lights,” said DEP Energy Program Specialist Michelle Ferguson. “DEP was pleased to support Dries Orchards’ LED lighting project through a rebate, and we encourage other agricultural producers to apply for this program to help lower their electricity costs and improve their operations.”

During the tour, Dries Orchards Manager John Bzdil explained that upgrading to LED lights has resulted in a brighter workspace, improving quality control during the apple packing process and increasing overall employee morale.

“Dries Orchards was excited to receive support from DEP to help kickstart the LED lighting upgrade to our facility, and we are already seeing a savings impact on our monthly electric bills,” said Bzdil. “We strongly encourage other farms to make the step to upgrade their lighting through this DEP rebate.”

The Agricultural Energy Efficiency Rebate Program helps agricultural producers reduce energy consumption through the use of energy efficient technologies. Rebates are available for LED lighting, fixtures and controls; energy-efficient ventilation equipment; and energy-efficient milk-pumping equipment. Rebates will pay 50% of equipment costs, up to \$2,000 per technology category or \$5,000 per business.

Representatives from the Northumberland County Conservation District, the Small Business Development Center at Bucknell University, the Environmental Management Assistance Program at Widener University (EMAP), and the Susquehanna Economic Development Association-Council of Governments (SEDA-COG) also attended the event and discussed the benefits of energy efficiency improvements to farm and agricultural operations.

## **DEP Visits Dries Orchards in Northumberland County to View LED Lighting Project and Discuss Agricultural Energy Efficiency Rebate Program (continued)**

Applications for the program are now being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis as funding remains available or through June 30, 2022. Interested applicants should apply to secure a rebate voucher prior to installing the equipment. More information and the application can be found at [www.dep.pa.gov/agricultureenergy/](http://www.dep.pa.gov/agricultureenergy/).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## District Court Upholds EPA Right to Enforce Against Illegal Imports from Chinese Vehicle Makers

### Case Demonstrates Agency Commitment to Enforcing Requirements for Vehicles Under the Clean Air Act

On Thursday, March 31, 2022, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia denied a [challenge](#) to EPA's successful litigation of significant Clean Air Act vehicle importation violations, upholding the agency's right to enforce the law and protect the public from dangerous air pollution. The challenge was brought by Taotao USA, Inc, Taotao Group Co., Ltd., and Jinyun County Xiangyuan Industry Co., Ltd. (plaintiffs).

"This case and the District Court's decision sends a clear signal that EPA will hold companies accountable for failure to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act, requirements designed to protect human health and reduce harmful air pollution," said Acting Assistant Administrator Larry Starfield for EPA's Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance.

Specifically, plaintiffs challenged an [Environmental Appeals Board decision](#) that affirmed plaintiffs violated Clean Air Act sections 203(a) and 213 by importing for sale 109,964 motorcycles and recreational vehicles with catalytic converters that did not comply with certification requirements. In addition to affirming plaintiffs' liability, the District Court also affirmed the \$1,601,150 civil penalty assessed by the Administrative Law Judge.

Certification requirements ensure that vehicles brought into commerce conform to design specifications for pollution control equipment.

Producing vehicles for sale that do not match such specifications, such as nonconforming catalytic converters, undermines the integrity of the Clean Air Act certification scheme, designed to protect human health and air quality. Catalytic converters convert toxins into less harmful by-products, such as water vapor and carbon dioxide, and in so doing reduce harmful emissions that include hydrocarbons, nitrogen oxides, and carbon monoxide.

To report a violation, please visit: <https://echo.epa.gov/report-environmental-violations>

Source: U.S. EPA

## **Wolf Administration Celebrates Driving PA Forward Grant Impact on Franklin County's Air Quality**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) recognized a significant operational change by Rail Management Services (RMS) that improved air quality in Franklin County.

RMS replaced five diesel yard hostlers – semi-tractors used to move containerized cargo – with five electric yard hostlers at the CSX Intermodal terminal in Chambersburg. A \$1 million Driving PA Forward grant made the replacement project possible.

“By replacing old diesel-engine trucks with zero-emission electric trucks, Rail Management Services has eliminated a source of nitrogen oxide pollution in the Chambersburg area, helping residents breathe healthier air,” said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. “They’re also helping to lower greenhouse gas emissions, while saving on fueling costs, two more reasons for companies’ growing interest in cleaner running vehicles for daily industrial use.”

The terminal is owned by CSX, a national leader in rail-based freight transportation. Pacific Rail Services, a division of RMS, oversees the intermodal loading and unloading operation at the facility.

The OrangeEV all-electric powered, zero-emission vehicles went into service in June 2021. On average, the five electric hostlers move a combined 500-600 shipping containers daily. The estimated emission reduction benefits from this project are:

NOx: annual = 6.16 tons; lifetime = 73.92 tons

PM10/2.5: annual = 1.585 tons; lifetime = 19.02 tons

Hydrocarbons: annual 0.6 tons; lifetime = 6.0 tons

CO: annual = 4.59 tons; lifetime = 55.08 tons

This project is expected to save approximately 50,000 gallons of diesel fuel each year.

(continued on page 14)

## **Wolf Administration Celebrates Driving PA Forward Grant Impact on Franklin County's Air Quality (continued)**

"Rail Management Services strives to be the leader of alternative fuel opportunities within the intermodal industry," said RMS Vice President Ed Morgenthaler. "We currently have Orange EV electric hostling trucks at six different locations and have been approved for funding at two more locations this year. Our goal is to continuously integrate strategic economic opportunities, all the while reducing significant CO2 emissions. Working in conjunction with CSX and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, we feel we have accomplished this at our Chambersburg facility with the purchase of our five electric hostlers."

The terminal is in an environmental justice area, defined by DEP as communities where 20 percent or more individuals live in poverty and/or 30 percent or more of the population are residents of color.

The [Driving PA Forward](#) program aims to permanently reduce lifetime NOx emissions from mobile sources. To date, the program has awarded nearly \$51 million in grants to 934 projects across eight funding programs.

The funding comes from the commonwealth's \$118.5 million share of the \$2.95 billion national settlement with Volkswagen Group of America for cheating on U.S. Environmental Protection Agency emissions tests.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Wolf Administration Highlights Importance of Environmental Justice for Pennsylvania

Comment period for draft Environmental Justice Policy open until May 11, 2022

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Patrick McDonnell spoke with a group of students at Penn State Brandywine about environmental justice and encouraged people to review and comment on the draft Environmental Justice Policy, [open for public comment](#) until May 11, 2022.

“I appreciated the opportunity to speak with the leaders of tomorrow about environmental justice and how we can incorporate these principles into DEP’s work across Pennsylvania,” McDonnell said. “Low-income communities and communities of color have borne disproportionate levels of pollution for generations, and the draft Environmental Justice Policy is one step toward ensuring that does not continue.”

The draft Environmental Justice Policy includes several sections to expand and improve upon the existing Environmental Justice Policy which has been in effect since 2004. The new policy will attempt to integrate environmental justice into more aspects of DEP’s work to benefit environmental justice communities. This may include revising definitions of environmental justice areas or populations; increasing collaboration and planning between state government agencies; developing environmental justice mapping, resources, and data for community use; prioritizing environmental justice in grantmaking practices; and training DEP staff and external partners on environmental justice.

The draft policy was developed after Governor Tom Wolf signed the [Environmental Justice Executive Order](#) last fall.

(continued on page 16)

## **Wolf Administration Highlights Importance of Environmental Justice for Pennsylvania (continued)**

More information on the Office of Environmental Justice can be found at <https://www.dep.pa.gov/PublicParticipation/OfficeofEnvironmentalJustice/Pages/default.aspx>

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)