

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 26 Issue 3

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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Drought Watch/Warning Lifted for 8 Counties, All counties now back to Normal Status

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced after a meeting of the Commonwealth Drought Task Force that drought watch/warning will be lifted for the last remaining 8 counties.

Adams, Cameron, Clinton, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Westmoreland and York counties have returned to Normal status.

Pennsylvania has received adequate precipitation over the past 6 months to re-

turn many of the drought indicators to normal and reduce long-term precipitation deficits. In addition, Public Water Suppliers have begun to lift the restrictions they put in place last summer and fall as they see

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Biden-Harris Administration finalizes strongest-ever pollution standards for cars that position U.S. companies and workers to lead the clean vehicle future, protect public health, address the climate crisis, save drivers money

Biden's Investing in America agenda

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced final national pollution standards for passenger cars, light-duty trucks, and medium-duty vehicles for model years 2027 through 2032 and beyond. These

standards will avoid more than 7 billion tons of carbon emissions and provide nearly \$100 billion of annual net benefits to society, including \$13 billion of annual public health benefits due to improved air quality, and \$62

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Final standards will expand consumer choice in clean vehicles and build on historic progress in U.S. auto manufacturing under President

Drought Watch/Warning Lifted for 8 Counties, All counties now back to Normal Status (continued)

their sources of supply recover.

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

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% less water and 40-50% less energy.

Find more tips at the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency](#).

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Drought Watch/Warning Lifted for 8 Counties, All counties now back to Normal Status (continued)

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.

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](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Biden-Harris Administration finalizes strongest-ever pollution standards for cars (continued)

billion in reduced annual fuel costs, and maintenance and repair costs for drivers. The final standards deliver on the significant pollution reductions outlined in the proposed rule, while accelerating the adoption of cleaner vehicle technologies. EPA is finalizing this rule as sales of clean vehicles, including plug-in hybrid and fully electric vehicles, hit record highs last year.

EPA projects an increase in U.S. auto manufacturing employment in response to these final standards, consistent with the broader Biden-Harris Administration commitment to create good-paying, union jobs leading the clean vehicle future. Strong standards have historically contributed to the U.S. leading the world in the supply of clean technologies, with corresponding benefits for American global competitiveness and domestic employment. Since President Biden took office, companies have announced more than \$160 billion in investment in U.S. clean vehicle manufacturing and the U.S. auto manufacturing sector has added more than 100,000 jobs.

These standards will provide greater certainty for the auto industry, catalyzing private investment, creating good-paying union jobs, and invigorating and strengthening the U.S. auto industry. Over the next decade, the standards, paired with President Biden's historic Investing in America agenda and investments in U.S. manufacturing, will set the U.S. auto sector on a trajectory for sustained growth. Additionally, the final standards will lower costs for consumers. Once fully phased in, the standards will save the average American driver an estimated \$6,000 in reduced fuel and maintenance over the life of a vehicle.

EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan will join President Biden's National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi today at an event in Washington, DC to announce the final standards and how they build on President Biden's historic climate and economic record. The event will livestreamed starting at noon EDT.

"With transportation as the largest source of U.S. climate emissions, these strongest-ever pollution standards for cars solidify America's leadership in building a clean transportation future and creating good-paying American jobs, all while advancing President Biden's historic climate agenda," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan.** "The standards will slash over 7 billion tons of climate pollution, improve air quality in overburdened communities, and give drivers more clean vehicle choices while saving them money. Under President Biden's leadership, this Administration is pairing strong standards with historic investments to revitalize domestic manufacturing, strengthen domestic supply chains and create good-paying jobs."

"President Biden is investing in America, in our workers, and in the unions that built our middle class and established the U.S. auto sector as a leader in the world," **said President Biden's National Climate Advisor Ali Zaidi.** "The President's agenda is working. On factory floors across the nation, our autoworkers are making cars and trucks that give American drivers a choice – a way to get from point A to point B without having to fuel up at a gas station.

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Biden-Harris Administration finalizes strongest-ever pollution standards for cars (continued)

From plug-in hybrids to fuel cells to fully electric, drivers have more choices today. Since 2021, sales of these vehicles have quadrupled and prices continue to come down. This growth means jobs, and it means we are moving faster and faster to take on the climate crisis – all thanks to the President’s leadership.”

Statement from United Automobile Workers: “The EPA has made significant progress on its final greenhouse gas emissions rule for light-duty vehicles. By taking seriously the concerns of workers and communities, the EPA has come a long way to create a more feasible emissions rule that protects workers building ICE vehicles, while providing a path forward for automakers to implement the full range of automotive technologies to reduce emissions.”

Light- and Medium-Duty Vehicle Final Standards

The final standards announced today, the “*Multi Pollutant Emissions Standards for Model Years 2027 and Later Light-Duty and Medium-Duty Vehicles*,” build on EPA’s existing emissions standards for passenger cars and light trucks for model years 2023 through 2026. The standards continue the technology-neutral and performance-based design of previous EPA standards for cars, pickups, and vans, and leverage advances in clean car technologies to further reduce both climate pollution and smog- and soot-forming emissions. EPA is finalizing the same standard proposed for MY 2032 while allowing additional time for the auto sector to scale up clean vehicle manufacturing supply chains in the first three years covered by the rule.

Annually, the net benefits to society for the light- and medium-duty final rule are estimated to be \$99 billion. The final rule is expected to avoid 7.2 billion tons of CO₂ emissions through 2055, roughly equal to four times the emissions of the entire transportation sector in 2021. It will also reduce fine particulate matter and ozone, preventing up to 2,500 premature deaths in 2055 as well as reducing heart attacks, respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses, aggravated asthma, and decreased lung function.

EPA received extensive feedback on the proposed rule, including through written comments, testimony at public hearings, and other stakeholder engagements. The final standards were informed by the best available data in the public record and rigorous technical assessments. Like the proposal, EPA’s final rule gives manufacturers the flexibility to efficiently reduce emissions and meet the performance-based standards through the mix of technologies they decide is best for them and their customers. EPA’s analysis considers a broad suite of available emission control technologies, and projects that consumers will continue to have a wide range of vehicle choices under the final rule, including advanced gasoline vehicles, hybrids, plug-in hybrid electric vehicles, and full battery electric vehicles.

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Biden-Harris Administration finalizes strongest-ever pollution standards for cars (continued)

Compared to the existing MY 2026 standards, the final MY 2032 standards represent a nearly 50% reduction in projected fleet average GHG emissions levels for light-duty vehicles and 44% reductions for medium-duty vehicles. In addition, the standards are expected to reduce emissions of health-harming fine particulate matter from gasoline-powered vehicles by over 95%. This will improve air quality nationwide and especially for people who live near major roadways and have environmental justice concerns.

Investing in America's Clean Transportation Future

The final rule reflects the significant investments in clean vehicle technologies that industry is already making domestically and abroad, as well as ongoing U.S. market shifts and increasing consumer interest in clean vehicles. The Biden-Harris Administration is also directly supporting communities across America in moving towards a cleaner transportation future, including by building a national network of EV chargers and alternative-fuel stations; ensuring domestic manufacturers have the critical minerals and materials they need to make EV batteries; and funding clean transit and clean school buses, with priority for underserved communities. President Biden's Investing in America agenda is focused on growing the American economy from the bottom up and the middle out – from rebuilding our nation's infrastructure, to creating a manufacturing and innovation boom, to building a clean-energy economy that will combat climate change and make our communities more resilient.

Here's what leaders are saying about the final rule:

"I've always said Michigan automakers are the best in the world. And this is their moment," **said Senator Debbie Stabenow (MI)**. "I appreciate EPA's commitment to engaging with our automakers and autoworkers to develop an ambitious but achievable final rule. It represents an opportunity for union workers to continue to build the vehicles of the future right here in the U.S. and tackle the climate crisis."

"My priority will always be to protect American jobs and our environment, keep the United States at the forefront of automotive manufacturing, technology, and innovation, and keep our domestic industry strong and competitive," **said Congresswoman Debbie Dingell (MI-06)**. "The EPA has worked with all stakeholders to reach this final rule that includes hybrid and electric vehicles, and ensure these goals are achievable. It's important to protect vehicle choice – the number of available models has doubled in the last three years, and in the last year sticker prices are down 20%. We need to continue to work on making sure that these vehicles are affordable to everyone, that we have the infrastructure in place to make them accessible and practical for consumers, and bring jobs back to the U.S. The bottom line is that the future of the industry must be created in America and driven by American workers, and we are all committed to working together toward that future."

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Biden-Harris Administration finalizes strongest-ever pollution standards for cars (continued)

“The future is electric. Automakers are committed to the EV transition – investing enormous amounts of capital and building cutting edge battery electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids, traditional hybrids and fuel cell vehicles that drive efficiency and convert petroleum miles to electric miles,” **said John Bozzella, President and CEO, Alliance for Automotive Innovation.**

“Consumers have tons of choices. But pace matters. Moderating the pace of EV adoption in 2027, 2028, 2029 and 2030 was the right call because it prioritizes more reasonable electrification targets in the next few (very critical) years of the EV transition. These adjusted EV targets – still a stretch goal – should give the market and supply chains a chance to catch up. It buys some time for more public charging to come online, and the industrial incentives and policies of the Inflation Reduction Act to do their thing. And the big one? The rules are mindful of the importance of choice to drivers and preserves their ability to choose the vehicle that’s right for them.”

“This is a day to celebrate American achievement. The step EPA is taking today will slash climate pollution and air pollution,” **said Amanda Leland, Executive Director of Environmental Defense Fund.** “It will bring more jobs for workers, more choices and more savings for consumers, and a healthier future for our children. The U.S. has leapt forward in the global race to invest in clean vehicles, with \$188 billion and nearly 200,000 jobs on the way. Jobs in communities across the country, in places like Michigan, Nevada, and Kentucky. These clean car standards will help supercharge economic expansion and make America stronger.”

“These standards make clear that securing America’s global leadership in manufacturing and securing a better future are 100% aligned,” **said Albert Gore, Executive Director of the Zero Emission Transportation Association.** “We have everything we need today to meet and exceed this standard, and that means more of the vehicles sold in America will be made in America.”

[Learn more information about the final rule.](#)

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Biden-Harris Administration engages states on safeguarding water sector infrastructure against cyber threats

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael Regan and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan sent a [letter](#) to all U.S. Governors inviting state environmental, health and homeland security Secretaries to a convening by their deputies to discuss the urgent need to safeguard water sector critical infrastructure against cyber threats. This meeting will highlight current federal and state efforts to promote cybersecurity practices in the water sector, discuss priority gaps in these efforts, and emphasize the need for states and water systems to take immediate action.

This virtual meeting will take place on Thursday, March 21, 2023, from 12:30pm – 2:00 pm EST. EPA will be sending meeting registration information to the states separately via email.

“Drinking water and wastewater systems are a lifeline for communities, but many systems have not adopted important cybersecurity practices to thwart potential cyberattacks,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “EPA and NSC take these threats very seriously and will continue to partner with state environmental, health, and homeland security leaders to address the pervasive and challenging risk of cyberattacks on water systems.”

“The Biden Administration has built our national security approach on the foundational integration of foreign and domestic policy, which means elevating our focus on cross-cutting challenges like cybersecurity,” **said National Security Advisory Jake Sullivan**. “We’ve worked across government to implement significant cybersecurity standards in our nation’s critical infrastructure, including in the water sector, as we remain vigilant to the risks and costs of cyber threats. We look forward to continuing our partnership with the EPA to bolster the cybersecurity of America’s water and wastewater systems.”

The National Security Council (NSC) and EPA are encouraging all states to join this dialogue to drive rapid improvements to water cybersecurity and reinforce collaboration between state and federal entities and water systems.

Additionally, EPA will strive to collaborate with the Water Sector and Water Government Coordinating Councils in forming a Water Sector Cybersecurity Task Force to identify near-term actions and strategies to reduce the risk of water systems nationwide to cyberattacks. In addition to considering the prevalent vulnerabilities of water systems to cyberattacks and the challenges experienced by some systems in adopting best practices, this Task Force in its deliberations would seek to build upon existing collaborative products, such as the 2023 Roadmap to a Secure and Resilient Water and Wastewater Sector and recommendations stemming from the meeting with Environmental, Health and Homeland Security Secretaries.

These collaborative efforts will result in advances that will better protect the nation’s critical water infrastructure from cyberattacks. For information about EPA’s cybersecurity program or details about the upcoming meeting please visit [EPA’s Cybersecurity for the Water Sector website](#).

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Biden-Harris Administration engages states on safeguarding water sector infrastructure against cyber threats (continued)

Background

Disabling cyberattacks are striking water and wastewater systems throughout the United States. These attacks, carried out by countries and criminals, have the potential to disrupt the critical lifeline of clean and safe drinking water, as well as impose significant costs on affected communities. As the Sector Risk Management Agency identified in Presidential Policy Directive 21 for water and wastewater systems, EPA is the lead federal agency for ensuring the nation's water sector is resilient to all threats and hazards.

EPA and the Department of Homeland Security's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) offer guidance, tools, training, resources, and technical assistance to help water systems to execute these essential tasks. Further, cybersecurity support and technical assistance are available from state programs as well as private sector associations like the American Water Works Association, the National Rural Water Association, and the Water Information Sharing and Analysis Center. State leadership and messaging to connect water systems with these tools and resources is essential to ensure that utility leaders assess and mitigate critical cyber risks. Additionally, Homeland Security Advisors are also a resource to providing links to federal cybersecurity efforts and access to relevant information about these threats.

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

DEP Reports Progress on Implementing Shapiro Administration Permitting Reform, Reduces Permit Backlog by 41 Percent

To date, under the PAYback program, DEP has not had to refund a single application fee – meaning permits are getting out the door in a timely manner. Thanks to Governor Shapiro’s leadership, Commonwealth agencies like DEP are working to move at the speed of business.

The Shapiro Administration’s efforts to enhance and improve permitting are showing early success as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) improves online permitting, online payment, and delivers on-time permit decisions.

DEP has successfully implemented the [PAYback program](#), the Shapiro Administration’s online money-back guarantee system and begun making significant progress in reducing backlogs and speeding up processing timelines. Through the PAYback program, led by the **Office of Transformation and Opportunity (OTO)** and the **Commonwealth Office of Digital Experience (CODE PA)**, application fees are returned to applicants upon request if agencies don’t take action on applications submitted on or after November 1, 2023 within set review timeframes. To date, DEP has not been required to refund a single application fee.

DEP has also pledged to address the backlog of permits that were overdue before the implementation of [PAYback](#), and has seen a drastic reduction in the permit backlog. DEP has hired 15 new staff members dedicated to processing permits, thanks to investments from the 2023-24 budget signed into law by Governor Shapiro, and has utilized some staff working overtime when needed to address the backlog. Since hiring the additional staff members and cataloging and reviewing DEP’s nearly 800 available types of permits, DEP has reduced the backlog of permits by nearly 900 individual permits – or 41 percent – as of March 1, 2024.

“Permit modernization is instrumental in establishing an excellent customer service model and providing support to all stakeholders through the permitting process,” said **DEP Interim Acting Secretary, Jessica Shirley**. “As we continue to implement updates and enhancements, DEP will improve the user experience and the application and review process. At the same time, DEP will continue to protect human health and the environment and ensure compliance with Pennsylvania’s environmental laws and regulations.”

DEP has also made it easier for businesses to upload documents and payments for permit applications electronically. Applicants can now use [DEP’s Public Upload](#), a new service which allows individuals, small businesses, and corporations to electronically upload documents and payments. DEP’s Public Upload system was implemented in December 2023, and since then, more than 7,100 documents have been submitted, collecting more than \$600,000 in revenue. Electronic submissions are the most efficient way to submit

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DEP Reports Progress on Implementing Shapiro Administration Permitting Reform, Reduces Permit Backlog by 41 Percent (continued)

documents, providing for the fastest review timeframes for authorization, and enhanced security.

“Governor Shapiro has made clear that Commonwealth agencies need to streamline permitting and enhance their customer experience to demonstrate that Pennsylvania is open for business,” said **Chief Transformation Officer Ben Kirshner**. “DEP is leading the way by changing how it does business, reducing its backlog and improving how it interacts with permit-seekers, while continuing to vigilantly protect our environment.”

Additional initiatives underway at DEP as part of permit modernization include:

- Finalizing a pilot program to evaluate new procedures that will improve the quality of submissions and review efficiency of Chapter 102 Individual National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit applications. This pilot program is expected to reduce the review timeframe by 73 business days and improve the quality of applications received.
- Creating a quarterly Agriculture Permitting Stakeholder Roundtable to engage farmers, conservation district managers, owners, operators, producers, and consultants to collect feedback on permitting processes.
- Formalizing a pre-application meeting process to better-inform potential applicants of the permitting process and the specific permits they need. The Permit Application Consultation Tool ([PACT](#)) is available online.
- Undergoing User Experience (UX) research with key stakeholders that will provide useful insights into what they need and value during the application process. The goal of the customer experience initiative is to understand and improve the applicant’s experience and reduce bottlenecks in review.

DEP aims to complete more projects in the coming months. DEP will provide updates to the public on process improvements and related review timeliness data as projects are completed.

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

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

EPA Announces 2024 ENERGY STAR Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Energy Efficiency and a Clean Future

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is announcing the winners of the 2024 ENERGY STAR® Partner of the Year Awards. These 211 organizations, which represent the top ENERGY STAR program partners, are making significant contributions in support of the clean energy transition. They come from 38 states and localities, representing multiple economic sectors. The winners will be recognized at an event in Washington, D.C., on Thursday, April 25.

“Public-private partnerships such as ENERGY STAR are essential to enabling us to meet the historic opportunity that the President’s Inflation Reduction Act provides,” **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan.** “I congratulate this year’s ENERGY STAR award winners for their innovation and leadership, in delivering cost-effective energy efficient solutions that create jobs, protect the climate, and contribute to a healthier environment for everyone.”

Today’s awards recognize leaders among the thousands of industrial, commercial, utility, state, and local organizations—including nearly 40% of the Fortune 500®—that partner with the EPA through the ENERGY STAR program. For every \$1 the EPA spends to administer ENERGY STAR, these partners collectively add \$230 of their own investment. The result is: millions of ENERGY STAR certified products, homes, apartments, buildings, and industrial plants across the nation; utility rebate programs reaching 95% of American households; 4 billion tons of greenhouse gas reductions; and \$500 billion in cost savings.

Among today’s ENERGY STAR award winners, 160 partners have demonstrated an ongoing, year after year commitment to energy efficiency. These award winners are being recognized through the program’s highest honor: ENERGY STAR Partner of the Year – Sustained Excellence Award.

Here are a few examples of how 2024 ENERGY STAR Award Winners are taking action:

- (Milwaukee, Wisconsin) **A.O. Smith**, a manufacturer of water heating and water treatment products, launched a new website design that highlights ENERGY STAR products for homeowner and trade professional audiences and features a heat pump water heater product page banner to promote the latest innovations in energy efficiency.
- (Charlotte, North Carolina) **Atrium Health**, a healthcare organization, significantly improved energy efficiency and increased the average ENERGY STAR score of its portfolio of hospitals, medical office buildings and more by almost 5% in 2023.
- (Richfield, Minnesota), **Best Buy Co. Inc.**, a seller of electronics and appliances, demonstrated its dedication to ENERGY STAR by holistically using ENERGY STAR

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EPA Announces 2024 ENERGY STAR Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Energy Efficiency and a Clean Future (continued)

as a key strategy to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions and drive consumer adoption of efficient products by stocking more than 4,150 different models of ENERGY STAR certified products across stores nationwide.

- (Irvine, California) **Bosch Home Appliances**, a residential kitchen and laundry appliances manufacturer, revamped its offerings of highly efficient appliances to meet new ENERGY STAR requirements and significantly enhanced its marketing and media focus on energy efficiency and ENERGY STAR, earning billions of impressions.
- (Southfield, Michigan) **Grede Holdings**, a manufacturer of ductile, gray and specialty iron castings, built a comprehensive industrial energy program using ENERGY STAR energy management guidance and achieved a 5% reduction in energy intensity over 2022.
- (Anaheim, California) **Greenlite**, a manufacturer of lighting products, expanded its offerings through one utility implementer's programs by over 15 million ENERGY STAR certified bulbs, resulting in over \$60 million in energy savings for consumers.
- (Malibu, California) **Green Econome**, an energy-efficiency consulting and construction firm, helped to benchmark more than 1,200 of its clients' properties in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager®.
- (Prescott, Arizona) **Mandalay Homes**, a regional home builder, constructed nearly 150 ENERGY STAR certified homes in 2023, for a total of over 1,400 since joining the program in 2013, and launched a maintenance program to help new and re-sale buyers ensure that their ENERGY STAR certified homes continue to perform well.
- (Greenbelt, Maryland) **National Asphalt Pavement Association**, a trade association representing asphalt mixture producers and paving contractors, increased the visibility of the ENERGY STAR program and championed energy efficiency as key strategies to reduce the embodied carbon of the industry's products at industry events and in trade press.
- (Boston, Massachusetts) **Rockhill Management LLC**, a property management company, achieved ENERGY STAR Certification for 17 properties, and demonstrated innovation through its *Property Playoff* campaign, a friendly competition that trained 100% of property managers on how to benchmark in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager and led to a 2% overall energy reduction across its portfolio from September to November.

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EPA Announces 2024 ENERGY STAR Awards for Outstanding Contributions to Energy Efficiency and a Clean Future (continued)

- (Streetsboro, Ohio) **Softlite Windows & Doors**, a window and door manufacturer, demonstrated its strong support of ENERGY STAR by offering 156 product lines, with 100% having an ENERGY STAR certified option, while actively improving the current product lines to meet new, more stringent ENERGY STAR criteria.
- (Irving, Texas) **U.S. EcoLogic**, a home energy rating company, certified more than 3,600 homes as ENERGY STAR in 2023, for a total of nearly 60,000 since 2002, and developed new software to enhance its ENERGY STAR certification process with exception reporting to identify data anomalies, reporting archives, photos, timestamps, and geolocations.
- (Denver, Colorado) **Xcel Energy-Colorado**, an electric utility and natural gas company, supported the construction of more than 1,800 ENERGY STAR certified homes and hosted meetings with the community, builders, and energy rating companies to answer questions about rebuilding, energy efficiency and available incentives.

Read more about the [ENERGY STAR Awards](#) and [Award Winners' achievements](#).

About ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR® is the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible, and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. Thousands of industrial, commercial, utility, state, and local organizations rely on their partnership with the EPA to deliver cost-saving energy efficiency solutions. Since 1992, ENERGY STAR and its partners helped American families and businesses avoid more than \$500 billion in energy costs and achieve more than 4 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions. Please see more background information about [ENERGY STAR's impacts](#).

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA celebrates 20 years of methane reduction accomplishments at the Global Methane Forum

As part of the Biden-Harris Administration's commitment to cut methane pollution that threatens the climate and public health, the EPA and State Department officials convened a group of 450 global leaders at the 2024 Global Methane Forum this week. The Global Methane Forum provides an opportunity for members of the Global Methane Initiative, participants of the Global Methane Pledge and others to share successful actions, discuss next steps, and learn from peers and technical experts.

"This event marks the Global Methane Initiative's 20th anniversary as a global public-private partnership that, since 2004, has led the way on advancing technical understanding to reduce methane, a potent greenhouse gas that contributes about one-third of today's warming," **said Tomás Carbonell, Deputy Assistant Administrator of the EPA's Office of Air and Radiation and Chair of GMI.** "GMI has created networks of people around the world who can act on methane and achieve ambitious reductions. We are grateful to see the world rallying behind this important effort as we know that together we can mobilize greater methane action."

At the 2024 Global Methane Forum, the U.S., and representatives from more than 50 other countries highlighted actions taken by national and international policy makers and the private sector to reduce methane emissions. Over 30 specific projects and activities were showcased as examples for countries to emulate in addressing methane, including the EPA's recent historic oil and gas regulations under the Clean Air Act.

"Methane is the fastest way to reduce near term warming and essential to keep 1.5 degrees within reach," **said Rick Duke, Deputy Special Envoy for Climate.** "GMI has led the way in demonstrating how to reduce methane across sectors and laid a foundation to achieve the Global Methane Pledge goal of reducing emissions 30% by 2030."

GMI plays a critical role in advancing technical understanding that advances the ambitious global methane reduction targets of 30% by 2030, under the Global Methane Pledge. GMI has enabled the EPA to forge strong bilateral and multilateral collaboration with other countries, including India and China, in the effort to reduce methane emissions as quickly as possible.

Global Methane Initiative

In 2004 the EPA and the State Department launched the [Global Methane Initiative](#) (then known as the Methane to Markets Partnership) along with 14 countries and leading industry groups. There are 49 GMI Partner countries today.

In support of the Global Methane Initiative, an international public-private partnership committed to addressing methane, the U.S. has fostered global collaboration and sharing on

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EPA celebrates 20 years of methane reduction accomplishments at the Global Methane Forum (continued)

methane mitigation strategies, providing technical assistance, building capacity, and hosting eight GMI Global Methane Forums and Expos in five different countries and virtually.

Through the Global Methane Initiative, the EPA spearheads technical collaboration and innovation that leads to methane emissions reductions across key sectors including oil and gas, coal mining, municipal solid waste, agricultural manure management, and municipal wastewater. The EPA's work has demonstrated the technical effectiveness, commercial availability, and economic benefits of projects that convert waste methane into useful energy. The EPA's technical leadership has been a critical element in the success of this initiative, based on successful legacy domestic public-private partnerships like the Natural Gas STAR partnership and the Landfill Methane Outreach Program.

Since 2004, the EPA, with funding and support from the Department of State, has developed technical assessments, best practices, technical guidance, and tools, and provided training to more than 50,000 people across 70 countries. EPA has hosted the Secretariat of the GMI since its launch, organizing meetings, workshops, and trainings, and managing communications to build partner countries' capacity to address methane. GMI efforts have led to implementation of innovative projects and efforts such as the world's largest coal mine methane recovery project, the World Bank's innovative Pilot Auction Facility for Methane and Climate, deployment of pioneering technologies to reduce methane emissions from coal mine ventilation shafts, strengthened facility-specific emissions inventories in the oil and gas sector, and developed tools for the solid waste sector that have been used by more than 60 cities to assess methane reduction opportunities. These efforts through GMI have resulted in methane emissions reductions of more than 540 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent, equal to taking 115 million gasoline powered passenger vehicles off the road for a year. Every \$1 invested by the United States in GMI leverages approximately \$6 in investments from other stakeholders.

Global Methane Pledge

The Global Methane Pledge, launched at COP26 by the European Union and the United States, now has over 155 government participants representing over 50% of global anthropogenic methane emissions. Participants agree to take voluntary actions to contribute to a collective effort to reduce global methane emissions by at least 30% from 2020 levels by 2030. Since its launch, the GMP has generated unprecedented momentum for methane mitigation, with major work underway in six action areas including: the Energy Pathway, the Waste Pathway, the Food and Agriculture Pathway, Methane plans and policies, Data for Methane Action, and Finance for Methane Abatement. Meeting the GMP would reduce methane emissions to a level consistent with 1.5°C pathways while delivering significant benefits for human health, food security, and our economies such as preventing 26 million tons of crop losses, 255,000 premature deaths, 775,000 asthma-related hospitalizations and 73 bil-

EPA celebrates 20 years of methane reduction accomplishments at the Global Methane Forum (continued)

lion hours of lost labor due to extreme heat annually. Learn more about the [Global Methane Pledge](#).

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: U.S. EPA

EPA Regional Administrator kicks off 2024 Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference in State College, PA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) joined the Engineers' Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP), state and local partners, grantees, consultants, and industry leaders to help kick off the 2024 Pennsylvania Brownfields Conference in State College, Pennsylvania. Offering remarks during the opening plenary, EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz spoke to conference attendees on the importance of partnerships, priorities, and perseverance.

"Brownfields programs hold significant power, and we know these remediation, restoration, and revitalization efforts change lives and communities all across the Commonwealth," said Ortiz. "When we come together, align our priorities and goals, and commit to seeing projects through, we're telling our present and future communities that they're worth it."

Thanks to additional funding from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EPA in 2023 awarded a total of \$14 million to 19 grantees across Pennsylvania for assessments, cleanups, and revolving loan funds. EPA currently has 50 open Brownfields grants across 35 grantees in the Commonwealth.

During his remarks, Ortiz congratulated two Pennsylvania entities – North Side Industrial Development Company in Pittsburgh and the Housing and Redevelopment Authority of Cumberland County in Carlisle – on being selected to receive \$500,000 each in Brownfields Job Training grants.

"Pennsylvania has a rich industrial history with thousands of revitalized Brownfields sites and many more sites across the Commonwealth are currently undergoing the cleanup process, said DEP Acting Executive Deputy Ramez Ziadeh. "Brownfield projects can both restore the environment and contribute to greater economic development for businesses and communities. The success of our Brownfield Redevelopment program would not be possible without our collaborative partnerships with US EPA and other state agencies. DEP is committed to connecting communities and transforming sites into places where people want to live, work and visit through brownfield redevelopment."

Provided to nonprofit organizations and other eligible entities, these grants are used to recruit and train unemployed and underemployed residents from communities affected by environmental pollution, and economic disinvestment, and place them in environmental jobs. Since the program was created in 1998, EPA has funded 371 job training grants totaling over \$79 million through the Brownfields Job Training program. A total of 20,341 individuals have been trained and 15,168 individuals have been placed in full-time careers related to land remediation and environmental health and safety.

To learn more about EPA's Brownfields program, visit www.epa.gov/brownfields

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

Readout from state convening to discuss cybersecurity and the water sector

As a follow up to the letter from National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Michael S. Regan to Governors, on March 21, 2024, Anne Neuberger, Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies and Janet McCabe, EPA Deputy Administrator, met with state and local officials from across the United States to discuss cybersecurity of the water sector. The meeting highlighted the urgency of states' acting to improve the cybersecurity of water systems to protect our nations' water resources from potential cyberattacks by foreign governments and associated criminal entities.

"The nation's water systems face cyber threats from criminals and countries alike," **said Anne Neuberger, Deputy National Security Advisor for Cyber and Emerging Technologies.** "We must lock our digital doors to meet the threat. The Biden-Harris Administration has issued cybersecurity best practices and made available free tools and services to help companies operating critical infrastructure act quickly."

"Cybersecurity is not the sole responsibility of one single water system, one single state, or the federal government. Instead, cybersecurity is a collective responsibility," **said Janet McCabe, EPA Deputy Administrator.** "EPA has an important role, and it's critical that we work together with our state partners to help set a course toward cyber-resilience that will deliver essential protections across the country."

During the meeting, officials from several states outlined actions that they are currently taking to protect their water systems. There was discussion of current state programs in place and lessons learned from these experiences. Many states relayed challenges associated with cyber vulnerability including barriers such as finding the appropriate technical expertise. EPA and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) also shared information about existing state coordination and resources available to assist states in assessing and addressing vulnerabilities. States and federal partners will continue to work together to share best practices and facilitate connections to reduce barriers.

At the meeting, Deputy National Security Advisor Anne Neuberger requested that each state share a cybersecurity plan by May 20, 2024. The cybersecurity plans should include details for how states are working with both drinking water and wastewater systems to determine where they are vulnerable to cyberattacks and what actions they are taking to build in cybersecurity protections. DNSA Neuberger encouraged states to tap into EPA and CISA's resources to support their work. For more information visit the [Water and Wastewater Cybersecurity website](#).

Finally, EPA outlined actions being taken to establish a Water Sector Cybersecurity Task Force to identify near-term actions and strategies to reduce the risk of water systems nationwide to cyberattacks.

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Readout from state convening to discuss cybersecurity and the water sector (continued)

For information about EPA's cybersecurity program, visit [EPA's Cybersecurity for the Water Sector website](#).

For further information: press@epa.gov

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For further information: press@epa.gov

Source: U.S. EPA

EPA Regional Administrator visits UVA to discuss environmental issues, research

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz visited the University of Virginia campus in Charlottesville, Virginia, to engage with thought leaders and researchers and learn about the university's innovative projects addressing environmental challenges.

Ortiz met with UVA's Environmental Institute staff and students to gain insight into the cutting-edge research projects and have in-depth discussions that provided additional perspectives on environmental justice, climate equity and economic prosperity across the Mid-Atlantic Region.

"Learning about the important research work ongoing at UVA's Environmental Institute is key to achieving our mission," **said EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz.** "Protecting our planet is a shared responsibility. Engagement opportunities like this visit lead to a deeper understanding of environmental issues and strengthen our capability to develop effective solutions that help all communities."

Discussions between Ortiz and the UVA faculty, researchers and students included findings on climate change and rising sea levels along coastlines, programs affecting tribes and indigenous peoples, the effects of green energy in rural Virginia, and a roundtable discussion on the region's efforts and research opportunities.

This visit highlights the EPA's dedication to collaborating with academic institutions to encourage dialogue and information sharing that helps protect human health and the environment.

"UVA's Environmental Institute is very pleased to host EPA Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz, who is a leader in innovative climate solutions," **said Karen McGlathery, UVA's Environmental Institute Director.** "UVA has exciting frontier research that addresses some of the most pressing environmental challenges our region faces. This conversation is important as we consider how UVA research leads the way for solutions that engage diverse stakeholders on issues ranging from coastal resilience to environmental justice."

Before the visit concluded, Ortiz also met with students to discuss EPA efforts, answer questions and promote career opportunities with the agency.

For further information: R3Press@epa.gov

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

Toxic chemical releases have declined 21% in 10 years according to new Toxics Release Inventory data

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency released its 2022 Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) National Analysis showing that environmental releases of TRI chemicals from facilities covered by the program were 21% lower in 2022 compared to 2013. This includes a 26% decrease in air releases. During this 10-year period, releases from manufacturing facilities decreased by 9% while the value added to the U.S. economy from manufacturing increased by 14%. While overall releases increased by 1% from 2021 to 2022, there was a 6.5% increase in the number of pollution prevention activities reported under the TRI program compared to 2021.

The 2022 TRI National Analysis summarizes environmental releases of TRI chemicals, as well as how facilities managed their waste. In 2022, facilities reported managing 88.5% of their TRI chemical waste through preferred practices such as recycling, energy recovery and treatment, while releasing 11.5% of their TRI chemical waste into the environment.

“Communities have a right to know how facilities in their backyards might be exposing them to toxic chemicals,” **said Assistant Administrator for the Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michal Freedhoff.** “We are committed to sharing the information we collect from facilities openly and clearly, allowing people to find new ways to use this data to the benefit of us all.”

EPA, states and Tribes receive TRI data from facilities in sectors such as manufacturing, mining, hazardous waste management and electric utilities. More than 21,000 facilities submitted reports on 522 of the 827 chemicals and chemical categories for which TRI reporting is required. The remaining 305 chemicals either were not manufactured, processed or used by facilities required to report to TRI or were not manufactured, processed or used in amounts large enough to trigger reporting.

The 2022 TRI National Analysis features visualizations and analytical tools to make data more useful and accessible to communities. Readers can view data by state, Tribe, metropolitan area, EPA region and watershed using the [“Where You Live” mapping tool](#). This tool also allows readers to view facility locations overlaid with demographic data to identify potential exposure to TRI chemical releases in communities, including overburdened communities. Community groups, policymakers and other stakeholders can use this information, along with other environmental data, to better understand which communities may be experiencing a disproportionate pollution burden and take action at the local level.

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Toxic chemical releases have declined 21% in 10 years according to new Toxics Release Inventory data (continued)

Additionally, the 2022 TRI National Analysis highlights trends and changes in waste management practices for specific sectors and chemicals in the Sector Profile and Chemical Profile sections. This year, the 2022 TRI National Analysis highlights the primary metals manufacturing sector alongside the standard profiles for electric utilities, chemical manufacturing and metal mining.

EPA is holding a public webinar on Thursday, April 4, 2024, at 2 p.m. ET to provide an overview of the 2022 TRI National Analysis. [Register for the webinar](#).

[View the 2022 TRI National Analysis, including local data.](#)

PFAS Reporting

The TRI National Analysis includes reporting on per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as required by the 2020 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). A provision of the NDAA outlines criteria for additional PFAS to be automatically added for TRI reporting. For reporting year 2022, four PFAS met the criteria and were added to the reporting requirements for a total of 180 PFAS tracked by the TRI program. During 2022, 50 facilities managed 1.2 million pounds of these chemicals as waste, which represents an 8% decrease compared to 2021.

For reporting year 2024, TRI will no longer have a reporting exemption for facilities that use PFAS in small, or *de minimis*, concentrations as a result of EPA's recently published [final rule](#). This rule will improve the quality and quantity of publicly available data on PFAS, as many materials used at facilities contain PFAS in low concentrations. Facilities that make or use these products will no longer be able to rely on the *de minimis* exemption to avoid their responsibility to disclose PFAS releases and other waste management of these chemicals.

Pollution Prevention

Facilities implemented 3,589 total pollution prevention activities in 2022 with the most common being process and equipment modifications, followed by changes to operating practices and training. Through both existing programs and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, EPA offers [grant opportunities](#) to state and Tribal technical assistance providers to help prevent pollution.

Industry professionals can view TRI reporting on [pollution prevention](#) to learn about best practices implemented at other facilities.

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Toxic chemical releases have declined 21% in 10 years according to new Toxics Release Inventory data (continued)

Key Expansions to TRI Reporting

Important expansions to TRI reporting went into effect for reporting year 2022. Some contract sterilization facilities, which are contracted to sterilize products or equipment for hospitals and other facilities, were [required to report](#) to TRI for the first time on their management of ethylene oxide and ethylene glycol as waste. These facilities managed 6.3 million pounds of ethylene oxide waste, nearly all of which was treated.

Reporting year 2022 was also the first year of [expanded reporting for the natural gas processing sector](#). The 305 facilities in this sector that reported to TRI managed 115 million pounds of TRI chemicals in waste and disposed of 81% of TRI chemicals in underground injection wells.

For further information: press@epa.gov

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency