

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 27 Issue 6

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

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The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an

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

This is my Pledge!

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DCNR Celebrates Path of the Flood Trail in Cambria County as Pennsylvania's 2025 Trail of the Year

A historic 14-mile trail tracing the 1889 Johnstown Flood route earns statewide recognition for its blend of natural beauty, recreation, and economic impact.

the Department of Conserva-

tion and Natural Resources (DCNR) celebrated the [Path of the Flood Trail](#) in Cambria County as Pennsylvania's 2025 Trail of the Year.

Spanning 14 miles, the Path of the Flood Trail follows the historic route of the cat-

astrophic 1889 Johnstown Flood. This scenic corridor blends natural beauty, outdoor recreation, and deep historical significance—featuring landmarks such as the **Staple Bend Tunnel**,

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DCNR Secretary Issues Statement After Death of Forestry Employee at Wildland Fire Academy

Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn released the following statement after the passing

yesterday of Dave Warfel, Forest District Maintenance Supervisor at Weiser State Forest, at the Wildland Fire Academy at Shippensburg University, following a day spent instructing and mentoring wildland firefighters.

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of Dave Warfel, whose dedication to public service was unwavering throughout his life. Beginning as a volunteer firefighter at a young age, his commitment

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DCNR Celebrates Path of the Flood Trail in Cambria County as Pennsylvania's 2025 Trail of the Year (continued)

the first railroad tunnel constructed in the United States.

"Path of the Flood is a special trail that reflects the region's history and provides a vibrant space for recreation and community engagement," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "I hope this designation brings even more visitors to explore the trail, supporting local businesses and fostering economic, environmental, and social benefits to the region."

The trail draws approximately **80,000 visitors annually**, including international tourists. It has become an important economic and cultural asset for Cambria County —contributing to the growth of small businesses, drawing tourists, and providing a space for events like the [Path of the Flood Historic Races](#), which welcomes nearly 1,000 participants each year.

"We are honored to celebrate this incredible honor for the Path of the Flood Trail and are excited to share the Pennsylvania's top trail for 2025 with the public," said **Cliff Kitner, Executive Director, Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority (CCCRA)**. "This trail is a testament to the partnership between partners at the local and county level, as well as with DCNR and the National Park Service. We would not be here celebrating today without the synergy that maintains this amazing trail and the history of this region."

The Path of the Flood Trail is composed of crushed stone and pavement, making it accessible for a variety of activities, including biking, hiking, running, birdwatching, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing. Its historical significance is further elevated by its inclusion in the [9/11 National Memorial Trail](#), a corridor connecting national sites of remembrance. Development and maintenance of the trail are a collaborative effort led by the Cambria County Conservation & Recreation Authority (CCCRA) and the National Park Service, supported by local businesses and volunteers.

Since taking office, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has made [strategic investments](#) to elevate outdoor recreation, transforming it into a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy and improve quality of life in communities statewide. These efforts are driving economic growth, fostering entrepreneurial opportunities, and creating jobs across the Commonwealth.

In 2023, Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation industry contributed **\$19 billion** to the state's economy — a 10 percent increase over the previous year — and now represents 2 percent of the Commonwealth's GDP. The industry supports more than **168,000 jobs** and generates **\$9 billion** in wages, [according](#) to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

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DCNR Celebrates Path of the Flood Trail in Cambria County as Pennsylvania's 2025 Trail of the Year (continued)

With more than 14,000 miles of trails, Pennsylvania continues to lead the nation in trail development. DCNR's goal is to have a trail within 10 minutes of every Pennsylvanian, with significant investments being made to close priority trail gaps across the Commonwealth. In the past two years, the **Shapiro Administration** has closed [four of the Commonwealth's Top 10 priority trail gaps](#).

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 [CCCRA webpage](#) for more information about the trail. Check out DCNR's [Calendar of Events](#) for events on public lands.

Source: the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**

DCNR Secretary Issues Statement After Death of Forestry Employee at Wildland Fire Academy (continued)

to protecting communities and our natural resources never wavered. He was a respected and invaluable leader within the wildland firefighting community and made lasting contributions to DCNR through his expertise, professionalism, and leadership.

Beyond his professional accomplishments, Dave was a cherished colleague and friend. His camaraderie, integrity, and kindness enriched the lives of all who had the privilege to work alongside him. The entire DCNR family mourns this tremendous loss and extends heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones.”

Warfel also served as the Carsonville Volunteer Fire Company Chief in Dauphin County.

The manner of death will be determined by the Cumberland County coroner.

More than 400 individuals are participating in the annual Pennsylvania Wildland Fire Academy at Shippensburg University that offers hands-on activities designed to simulate conditions that they may encounter during a wildfire assignment.

The [Weiser State Forest](#) encompasses about 30,000 acres in seven counties in the central part of the state.

Source: **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**

DCNR Names New Park Manager for Ohiopyle in Fayette County

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams **Dunn** announced the appointment of **Chris Houck** as the new manager for the [Ohiopyle State Park](#) in Fayette County.

“Chris is a top notch professional and an exemplary leader – we are excited to have him at one of our most popular state parks,” **Secretary Dunn** said. “I am confident that his passion and expertise will be an asset to Ohiopyle and the surrounding community for the foreseeable future.”

Houck oversees the 20,500-acre park, which serves as the gateway to [the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape](#). Passing through the heart of the park, the rushing waters of the [Youghiogheny River Gorge](#) are the centerpiece for Ohiopyle.

“I am fortunate to have the opportunity to manage this amazing park and I welcome the millions of visitors that come here annually to adventure and explore,” **Houck** said. “Ohiopyle is the closest thing we have to national park in Pennsylvania. I am eager to take on the challenge of protecting this space for present and future generations’ use.”

Houck comes to Ohiopyle after spending four years at [Pine Grove Furnace State Park](#). He began his career with DCNR at [Black Moshannon State Park](#), working first as a laborer and then ranger. Completing the bureau’s park manager trainee program in the eastern region of state parks, he worked as the manager of the [Memorial Lake State Park Complex](#), and then assistant manager at the [French Creek State Park Complex](#).

Houck is a Pennsylvania Furnace, Centre County native who holds a bachelor’s degree in recreation, park and tourism management from the Pennsylvania State University. He enjoys hiking, mountain biking, hunting, fishing and kayaking with other state park managers in his free time.

Last year, **Governor Josh Shapiro** launched *Pennsylvania: The Great American Gateway* ([opens in a new tab](#)), a new tourism brand highlighting the Commonwealth’s outdoor recreation opportunities. Pennsylvania’s state parks provide free access to nature, making them ideal destinations for relaxation and adventure.

Visit [DCNR’s website](#) for more information about Pennsylvania state parks and check out [DCNR’s Calendar of Events](#) for happenings on public lands.

Source: **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**

Still Open. Still Awesome: Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests See Surge in Camping Demand as Summer Season Kicks Off

State park reservations are up 10 percent statewide — and up as much as 60 percent near closed federal campgrounds.

DCNR added 149 new full-service campsites across Pennsylvania since last year.

As summer kicks off, camping is booming in state parks and forests across Pennsylvania. The **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** reports an overall 10 percent jump in campsite reservations — up 60 percent in some areas — compared to this time last year with more than 5,400 additional bookings, reflecting strong demand for outdoor recreation statewide.

While DCNR has seen rising interest in camping, particularly near federally managed sites where campgrounds have closed, the department's addition of 149 new full-service campsites since June 2024 was driven by strategic infrastructure investments to improve the camping experience and expand access across the Commonwealth.

To encourage more residents and visitors to explore Pennsylvania's natural beauty, DCNR also launched the "[Still Open. Still Awesome.](#)" initiative, reinforcing the Commonwealth's commitment to accessible and affordable outdoor experiences while the federal government shuttered some of its campsites.

Pennsylvania's 124 state parks and 2.2 million acres of state forests offer free, year-round recreation with no entrance fees. With more than 7,100 campsites — including tent sites, modern cabins, and yurts — there's an option for every level of camper, and many state parks also welcome pets.

"Camping is more popular than ever in Pennsylvania, and we're working hard to meet that demand," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "These new full-service sites help us better serve today's campers and expand access to high-quality outdoor experiences across the state."

State Parks Step Up as Federal Sites Close

The closure of U.S. Army Corps of Engineers campgrounds at Raystown Lake has driven more campers to state parks. From March through May 2025, parks within a one-hour drive of Raystown saw a 33 percent increase in reservations compared to the same period last year. Nearby Trough Creek State Park alone saw a more than 60 percent spike in bookings.

Similarly, state parks near Cowanesque Lake experienced an 18 percent increase in reservations within a one-hour radius, and a 21 percent increase within 90 minutes — reinforcing the growing demand for reliable, well-maintained campgrounds.

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Still Open. Still Awesome: Pennsylvania State Parks and Forests See Surge in Camping Demand as Summer Season Kicks Off (continued)

New Full-Service Campsites Across Four Parks

Since June 2024, DCNR has added full-service hookup sites — which include electric, water, and sewer — at the following parks:

- **Pymatuning State Park:** 89 sites
- **Bald Eagle State Park:** 20 sites
- **Lackawanna State Park:** 20 sites
- **Ohiopyle State Park:** 20 sites

Since day one, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has made [strategic investments](#) to elevate outdoor recreation, transforming it into a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy and communities since day one. These efforts are driving economic growth, fostering entrepreneurial opportunities, and creating jobs across the Commonwealth.

Plan Your *Great American Getaway*

With the launch of [Pennsylvania: The Great American Getaway](#), the Commonwealth is highlighting its status as a premier outdoor recreation destination. Campsites and lodging at state parks can be reserved online at visitPAparks.com or by calling 888-PA-PARKS (888-727-2757), Monday through Saturday, 7:00 AM – 5:00 PM. Many state parks have weekday availability and offer lower rates during non-peak times. DCNR relaunched its gift certificate program, available [online](#) and at park offices, which can be used for lodging reservations, pavilion rentals, and state-operated retail purchases.

Public lands offer a wide range of outdoor activities spanning from ATV riding to whitewater boating. Visit DCNR's website for more information about [what to do at state parks](#) and [where to go](#) on public lands, including local parks and for scenic views. DCNR encourages Pennsylvanians to check its [Calendar of Events](#) for seasonal programming happening across the state.

As **DCNR marks its 30th anniversary** in 2025, the **Shapiro Administration** remains focused on delivering safe, welcoming, and well-maintained public lands for all. Whether you're exploring a scenic overlook, casting a line into a quiet lake, or spending the night in a state park — Pennsylvania's parks and forests are ready for your next adventure.

Visit [DCNR's website](#) for more information about state parks, events, and outdoor recreation opportunities.

Source: **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**

DEP Reviewing Permits for Drinking Water Treatment Facility for Dimock as Construction Continues on Schedule for Public Water Line

PA American Water has already constructed nearly a mile of pipe on a public water line for Dimock residents, paid for by Coterra Energy as the result of a settlement by then-AG Shapiro

DEP also received permit applications for drinking water treatment facility that will help to provide clean water to the community

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has received and is reviewing additional permits for the drinking water treatment facility that will provide clean, safe drinking water to 21 homes in Dimock, Susquehanna County that have had their water wells impacted by natural gas drilling. Pennsylvania American Water Company (PA American) [has started construction on a new public water line](#) for Dimock residents – the result of a [settlement](#) secured by then-Attorney General Shapiro after Coterra Energy was found to be in violation of the Clean Streams Law for contaminating residents' well water.

DEP approved the permit for the construction of the waterline in February 2025, and PA American expects to complete construction on schedule, by early 2026.

“Every Pennsylvanian has a right to clean air and pure water, but for too long, the good people of Dimock were denied their constitutionally protected right to clean water,” said **Governor Josh Shapiro**. “As Attorney General, I took action holding Coterra Energy accountable and securing a settlement requiring the company to pay the community’s water bills for the next 75 years and to install a new public water line. With construction starting on the water line, we’re closer than ever to restoring clean drinking water to Dimock and bringing justice for this community.”

The new system involves installing 6-miles of water lines and a new service line to each resident’s home. PA American has submitted applications to build a drinking water treatment facility and install additional water mains within several state and township roadways. PA American must also submit a permit application for the proposed water treatment, storage, and distribution system. DEP stands ready to review all required permit applications to ensure that the replacement water source meets the highest water quality standards and looks forward to continuing to work with PA American to get impacted residents clean water as soon as possible.

“This water system will provide Dimock residents with what they have been fighting to get for more than a decade, something others may take for granted: safe drinking water,” said **DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “It exemplifies the Shapiro Administration’s commitment to provide clean air and safe water to all Pennsylvania residents.”

In 2022, then-AG Shapiro announced that Coterra had pleaded no contest to charges related to environmental crimes in Northeastern Pennsylvania. The PA-AG’s Office charged Coterra in 2020 after a grand jury investigation into the contamination of well water in Dimock. The investigation revealed that the drilling activities of Coterra’s predecessor, Cabot

DEP Reviewing Permits for Drinking Water Treatment Facility for Dimock as Construction Continues on Schedule for Public Water Line (continued)

Oil and Gas, was responsible for methane pollution in local water supplies. The AG's investigation led Coterra Energy to take full accountability for Cabot's pollution of the community's water, agree to pay impacted homeowners' water bills for the next 75 years, and commit to paying \$16 million towards building this public water line to provide clean, reliable drinking water for years to come.

DEP's 2022 COA with Coterra also requires Coterra to pay for the new water system and continue to provide water treatment for impacted residents until the public water system is available.

A copy of the NPDES permit and the COA can be found on DEP's website: <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/about-dep/regional-office-locations/northcentral-regional-office/northcentral-community-information/dimock-gas-migration-investigation.html>

The Shapiro Administration and the DEP will monitor construction of the water system, to make sure the work follows the conditions in the NPDES permit.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

More Than 450 Wildland Firefighters Attend DCNR's Annual Wildland Firefighting Training, Now Prepared to Respond to Wildfires Across the Commonwealth and Nationwide

DCNR's annual training at Shippensburg University in Cumberland County prepared hundreds of firefighters from 11 states — including Pennsylvania — to respond to wildfires and natural disasters across the country.

As wildfire seasons grow longer and more dangerous across the country, more than 450 wildland firefighters from 11 states gathered for intensive wildfire suppression training recently through the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** at Shippensburg University in Cumberland County — preparing them to respond to wildfires in Pennsylvania and across the United States.

The weeklong training, hosted annually by **DCNR's Bureau of Forestry**, ensures that firefighters are fully qualified to deploy to wildfire and natural disaster assignments nationwide. This year's academy issued 384 certificates to participants from nearly every county in Pennsylvania and from Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Maryland, Minnesota, New Hampshire, Ohio, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. The training emphasized safety, interagency coordination, and the specialized skills needed for dangerous and fast-changing wildfire conditions.

"This training is critical for the people who respond to wildfires here in Pennsylvania and across the country," said **DCNR State Forester Seth Cassell**. "We are proud of these public servants — many of whom are volunteers — and thank them for helping to keep our forests and communities safe."

Pennsylvania has a long history of answering the call: in 2024, nearly 200 Pennsylvania wildland firefighters deployed to support out-of-state firefighting operations, often as part of 20-person interagency crews. More recently, in January 2025, the **Shapiro Administration** [deployed](#) 40 highly trained firefighters to assist California in battling devastating wildfires near Los Angeles. And in May, hundreds of firefighters, first responders, and local officials worked tirelessly to [contain](#) wildfires in [Michaux State Forest](#). Since the Commonwealth's program began in 1973, DCNR has sent crews to wildfire and hurricane incidents in every region of the country — from Alaska to Hawaii and the western U.S.

Governor Shapiro's [2025-26 budget proposal](#) includes new [investments](#) to support firefighters, fire departments, and protect communities across the Commonwealth, including:

- A **\$30 million** competitive grant program to fund staffing, equipment, and other local needs;

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More Than 450 Wildland Firefighters Attend DCNR's Annual Wildland Firefighting Training, Now Prepared to Respond to Wildfires Across the Commonwealth and Nationwide (continued)

- A pilot program to promote shared services and cooperation among municipalities; and
- Annual cancer screenings for firefighters to address job-related health risks.

For more information about Pennsylvania's Wildland Fire Crew Training Program, contact a local State Forest District Office or [visit pa.gov/dcnr](http://pa.gov/dcnr).

Source: Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

Shapiro Administration Celebrates New Naturalistic Fish Passage at Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County

The fish passage – a structure that allows aquatic life to swim around structures like dams -- contains natural materials such as boulders creating pools and riffles and allows aquatic life to go around the inflatable dam at the park.

Unique passage being highlighted during Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week for its benefits both upstream and downstream.

As part of the watershed-wide [Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week](#), the **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** celebrated the new naturalistic fish passage at Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County for its upstream benefit to native species such as American shad and eels, and its downstream benefit to the Chesapeake Bay.

In 2024, **Governor Josh Shapiro** [highlighted](#) that Pennsylvania's portion of the watershed is significantly improving because the Commonwealth has brought people together and invested in Chesapeake Bay restoration efforts.

"Stewardship and conservation of our environment is the core of what DCNR does every day. You can see the results of our efforts in this fish passage, which is designed to function and look natural and help many kinds of life thrive in the river," **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** said. "The result of many partnerships at the state, regional, and federal level, this project is good for Pennsylvania, and it helps Pennsylvania be a good neighbor."

Spanning the width of the Susquehanna River between the towns of Shamokin Dam and Sunbury, the inflatable dam at Shikellamy State Park creates the seasonal Lake Augusta -- a 3,000-acre recreational pool that offers boating, fishing, and other water-based activities. The fish passage allows aquatic life to go around the dam.

The fish passage is:

- About 900 feet long
- Located on the dam's west end

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Shapiro Administration Celebrates New Naturalistic Fish Passage at Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County (continued)

- Made with natural materials such as boulders and rip rap to simulate a streambed
- Four resting pools and five riffles
- Engineered for self-cleaning during high-water events
- Activated automatically once the dam is inflated in the spring and lake elevation is reached

The passage is recognized as one of the largest and most naturalistic fishways on the East Coast. The design has garnered nationwide attention and stands as a model for future fishway projects.

“Speaking for the aquatic life who can’t speak for themselves, this is a wonderful completion of a project which allows all aquatic life to move freely up and down the Susquehanna River as they once did. What is good for the fish, is good for the humans as well,” said **Sid Jamieson, an indigenous Cayuga Nation Iroquois.**

Key species supported include American shad which migrates upstream to spawn and American eel that hosts freshwater mussel larvae. Freshwater mussels are natural water filters. Restoring their populations improves overall water quality.

“Fish passage on every scale is important, allowing our native aquatic species to move unobstructed through our small streams and large rivers, in many cases, to complete vital stages of their life cycles that ensure strong populations in the future,” said **Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.**

“Projects like this within the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, with smart designs that invite fish to migrate up and down the river naturally, complement other habitat efforts statewide to benefit fish, anglers, and everyone who appreciates healthy waterways in their own communities and hundreds of miles upstream and downstream. Thanks to innovative partnerships across the Commonwealth, Pennsylvania is a fish passage leader.”

The Chesapeake Bay Agreement has a [goal](#) of continually increasing access to habitat to support sustainable migratory fish populations in the watershed’s freshwater rivers and streams by opening an additional 132 miles every two years to fish passage.

The Susquehanna River is the largest tributary of the Chesapeake Bay, playing a critical role in its overall health and ecology.

Since 2021 Pennsylvania has invested more than \$580 million in on-the-ground projects to improve local water quality in the bay watershed. This includes more than \$61 million in Growing Greener grants, more than \$92 million in farmland preservation and conservation projects, and nearly \$9 million to plant forest buffers and restore urban tree canopy.

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Shapiro Administration Celebrates New Naturalistic Fish Passage at Shikellamy State Park in Northumberland County (continued)

During the past five years Pennsylvania also has added three new state parks in the watershed and DCNR has led with increased funding and technical assistance in planting streamside forest buffers across the Commonwealth, leading all Bay states in buffers planted.

At the confluence of the North and West branches of the Susquehanna River, [Shikellamy State Park](#) includes a 50-acre marina section and a 190-acre overlook section with a spectacular view of the confluence of the river branches.

Source: **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)**

Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence

DEP honors community organizations for work including converting land into nature trails, building bee hives to donate honey to charitable causes, creating rain gardens to mitigate stormwater, and more

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is honoring 19 projects completed by schools, businesses, and community organizations around the state with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence.

"The Environmental Excellence honorees embody the innovative thinking needed to protect our environment and shape a more sustainable future here in Pennsylvania," said **DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. "Together, we will spur the next generation of environmental stewards. These projects showcase our ability to work collaboratively to preserve and protect Pennsylvania's natural resources."

Applications were evaluated for their degree of environmental protection, innovation, partnership, economic impact, consideration of climate change, sustainability, and environmental justice, as well as outcomes achieved.

The 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence were awarded to:

Center for Science and the Schools, Penn State – AG SEED-Lings

The AG SEED-Lings program was designed to equip students and educators with the ability to provide a high-quality environmental education aligned with PA's newly adopted STEELS standards. The program established a comprehensive online platform where all developed curricula were made available for educators across the state. This curriculum consisted of over 19 STEELS-aligned lessons designed to provide high-quality, interdisciplinary instruction. Lessons included AI-generated read-aloud in both English and Spanish to increase accessibility for differing languages. In 2024, 45 educators completed the AG SEED-LINGS professional development series, resulting in the program's implementation in 42 school districts, reaching more than 1,750 students.

Green Allies – Althouse Arboretum

The Althouse Arboretum is a student led outdoor education center. In 2024, it saw over 17,000 visitors who engaged with programming led exclusively by a team of high school students from five surrounding school districts. Students were responsible for everything, including writing curriculum for a summer nature camp program and hosting community events. In 2024, the organization secured a property nearby its existing arboretum, which provided a grass meadow they deemed essential to expanding programming.

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Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence (continued)

The arboretum constructed a trail built entirely by volunteers to connect the new land to the existing property. On the lands of the Althouse Arboretum, students have planted over 100 native PA trees, along with introducing over 50 varieties of native wildflowers and other plants onto the property and into their natural habitats. The Arboretum ran a variety of sustainability programs in 2024, including a community recycling day, which resulted in a collection of 21 tons of electronics, appliances, and scrap metal from the 426 vehicles that participated. Students also collected 78 bicycles, which were then refurbished and donated to underserved families.

East Hempfield Township – Amos Herr Wetland Restoration

The Amos Herr Wetland Restoration project converted over six acres of unused land into an ecosystem of trails, meadows, and wetlands, allowing for a sustainable and multi-purpose area that serves the communities' needs while also promoting biodiversity. The topography of the resulting wetland habitat naturally provides storage volume for nuisance storms, reducing flooding risks and promoting natural water retention. The project led to the reduction of 98,015 pounds of sediment and 2,369 pounds of nitrogen, contributing to enhanced water quality and ecosystem health. And 75 trees were planted throughout the wetlands, increasing biodiversity and providing habitats for wildlife.

Clarence and Mary Ann Harms Center for the Environment at Westminster College – Apiary

Westminster College's apiary was established in 2020 beginning with six hives. Now exceeding 70 hives, the apiary serves as a hands-on educational resource to raise awareness about the roles of bees in ecosystems, promote pollinator conservation, and provide training in sustainable beekeeping practices for students and the community. During the 2024 period, Westminster developed various courses, which revolve around the apiary, including "Environmental Entrepreneurship," which stresses how sustainable practices and conservation is critical to entrepreneurial success through engagement with the Westminster Bee Company. The project engaged with over 800 individuals through various community and student events. The project also engaged with several charitable causes by donating honey, including the "bags & blessings" program, which provides comfort bags to patients with cancer.

The Watersmith Guild – Aqua Lab Adventures

Aqua Lab Adventures is a hands-on citizen science and outdoor adventure program designed for young students from environmental justice communities. The project engages students through in-school lessons about microplastics, concluding with a field trip to their local watershed where students conduct a microplastics survey. The survey is conducted through a low-cost microplastics trawl, which students deploy behind a paddleboard.

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Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence (continued)

This program led 245 young people to community-engaged citizen-based science and allows for the monitoring of microplastics pollutions at seven sites across western Pennsylvania. Through these practices, Aqua Lab Adventures fosters young leaders in environmental conservation by exposing them to a side of the environment they never would have been familiar with had this program not existed.

Discovery Pathways – Youth Environmental Leaders Program

The Discovery Pathways: Youth Environmental Leaders Program's goals are to create free and multilingual outdoor experiences for underrepresented youth and families in the Southeast Philadelphia area, primarily immigrant and refugee communities. The Youth Environmental Leadership Program seeks to train BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee youth in leadership, public speaking, water testing, kayaking, fishing, and sustainability. In 2024, 31 high-need students were selected for this program. Discovery Pathways hosted 21 large community boating events reaching 12,011 participants, conducted weekly water tests where data was shared with government officials and local communities, removed 11,000 pounds of trash, educated 2,000 children in hands-on environmental education, and marked over 75 storm drains, and led anti-litter campaigns in several languages.

UpstreamPgh – Dornbust Street Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project

The Dornbush Street Green Stormwater Infrastructure Project converted two vacant parcels of land on a residential street into a series of rain gardens with subsurface storage and an ADA accessible pathway. The rain gardens receive stormwater from green inlets on Dornbush Street, which is the second steepest street in Pittsburgh and eighth steepest in the United States. The project is estimated to capture an estimated 1.6 million gallons of stormwater each year. While helping to manage stormwaters, the project also included the planting of many native flower shrubs and tree species including Mountain Laurel.

Schuylkill Haven Area High School Biology Club - Empowering Environmental Stewardship

The Empowering Environmental Stewardship program is run through a high school biology club meant to provide students with opportunities to engage in environmental activities. Activities include a twice-yearly highway litter clean-up, tree planting along Bear Creek, and raising trout species from eggs to fingerling. To raise trout, the club transformed a 55-gallon aquarium into a mini-Coldwater ecosystem. The trout raised in sheltered conditions have a significantly higher hatch rate, with 162 of 199 eggs becoming fingerlings, compared to a one to two percent survival rate in nature.

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Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence (continued)

Pennsylvania Resources Council - Hard to Recycle Collection Event Program

The Hard to Recycle Collection Event Program runs collection opportunities in Southwestern Pennsylvania for the purpose of disposing hard to recycle materials. In 2024, the program's efforts resulted in the collection of 386,000 pounds of electronic devices, 49,000 pounds of small appliances, 36,000 pounds of tires, and 1,410 pounds of Styrofoam. The program had over 6,000 people participate in collection last year and all critical roles are staffed by volunteers.

California Area School District - Nature's Classroom: Advancing Environmental Stewardship through Outdoor Education and Innovation

The school district created the Nature's Classroom: Advancing Environmental Stewardship through Outdoor Education and Innovation program, which started an outdoor science school, complete with an apiary, yurts for outdoor education, and advanced programs that children can participate in. One program highlighted was a student-led energy study, which identified strategies to reduce energy costs that were then implemented based on student findings.

Luzerne County Courthouse Office of Solid Waste & Recycling Management – Old Air Force Building Renovation

The county gutted and renovated the Old Air Force Building office space, using as many recycled materials as possible. Carpeting was 100 percent made from recycled fishing nets, ceiling tiles made with 76 percent recycled content, countertops 23 percent, vinyl floors 39 percent, stonework 55 percent. Virgin materials that would have been used for the project were spared through the use of recycled content.

Phoenix Contact USA – EV Charging Station

The company installed a new charging station for electric vehicles at its U.S. headquarters. This station allows for 10 additional EV charging stations with a 220-kW capacity energy storage system. Through these carports, employees and guests can charge their vehicles without any additional burden to the electric grid.

The Philadelphia Zoo - The Unless Contest

The Unless Contest, a project-based learning contest, helped students raise awareness of wildlife conservation challenges. The Project encourages students to "think globally and act locally" through creating various projects.

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Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence (continued)

Students are encouraged to work with their families and local communities to achieve their project goals to ensure broader and lasting impacts. In 2024, the contest raised \$2,240 through fundraisers for conservation efforts, the diversion of over 2,415 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions, and partnering with a recycling company to turn litter into a park bench for their school garden.

City of Lancaster - Wetlands at Long's Park

The Wetlands at Long's Park project was tasked with meeting requirements of the city's Chesapeake Bay Pollutant Reduction Plan and ended up exceeding its initial goal by almost double. The water quality improvement project was to capture and treat over 16 million gallons of stormwater runoff and recirculated pond water each year. The project is in a large, popular recreational area and provides park amenities while reducing nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment loading, improving water quality in Chesapeake Bay.

Hauser Nature Center - Universal Access Trail

The Universal Access Trail at Hauser Nature Center "Cathy's Trail" is a 0.7-mile accessible trail meant to accommodate individuals with varying mobility types. The trail goes through isolated natural areas equipped with benches, education kiosks, and other facilities.

Friends of the Wissahickon - Valley Green Run Restoration and Pedestrian Bridge

The Valley Green Run Restoration and Pedestrian Bridge project restored approximately 201 linear feet of stream bed and channel. Project also included the construction of a new elevated pedestrian bridge along with stormwater management improvements along the bridge.

Warrington Township - Mountain at Lions Pride Park – Ecological Restoration of Native Wetland Habitat

Warrington Township's Kid Mountain at Lions Pride Park – Ecological Restoration of Native Wetland Habitat project converted a dilapidated pond characterized by impounded sediments and invasive species, to a native freshwater shrub wetland habitat that is accessible to the community.

Earth Conservancy - WeReclaim!

The WeReclaim! teaching unit is meant to show the connection between community and industry in the anthracite coal region. The materials are tailored to different regions, featuring coal sites that are in proximity to each student's schools.

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Shapiro Administration Honors 19 Projects Statewide with 2025 Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence (continued)

United States Steel Mon Valley Clairton Coke Plant and AKJ Steel Industries, Inc. - Expanded Recycling of Coke Plant Materials

U.S. Steel constructed a new facility to receive a blend of various coke plant materials, assuring that coke plant materials can be processed and recycled in the shortest amount of time minimizing potential risk of air and/or water contamination. The amount of coke plant materials that can be recycled in a given year is as high as 6,000 tons, with each ton recycled avoiding the generation of roughly 20 tons of Co₂.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

EPA and Army Wrap Up Initial Listening Sessions, Move Toward Proposal to Revise 2023 Definition of WOTUS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and U.S. Department of the Army (Army) have completed a robust series of listening sessions intended to seek input from stakeholders on real-world and practical experience with Clean Water Act (CWA) programs and requirements that rely on the definition of “waters of the United States,” or WOTUS. Through these sessions, the agencies gained invaluable insights representing on-the-ground perspectives of farmers and ranchers, homebuilders and construction contractors, miners and energy producers, manufacturers, states, Tribes, elected officials, environmental groups and the general public.

“When it comes to the definition of ‘waters of the United States,’ EPA has an important responsibility to protect water resources while setting clear and practical rules of the road that accelerate economic growth and opportunity,” said EPA Administrator Lee Zeldin. “These listening sessions gave us real-world perspectives as we work toward a proposed rule that follows the Supreme Court decision in Sackett, ends the regulatory uncertainty and ping-pong that has persisted for years, supports our nation’s farmers who feed and fuel the world, and advances the agency’s [Powering the Great American Comeback initiative](#).”

The definition of WOTUS guides CWA implementation, including whether farmers, landowners and businesses must secure costly permits before they can pursue a project. Under the Biden Administration, EPA and the Army’s Amended 2023 definition of WOTUS failed to follow the law and implement the Supreme Court’s holding in *Sackett v. Environmental Protection Agency*. Under Administrator Zeldin’s leadership, EPA and Army moved quickly by issuing joint guidance aligned with *Sackett*, announcing a plan to revise the amended 2023 definition of WOTUS, and initiating these listening sessions to obtain public input.

“The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers plays a key role in implementing the Clean Water Act. The importance of input from all our stakeholders including landowners, local governments, the States, Tribes and others is critical to how we undertake our statutory responsibilities. We understand the importance of communication and appreciate the feedback we received as we move forward together with EPA on this important effort,” said Acting Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Lee Forsgren.

Over the course of nine listening sessions, including two public sessions in West Virginia and Utah, EPA heard from people who are frustrated with the constantly shifting WOTUS definition.

Many attendees of the listening sessions strongly supported EPA and the Army’s plan to revise the 2023 WOTUS definition, urging the agencies to provide consistency for the regulated community that will stand the test of time. For some, this feedback was based on confusion over jurisdictional waters on agricultural land such as ditches, stock ponds and wetlands.

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EPA and Army Wrap Up Initial Listening Sessions, Move Toward Proposal to Revise 2023 Definition of WOTUS (continued)

The agencies also heard frustration from the on-the-ground experience of homebuilders and other industry stakeholders that are directly impacted by the definition of WOTUS.

Many supported the federal environmental protections tied to the CWA. Many also requested regulatory predictability to build and maintain the infrastructure that advances local and regional economies. Others highlighted the importance of cooperative federalism under the CWA and urged the agencies to delegate decision-making to states and local authorities. Attendees also highlighted the need to consider hydrologic diversity across the nation, such as wetlands in the southeast, prairie potholes in the Midwest, ephemeral washes in the arid West, and permafrost in Alaska.

EPA and Army intend to issue a proposed rule in the coming months that will prioritize clear interpretation and implementation of the law, reducing red-tape, cutting overall permitting costs, and lowering the cost of doing business in communities across the country while protecting the nation's waters from pollution. Following public comment on the proposal, the agencies will review input with the intention of issuing a final rule by the end of 2025.

Please see additional information on [Waters of the United States](#).

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

EPA Regional Administrator Tours Former Tannery Site in Peabody Recently Selected for \$4 Million Brownfields Cleanup Grant

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Regional Administrator Mark Sanborn joined Mayor Edward Bettencourt, city councilors, and local officials to tour the former Bob-Kat Tanning site, a 0.7-acre property in downtown Peabody recently selected to receive a [\\$4 million Brownfields Cleanup Grant](#). Staff from the offices of U.S. Senators Elizabeth Warren and Ed Markey and U.S. Representative Seth Moulton were also in attendance. This grant will support environmental remediation and community engagement activities at the long-vacant site, which operated as a tannery for over 200 years and is contaminated with a range of hazardous substances.

EPA Regional Administrator Mark Sanborn and Mayor Edward Bettencourt visit a Brownfields site in Peabody, MA.

"Together with our federal, state, and local partners, we're helping Peabody unlock new opportunities for community and economic revitalization," **said EPA Regional Administrator Mark Sanborn**. "This Brownfields grant reflects our commitment to delivering on EPA's statutory mission through cooperative federalism and common-sense investments."

"EPA's Brownfields program is a commonsense commitment to clean air, clean water, and clean land for all. I am pleased to see EPA Region 1's investment to clean up brownfield sites in Massachusetts—a win-win for the health and wealth of communities in our state and across the country," **said U.S. Senator Edward Markey**. "These smart reinvestments help communities from Boston to the Berkshires and from New Bedford to the Merrimack Valley transform toxic eyesores into community assets, spurring job creation and economic activity. Revitalizing underutilized and polluted lands in communities that have been left to deal with abandoned toxic waste is a challenge that deserves bipartisan solutions, which is why I worked to reauthorize the Brownfields program in 2015-2018 and fought to secure these federal funds in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law."

"With support from the EPA, we are transforming our downtown into a vibrant, healthy, and sustainable community center. We are revitalizing our economy while restoring our environment. This partnership enables us to build a healthy lasting future that will serve future generations," **said Mayor Edward A. Bettencourt, Jr., City of Peabody**.

The cleanup of the Bob-Kat site builds on Peabody's strong track record of leveraging federal resources to address contamination and spark community revitalization. Peabody has received multiple Brownfields grants in recent years, including:

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EPA Regional Administrator Tours Former Tannery Site in Peabody Recently Selected for \$4 Million Brownfields Cleanup Grant (continued)

- \$650,000 to clean up the Clark Steel Drum site;
- \$300,000 for environmental assessments and planning in the North River Corridor, an area with a rich industrial history and major potential for redevelopment;
- Participation in a Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) partnership with the City of Salem that includes plans to redevelop the former L. Fine Building in Peabody into resilient senior housing and commercial space.

The City's broader vision includes development of a future Riverwalk in the North River Corridor, an area historically affected by tannery operations but poised for transformation into a vibrant, connected district that benefits residents and businesses alike.

Background

EPA's Brownfields Program began in 1995 and has provided nationally nearly \$2.7 billion in Brownfield Grants to assess and clean up contaminated properties and return blighted properties to productive reuse. For more information about EPA's Brownfields Program, visit: www.epa.gov/brownfields.

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