

# Conservation Committee Report

Volume 26 Issue 2

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

February 2024



## 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:

5

Allegheny River Named

Western Pennsylvania Related to the East Palestine Train Derailment 7

DEP Enforcement Actions Lead to Appointment of a Receiver to Manage East Dunkard Water 8

Drought Watch Lifted for Eight Counties, Six Counties in Drought Watch, Two Counties 10

GOVERNOR SHAPIRO'S BUDGET SUPPORTS PARK AND FOREST TRAILS, PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR CORPS 12

Shapiro Administration Awards Funding to Protect Lake Erie Coastal Zone 15

Trails At Jakes Rocks Selected As Pennsylvania's 2024 Trail Of the year 17

## DEP Begins Emergency Project to Plug Abandoned Gas Wells in Scott Township, Allegheny County

Residents may observe flaring and noise during plugging operations

The Shapiro Administration has made capping and plugging as many orphaned and abandoned wells as possible

a priority, plugging 169 wells so far

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has begun an emergency project to plug two leaking abandoned natural gas wells along Scrubgrass Road in Scott Township, Allegheny County. At

Governor Josh Shapiro's direction, DEP is aggressively working to plug leaking oil and gas wells across Pennsylvania using state and federal funds. So far, under the Shapiro Administration, DEP has plugged 169 orphaned and abandoned wells.

(continued on page 2)

## Shapiro Administration, DEP Requires All Fracking Companies to be More Transparent About Chemicals Used in Drilling

At Governor Shapiro's Direction, Following Collaboration with CNX Resources, DEP Will Require Natural Gas Companies to Disclose Chemicals Used in

Drilling & Hydraulic Fracturing Before They Are Used On-Site

The Shapiro Administration, through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), is implementing new policies that will require opera-

tors to publicly disclose chemicals they use in drilling and hydraulic fracturing earlier in the well development process. This step will cover all gas companies following

the [historic collaboration](#) between the

(continued on page 3)

## DEP Begins Emergency Project to Plug Abandoned Gas Wells in Scott Township, Allegheny County (continued)

On Tuesday, February 6, 2024, DEP's contractor will begin plugging two leaking abandoned wells, Nixon 501-1 (003-00960) and Nixon 501-3 (003-00962), using emergency plugging funds. DEP's contractor will be removing trees and potentially flaring the wells in preparation for plugging. Flaring is the controlled burning of natural gas from a well and may be necessary to evacuate gas from the well to ensure it can be safely plugged. The project is expected to take about a month to complete with a goal to permanently eliminate the potential for these wells to leak methane.

Due to the increasing methane levels, DEP has determined that this project is necessary to protect public health, safety, and the environment. Without this emergency project, the well could continue to deteriorate and stray methane gas could migrate into nearby sewer lines through the soil. The existing two leaking abandoned wells increase the risk of gas levels accumulating to unsafe levels if adverse weather conditions exist which would prevent the gas from dissipating. DEP will monitor stray gas while plugging the well.

DEP previously performed an emergency mitigation project in 2019 to address stray soil gas in the area. Recently, methane levels around the wells increased, and DEP and Scott Township officials have received a number of odor complaints around the Kane Woods Nature Area.

"Orphaned and abandoned gas wells dot Southwestern Pennsylvania in rural and more populated areas, representing potential threats to human health, safety, and the environment," said **Director of District Oil and Gas Operations, Dan Counahan**. "We're mobilizing emergency crews to mitigate this hazard as quickly as possible."

DEP has allocated unprecedented resources to plug orphaned and abandoned wells, which allowed Pennsylvania to leverage millions in federal funding. Two additional wells in this area, Nixon 501-4 (003-00963) and Charter 502-1 (003-00964) are slated to be plugged later this year using federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funds.

Orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells can leak methane, a potent, greenhouse gas, that contributes to climate change. Methane can migrate into buildings and water supplies. Pennsylvania has over 30,000 orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells on its inventory and hundreds of thousands of legacy wells may be unaccounted for, posing a major financial liability and environmental, public health, and safety risk.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, [please visit website](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Shapiro Administration, DEP Requires All Fracking Companies to be More Transparent About Chemicals Used in Drilling (continued)

Shapiro Administration and CNX Resources Corporation.

This announcement is a next step in the Shapiro Administration's continuing work to address climate change and protect Pennsylvanians' Constitutional right to clean air and pure water while maintaining our Commonwealth's legacy as a national energy leader. In implementing this requirement, the Shapiro Administration is also following through on a key recommendation of the [43rd Statewide Grand Jury Report](#), which Governor Shapiro oversaw as Attorney General.

The details of which chemicals an operator is using are contained in companies' site-specific Preparedness, Prevention, and Contingency (PPC) plans. Previously, PPC plans were required to be submitted to DEP only upon request. Now, when issuing permits for new unconventional wells, DEP will require the submission of unconventional well operators' site-specific PPC plans prior to drilling. Moving forward, the PPC documents will be posted online by DEP at [PA Oil and Gas Mapping website](#) upon receipt.

As a result of the historic collaboration with Governor Shapiro, CNX Resources Corporation has already publicly disclosed the chemicals and additives used in its new drilling operations, and [has begun posting air monitoring results](#) in real time for two of its well pads, with plans to expand the program across its operations statewide.

"As Attorney General and now as Governor, I have listened to Pennsylvanians concerned about their health and safety – and I am delivering on the promise I made to them to secure these protections," said Governor Josh Shapiro. "My Administration is setting a new standard for Pennsylvania natural gas to be produced in a responsible, sustainable way and showing how we can bring people together to get things done. We're going to follow through on our commitment to ensure the health and safety of our communities while maintaining Pennsylvania's proud energy legacy and our Commonwealth's critical role in the nation's energy economy."

The Governor's collaboration with CNX, which addresses many of the recommendations of the [43rd Statewide Investigating Grand Jury](#), demonstrates how industry, government, and public advocates can find common ground and collaborate to keep people safe and move Pennsylvania forward.

In addition to the disclosure of chemicals used in drilling, Governor Shapiro has also directed DEP to take action to pursue formal rulemaking and policy changes mirroring the collaboration, including: improved control of methane emissions aligned with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recently announced performance standards for emission sources in the oil and natural gas sector, stronger drilling waste protections, including inspection of secondary containment, and corrosion protections for gathering lines that transport natural gas.

(continued on page 4)

## Shapiro Administration, DEP Requires All Fracking Companies to be More Transparent About Chemicals Used in Drilling (continued)

As part of this collaboration, DEP will also conduct the most intensive independent study of unconventional natural gas wells in the nation. CNX will provide DEP with unprecedented access to two future CNX well sites, allowing for in-depth, independent monitoring of the air emissions at both locations before, during, and after development of the new wells. This will make it possible for communities to understand the facts about natural gas development with more transparency than ever before.

"DEP is setting a new standard of transparency for Pennsylvania's natural gas regulation and policy actions," said DEP Interim Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. "Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, DEP will continue to ensure compliance with Pennsylvania's environmental laws and regulations that address unconventional well permits. By requiring unconventional gas companies to make their PPC plans publicly available, Pennsylvanians will have a clearer picture of the types of chemicals being used on unconventional well sites earlier in the process."

Regulations require well operators to prepare and develop a site-specific PPC plan prior to storing, using, or generating regulated substances on a well site. The PPC plan requires disclosure of "regulated substances," as defined in [25 Pa. Code § 78a.1](#). Substances recorded include those from the drilling, alteration, production, plugging, or other activity associated with a gas well or transporting those regulated substances to, on, or from a well site.

To inform unconventional operators of this new process, DEP will include the new request in every cover letter that is attached to issued unconventional well permits as of January 3, 2024. DEP has also notified unconventional operators and industry groups. PPC plans will be uploaded and made publicly available via the PADEP Office of Oil & Gas Management's eSubmission application, which can be accessed through [DEP's Greenport](#). Making this information accessible will ensure communities understand the facts about natural gas development.

In order to provide a consistent and thorough response, the DEP Office of Oil and Gas Management will conduct the initial reviews of the submitted PPC plans for completeness and compliance with regulations. DEP will also provide training to unconventional gas well operators to ensure compliance with the regulatory planning requirements. With this oversight, DEP can ensure that operators are well-prepared to avoid and address spills and releases, which can have public health and safety implications as well as environmental impacts.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, please [visit website](#).

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Allegheny River Named Pennsylvania's 2024 River Of The Year

The Allegheny River in western Pennsylvania has been selected by a public vote as the state's 2024 River of the Year, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn and Janet Sweeney of the Pennsylvania Organization for Waterways and Rivers (POWR) announced today.

"We are excited to honor the Allegheny River as Pennsylvania's 2024 River of the Year, and I cannot wait to celebrate this incredible river during a sojourn later this year," **Dunn said**. "Congratulations to Three Rivers Waterkeeper for the successful campaign and earning this prestigious honor. Thank you to everyone who voted in this wonderful competition highlighting one of our most precious natural resources."

The historic Allegheny River starts as a stream in Potter County, meandering through a field of wildflowers before crossing briefly through New York and then through six counties in Western Pennsylvania.

The 325-mile river ends in Pittsburgh where it meets the Monongahela River and flows into the Ohio River, providing drinking water to more than one million people and acting as an ecologically and economically precious water trail.

The fertile valleys and abundant biodiversity have led many communities to call this place home, including the O-non-dowa-gah (Seneca Nation) who call the Allegheny Ohi:yo' (beautiful river), the Lenni Lenape (Delaware Nation) who named it welhik-heny (most beautiful stream), and French settlers who referred to it as La Belle Riviere.

A series of locks and dams were constructed in the early 20th century to make the Allegheny River navigable for barges to transport goods, and now swimming, boating, and fishing are profoundly enjoyed by residents and visitors.

The river includes the Allegheny Islands Wilderness, a seven-island, 372-acre preserve that boasts old-growth hardwoods and prolific bird populations.

The U.S. Forest Service has documented over 50 mammals, 200 birds, 25 amphibians, 20 reptiles, 80 fishes, and 25 freshwater mussels in and around the Allegheny, including the threatened Salamander Mussel (*Simpsonaias ambigua*), who help improve the water quality by filtering out sediment and pollutants.

Whether you are bird watching, island camping, or traveling through the locks, you are sure to find that the Allegheny River is rich with life, history, and beauty.

The public was invited to vote online for the [River of the Year](#), choosing from among three waterways nominated.

(continued on page 6)

## Allegheny River Named Pennsylvania's 2024 River Of The Year (continued)

A total of 20,259 votes were cast, a record for the River of the Year Program, with the Allegheny River receiving 8,307, the Youghiogheny 7,212, and the Lackawaxen River 4,740.

"POWR would like to commend everyone for their support for the nominated rivers, especially for the strong showing of support for the Allegheny River," **Sweeney said**. "The River of the Year program continues to engage our communities by providing a wonderful opportunity to showcase all the nominated rivers and the great work being done in Pennsylvania on these resources. We are excited about the opportunity to highlight the Allegheny River this year."

Three Rivers Waterkeeper nominated the Allegheny River, and will receive a \$10,000 Leadership Grant to help fund a slate of year-long 2024 River of the Year activities.

DCNR and POWR will work with them to create a free, commemorative poster celebrating the Allegheny River as the 2024 Pennsylvania River of the Year.

"We were so excited to see just how many people came together to show their support for the Allegheny River after we nominated it for River of the Year," **said Jess Friss, the Director of Community Programs at Three Rivers Waterkeeper**. "We are looking forward to everything we are able to do this year to promote all the wonderful resources the Allegheny River provides to us, including a summer kickoff! We are dedicated to protecting the water quality of the Allegheny River and all its uses, and knowing that it was awarded the River of the Year because of the support of the community shows the collective commitment to environmental stewardship, recreation, and love for our waterways that defines this community."

In cooperation with DCNR, selection of public voting choices was overseen by the POWR, an affiliate of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC).

A commemorative River of the Year sojourn is among many paddling trips supported by DCNR and POWR each year.

An independent program, the [Pennsylvania Sojourn Program](#), is a unique series of a dozen such trips on the state's rivers.

These water-based journeys for canoeists, kayakers, and others raise awareness of the environmental, recreational, tourism, and heritage values of rivers.

Visit DCNR's website for more information on the River of the Year competition and check out DCNR's [Calendar of Events](#) for events on public lands.

Source: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)



## DEP: Interim Report on a Full Year of Sampling Finds No Evidence of Contamination in Western Pennsylvania Related to the East Palestine Train Derailment

DEP and its independent contractor collected and analyzed hundreds of private drinking water, surface water, and soil samples

Analysis of a year of sampling conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and its independent contractor found no evidence of water or soil contamination related to the derailment in Pennsylvania's private water wells, surface water, and soil. The contractor also evaluated and verified sampling data, compared data to Pennsylvania's environmental standards, and made recommendations for additional sampling.

DEP's contractor also conducted, and continues to conduct, split sampling at three sentinel monitoring wells installed in Pennsylvania by Norfolk Southern near the train derailment location. These wells were installed between the derailment site and private properties in Pennsylvania and are used for early detection of groundwater contamination that could have migrated from the derailment site. Groundwater in this area has not been impacted by contamination from the derailment. Additionally, the monitoring well data evaluated by DEP indicates that groundwater around the monitoring wells on the Pennsylvania border is flowing towards Ohio and away from Pennsylvania residents in the area.

The full interim summary report can be found on [DEP's webpage](#) on the derailment along with an interactive mapping tool of sampling conducted to date. DEP's independent contractor is in the process of conducting the fourth round of private well sampling and has completed all soil and surface water sampling. To date, samples have been taken at 85 individual private potable water sources, 97 surface soil locations, and 18 surface water locations within the Commonwealth, totaling hundreds of samples.

"DEP's response to the Norfolk Southern train derailment started just over a year ago, and we continue to be on the ground in Beaver and Lawrence counties supporting local communities," said **DEP Interim Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. "DEP will continue to work with local partners and its independent contractor to uphold Pennsylvanians' right to clean air, pure water, and the preservation of natural resources. Under the leadership of the Shapiro Administration, DEP will remain committed to addressing residents' concerns, following the science, and taking action when warranted."

Marking the one-year anniversary of the derailment, [Governor Josh Shapiro outlined Pennsylvania's response](#), including efforts he directed state agencies – including the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA), State Police (PSP), Department of Agriculture (PDA), Department of Health (DOH), and DEP – to take immediately following the derailment and since. The Shapiro Administration is committed to serving Pennsylvanians impacted by the derailment, and will continue to work with local, state, and federal partners.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, [please visit website](#).

## **DEP Enforcement Actions Lead to Appointment of a Receiver to Manage East Dunkard Water Authority**

Commonwealth Court today ordered the appointment of Pennsylvania American Water Company as receiver of the Greene County public water system

As the result of the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) enforcement action, a receiver will take over management and operations of the East Dunkard Water Authority's (EDWA) non-compliant public water system. On Thursday, February 1, 2024, EDWA's board approved a motion agreeing to the appointment of a receiver, and, today, Commonwealth Court signed an order officially appointing Pennsylvania American Water Company (PAWC) as receiver.

On numerous occasions, EDWA customers have complained of brown water and water outages that left the customers without water for several days. EDWA's customers had to boil their water for weeks until proper treatment was restored. Over the last two years, DEP cited EDWA numerous times for failure to have a certified operator and for violations that led to breakdowns in water treatment and issued multiple orders requiring the EDWA to take corrective actions. Most recently, DEP petitioned the Commonwealth Court to enforce orders that DEP and the court issued to EDWA and appoint a receiver to take over control of the water system.

Every Pennsylvanian has a constitutional right to clean air, pure water, and a safe and healthy environment. This is the latest in DEP's efforts to compel compliance with Pennsylvania's safe drinking water laws and regulations. DEP reviews EDWA's monitoring data on a daily basis and will continue to work with PAWC and EDWA through the transition.

In November 2023, [the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission issued an emergency order](#) authorizing PAWC to manage and operate EDWA's public water system pending approval by the court.

(continued on page 9)



## **DEP Enforcement Actions Lead to Appointment of a Receiver to Manage East Dunkard Water Authority (continued)**

“Ensuring ample, properly treated drinking water to EDWA’s consumers has been DEP’s priority. Appointing Pennsylvania American Water Company was the most logical and efficient choice to act as receiver, especially since PAWC intends to acquire the EDWA’s public water system,” said **DEP Southwest Regional Director, Jim Miller**.

“Paving the way for this receivership required the coordination of many people, including Pennsylvania American Water Company and the Public Utility Commission, and DEP appreciates their efforts.”

EDWA’s public water system currently serves approximately 4,200 Greene County residents in Dunkard and Greene townships and portions of Monongahela, Cumberland, Perry, and Whitely townships.

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, [please visit website](#).

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection’s (DEP)

## **Drought Watch Lifted for Eight Counties, Six Counties in Drought Watch, Two Counties Remain in Drought Warning**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced after a meeting of the Commonwealth Drought Task Force that a drought watch has been lifted for eight counties but is in place for six counties.

Bucks, Dauphin, Huntingdon, Lancaster, Lebanon, Montgomery, Northampton, and Perry Counties have returned to normal status.

Adams, Cameron, Cumberland, Fulton and Westmoreland Counties remain in drought watch. York County's status has been changed from drought warning to drought watch.

Drought warning will continue for Clinton and Franklin Counties.

For a map of drought declarations updated daily, see the [DEP drought web page](#).

Residents on drought warning are asked to reduce their individual water use by 10 to 15 percent, or a reduction of six to nine gallons of water per day.

Varying localized conditions may lead water suppliers or municipalities to ask residents for more stringent conservation actions. See the [list of public water suppliers](#) that have requested or mandated water conservation in their communities.

### **Ways to Conserve Water at Home**

- Run the dishwasher and washing machine less often, and only with full loads.
- Shorten the time you let the water run to warm up before showering and take shorter showers. The shower and toilet are the two biggest indoor water guzzlers.
- Check for and repair household leaks. For example, a leaking toilet can waste up to 200 gallons of water daily.
- Install low-flow plumbing fixtures and aerators on faucets.
- Replace older appliances with high-efficiency, front-loading models that use about 30 percent less water and 40 to 50 percent less energy.

You can find more tips on the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website](#).

### **How DEP Determines Drought Conditions**

To determine drought conditions, DEP assesses information from public water suppliers and data on four indicators: precipitation, surface water (stream and river) flow, groundwater level, and soil moisture.

(continued on page 11)

## **Drought Watch Lifted for Eight Counties, Six Counties in Drought Watch, Two Counties Remain in Drought Warning (continued)**

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

There are normal ranges for all four indicators. DEP makes drought status recommendations after assessing departures from these ranges for all indicators for periods of 3-12 months. For a map that's updated daily to show the status of all four indicators for each county, see the [USGS Pennsylvania drought condition monitoring website](#).

DEP shares these data and its recommendations with the state and federal agencies and other organizations that make up the Commonwealth Drought Task Force. Declarations are determined by DEP, with the concurrence of the task force.

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

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, [please visit website](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## GOVERNOR SHAPIRO'S BUDGET SUPPORTS PARK AND FOREST TRAILS, PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR CORPS

Governor Josh Shapiro presented his 2024-2025 budget proposal on February 6 -- sharing his 'get stuff done' approach and vision to create more opportunity and continue delivering real solutions to the most pressing issues Pennsylvanians face.

"This year, we have a real chance to build safer communities, become more competitive economically, and invest in our students and their success -- and this budget lays out a comprehensive and aggressive focus on doing just that without raising taxes and maintaining a surplus of \$11 billion at the end of June 2025," said Governor Josh Shapiro.

The Governor noted the budget will continue to create opportunity for every Pennsylvanian with historic investments in economic development, education, healthier and safer communities, and much more.

As he promised in his first budget proposal, Governor Josh Shapiro [launched the Office of Outdoor Recreation](#) in 2023 to make Pennsylvania the national leader in outdoor recreation.

Last year's budget also provided \$112 million to maintain and improve infrastructure in parks and forests -- the single largest investment in decades.

This year, the proposal includes another strong investment in the stewardship of Pennsylvania's natural resources, with new funding to build trails and expand the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps program.

### Build and Maintain Trails

Governor Shapiro is supporting the outdoor recreation economy by proposing an \$8.5 million investment in our parks and forests that will make Pennsylvania a premier destination for exceptional trail experiences, benefiting the economic competitiveness of communities, tourism, and public health.

The budget as proposed would enable the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to:

- Design and construct new trails in parks and forests
- Retrofit, widen, and otherwise improve existing trails
- Prepare to respond to damage that currently cannot be quickly addressed when emergencies occur

(continued on page 13)

## GOVERNOR SHAPIRO'S BUDGET SUPPORTS PARK AND FOREST TRAILS, PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR CORPS (CONTINUED)

“PEC is pleased to see the Governor recognize the many economic benefits of trails and outdoor recreation assets,” said Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) President Thomas Gilbert. “We look forward to a sustained and serious conversation about investing in resources that return so much to our communities -- not only in jobs and economic activity, but in benefits to our health and quality of life.”

### Growing the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps

To improve public lands, the proposed budget builds on the success of the [Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps](#) with a \$5 million investment in a regional effort to diversify and strengthen conservation career and workforce pathways for young people and protect our natural resources.

In 2023 alone, the Outdoor Corps:

- Improved 91 miles of trails
- Planted 2,894 trees
- Improved 512 acres of natural lands and wetlands
- Improved 79,579 feet of shore and waterways
- Provided a formative and rewarding experience for participants

### Outdoor Recreation Economy

The Governor's 2024-2025 budget also calls for significant investments directly tied back to a recently released [Pennsylvania Economic Development Strategy](#).

Outdoor recreation adds \$17 billion to the Pennsylvania economy and creates 164,000 jobs which earn Pennsylvanians \$8 billion in wages and salaries.

[The Growing Outdoor Recreation for Pennsylvania \(PDF\)](#) report will guide the work of the Office of Outdoor Recreation and includes more than 50 actions to assist with the larger strategic priorities of building capacity within Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry, building community and economic development capacity, and building the capacity for inclusive and equitable wellbeing for Pennsylvania.

Overall, the proposed 2024-2025 Commonwealth budget includes \$630.5 million for DCNR across all funding sources.

The General Assembly now works to pass a budget bill that will go to Governor Shapiro to sign.

(continued on page 14)

## **GOVERNOR SHAPIRO'S BUDGET SUPPORTS PARK AND FOREST TRAILS, PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR CORPS (CONTINUE**

DCNR's House Appropriation hearing is Wednesday, February 28, at 1:00 P.M.

Find more information about [Governor Shapiro's budget](#) on the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget website or watch his [budget address](#).

Source: By: DCNR



## Shapiro Administration Awards Funding to Protect Lake Erie Coastal Zone

This year's projects emphasize environmental education, community outreach, and continued research to benefit this critical habitat and ecosystem

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded Coastal Zone Grants totaling more than \$268,000 to five projects in the state's Northwest region. The grants, which are aimed at protecting and restoring the Lake Erie Coastal Zone, will be used toward projects that will benefit this critical habitat and ecosystem.

"The Coastal Zone Grants are aimed at supporting programs that measure the impact of various pollution sources, improve public access, preserve habitats, and educate the public about the benefits of the state's coastal zones," said **DEP Interim Acting Secretary, Jessica Shirley**. "Each year, recipients of these grants do amazing work and the DEP is committed to continue supporting these partners with grant funding and technical assistance."

A coastal zone is an area where land meets the coast and includes both coastal waters and adjacent shorelands. Coastal zones are also under increasing pressure from development, erosion, biodiversity loss, and pollution. Coastal Zone Grants are awarded to projects related to fisheries, wetlands, recreation, public education, coastal hazards such as bluff recession, and other areas. Grants may also be awarded to other projects in the watershed that have an impact on coastal waters.

The 77-mile Lake Erie coastal zone is in Erie County and includes the Lake Erie shoreline and several major tributaries. The coastal zone also extends to the middle of the lake, to the international boundary with Canada, and inland an average of 1.4 miles.

Approved projects include:

- Erie Bird Observatory – \$45,277 for songbird migration research and visitor engagement at Presque Isle State Park
- Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development – \$75,000 for coordination and technical assistance with Lake Erie coastal zone grantees, municipalities, and residents

(continued on page 16)

## Shapiro Administration Awards Funding to Protect Lake Erie Coastal Zone (continued)

- Erie County Department of Planning and Community Development – \$7,000 to assist Lake Erie coastal communities in administering the Bluff Recession and Set-back Act of 1980
- Regional Science Consortium – \$65,831 to establish a boat shrink-wrap recycling program along Lake Erie
- Regional Science Consortium – \$74,940 to track Yellow Perch migration between Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie

Pennsylvania's Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP) receives an annual grant award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). A portion of this award is used to fund eligible projects that address CRMP priorities. The funds are distributed through sub-grant awards to local and state government agencies as well as nonprofit groups with projects located in the Delaware Estuary or Lake Erie Coastal Zones. Applications are accepted late August through mid-October with project funding awarded on or around October 1 of the following year. To learn more about Coastal Zone grants, visit [DEP's website](#).

For more information on the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, [please visit website](#).

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Trails At Jakes Rocks Selected As Pennsylvania's 2024 Trail Of the year The Year

### Trails At Jakes Rocks Selected As Pennsylvania's 2024 Trail Of The Year

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced the Trails at Jakes Rocks has been named Pennsylvania's 2024 Trail of the Year.

"This amazing trail system is extremely deserving of this tremendous honor and I am excited to announce the Trails at Jakes Rocks have been selected as Pennsylvania's top trail for 2024," **Dunn said**. "People travel from near and far to hike, bike, and run these trails, which is a testament to the worthiness of this trail system. We at DCNR are hopeful that this honor helps connect even more people to the recreation opportunities around the trails, in Warren County and in the Allegheny National Forest."

The Trails at Jakes Rocks is a 35-mile natural surface trail system located in the Allegheny National Forest in Warren County.

The trails are used primarily for mountain biking, but other types of recreation such as hiking, trail running, and cross-country skiing are also permitted.

The Trails at Jakes Rocks was established to address a notable gap in Warren County's recreational landscape: high-quality mountain bike trails.

The unique design as a stacked-loop system significantly reduces the typical gaps found in point-to-point trail systems.

The Trails at Jakes Rocks has not only created a fantastic trail system but also serves as an economic driver.

A recent economic impact analysis found that the Trails at Jakes Rocks draws over 25,000 users annually and generates an estimated \$9 million in annual tourism spending.

Trails at Jakes Rocks is a prime example of a modern, professionally designed, and meticulously constructed natural surface mountain bike trail system.

"The impact that the Trails at Jakes Rocks has made on Warren County has far surpassed our expectations," **said Jim Decker, President and CEO of the Warren County Chamber of Business and Industry**. "Locally we have long recognized the unique beauty and

(continued on page 18)

## **Trails At Jakes Rocks Selected As Pennsylvania's 2024 Trail Of the year The Year (continued)**

outdoor recreational opportunities our region offers and celebrate the catalyst that the Trails at Jakes Rocks has provided to allow us to share these attributes to a much larger audience. We are humbled by this recognition and sincerely thank DCNR for their assistance with our efforts to create this asset as well as the conveyance of this prestigious award to the Trails at Jakes Rocks."

The Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee designates the Trail of the Year to help build enthusiasm and support for trails across the state, and to raise public awareness about the value of the Pennsylvania's land and water trail network.

Pennsylvania continues its tradition of being a leader in trail development by providing its citizens and visitors with more than 12,000 miles of trails.

In an effort to close the gaps in this network and bring trails to close everyone, DCNR has established a goal to have a trail within 10 minutes of all Pennsylvanians.

The agency is also focusing on closing priority trail gaps and prioritizing strategic investments in trails across the Commonwealth.

The [Pennsylvania Trails Advisory Committee](#) is charged with implementing the recommendations of the [Pennsylvania Trails Strategic Plan](#) to develop a statewide land and water trail network to facilitate recreation, transportation, and healthy lifestyles for all.

The 20-member DCNR-appointed committee represents both motorized and non-motorized trail users and advises the Commonwealth on use of state and federal trail funding.

Visit the [Pennsylvania Wilds Assets web page](#) or the [Trails at Jakes Rocks Facebook page](#) for more information about the trail.

Source: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)