

# Conservation Committee Report

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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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## Shapiro Administration Launches Grant Program to Help Schools and Childcare Facilities Eliminate Lead in Drinking Water

DEP's no-cost lead sampling program aims to reduce childhood exposure to lead in drinking water across the Commonwealth

Grants are available for schools and childcare centers to install hydration sta-

tions, point-of-use devices for removing lead, and replacement faucets

The Shapiro Administration is launching a no-cost water sampling program for eligible schools and childcare facilities across the Commonwealth to eliminate lead in drinking water

and reduce childhood lead exposure.

Testing water in schools is important because children spend a significant portion of their days in these facilities. The longer water remains in contact with lead plumbing,

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## DCNR Begins Aerial Treatment to Mitigate Spongy Moth Impact on Forest Ecosystems, Reports Significant Improvement in Defoliation Caused by Pests

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) announced that the beginning of aerial spraying of state woodlands to combat spongy moth

(*Lymantria dispar dispar*, formerly known as the gypsy moth) populations poised for spring outbreaks in many sections of Pennsylvania.

In 2024, spongy moth defoliated 595,324 forest acres in Pennsylvania.

This year's treatment program covers just under 75,000 forest acres—a significant decrease from over 227,000 forest acres last year and 290,000 the year before.

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## **Shapiro Administration Launches Grant Program to Help Schools and Childcare Facilities Eliminate Lead in Drinking Water**

the more opportunity exists for lead to leach into water. As a result, facilities with on again/off again water use, such as schools, may have elevated lead concentrations in their water. Testing the water at each facility is the only sure way to find out if the water contains too much lead.

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) received federal funding for the Voluntary School and Child Care Lead Testing and Reduction Grant Program through the EPA's Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Program.

"We know the health risks associated with childhood lead exposure, which is why we're committed to seeing it eliminated whenever possible. The WIIN program is a win/win for Pennsylvania's children because it helps find where the problems are and helps eliminate them," said DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley. "Ensuring every Pennsylvanian has access to clean drinking water is a core part of DEP's mission. By continuing to take action to get lead out of our drinking water, this grant program will promote a healthier, safer Commonwealth."

Eligible schools and childcare facilities can apply to test and/or remediate lead in their drinking water. Eligible lead reduction activities may include purchasing and installing hydration stations, point-of-use (POU) devices designed to remove lead, and replacement of faucets. DEP has contracted with Terraphase Engineering to perform the lead testing.

To qualify, applicants must have drinking water sample results demonstrating an exceedance of the EPA's remediation trigger level (5 parts per billion) within 36 months of the date of their application. Recipients may be eligible for reimbursement up to \$3,000 per installed hydration station.

Interested applicants can visit the [Lead Testing Program webpage](#) to determine eligibility.

Applications must be submitted online through the Commonwealth's Electronic Application: [Grant Details | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#). Enrollment is currently open and will remain so until the \$4.4 million in total funds are exhausted.

For more information on the Voluntary School and Child Care Lead Testing & Reduction Grant program, application guidance, and more, visit DEP's webpage: [Lead Information for Schools and Child Care Facilities](#). Inquiries can also be sent to the Department's Safe Drinking Water program at [RA-EPWIINLEAD@pa.gov](mailto:RA-EPWIINLEAD@pa.gov).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **DCNR Begins Aerial Treatment to Mitigate Spongy Moth Impact on Forest Ecosystems, Reports Significant Improvement in Defoliation Caused by Pests (continued)**

“Pennsylvania’s forests are one of the Commonwealth’s most valuable natural assets, providing clean air and water, recreation opportunities, and a sustainable timber resource,” **State Forester Seth Cassell** said. “Each year, spongy moths pose a significant threat to our native oak forests, and DCNR works to target and suppress outbreaks to prevent widespread tree loss. This reduction is a strong indication that our suppression efforts are making a difference, and we remain committed to protecting these vital forested landscapes.”

Feeding while in the larval or caterpillar stage, the insect usually hatches and begins feeding from mid- to late April in southern Pennsylvania, and in early to mid-May in the northern part of the state. Oak, apple, sweet gum, basswood, birch, aspen, and willow trees are most affected by the spongy moth. DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry experts note the state’s oak tree stands are especially vulnerable to infestations.

DCNR will oversee spraying of 65 sites totaling 74,779 acres. Included will be portions of 5 state forests and 7 state parks, in 13 counties located in southcentral, central, northcentral, and northeast Pennsylvania.

In addition to DCNR’s spray program, the Pennsylvania Game Commission will also be conducting an aerial spray program in 2025 on approximately 38,000 acres of State Game Lands.

State Forests and Parks to be sprayed include:

- Boyd Big Preserve Tree Conservation Area, Dauphin County
- Delaware State Forest, Pike and Monroe County
- Ibberson Conservation Area, Dauphin County
- Kings Gap State Park, Cumberland County
- Loyalsock State Forest, Lycoming and Bradford County
- Promised Land State Park, Pike County
- Shikellamy State Park, Union County
- Swatara State Park, Lebanon County
- Tiadaghton State Forest, Clinton and Lycoming County
- Tuscarora State Forest, Perry and Juniata County
- Weiser State Forest, Dauphin, Schuylkill, Northumberland County

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## **DCNR Begins Aerial Treatment to Mitigate Spongy Moth Impact on Forest Ecosystems, Reports Significant Improvement in Defoliation Caused by Pests (continued)**

“Spongy moth populations in Pennsylvania appear to be declining, particularly in the central part of the state, thanks to ongoing suppression efforts and the natural end of the insect’s outbreak cycle,” said **DCNR Forest Health Manager Rosa Yoo**. “That said, we’re still seeing hotspots and lingering populations that will be addressed in this year’s suppression program. In the northeast, populations remain a concern based on egg mass surveys conducted last fall and winter, so treatments will continue there as well. The encouraging news is that, overall, we’re seeing signs of a statewide decline, and we’re hopeful for population crashes in some areas.”

The suppression program is conducted with the goal of minimizing defoliation so that trees do not become stressed and succumb to disease, other insect pests, or drought. Aerial spraying will be conducted by two helicopters and two fixed-wing aircraft. Progress of the spray program can be followed using the [interactive map](#) on the DCNR web page([opens in a new tab](#)), which shows the location of all the spray blocks.

Targeted sites are determined by surveys of egg masses and other indicators across the state indicating populations are increasing and have the potential to cause major defoliation.

A tree begins to significantly suffer when 30 percent or more of its leaf surface is lost, and when left untreated, heavy infestations over 2-3 consecutive years can result in tree mortality. Oak mortality leads to a loss of timber resources, a decrease in the carbon sequestered by our forests, and negatively impacts the habitat quality for many of our native species. Not only are oaks an important mast species for wildlife, but oaks host a significant number of native insects and invertebrates as well.

The applied insecticides, tebufenozide or *Bacillus thuringiensis* subsp. *kurstaki*, must be ingested by young caterpillars as they feed on emerging foliage. These products are specific to young caterpillars and must be ingested to be effective. There are no known impacts to other insect groups, including bees. These products are also subject to State and federal environmental review and are deemed safe for use and are commonly used in agriculture.

The Pennsylvania DCNR will also conduct aerial spraying in parts of Somerset, Fayette, and Westmoreland counties to protect stressed forests from Fall Cankerworm (FCW) defoliation around the same time as the spongy moth suppression program. These areas have faced repeated damage from pests and drought in recent years, making them more vulnerable. While FCW is a native insect, another year of defoliation could hinder forest recovery. Treatment zones can be viewed on the DCNR’s spongy moth [interactive map](#).

Visit [DCNR’s website](#) for more information on spongy moth impacts in Pennsylvania.

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

## **DEP Alerts Cumberland County Residents to Elevated Air Quality Levels Due to Wildfire Smoke**

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced elevated air quality levels due to wildfires in southern Cumberland County. DEP expects air quality to be in the high Code Yellow to Code Orange range for periods of time Friday as the smoke descends into the valleys of Cumberland County, specifically along the I-81 corridor.

Pennsylvania residents in the areas impacted the most from smoke should limit their outdoor activities. Children, sensitive populations such as older people, those who exercise or work outdoors and those with lung or respiratory conditions such as asthma, emphysema, or bronchitis should avoid prolonged or heavy outdoor exertion.

As of Friday afternoon, April 25, 2025, wildfires continue to burn across eastern and southern Cumberland County. As a result of the very dry conditions that have persisted across southcentral Pennsylvania in 2025 and an area of high pressure over the region, the wildfires will continue to produce smoke that will linger over the area. DEP anticipates elevated air quality levels due to fine particulate matter.

The weather pattern on Friday will change during the day, leading to an improvement in the air quality. The area of high pressure that persisted over the region on Thursday will give way to rain during the afternoon and evening hours on Friday. As a result, the smoke's greatest impact was expected to be during the morning hours on Friday.

To track the air quality in real-time, visit the US EPA Airnow website at <https://www.airnow.gov>. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) [Air Quality Index \(AQI\)](#) provides standardized color codes for forecasting and reporting daily air quality. Green signifies good air quality; Yellow means moderate air quality; Orange represents unhealthy pollution levels for sensitive groups of people; and Red warns of unhealthy pollution levels for all.

For more information, visit DEP at [www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/AQPartnersWeb](http://www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/AQPartnersWeb) and EPA's AirNow at [www.airnow.gov](http://www.airnow.gov).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## DEP Partners with PennTAP and Catalyst Connection on RISE PA to Reduce Costs for Businesses and Create Energy Jobs Across Pennsylvania

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) announced two strategic partnerships that will expand energy job opportunities across the Commonwealth while helping small and mid-sized manufacturers reduce costs, lower emissions, and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving energy economy.

Through the RISE PA (Reducing Industrial Sector Emissions in Pennsylvania) initiative, DEP is partnering with Penn State's Pennsylvania Technical Assistance Program (PennTAP), which provides no-cost technical assistance to help small and mid-sized businesses improve energy efficiency and environmental performance, and Catalyst Connection, a Pittsburgh-based economic development organization focused on manufacturing innovation.

"These partnerships are a win-win for Pennsylvania," said **DEP Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley**. "RISE PA is about investing in our people, our planet, and our economy. By helping manufacturers reduce energy waste and adopt cutting-edge technologies, we're not only supporting cleaner air and lower energy costs—we're also creating more good-paying energy jobs right here in Pennsylvania."

The [collaboration with PennTAP](#) will provide hands-on technical assistance to help manufacturers identify and implement practical, energy-saving solutions. Leveraging decades of experience, PennTAP empowers businesses to increase efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and lower operational costs, all while driving sustainable growth. The PennTAP partnership will support approximately 800 small and medium size manufacturing businesses.

"RISE PA is a game-changer for Pennsylvania manufacturers," said **Tanna Pugh**, director of PennTAP. "By helping manufacturers adopt energy-efficient technology, this program lowers costs, boosts sustainability and keeps Pennsylvania industries competitive in a changing economy."

Catalyst Connection, a long-standing leader in southwestern Pennsylvania's manufacturing sector, will provide direct support to companies [applying for RISE PA grants](#), including technical training. These grants, managed by DEP, will fund projects that create opportunities for energy contractors, engineers, and skilled workers across the state.

Together, these efforts will support workforce development and innovation in the clean energy economy.

"RISE PA is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to transform Pennsylvania's industrial economy," said **Petra Mitchell**, President and CEO of Catalyst Connection. "It enables manufacturers—especially small and mid-sized companies—to invest in sustainable technologies that will reduce emissions, lower costs, and ensure long-term growth."

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## **DEP Partners with PennTAP and Catalyst Connection on RISE PA to Reduce Costs for Businesses and Create Energy Jobs Across Pennsylvania**

**(continued)**

This announcement aligns with Governor Josh Shapiro’s “[Lightning Plan](#)”, an “all of the above” energy plan to spark new energy development in Pennsylvania, create energy jobs, lower costs for consumers, and position the Commonwealth as a national energy leader for decades to come.

For more information on RISE PA and how to apply for technical assistance or funding, visit: [dep.pa.gov/RISE-PA](http://dep.pa.gov/RISE-PA)

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)



## **EPA Reaches Settlement with the Scranton, Pennsylvania, School District for Alleged Asbestos-Related Violations**

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced a settlement to resolve alleged violations of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act with the Scranton, Pennsylvania, public school district.

EPA alleges the school district failed to include all required elements in the asbestos management plans for 15 schools and to maintain complete, updated copies of the asbestos management plans for 19 schools in its administrative office and in the administrative offices of those schools. Under the terms of this settlement, the district has agreed to demonstrate compliance with the relevant regulations in all of its school buildings and submit a certification of compliance.

The Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act is the section of the Toxic Substances Control Act that regulates how educational institutions manage asbestos in school buildings. The law requires public school districts and non-profit schools—including charter schools and schools affiliated with religious institutions—to inspect schools for asbestos, prepare management plans, and take action to prevent or reduce asbestos hazards.

For more information on asbestos exposure, visit the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry [asbestos webpage](#) and EPA's website for information on [asbestos and school buildings](#).

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



## Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Invests in New Green Space as Minersville Community Park Opens in Johnstown

**Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** visited Johnstown to celebrate the opening of a new community park in the city, **Minersville Community Park**.

DCNR invested \$160,800 in the development of Minersville Community Park, which features a walking path, a half-court basketball court, a pavilion, a parking area, and a playground. This recently completed project was supported through DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program (C2P2) as part of the agency's [2022 grant round](#), which awarded \$90 million to projects across the Commonwealth.

"This park is a tremendous step in improving access to nature in one of Pennsylvania's key urban communities," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "Thank you to everyone on the ground who worked to make this park possible for Johnstown. Present and future generations will be able to enjoy nature here for years to come thanks to this important work."

The \$321,600 park project was made possible by a \$150,800 investment from City of Johnstown, a \$10,000 donation from Charlotte Hall, Maryland resident Robert Ramos, and with support from the Johnstown Community Redevelopment Authority, Minersville Polish Alliance, and community members such as the Minersville Action Committee.

"This project is the culmination of strong local partnerships and the community seeing the value of investing in local communities," said **Mary Ann Manculich, a member of the Minersville Action Committee**. "We now have a playground and open space for people of all ages thanks to this collaborative work. Special thanks to Robert Ramos and thank you to everyone who made this park a reality."

The C2P2 grant program supports projects to create new parks, rehabilitate existing green spaces, and protect natural resources across Pennsylvania. Last fall, the **Shapiro Administration** awarded more than [\\$79 million to 307 local projects](#) through this program — reinforcing a statewide strategy to expand access to safe, high-quality outdoor recreation.

Pennsylvania is home to more than **6,100 local parks, 124 state parks, over 12,000 miles of trails, and more than 83,000 miles of rivers and streams**. Combined with **2.2 million acres of state forest**, the Commonwealth is one of the largest providers of public outdoor recreation space in the eastern U.S. with opportunities in all four seasons – making Pennsylvania [The Great American Getaway](#).

For more information about **DCNR's Community Conservation Partnerships Program** grants, visit [DCNR's website](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Grant Applications to Protect At-Risk Wildlife and Native Plants in Pennsylvania

Applications are now open for the 2025 Wild Resource Conservation Program (WRCP), which offers grant funding to support research and conservation projects that protect Pennsylvania's native wildlife, plants, and ecosystems, announced the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**.

The WRCP, overseen by DCNR, provides critical support for conserving non-game animals, native plants and fungi, and invertebrates such as insects — species often left out of traditional conservation programs but vital to the Commonwealth's ecosystems.

"These grants fuel the kind of science-driven, hands-on conservation work that helps protect Pennsylvania's most vulnerable wildlife and plant species," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "The Shapiro Administration is committed to maintaining our Commonwealth's rich biodiversity for future generations — and this program is a key part of that mission."

This year's WRCP grant priorities include:

- **Surveys** of at-risk species such as the Allegheny woodrat, northern harrier, green salamander, and state-listed native plants
- **Genetic research** on native grapes and mountain mint
- **Habitat management** for wood thrush and other species of concern

Additional focus areas include the rare amphipod species *Gammarus* and 12 regional stonefly species identified as top conservation priorities.

"The 2025 grant round is focused on supporting recovery and implementation efforts for Pennsylvania's rare, threatened, and endangered species," said **Rebecca Bowen, DCNR's chief of Conservation Science and Ecological Resources**. "The Wild Resource Conservation Program is unique in that it allows Pennsylvanians to directly support the protection of non-game wildlife and native plants."

Launched in 1982, WRCP encourages and supports research and protection efforts to conserve Pennsylvania's diverse native wildlife resources, including bird and mammal species, amphibians and reptiles, insects, wild plants, and fungi.

The Wild Resource Conservation Program's mission fits with the **Shapiro Administration's** broader commitment to preserving and enhancing Pennsylvania's natural resources. Pennsylvanians can contribute to WRCP through the [Eastern Hellbender license plate](#) and the state's voluntary tax check-off.

In 2024, [DCNR awarded \\$372,000](#) through WRCP to support field research, habitat restoration, and the conservation of fungi and plant species.

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## **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Grant Applications to Protect At-Risk Wildlife and Native Plants in Pennsylvania (continued)**

### **How to Apply**

Applications will be accepted **now through 4:00 PM on July 7, 2025**, through DCNR's [online grant portal](#). Project proposals that support DCNR's Wildlife Action Plan or other agency conservation priorities — even if not explicitly listed — are welcomed.

Visit [DCNR's website](#) for full grant criteria, priority species, and application instructions.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## EPA Takes Enforcement Action to Address Biodiesel Spill that Reached Maine Waterways

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced a settlement with P.S. Marston Associates, LLC that resolves a February 2024 incident where the company spilled approximately 1,680 gallons of biodiesel into a storm drain from a fuel truck on the Bates College campus in Lewiston, Maine. The biodiesel reached Jepson Creek through the storm drains, and an oil sheen was observed in the Androscoggin River in alleged violation of the federal Clean Water Act. P.S. Marston will pay a \$49,528 civil penalty to resolve this case.

"This settlement holds accountable a company that polluted Maine waterways and was not able to contain all of the spilled biodiesel before it reached Jepson Creek and the Androscoggin River," **said EPA New England Regional Administrator Mark Sanborn.** "This case exemplifies EPA's core mission to protect human health and the environment and ensure clean air, land and water for every American."

The spill occurred while a truck driver with the fuel delivery company was conducting a transfer of biodiesel to Bates College. The driver did not follow the company's standard operating plan and walked away from the transfer. Immediately following this, the truck and the transfer hose disconnected from one another and released an estimated 1,680 gallons of product. The biodiesel flooded a parking lot, flowed into storm drains and eventually reached nearby waterways.

Following the spill, Bates College called the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and reported the spill to the federal National Response Center. P.S. Marston reported that some, though not all, of the spilled oil was recovered. Recovery of the oil in the Androscoggin River was not possible due to high levels of water and ice, and Maine DEP placed booms in the affected storm drains and in accessible areas of Jepson Brook.

Following the spill, P.S. Marston reported to EPA that the spill did not impact any fish, waterfowl, animals, vegetation, or soils in Jepson Brook or the Androscoggin River. P.S. Marston Associates, LLC, doing business as Abeniqui Carriers, is a subsidiary of Brown Bear Transportation NH, Inc., and is located in North Hampton, N.H.

[Read more information on EPA's work to enforce the Clean Water Act.](#)

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

## **Governor Shapiro Visits Michaux State Forest in Cumberland County to Survey Wildfire Damage, Thank First Responders, and Call for Increased Support for Firefighters**

**Governor Josh Shapiro** and **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** visited [Michaux State Forest](#) in Cumberland County to survey the burn site of the Thompson Hollow and Hammonds Rocks wildfires. The Governor thanked firefighters, first responders, and local officials who worked tirelessly to contain and manage the fires, and he visited the Incident Command Center to hear firsthand about the challenges crews faced on the front lines.

The wildfires in Michaux State Forest are now largely under control: the **Thompson Hollow Fire is 80 percent contained**, and the **Hammonds Rocks Fire is fully contained**. Crews continue to patrol the area and conduct mop-up operations to extinguish any remaining hot spots and ensure the fire does not spread further. Combined, the two fires have burned more than 2,500 acres.

“Here in Michaux State Forest, we’ve seen outstanding leadership from DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry, who led the response with skill and determination — and they were supported by an extraordinary team of career and volunteer firefighters from across the region,” said **Governor Shapiro**. “We are incredibly grateful for the bravery and professionalism of our firefighters and first responders. These men and women run toward danger, putting their lives on the line to protect our communities, our forests, and our way of life. I’ve seen the very best of Pennsylvania’s fire service in action, and I’m committed to making sure the Commonwealth continues to have their backs – ensuring they have the tools, training, and support needed to do their jobs safely and effectively.”

**Governor Shapiro’s [2025-26 proposed budget](#)** includes critical investments to strengthen fire departments and protect communities across the Commonwealth, including a new \$30 million competitive grant program to fund equipment, staffing, and local needs; a pilot program to encourage municipal cooperation and shared resources; and annual cancer screenings for firefighters to address job-related health risks.

During the visit, **Secretary Dunn** provided updates on the firefighting operations over the past week. DCNR leads the Commonwealth’s wildfire response efforts, coordinating the work of department staff, local fire departments, and volunteers. More than 175 personnel from 159 local fire departments across Adams, Cumberland, Franklin, and York counties supported suppression efforts, alongside Cumberland County Emergency Operations, the **Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)**, and the **Pennsylvania State Police (PSP)**.

“Preventing and managing wildfires is a critical responsibility of DCNR as the caretakers of Pennsylvania’s forests,” said **Secretary Dunn**. “But we couldn’t do it without the dedicated support of our local fire departments and first responders. We are grateful for Governor Shapiro’s proposed budget, which will help ensure that these firefighters continue to have the resources they need to help protect our communities.”

With active firefighting efforts winding down, DCNR is beginning the next phase: long-term recovery and restoration of the burned forest tracts. Fortunately, no structures were lost, though two personnel were treated for dehydration and smoke inhalation. As of today, ap-

## Shapiro Administration and Local Partners in Lancaster County Celebrate Stream Restoration Investments to Little Conestoga Creek

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley and members of the Lancaster Clean Water Partners gathered at the Blue Green Connector Project today to celebrate stream and floodplain restoration investments on Little Conestoga Creek, including more than \$4 million in state funds, through the ongoing work of an innovative partnership led by the Little Conestoga Creek Foundation and Steinman Foundation.

The Blue Green Connector in Lancaster County is a prime example of how sustained investments through programs like Growing Greener are restoring watersheds, reducing pollution, and increasing outdoor recreational opportunities across Pennsylvania's share of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Acting Secretary Jessica Shirley and project partners offered remarks and toured a stream restoration site as part of DEP's Earth Week events.

"DEP is proud to be part of the ongoing effort to restore Little Conestoga Creek, reduce pollution, improve flood resiliency, and create the Blue Green Connector. This project will provide environmental education in a recreational setting, strengthening the community's connection to nature," said **Acting DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley**. "Children who have meaningful environmental experiences become better stewards of our natural resources as adults, so it was fitting to visit this project serving an Environmental Justice area as we celebrate Earth Week."

The Shapiro Administration invested more than \$4 million in the ongoing environmental restoration work in the Little Conestoga watershed, including more than \$3 million in Growing Greener grants, which helped secure matching federal funds, and a Countywide Action Plan (CAP) Block Grant of \$440,000. DEP has also provided technical assistance and streamlined permitting oversight for the project. With this essential funding, the project has completed 50% of the restoration planned for the Little Conestoga Creek along the Blue Green Connector to date.

Little Conestoga Creek is a priority watershed under Lancaster County's CAP. The ongoing Blue Green Connector project includes the restoration of 25 acres of floodplain and wetland along 1.3 stream miles; the removal of 112,000 cubic yards of legacy sediment, which are soils that eroded from upstream areas; the planting of native vegetation and habitat creation for wildlife; and the annual reduction of 4 million pounds of sediment, 1,541 pounds of phosphorus, and 7,752 pounds of nitrogen from the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

"Lancaster's shared vision of clean and clear water by 2040 needs projects like the Blue Green Connector," said **Allyson Gibson, Executive Director of Lancaster Clean Water Partners**. "This project is at a scale that helps us achieve not only local water quality improvements as outlined in our CAP, but also inspires innovative thinking and requires reaching out to neighbors, inviting them to learn about and live in this system together."

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## **Shapiro Administration and Local Partners in Lancaster County Celebrate Stream Restoration Investments to Little Conestoga Creek (continued)**

The Blue Green Connector will include 3.44 miles of multi-modal, accessible trail, linked to the fifteen-mile Greater Lancaster Heritage Pathway and five miles of existing trails, serving 225,000 residents in the Lancaster metropolitan area. A trailside environmental learning lab with interpretive stations, demonstration areas, outdoor learning spaces, and public art is planned.

“We hope that this project catalyzes others to address water quality and ecosystem health throughout Lancaster County, and recognize that recreational and educational opportunities improve the quality of life in our community,” said **Shane Zimmerman, CEO of the Steinman Foundation**.

Growing Greener is the largest single investment of state funds in Pennsylvania's history to address critical environmental concerns. Growing Greener grants can be awarded to watershed groups, local or county government, municipal authorities, county planning commissions, county conservation districts, council of governments, educational institutions, or non-profit organizations. Grantees have up to three years to implement their projects.

For more information on the Growing Greener Plus Grant Program, application guidance, and to apply, visit DEP's website, [Growing Greener Plus Grants Program](#).

**Source:** The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)



## **Shapiro Administration Highlights Invasive Species Removal and Ecosystem Restoration at Cumberland County Conservation District Office**

**Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn** joined officials from across the **Shapiro Administration** to spotlight efforts to combat invasive species and restore native ecosystems during the **Invasive Replace-ive** event hosted by the Governor's Invasive Species Council at the **Cumberland County Conservation District**.

The event brought together leaders from **DCNR, Department of Agriculture (PDA), Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC), and Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)** to highlight how replacing invasive plants with native species helps restore habitat, protect wildlife, and promote biodiversity. Participants received native plants to support restoration efforts in their own landscapes — part of a series of five Invasive Replace-ive events held across the Commonwealth this spring, all of which quickly reached capacity.

These events reflect **Governor Shapiro's** commitment to protecting Pennsylvania's natural resources, engaging communities, and fostering healthier ecosystems across the state.

This week's event also builds momentum for **Pennsylvania Native Species Day**, which will be celebrated statewide on **May 20, 2025**. The **Shapiro Administration** encourages local communities, organizations, and residents to host their own events throughout May to raise awareness and celebrate the vital role native species play in sustaining ecosystems.

"Native species are vital to healthy ecosystems in Pennsylvania," **said Secretary Dunn**. "When invasive plants take hold, they disrupt food chains and leave wildlife with fewer resources to survive. Through programs like Invasive Replace-ive, we're not only removing harmful species — we're rebuilding natural systems that support pollinators, wildlife, and people."

"Pennsylvania is home to 480 species of native birds and mammals, all of which depend on native ecosystems to survive," **said Timothy R. Haydt, Director, Bureau of Wildlife Habitat Management, PGC**. "Invasive species disrupt these ecosystems statewide highlighting the importance of working with agency partners and the public to ensure healthy native habitats for wildlife now and in the future."

"Invasive trees and shrubs take over farm fields, landscapes, and forests, choking out native species and harboring ticks and harmful pests like spotted lanternflies," **said PDA Deputy Secretary Fred Strathmeyer, Jr.** "Replacing invasives with beneficial natives is one way homeowners can eliminate threats to their farming neighbors and attract pollinators that will continue to benefit farms and beautify Pennsylvania landscapes for years to come."

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## **Shapiro Administration Highlights Invasive Species Removal and Ecosystem Restoration at Cumberland County Conservation District Office (continued)**

“Native species are an essential part of life in Pennsylvania, including in our aquatic ecosystems,” said **Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director, PFBC**. “These native fish, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, and plants bring our waters to life, and where managed and protected responsibly, provide incredible recreational value and sustenance. Many of these delicate species are also nature’s best indicators of clean water, which is beneficial to everyone.”

### **Ways to Celebrate Native Species Day:**

- Hosting or participating in a native species planting event
- Organizing or joining a guided nature hike
- Taking part in an invasive species removal event
- Attending a workshop or webinar on native species and ecosystem restoration
- Planting native species in your yard

Organizations and individuals planning events for Native Species Day are invited to **share their activities** through a brief online survey. Submitted events may be featured on DCNR’s website and shared to inspire others to take part.

To learn more about the Invasive Replace-ive Program, Native Species Day, and how you can participate, visit the **Governor’s Invasive Species Council website**.

If you’re unsure whether a tree or shrub on your property is invasive, DCNR has experts that can help. There are service foresters available in every county. **Contact yours today.**

As more people request native species, they become easier to find and identify at nurseries. DCNR has pulled together a **list** of opportunities and places throughout the state that specialize in native plant species.

Through a **new online form**, Pennsylvanians can now make electronic donations to the Keystone Tree Fund, which supports grants for tree plantings in communities and streamside buffers in the Commonwealth.

The **2025 Pennsylvania Invasive Replace-ive Program** is funded by the U.S. Forest Service and made possible through partnerships with DCNR, the Department of Agriculture, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, the Penn State Extension Master Watershed Steward Program, and Pennsylvania Sea Grant.

For more information on invasive plants visit DCNR’s **website** or Agriculture’s **website**.

**Source:** The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

## **Governor Shapiro Visits Michaux State Forest in Cumberland County to Survey Wildfire Damage, Thank First Responders, and Call for Increased Support for Firefighters (continued)**

proximately 30 personnel remain on-site to support recovery efforts. Visitors to Michaux State Forest are urged to avoid entering burned areas as restoration work continues.

(continued on page 18)

DCNR continues to emphasize the importance of wildfire prevention, particularly during the dry spring months when fire danger remains high. Find up-to-date information about the [status of the wildfires](#) on the Commonwealth's dedicated website. Learn more about [wildfire prevention and management](#) on the DCNR website. To support tree plantings in Pennsylvania to help restore forests, [donate online](#) to the Keystone Tree Fund.

DCNR manages Pennsylvania's **124 state parks** and **2.2 million acres of state forestland**, with sustainability at the core of its stewardship. From protecting **86,000 miles of rivers and streams** to maintain **12,000-plus miles of trails** and over **6,100 local parks**, DCNR is ensuring these vital resources are preserved for future generations. For more details on Pennsylvania's public lands, visit [DCNR's website](#) and check out the [Calendar of Events](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)