Allegheny County Sportsmen's League

www.acslpa.org

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 25 Issue 8 | Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman | August 2023

The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an

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

This is my Pledge!

Inside this issue:

Shapiro Administration Provides Update on Plum Stray Gas Investigation

DEP working with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, local and county agencies

Earlier this week, Governor Josh Shapiro directed the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to launch an investigation into the house explosion in the Rustic Ridge neighborhood of Plum Borough, Allegheny County.

Under the Governor's direction on Monday morning, August 14, 2023, in coordination with local and County authorities, DEP inspectors began conducting a stray gas investigation at the incident site to look for sources of combustible gas near the structure and inspecting nearby natural gas-related facilities and infrastructure under DEP's jurisdiction.

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Bipartisan Budget Follows Through On Governor Shapiro's Promise To Protect Pennsylvania's State Parks And Forests And Spur Economic Development Through Outdoor Recreation

Shapiro Administration invests $112 Million in improving state parks and forests, increasing economic power of outdoor recreation

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today highlighted the significant investments in public lands and outdoor recreation in the commonsense bipartisan budget recently signed into law by Governor Josh Shapiro.

Pennsylvania's 2023-24 budget provides $112 million to maintain and improve infrastructure in parks and forests, which is single largest investment in decades.

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Shapiro Administration Provides Update on Plum Stray Gas Investigation (continued)

DEP continues to work in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), Allegheny County Fire Marshal's (ACFM) Office, utility operators, and other county and local emergency service agencies. The ACFM continues its investigation into the cause and origin.

"From the moment DEP was called in to investigate, our experts have worked tirelessly alongside county officials and partner agencies to aid in identifying the cause," said **DEP Secretary Rich Negrin**. "Our emergency response team, geologists, and members of the Oil and Gas District Operations will continue to have boots on the ground in the days ahead, as we exhaust every relevant resource in our scope of jurisdiction."

DEP inspectors are using handheld gas detectors to take daily readings for the presence and concentration of combustible gas – like methane – in the soil or in structures around Rustic Ridge. Where sufficient volume of gas is measured, inspectors are taking samples for lab analysis. DEP expects expedited results from the first samples collected. Potential methane sources include landfills, sewer lines, active/abandoned/historic oil or natural gas wells and associated pipelines, and coal mines. Analysis of the isotopic signature of the gas can indicate the depth of where the gas originated to aid in DEP's identification of the source of the gas.

DEP staff have already inspected the closest oil and gas well sites near Rustic Ridge and are coordinating with the owners/operators of the wells and associated pipelines. DEP staff have begun inspecting abandoned/historic wells and will continue to search for unregistered oil and gas wells in the area that may also be a source of natural gas.

"I am in constant communication with Governor Shapiro, who has expressed his unwavering support for the Plum community and for the use of all available investigative measures. At the Governor's request, an extensive amount of testing has been completed. I have ordered that the results be expedited. Over the next few days additional testing will be conducted and shared with the public appropriately," added **Negrin**. "It is not lost on our agency the tremendous impact this event has had on the Plum community. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the family and the precious lives lost through this tragic incident."

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Shapiro Administration Provides Update on Plum Stray Gas Investigation (continued)

Media sources have noted the presence of abandoned mine lands in the area. Vast swaths of southwestern Pennsylvania sit atop abandoned underground mines. DEP has assessed the coal seam in the Plum Borough area and found no nearby shafts or drill/bore holes in the vicinity of the incident and determined the likelihood of an abandoned mine-related gas issue to be very low. Two DEP projects to extinguish the nearby Renton abandoned mine fire were successfully concluded in October 2021. Abandoned mine features are not currently part of DEP's investigation.

Source: PA DEP

Bipartisan Budget Follows Through On Governor Shapiro's Promise To Protect Pennsylvania's State Parks And Forests And Spur Economic Development Through Outdoor Recreation (continued)

Additionally, the budget proposes $2.8 million to support operating needs for the management and safety of our public lands and the creation of a new Office of Outdoor Recreation.

"As people seek more time outdoors with their friends and families, it is important we make investments that help provide positive experiences for those visiting parks and forests and support Pennsylvania's growing outdoor recreation economy," **Dunn said**. "Thank you to Governor Shapiro and the Pennsylvania General Assembly for supporting these important investments in the infrastructure and operations on our public lands. We will put this funding to good use as we continue to be positive stewards of our state parks and forests for future generations."

The agency's large public land system contains not only natural areas, but many roads, bridges, dams and structures, most of which were built more than 50 years ago -- the infrastructure investments in this budget will be critical in addressing DCNR'S backlog of needed infrastructure work.

"The Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation [PPFF] applauds Governor Josh Shapiro and the Pennsylvania General Assembly for recognizing the important role that state parks and forests play in Pennsylvania." **said PPFF President Marci Mowery**. "Two-thirds of Pennsylvanians (PDF) agreed that state government should prioritize public lands infrastructure and we are grateful to see Governor Shapiro delivering for Pennsylvanians with these substantive investments in public lands. Not only do these places support a robust outdoor economy, they are important for the physical, mental and emotional health of the citizens of the Commonwealth while also providing a diverse array of environmental benefits, from helping to clean the air we breathe to reducing the impacts of flooding."

Also included in the budget is funding to support the creation of Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation.

This new office is focused on helping leveraging Pennsylvania's diverse and exceptional natural spaces to help grow the outdoor recreation industry, which adds $14 billion to Pennsylvania's economy, accounts for 152,000 jobs and 1.6 percent of the state's GDP.

"We hired Pennsylvania's first Director of Outdoor Recreation in 2021, and less than two years later, we are the largest of the 18 other states that have an Office of Outdoor Recreation," **Dunn noted**. "We see the outdoors as a means to transform health and wellness in the Commonwealth, and as a way to create meaningful economic opportunities in our communities. This is an exciting step forward for the future of our outdoors."

"We are thrilled to see this announcement of a new state office of outdoor recreation in Pennsylvania, becoming not just the 19th state to create such an office but also the largest state by population,"

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Bipartisan Budget Follows Through On Governor Shapiro's Promise To Protect Pennsylvania's State Parks And Forests And Spur Economic Development Through Outdoor Recreation (continued)

Outdoor Recreation Roundtable President Jessica Turner said. "We have been especially impressed to see all that Director Nathan Reigner has already accomplished in his time in the role, from activating stakeholders around the Commonwealth and promoting economic development to expanding outdoor access to all Pennsylvanians. Our members across the $862 billion outdoor recreation economy are celebrating and thank the Pennsylvania General Assembly and Governor Shapiro for supporting this important effort to create this office."

Governor Josh Shapiro signed into law a commonsense, bipartisan budget for fiscal year 2023-24 that delivers on his top priorities to create a stronger economy, safer and healthier communities, and better schools.

This budget makes historic investments in Pennsylvania children's education, supports businesses and speeds up permitting, helps older adults stay in their homes, protects and strengthens communities, and ensures law enforcement and first responders have the resources they need.

DCNR manages 124 state parks, 2.2 million acres of state forest land, and works with local governments and municipalities to provide grants, planning, and other resources to communities across Pennsylvania.

Visit DCNR's website for more information about the agency and check out DCNR's Calendar of Events for events on public lands.

Source: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Belle Fourche and Bridger Pipeline Companies to Pay $12.5 Million in Penalties and Improve Compliance after Pipeline Spills in Montana and North Dakota

Agreement protects public health, safety, and the environment by requiring action to make future spills less likely

Belle Fourche Pipeline Company and Bridger Pipeline LLC – affiliated companies that own and operate a network of crude oil pipelines in Montana, North Dakota, and Wyoming – have together agreed to pay a $12.5 million civil penalty to resolve claims under the Clean Water Act and Pipeline Safety Laws relating to oil spills in Montana and North Dakota.

“Oil pipeline spills can cause enormous and long-lasting damage to the environment,” said **Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator Larry Starfield for EPA’s Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance**. “This settlement holds Belle Fourche and Bridger Pipeline accountable for their significant oil spills and requires them to take meaningful measures to prevent future spills from their oil pipelines.”

“Today’s settlement is the result of federal and state partners working together to comprehensively address oil spills and assess a significant penalty to deter future violations,” said **Assistant Attorney General Todd Kim for the Justice Department’s Environment and Natural Resources Division**. “The agreement also protects public health, safety, and the environment by requiring action to make future spills less likely.”

“All pipeline spills harm our environment and many threaten the safety and well-being of the American public,” said **Deputy Administrator Tristan Brown for the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA)**. “PHMSA and our state and federal partners, are sending a strong message that spills will not be tolerated.”

“As the longest free-flowing river in the Lower 48, the Yellowstone River not only is a national treasure for its historic significance, ecosystems and recreational opportunities, but it also is an important economic resource for communities along its banks and the state of Montana,” said **U.S. Attorney Jesse Laslovich for the District of Montana**. “It is essential for pipeline companies operating in and around our rivers to comply with environmental protection and public safety regulations. This agreement holds these companies accountable for their significant oil spills, and more importantly, will help protect the iconic Yellowstone River from future damage.”

“Through this settlement, we are furthering North Dakota’s twin objectives of safe energy development and protection of our environment,” said **Attorney General Drew H. Wrigley for the State of North Dakota**. “I want to especially thank the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality staff who spent countless hours investigating and responding to the spill.”

In 2015, Bridger’s Poplar Pipeline ruptured where it crosses under the Yellowstone River near Glendive, Montana. The pipeline crossing had been installed using the “trench-cut” method. The pipeline failed after being exposed due to river scour.

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Belle Fourche and Bridger Pipeline Companies to Pay $12.5 Million in Penalties and Improve Compliance after Pipeline Spills in Montana and North Dakota (continued)

Bridger has completed its cleanup of the Montana spill site, and Bridger and the State of Montana separately resolved claims under Montana state law.

Belle Fourche's Bicentennial Pipeline ruptured in 2016 in Billings County, North Dakota. The pipeline traversed a steep hillside above an unnamed tributary to Ash Coulee Creek – which feeds into the Little Missouri River – when the slope failed. The size of the North Dakota spill was exacerbated by Belle Fourche's failure to detect the spill until it was reported by a local landowner. Belle Fourche's cleanup of the North Dakota spill site is ongoing with oversight by the North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality. The State of North Dakota is a co-plaintiff in this case, and it has worked closely with the United States; both are signatories to the consent decree.

In addition to the $12.5 million civil penalty, the companies are required to implement specified compliance measures including meeting certain control room operation requirements and related employee training, implementing their water crossings and geotechnical evaluation programs and updating their integrity management program. Belle Fourche will also pay the state of North Dakota's past response costs.

The case is being litigated by the Environment and Natural Resources Division's Environmental Enforcement Section, in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Montana, EPA, PHMSA and the State of North Dakota.

The consent decree, lodged in the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and final court approval. Under section 7003(d) of RCRA, a commenter may request an opportunity for a public meeting in the affected area. The consent decree will be available for viewing on the Department of Justice website.

Source: U.S. EPA

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of $206 Million in Funding for Local Projects to Restore Chesapeake Bay and Protect Underserved Communities

Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of $206 Million in Funding for Local Projects to Restore Chesapeake Bay and Protect Underserved Communities

Thanks to President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, EPA is seeking applications for single largest investment in the history of the EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office's Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction Grant and Small Watershed Grant programs

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the availability of up to $206 million in funding from President Biden's Investing in America agenda to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay and watershed, and advance environmental justice. EPA is seeking applications from eligible community-based organizations for two funding opportunities that will fund cooperative agreements for four years. Of the funding, $96 million will come from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law while another $110 million will come from regular EPA appropriations.

Organizations can apply for funding via two Requests for Applications (RFAs) issued by EPA's Chesapeake Bay Program Office; applications are due by mid-September. Both RFAs will fund the Innovative Nutrient and Sediment Reduction (INSR) Grant and Small Watershed Grant (SWG) programs for four years. As a result of the boost from the President's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the $206 million from both RFAs will mark the largest single investment in these grant programs since their creation in 1999. Both programs have been integral to progress made at restoring water quality in the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed and are advancing President Biden's Justice40 Initiative to direct 40% of the overall benefits of certain Federal investments to disadvantaged communities.

"Thanks to the Biden-Harris Administration, we have unprecedented funding going to communities for on-the-ground projects that will improve their local environments and ultimately the health of the Chesapeake Bay," **said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz.** "This historic funding, along with the great momentum and stronger cooperation among the many partners, is enabling us to accelerate our work to achieve clean waters and a healthier, more resilient and economically stronger Bay and watershed."

This program will fund principal recipients to administer the INSR and SWG grant programs, including issuance of subgrants to local, regional, and state organizations, as well as individuals in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

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Biden-Harris Administration Announces Availability of $206 Million in Funding for Local Projects to Restore Chesapeake Bay and Protect Underserved Communities (continued)

The RFAs will close mid-September. More information regarding these RFAs can be found at grants.gov at https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=349633 and https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppId=349699 Questions regarding applying for these opportunities should be directed to Autumn Rose, EPA Chesapeake Bay Program Office, at rose.autumn@epa.gov.

Background:

The Chesapeake Bay Program is a regional partnership made up of six states (Maryland, Virginia, Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York, and West Virginia) and the District of Columbia; federal agencies; local governments; academic institutions and non-governmental organizations that lead and direct the restoration and protection of the Chesapeake Bay and its 64,000 square mile watershed. Guided by the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*, Chesapeake Bay Program partners use 10 interrelated goals and 31 outcomes to collectively advance the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

The INSR program supports efforts within the Chesapeake Bay and its watershed that use innovative strategies to vastly accelerate sub-watershed and/or regional-scale implementation of nutrient and sediment reductions with approaches demonstrated to be successful. Since 2006, the INSR Program has provided more than $133 million to 229 projects that have reduced 22 million pounds of nitrogen, 4 million pounds of phosphorus, and 971,740 tons of sediment across the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The SWG Program funds community-based efforts to protect and restore the diverse and vital habitats of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributary rivers and streams. The SWG Program has provided more than $109 million to 496 projects that have permanently protected 169,000 acres under conservation easement, restored more than 1,550 miles of riparian habitat and 14,000 acres of wetlands, and engaged more than 125,000 watershed residents in volunteer conservation and restoration efforts.

For further information: r3press@epa.gov

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

California Truck Parts Manufacturer Sinister Diesel Agrees to Pay $1 Million After Pleading Guilty to Conspiracy and for Manufacturing and Selling Illegal Defeat Devices

Diesel performance parts manufacturer Sinister Mfg. Company, Inc. – doing business as "Sinister Diesel" – pleaded guilty to criminal charges today in federal court in Sacramento, California, and agreed to pay a total of $1 million in criminal fines and civil penalties. The company also agreed to implement a compliance program and to not manufacture, sell or install any device that defeats a vehicle's emissions controls.

Sinister Diesel pleaded guilty to a two-count Information, charging it with conspiracy to violate the Clean Air Act (CAA) and defraud the United States, and with violating the CAA by tampering with the monitoring device of an emissions control system of a diesel truck. Under the plea agreement, the defendant agrees to pay a $500,000 criminal fine.

Sinister must pay an additional $500,000 under the civil consent decree which the United States filed simultaneously with its civil complaint against Sinister, alleging violations of the CAA's prohibition against the sale or manufacture of devices that bypass, defeat or render inoperative emissions controls. The civil consent decree prohibits the company from making, selling or offering to sell defeat products, including delete tuners, and prevents Sinister Diesel from transferring intellectual property that would allow others to make such products. To ensure compliance with these requirements, Sinister Diesel will implement a robust internal training program and notify its distributors and former customers about the settlement.

"For close to ten years, Sinister Diesel sold parts designed to override or disable the emissions control systems on trucks," said **Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator Larry Starfield for the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance**. "EPA testing has shown that a vehicle altered with these parts can emit more than 100 times the amount of certain harmful air pollutants, compared to a vehicle with an intact emissions control system. This case shows that we will aggressively prosecute those who manufacture and sell devices designed to defeat vehicle emissions controls."

"Businesses that manufacture and sell illegal devices to defeat a vehicle's emissions controls foster pollution and risk decades of progress in curtailing harmful emissions from motor vehicles in this country," said **Assistant Attorney General Todd Kim of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division**.

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California Truck Parts Manufacturer Sinister Diesel Agrees to Pay $1 Million After Pleading Guilty to Conspiracy and for Manufacturing and Selling Illegal Defeat Devices

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"The plea agreement and civil settlement show that we will take strong action to enforce the Clean Air Act and ensure that emissions control requirements for cars and trucks are being followed."

"Sinister Diesel sold products that allowed drivers to strip the emissions controls from their trucks, causing a dramatic increase in the release of pollutants that worsen air quality and harm the quality of life," said **U.S. Attorney Phillip A. Talbert for the Eastern District of California**. "Environmental laws that control diesel pollution are especially important to protect sensitive populations such as the young, the elderly and people who suffer from respiratory conditions. My Office will continue to vigorously prosecute those who place profit above the public's health and the environment."

According to court documents, Sinister Diesel – from its 2010 incorporation to April 2020 – manufactured and sold parts intended to be installed on motor vehicles, particularly diesel trucks, to enable "deleting" the trucks by removing or disabling the trucks' emissions control systems. Various products, referred to as "delete devices" or "defeat devices," are used in the process of "deleting" a vehicle. Sinister often sold its products as part of "delete kits," sometimes bundled with "delete tunes." The delete tunes were software produced by another company which could alter a diesel truck's on-board computer to allow a truck with its emissions controls "deleted" to appear to run normally.

Through its employees, Sinister Diesel reached agreements with other companies that manufactured tuners or tuning platforms to sell their products bundled together. Sinister would often advise customers on other needed parts for their deleted vehicles to run properly with Sinister's delete kits — such as a tuner or tuning platform and delete tunes — and sell them those products, too. Sinister also counseled customers on how to evade state emissions tests.

Though Sinister sometimes labeled its delete products for "racing" and included disclaimers in marketing materials indicating that its products should be used only in off-road settings, the company knew most of its delete products were purchased by diesel truck drivers who used those products on public roads, not racetracks.

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California Truck Parts Manufacturer Sinister Diesel Agrees to Pay $1 Million After Pleading Guilty to Conspiracy and for Manufacturing and Selling Illegal Defeat Devices

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At times, approximately 25% of Sinister's gross revenue stemmed from its delete products. According to Sinister's sales statistics, between October 30, 2015, and July 17, 2017, it sold 39,792 defeat devices, including at least 35,960 kits that disable vehicles' exhaust gas recirculation systems.

Deleting a diesel truck causes its emissions to increase dramatically. For example, for a fully deleted truck with all emissions equipment removed, EPA testing has quantified the increased emissions as follows: Nitrogen oxides increased 310 times, non-methane hydrocarbons increased 1,400 times, carbon monoxide increased 120 times and particulate matter increased 40 times. EPA's Air Enforcement Division released a report in November 2020 finding that more than 500,000 diesel pickup trucks in the United States – approximately 15% of U.S. diesel trucks that were originally certified with emissions controls – have been illegally deleted.

Diesel emissions contain multiple hazardous compounds and harm human health and the environment. Diesel emissions have been found to cause and worsen respiratory ailments such as asthma and lung cancer. One study found that 21,000 American deaths annually are attributable to diesel particulate matter. Additionally, exposure to polluted air in utero has been associated with a host of problems with lifelong ramifications including low birth weight, preterm birth, autism, asthma and brain and memory disorders.

The defendant is scheduled to be sentenced in the criminal case by U.S. District Court Judge John A. Mendez for the Eastern District of California on November 14, 2023. Though Sinister Diesel agreed to pay $500,000 in criminal fines under its plea agreement, the company faces – for each count – a maximum fine of $500,000 or twice the gross pecuniary gain derived from the offense. Its sentence will be determined at the discretion of the court after consideration of all applicable statutory factors and the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of variables.

The criminal case was the product of an investigation by the EPA's Criminal Investigation Division, with assistance from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Sacramento Field Office. Assistant United States Attorney Katherine T. Lydon of the Eastern District of California and Senior Counsel Krishna S. Dighe and Trial Attorney Stephen J. Foster of the Environmental Crimes Section of the Justice Department's Environment and Natural Resources Division (ENRD) are prosecuting the criminal case. The federal civil case is being handled by Senior Attorney Eric Albert and Senior Counsel Joanna Day of the Environmental Enforcement Sec-

California Truck Parts Manufacturer Sinister Diesel Agrees to Pay $1 Million After Pleading Guilty to Conspiracy and for Manufacturing and Selling Illegal Defeat Devices

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tion of ENRD, Attorney Advisor David H. Kim of EPA's Region 9 office, and Janice Chan of the EPA's Region 9 office.

Stopping the manufacture, sale, and installation of illegal delete devices is a priority for EPA. To learn more, visit our National Enforcement and Compliance Initiative: Stopping Aftermarket Defeat Devices for Vehicles and Engines page. To learn more about EPA's criminal enforcement actions on defeat devices, visit Criminal Press Releases - 2023 and Criminal Press Releases - 2022.

The consent decree for this settlement, lodged today in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California, is subject to a 30-day public comment period and approval by the court. A copy of the consent decree and information on submitting comments will be available on the Department of Justice website.

Source: the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)

EPA Advances Asbestos Part 2 Risk Evaluation, Seeks Peer Review on White Paper

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a white paper as part of its Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) Risk Evaluation for Asbestos Part 2 - Supplemental Evaluation Including Legacy Uses and Associated Disposals of Asbestos for public comment and peer review. The white paper presents EPA's quantitative approach for the human health assessment for part 2 of the risk evaluation for asbestos, which will include all fiber types and legacy uses. The agency will release the draft risk evaluation for asbestos part 2 for public comment early next year. EPA is releasing this white paper ahead of the full draft risk evaluation for public comment and peer review to allow for a focused review of key technical aspects that will benefit from independent expert review and advice.

"More than thirty years after EPA first proposed a ban on asbestos, too many people are still exposed to this cancer-causing chemical," said **Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention, Michal Freedhoff**. "With this white paper, we move one step closer to comprehensively evaluating and then addressing the dangers of asbestos exposure."

Under the previous Administration, EPA narrowed the scope of the TSCA risk evaluation for asbestos by only reviewing ongoing uses and excluding legacy uses and disposals. Because only chrysotile asbestos has ongoing uses, other fiber types were not considered. However, in 2019, a court ruled that the agency unlawfully excluded "legacy uses" and "associated disposal" from TSCA's definition of "conditions of use," resulting in the need to supplement the agency's initial review of asbestos ("part 1") with a "part 2" risk evaluation, which focuses on legacy uses and associated disposals. Part 2 also includes other types of asbestos fibers in addition to chrysotile (crocidolite, amosite, anthophyllite, tremolite, and actinolite) as well as asbestos-containing talc.

Exposure to asbestos can cause cancer and other serious health effects. In order to evaluate the risks of asbestos in the manner required under the law, EPA needs to quantify these hazards. Today, the agency is releasing a white paper entitled *White Paper: Quantitative Human Health Approach to be Applied in the Risk Evaluation for Asbestos Part 2 - Supplemental Evaluation Including Legacy Uses and Associated Disposals of Asbestos*. In the white paper, EPA identifies existing hazard values for asbestos and describes how the agency proposes to use them in the risk evaluation.

EPA also describes its systematic review approach to identify and evaluate relevant scientific studies for the quantification of asbestos hazards and to make decisions about which are most relevant for part 2 of the risk evaluation in a fit-for-purpose manner. The approach was informed by the peer reviewed Draft TSCA Systematic Review Protocol and reflects the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM) recommendations to conduct a targeted, chemical-specific review of relevant science for TSCA specific decision making.

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EPA Advances Asbestos Part 2 Risk Evaluation, Seeks Peer Review on White Paper (continued)

As NASEM suggested, EPA has considered and built on existing peer-reviewed agency assessments of asbestos including part 1 of the risk evaluation, EPA's 2014 Integrated Risk Information System (IRIS) Libby Amphibole Asbestos Assessment and the 1988 IRIS Asbestos Assessment to streamline its evaluation of human health hazards. The systematic review approach helps ensure that part 2 of the risk evaluation for asbestos is based on the best available science.

Consistent with EPA and OMB guidance on peer review of scientific and technical work products, EPA is requesting a letter peer review by 10 to 15 independent experts of the quantitative approach to the human health assessment to be used in part 2 of the risk evaluation. The agency is choosing to submit this white paper, rather than the full draft risk evaluation, for peer review to focus on key technical aspects of the forthcoming risk evaluation and to make the most efficient use of the experts' time. Peer reviewers will develop and provide their independent comments to EPA between October 25, 2023, and November 24, 2023. Additional information about the letter peer review will be available on the peer review website.

EPA will accept public comments on the white paper for 60 days following publication via docket EPA-HQ-OPPT-2023-0309 at www.regulations.gov. These comments will be collated and provided to peer reviewers for their consideration.

In addition, EPA will consider feedback from this letter peer review as the agency prepares to release the draft Part 2 Risk Evaluation for Asbestos for public comment later this year. EPA will subsequently finalize part 2 of the risk evaluation by December 1, 2024.

Read the white paper.

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

EPA Awards Research Grants to 21 Student Teams to Develop Innovative Solutions to Environmental and Public Health Challenges

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced $523,796 in funding to 21 student teams for their research and innovative solutions to address environmental and public health challenges as part of the Agency's People, Prosperity, and the Planet (P3) Program.

"EPA's P3 program, now in its twentieth year, is an exciting and unique program that recognizes the power of students to translate imagination and science into new solutions that protect human health and the environment," said **Chris Frey, Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Research and Development**. "Congratulations to this year's teams. Their innovative projects tackle critical environmental issues and include an eco-friendly coating to reduce contamination in marine environments, a device to remove microplastics from stormwater, an air monitoring and filtration technology to reduce student exposures to air pollutants, and more."

The 21 Phase I recipients announced today will receive grants of up to $25,000 each to help them develop their proof of concept and will be eligible to compete for a Phase II grant of up to $100,000 to further implement their designs.

Teams from the following institutions are receiving funding for the 19th Annual P3 Phase I awards:

Clarkson University, Potsdam, N.Y., for Feasibility of On-farm Microalgal Cultivation for Dairy Feed Supplement Through Integration of Anaerobic Digestion of Farm Waste

- **Fort Lewis College, Durango, Colo.**, for PCR-Free Environmental Waterborne Bacteria Detection Using Raman Spectroscopy and Deep Learning
- **Hamline University, St. Paul, Minn.**, for Enhanced Detection of Lead Ions in Drinking Water Using Bismuth Nanoparticles
- **Georgetown University, Washington, D.C.**, for Enhanced Detection and Removal of GenX from Water Supplies
- **New Jersey Institute of Technology, Newark, N.J.**, for Scalable 2D Semiconductor-based Field-effect Transistors for Rapid and Efficient Detection of Lead Ions
- **North Dakota State University, Fargo, N.D.**, for Three-way Removal of Per- And Polyfluoroalkyl Substances from High-strength Landfill Leachate Utilizing Simultaneous Foaming and Humic Acid Precipitation During pH Adjustment
- **Purdue University, West Lafayette, Ind.**, for Implementation of Cost-effective Techniques for the Monitoring and Reduction of Indoor Air Pollutant Exposures in Classroom Environments Through a Service-learning Framework

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EPA Awards Research Grants to 21 Student Teams to Develop Innovative Solutions to Environmental and Public Health Challenges (continued)

- **Rice University, Houston, Texas**, for Chemical-free UV Unit That Degrades PFAS in Landfill Leachate Using Non-toxic Boron Nitride
- **Rochester Institute of Technology, Rochester, N.Y.**, for Implementation of an Industrial Scale Larvae Bioreactor
- **Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.**, for Physicochemical Degradation of Microplastics
- **Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y.**, for Developing Low-cost Sensor Unit for High-frequency Water Quality Monitoring in Non-navigational Rivers
- **University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Ala.**, for Modeling Outdoor Comfort With UAV-based Digitization Technique and a Comfort Tracking System for Underserved Communities
- **University of Alabama at Birmingham, Birmingham, Ala.**, for Urban Water Pollution Extent and Impact on the Village Creek in Birmingham, AL - Analysis and Mitigation Strategies
- **University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, Ala.**, for Predicting and Equipping Private Well Owners at Risk of Microbial Contamination After Flooding Events
- **University of Central Florida, Orlando, Fla.**, for Rapid and Simple MC-LR Check to Monitor Blooms for Early Action
- **University of Maryland Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, Md.**, for Natural Approach in Antifouling Protection: Remedy for Safer Water for Fisherman, Boaters, and Cargo Ships
- **University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nev.**, for Optimized Biochar/Hydrochar for Disinfection Byproduct Removal in Water
- **University of North Carolina Asheville, Asheville, N.C.**, for Mapping Air Pollution Disparities Using Low-cost Particulate Sensors
- **University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, Chattanooga, Tenn.**, for Microplastics Sampling for Stormwater Management
- **University of Texas at Dallas, Richardson, Texas**, for MINTS: Multi-scale Intelligent Sensing

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EPA Awards Research Grants to 21 Student Teams to Develop Innovative Solutions to Environmental and Public Health Challenges (continued)

- **University of Wyoming, Laramie, Wyo.**, for Recreator Crowdsourcing of Particle Levels During Wildfires

Learn more about the P3 Phase I winners.

Learn more about EPA's P3 program.

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

EPA Awards $1.3M in Research Funding to the University of Wisconsin-Madison to Develop Nanosensors to Detect Pesticides and Mitigate Their Harmful Impacts

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced over $1.3 million in funding to a team of researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in Madison, Wisconsin, to develop nanosensor technology that can detect, monitor, and degrade commonly used pesticides found in water that can harm human health.

“Nanotechnology advances are creating a new future for environmental monitoring,” said **Chris Frey, Assistant Administrator for EPA’s Office of Research and Development**. “The cutting-edge nanosensor technology that is being developed by researchers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison will help detect pesticides in water at extremely low levels and mitigate the harmful impacts of these pesticides.”

Environmental pollutants such as pesticides can adversely affect human health. Simple and reliable sensors to detect pesticides in water sources can help reduce human exposure. The unique properties of nanomaterials have enabled advances in sensor design, such as portability and rapid signal response times, and provided more cost-effective, efficient, and selective detection and monitoring methods.

Using funding from this grant, researchers from the University of Wisconsin-Madison will develop an integrated, portable, sensor-controlled water treatment technology that itself generates the chemicals needed for treatment. The researchers will distribute and deploy the treatment technology across rural communities in Alabama that rely on private and/or community wells for drinking water that have been impacted by neonicotinoids, a commonly used type of pesticide.

The University of Wisconsin-Madison’s Integrated Portable Raman and Electrochemical NanoSystem, or I-PRENS, will be used for rapid onsite detection and degradation of neonicotinoid pesticides in drinking water supplies. The team will develop a small-scale I-PRENS prototype for deployment in Alabama’s Black Belt region for long-term monitoring and remediation of neonicotinoid-impacted drinking water supplies. The Black Belt of Central Alabama, known for the region's rich, dark topsoil, faces many factors that make traditional wastewater treatment challenging, including its rural landscape and heavy clay soils. Results from the research are expected to help low income, underrepresented, rural communities in Alabama.

Learn more about the funded recipient.

Learn more about EPA research grants.

Source:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

EPA Celebrates the 2023 Winners for the Presidential Environmental Youth Award and the Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with the White House Council on Environmental Quality, celebrated the 2023 Presidential Environmental Youth Award (PEYA) and the Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators (PIAEE) Awards Ceremony. This ceremony marks an annual recognition of outstanding youth who are dedicated to environmental stewardship and impressive teachers who have contributed significantly to environmental education.

“We are thrilled to have this moment each year to celebrate such incredible leaders who promote environmental awareness through education in profound ways,” said **EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “Climate change is one of the most pressing challenges we face today, and these students and teachers are rising to the occasion and showing us what it means to fight for a cleaner planet and healthier future.”

“We all have a role to play in tackling our planet's most pressing environmental challenges, and education is the foundation for environmental stewardship and innovation,” said **White House Council on Environmental Quality Chair Brenda Mallory**. “Congratulations to these outstanding students and educators – your determination and creativity show us that a more sustainable and equitable future is on the horizon.”

Since 1971, the President of the United States has joined with EPA to recognize young people for protecting our nation's air, water, land, and ecology. The PEYA program recognizes outstanding environmental stewardship projects developed by K-12 youth.

This program honors and brings to light a wide variety of projects developed by these young students, school classes and clubs, youth camps, and youth organizations to promote The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency environmental awareness and action in their schools and communities. The PEYA program promotes awareness of our nation's natural resources and encourages positive community involvement.

PIAEE is another program recognizing outstanding K-12 teachers who employ innovative approaches to environmental education and use the environment as a context to engage their students. With each teacher providing informal hands-on environmental education to students, helping to advance their knowledge of real-world environmental issues while at the same time allowing the teachers to bring creative ways into the classroom to teach their students about the environment.

To read about the winning projects in detail, visit the President's Environmental Youth Award Winners webpage and the Presidential Innovation Award for Environmental Educators Winners webpage.

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Releases Initial Nationwide Monitoring Data on 29 PFAS and Lithium

First of 12 sets of data to be released through 2026, this information further builds upon EPA actions to address PFAS in Drinking Water

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is releasing the first set of data collected under the fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5). In the latest action to deliver on EPA's PFAS Strategic Roadmap, UCMR 5 will provide new data that will improve EPA's understanding of the frequency that 29 PFAS and lithium are found in the nation's drinking water systems, and at what levels. The monitoring data on PFAS and lithium will help the Agency make determinations about future actions to protect public health under the Safe Drinking Water Act. This action advances the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to combat PFAS pollution and safeguard drinking water for all people.

"PFAS are an urgent public health issue facing people and communities across the nation. The latest science is clear: exposure to certain PFAS, also known as forever chemicals, over long periods of time is linked to significant health risks," said **Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox**. "That's why the Biden-Harris Administration is leading a whole-of-government approach to address these harmful chemicals. As part of this commitment, EPA is conducting the most comprehensive monitoring effort for PFAS ever, at every large and midsize public water system in America, and at hundreds small water systems."

The data collected under UCMR 5 will ensure science-based decision-making and help EPA better understand national-level exposure to these 29 PFAS and lithium, and whether they disproportionately impact communities with environmental justice concerns. This initial data release represents approximately 7% of the total results that EPA expects to receive over the next three years. The Agency will update the results quarterly and share them with the public in EPA's National Contaminant Occurrence Database (NCOD) until completion of data reporting in 2026. EPA continues to conduct research and monitor advances in techniques that may improve our ability to measure these and other contaminants at even lower levels.

EPA is acting to protect peoples' health from PFAS in drinking water. In March 2023, EPA proposed standards to limit certain PFAS in drinking water. The proposal, if finalized, would allow public water systems to use results from UCMR 5 to meet the rule's initial monitoring requirements and to inform communities of actions that may need to be taken. In the interim period before the PFAS drinking water standard is final, EPA has established Health Advisories for four PFAS included in the UCMR 5. EPA continues to advance the science on the potential health effects of a wide range of PFAS, including many of those monitored for under this program.

EPA is moving forward to expand the investigation and cleanup of PFAS contaminated sites, including by finalizing new safeguards under Superfund to hold polluters accountable for contamination from two widely used PFAS chemicals.

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EPA Releases Initial Nationwide Monitoring Data on 29 PFAS and Lithium (continued)

The Agency also recent issued its third order to require PFAS manufacturers to conduct testing under EPA's National Testing Strategy to help EPA better confront these forever chemicals.

EPA is also deploying an unprecedented $9 billion, included in President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, specifically to invest in communities with drinking water impacted by PFAS and other emerging contaminants. This includes $4 billion via the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund (DWSRF) and $5 billion through EPA's "Emerging Contaminants in Small or Disadvantaged Communities" grant program. States, Tribes and communities can further leverage an additional nearly $12 billion in BIL DWSRF funds and billions more in annual SRF funds dedicated to making drinking water safer. These funds will help communities make important investments in solutions to remove PFAS from drinking water.

For more information visit EPA's Ground Water and Drinking Water webpage.

Background

The Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) specifies that every five years EPA is required to monitor for priority contaminants that may be present in drinking water but are not yet subject to EPA drinking water regulations. EPA uses the Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR) to provide the agency and other interested parties with nationally representative data on the occurrence of contaminants in drinking water, the number of people potentially being exposed, and an estimate of the levels of that exposure. These data can support future regulatory determinations, the development of national primary drinking water regulations (NPDWRs), and other actions to protect public health. EPA's Fifth Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule (UCMR 5) requires sample collection for 30 chemical contaminants (29 PFAS and lithium) between 2023 and 2025 using analytical methods developed by EPA and consensus organizations.

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency