

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 25 Issue 9

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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Governor Shapiro Launches Pennsylvania Office Of Outdoor Recreation, Highlights Largest Budget Investment In State Parks And Forests In Decades

The 2023-24 bipartisan budget invests \$112 million to improve state parks and forests, spur economic growth in the outdoor recreation industry, and make Pennsylvania the largest state to open an Office

of Outdoor Recreation

Governor Josh Shapiro visited Yough River Park in Connellsville, along the 150-mile [Great Allegheny Passage](#) (GAP), in Fayette County to launch Pennsylvania's Office of Outdoor Recreation and highlight the

2023-24 budget's \$112 million budget investment in state parks and forests -- the largest in decades.

"Our state parks and outdoor recreation industry are key to Pennsylvania's economy

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New EPA Report Shows Major Emissions Reductions in Electricity Sector from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released a new report that finds that President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act – the largest climate investment ever

– spurs major carbon dioxide (CO2) emission reductions from the U.S. electricity sector and across the economy. The report, "Electricity Sector Emissions Impacts of the Inflation Reduction Act: Assessment of projected CO2 emissions reductions from

changes in electricity generation and use," relies upon results from state-of-the-art models to assess how the Inflation Reduction Act's investments in clean electricity and other climate

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Governor Shapiro Launches Pennsylvania Office Of Outdoor Recreation (continued)

– hosting nearly 40 million visitors each year and boosting local businesses and the local economy in and around our parks,” **Governor Josh Shapiro said.** “When we invest real money to make our natural resources more accessible for Pennsylvanians, it helps communities and businesses grow and thrive. The budget that I recently signed delivers on the promise of a new Pennsylvania Office of Outdoor Recreation to strengthen our communities and grow the Commonwealth’s outdoor economy.”

The Pennsylvania Office of Outdoor Recreation will be focused on growing the state’s outdoor sector, which adds \$14 billion to Pennsylvania’s economy and accounts for 152,000 jobs.

The Office will coordinate efforts with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the departments of Community and Economic Development and Health, PennDOT, and others, to create a cohesive strategy for the growth and expansion of the outdoor sector.

“Governor Shapiro is making a tremendous down payment on our ability to improve visitor experiences at our state parks and forests,” **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said.** “It’s our public lands and trails that are the backbone that supports our outdoor recreation economy.”

Thanks to this budget investment, Pennsylvania becomes the largest state, by both economy and population, with an Office of Outdoor Recreation. Furthermore, the investments in state parks and forests in the budget signed by Governor Shapiro will help address a \$1.4 billion backlog of needed infrastructure work, ensuring Pennsylvania remains a premier destination for outdoor recreation.

“People and organizations across the Commonwealth see the need for statewide coordination to connect communities to meaningful and competitive growth opportunities,” **Pennsylvania Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner said.** “We have gathered a significant amount of input and will continue to engage with stakeholders and communities to build up the sixth largest outdoor recreation economy in the country, while maintaining the fun and adventure the outdoors provides.”

“Outdoor recreation is thriving in Pennsylvania, and we recognize the opportunity to transform this sector by expanding partnerships and making strategic investments,” **DCED Secretary Rick Siger said.** “DCED’s mission is to strengthen our communities and grow our economy and the focus of this new office fits perfectly within those principles. Strong outdoor recreation is also a major advantage when trying to attract and retain people and businesses – a competition that’s fiercer among states than ever before.”

Thousands of bicyclists pedal through Yough River Park in Connellsville every year impacting many businesses beyond those directly connected to outdoor recreation.

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Governor Shapiro Launches Pennsylvania Office Of Outdoor Recreation (continued)

Bicycle visitors lead to shops, eateries, and accommodations catering to trail users. They in turn have attracted new housing, a medical facility, and other business growth.

“We are fortunate to have experienced significant economic revitalization from the direct impact of the Great Allegheny Passage and the boon in outdoor recreation,” **Connellsville Mayor Greg Lincoln said**. “Investments in the trail have created so many new opportunities for this city, and not just for outdoor recreation. The economic development brought by the trail now extends to new medical centers and new homes being built – the trail is transforming us.”

A [50-member advisory group](#) (PDF) is helping create recommendations and actions needed for the new office to help support the outdoor economy. More than 500 people also participated during a statewide listening tour. A report with findings and action steps to guide the new office is being prepared.

The Great Allegheny Passage connects [Point State Park](#) in Pittsburgh, through [Ohiopyle State Park](#) and [Pennsylvania's Laurel Highlands](#) to Cumberland, Maryland, and on to Washington, D.C., through its link with the C&O Canal Towpath.

The Commonwealth has invested tens of millions in the GAP over the past four decades, including more than \$9 million in grant funding to help communities like Connellsville thrive.

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

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

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

New EPA Report Shows Major Emissions Reductions in Electricity Sector from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (continued)

solutions across sectors will reduce emissions. Since taking office, the Biden-Harris Administration has delivered on the most ambitious climate agenda in history, which is lowering energy costs for families, creating jobs across the country, and protecting lands and waters for future generations.

EPA's analysis finds that the Inflation Reduction Act:

Lowers economy-wide CO2 emissions, which include electricity generation and use, by 35 to 43% below 2005 levels in 2030.

Spurs CO2 emissions reductions from the electric power sector of 49 to 83% below 2005 levels in 2030.

Reduces CO2 emissions in all end-use sectors, most significantly in residential and commercial buildings followed by industry and transportation.

"The Inflation Reduction Act is transforming energy production and consumption in dramatic ways, paving the way towards a clean energy future," **said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan.** "This report shows robust evidence that America's clean energy transformation is driving significant reductions in CO2 emissions, putting us on a clear path to achieve President Biden's bold climate goals."

"EPA's report confirms that the Inflation Reduction Act has supercharged climate action in the United States," **said John Podesta, Senior Advisor to the President for Clean Energy Innovation and Implementation.** "This transformational law is enabling America to reach our climate goals by building a clean energy economy across every sector—power, transportation, buildings, and industry."

On August 16, 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act into law, marking the most significant policy action on clean energy and climate change in history. This report was written to satisfy the requirement in section 60107(5) of the Inflation Reduction Act that directs EPA to assess the reductions in greenhouse gas emissions that result from changes in domestic electricity generation and use through 2031.

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New EPA Report Shows Major Emissions Reductions in Electricity Sector from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (continued)

The report finds that the Inflation Reduction Act has greatly accelerated efforts to lower economy-wide CO₂ emissions. The results from EPA's analysis of an array of multi-sector and electric sector modeling efforts show that a wide range of emissions reductions are possible.

This finding reflects diversity in how the models represent the Inflation Reduction Act, the assumptions the models use, and fundamental differences in model structures. The analysis also explores sensitivity cases that vary assumptions about IRA implementation, technology costs, and deployment constraints – finding electric sector emissions reductions of up to 91% below 2005 levels in 2030 under advanced technology assumptions.

This report does not reflect rules and regulations that are currently in the process of being developed or finalized. Nor does it analyze non-CO₂ emissions or land-sink carbon removals.

This report is consistent with, and incorporates results from, recent reports issued by the Department of Energy and National Renewable Energy Laboratory, as well as results from a peer-reviewed analysis conducted by external, independent, energy and emissions modeling experts. The reports all show accelerated and significant reductions in U.S. carbon dioxide emissions with the implementation of the Inflation Reduction Act.

[Read the report.](#)

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

PA Resolves Longstanding Litigation to Protect Endangered Species, Ensure Pesticides

This week, the U.S. Department of Justice, on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) resolved longstanding litigation covering over 1,000 pesticide products, allowing EPA to fulfill its obligations to protect endangered species while conducting reviews and approvals of pesticides in a safe and protective manner.

In 2011, the Center for Biological Diversity and Pesticide Action Network (Plaintiffs) filed a complaint in Federal Court in California against EPA alleging that it was violating the Endangered Species Act (ESA) when it registered or reevaluated the registration of 382 pesticide active ingredients, which was ultimately reduced to 35 active ingredients covering over 1,000 pesticide products containing one or more of these active ingredients. This became known as the “megasuit” because of the number of pesticides it covered. The settlement entered by the Court this week resolves all outstanding claims.

“This agreement is a win-win-win to protect endangered species, ensure the availability of pesticides needed to grow food across America, and save considerable time and taxpayer expenses required to further litigate this case,” **said Assistant Administrator for EPA’s Office of Chemical Safety and Pollution Prevention Michal Freedhoff.** “This settlement allows EPA adequate time to fulfill its obligations under the Endangered Species Act and adopt key elements from the Agency’s 2022 ESA Workplan, which a wide range of stakeholders support.”

In 2022, EPA issued its ESA Workplan, *Balancing Wildlife Protection and Responsible Pesticide Use: How EPA’s Pesticide Program Will Meet its Endangered Species Act Obligations*, which describes how EPA will address the challenge of protecting ESA-listed species from pesticides. The ESA Workplan was developed with public listening sessions and public comment. This settlement is consistent with EPA’s ongoing efforts to develop a multichemical, multispecies approach to meeting its ESA obligations under the workplan. EPA’s traditional chemical-by-chemical, species-by-species approach to meeting these obligations has been slow and costly, with ESA work on each pesticide typically taking many years to complete. As a result, EPA has completed its ESA obligations for less than 5% of its actions, creating legal vulnerabilities, the potential for adverse impacts to listed species, and uncertainty for farmers and other pesticide users that use many pesticides. Resolving the remaining claims in this lawsuit and establishing a path forward under the settlement is a significant step to overcoming these challenges.

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PA Resolves Longstanding Litigation to Protect Endangered Species, Ensure Pesticides (continued)

This agreement and the prior partial settlement include obligations for EPA, many of which are also described in the ESA Workplan.

Those actions include:

- Development of mitigation measures for listed species that are particularly vulnerable to exposures from pesticides and determine how to apply these mitigations to future pesticide actions, as well as whether this Vulnerable Species Pilot should be expanded to more species. EPA met its first deadline (June 30, 2023) for this action by conducting public outreach on the mitigation measures identified for the first set of species.
- Development and implementation of an Herbicide Strategy (draft [released for public comment](#)), a Rodenticide Strategy, Insecticide Strategy, and Fungicide strategy (the latter three are still under development) which will identify mitigation measures for entire classes of pesticides to address their potential impacts to hundreds of ESA-listed species
- Completion of the ESA work for eight organophosphates and four rodenticides;
- Hosting of a workshop for stakeholders to explore how to offset pesticide impacts on ESA-listed species in situations where eliminating or modifying pesticide use may not be feasible, and how EPA could incorporate those offsets into its process for registering or reregistering pesticides. Offsets could include restoring wetland habitat or funding breeding programs for affected species.

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

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

Biden-Harris Administration Invests More than \$100 Million in Recycling Infrastructure Projects Through Investing in America Agenda

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced more than \$100 million from President Biden's Investing in America agenda to expand recycling infrastructure and waste management systems across the country, representing EPA's largest recycling investment in 30 years.

EPA has selected 25 communities to receive grants totaling more than \$73 million under the newly created Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling [funding opportunity](#). In addition, the agency is making available approximately [\\$32 million for states and territories](#) to improve solid waste management planning, data collection and implementation of plans.

The grants support the implementation of [EPA's National Recycling Strategy](#) to build an economy devoted to keeping materials, products, and services in circulation for as long as possible – what's known as a “circular economy.”

“President Biden's Investing in America agenda tackles our most pressing environmental challenges including climate change and lead in drinking water, and today we add another historic investment to better manage waste in communities across America,” said **EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. “By investing in better recycling, EPA is deploying resources to provide recycling services across the country, including in disadvantaged communities, while preventing waste that contributes to the climate crisis, supporting local economies and creating good-paying jobs.”

“Recycling helps us protect our environment while creating jobs and promoting economic growth,” said **Senator Tom Carper, Chairman of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee**. “Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, this unprecedented investment will provide communities across our country with the opportunity to improve their recycling programs and implement more sustainable waste-management practices. I applaud EPA for the hard work in getting this funding out the door, and I look forward to working together to advance policies that strengthen our nation's recycling infrastructure.”

President Biden's Investing in America agenda, a key pillar of Bidenomics, is growing the American economy from the middle out and bottom up – from rebuilding our nation's infrastructure, to driving over \$500 billion in private sector manufacturing and clean energy investments in the United States, to creating a manufacturing and innovation boom powered by good paying jobs that don't require a four-year degree, to building a clean-energy economy that is lowering energy costs for hardworking families, combatting climate change and making our communities more resilient.

EPA's Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program is also advancing the President's [Justice40 Initiative](#), which aims to ensure that 40% of the overall benefits of certain federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved, and overburdened by pollution.

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Biden-Harris Administration Invests More than \$100 Million in Recycling Infrastructure Projects Through Investing in America Agenda (continued)

Approximately \$56 million out of the \$73 million – or 76% - of the total funding for communities will go toward projects that benefit disadvantaged communities.

Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grants for Communities

The recycling grants for communities will support improvements to waste management systems across the country and will range from \$500,000 to \$4 million per grant. Selected projects include purchasing new fleets of recycling collection vehicles and bins to provide curbside recycling services for communities currently lacking access; upgrades to material recovery facilities to reduce contamination; enhancements to composting and organics programs and infrastructure; and construction of various types of facilities that improve recycling, composting, and reuse infrastructure for materials such as plastics and food waste.

Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grants for States and Territories

The recycling grants for states and territories will provide funding to all 56 states, territories, and the District of Columbia via grants ranging from \$360,000 to \$750,000; with the highest grant amounts supporting those states and territories that need it the most. These grants represent important steps toward achieving the [EPA's National Recycling Goal](#) and [Food Loss and Waste Reduction Goal](#). Funded activities include improving post-consumer materials management programs through developing or updating solid waste management plans and strengthening data collection efforts.

Additional Background:

Today's announcement for states, territories, and communities is the first round of funding from this new grant program. In the coming months, EPA will announce the selected recipients of the recycling grants for Tribes and intertribal consortia, as well as the recipients of [EPA's new Recycling Education and Outreach grant program](#).

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law provides \$275 million total from fiscal year 2022 to fiscal year 2026 for grants authorized under the Save Our Seas 2.0 Act - the largest investment in recycling in 30 years. The recycling grants are supplemented with additional funding provided through EPA's annual appropriations. EPA has selected these entities to receive funding for recycling infrastructure projects and anticipates making all the awards announced today once all legal and administrative requirements are satisfied.

For details about the Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling Grant Program selectees and other Bipartisan Infrastructure Law-related funding opportunities, visit the [EPA recycling grants webpage](#).

For further information: press@epa.gov

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

Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses, and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission Vehicles

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) awarded \$2.9 million in 2022 Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant funding to municipalities, schools, and businesses around the state to switch to zero- or low-emission vehicles.

The [DEP Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant \(AFIG\) program](#) supports projects to replace older gasoline or diesel fueled vehicles with cleaner fuel vehicles and install related fueling infrastructure to improve air quality in Pennsylvania. It builds on Governor Shapiro's agenda to create a bold, comprehensive climate and energy plan that will grow Pennsylvania's economy, protect and create jobs, and address climate change.

The 28 funded projects will install 32 electric vehicle chargers for private and public use and put 95 electric vehicles, 24 compressed or renewable natural gas vehicles, and 11 propane vehicles on the road.

Nine of the vehicles will be fully electric long-haul tractor trailers, the first supported by the AFIG program. Several other projects are for transit buses and garbage trucks. These three types of vehicles are the biggest consumers of gasoline, according to the [U.S. Department of Energy web page on average annual gasoline use by vehicle type](#).

The projects will be fully paid for with DEP funds. DEP receives approximately \$5 million in funding each year through the utilities gross receipts tax collected during each fiscal year to carry out the provisions of the Alternative Fuels Incentive Act.

"The Shapiro Administration is committed to supporting municipalities, school districts, and businesses that want to make zero- or low-emission transportation part of their operations," said DEP Secretary Rich Negrin. "The range of funded projects—our first funded electric 18-wheelers, a 40-car electric taxi fleet, electric scooters for a residential development, propane and electric buses and garbage trucks, and more—shows that interest in clean transportation is burgeoning among business and community leaders in Pennsylvania. DEP is excited to help them include healthier air quality in their mission."

The projects by county are as follows:

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**Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses,
and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission
Vehicles (continued)**

Montgomery, Schuylkill, and York

Current Trucking LLC: \$300,000 for this contractor for FedEx Ground to purchase three electric long-haul tractor trailers.

Evolve Logistics Group: \$300,000 for this contractor for FedEx Ground to purchase three electric long-haul tractor trailers.

Allegheny

50 26th Street: \$28,500 to purchase three electric cars and three electric scooters for residents' use in a planned residential development on

Pittsburgh's South Side.

Duquesne Light Company: \$90,000 for the purchase of 12 electric pickup trucks.

IE PA I LLC: \$300,000 to install eight DC electric vehicle fast chargers for use by the zTrip taxi fleet.

WHC PA LLC: \$300,000 for the purchase of 40 electric cars to operate the zTrip taxi fleet.

Berks

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Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses, and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission Vehicles (continued)

K.L. Harring Transportation: \$300,000 for this contractor to Bayer Pharmaceuticals to purchase three electric long-haul tractor trailers.

Bucks

Middletown Township: \$15,000 to buy two electric cars for use by the township's building and code enforcement inspectors

Solebury Township: \$7,500 to buy one electric car for use by the township codes department.

Butler

T.C. Recycling LLC: \$120,000 for six renewable natural gas garbage trucks.

Vogel Disposal Service: \$120,000 for six renewable natural gas garbage trucks.

Centre

Patton Township: \$7,500 to purchase an electric car for use by the township department of engineering, planning and zoning.

Chester

Chester County: \$72,464 to install eight dual-port Level 2 electric vehicle chargers across six county facilities.

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Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses, and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission Vehicles (continued)

East Pikeland Township: \$15,000 to purchase one electric car and one electric pickup truck for the township police force.

Cumberland

Carlisle Borough: \$37,500 for the purchase of five electric pickup trucks and light passenger trucks for use by the Borough's Codes department, administrative staff, and police department.

Cumberland County: \$60,000 to buy six electric cars, one electric pickup truck, and one electric transit van for use by several county departments, including facilities, probation, and county conservation districts and \$13,233 to install six level 2 chargers at two locations.

Dauphin

Derry Township School District: \$70,000 for seven propane school buses as part of their Propane School Bus Conversion Project.

Delaware

Springfield Ford, Inc.: \$292,628 to install three DC fast chargers and six Level 2 chargers for electric vehicles for their proposed rental fleet as well as for public use.

Lebanon

Lebanon County Housing Authority: \$15,000 for the purchase of one electric car and one electric transit van.

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**Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses, and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission Vehicles
(continued)**

Mercer

Tri-County Industries, Inc.: \$120,000 to purchase six renewable natural gas garbage trucks.

Montgomery

Bryn Mawr College: \$100,000 to buy its first electric bus as part of the college's goal to reach carbon neutrality by 2035.

Lower Merion Township: \$22,500 to purchase one electric car and two electric pickup trucks for municipal and police use.

School District of Springfield Township: \$100,000 for an electric school bus.

Suburban Transit Network, Inc.: \$11,250 for two electric transit vans and \$10,854 to install one Level 2 electric vehicle charger.

Tri-County Transit Service, Inc.: \$120,000 to purchase four propane transit buses.

Westmoreland

DMJ Transportation, Inc.: \$9,921 for the purchase of six compressed natural gas school buses.

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Shapiro Administration Awards \$2.9 Million to Schools, Businesses, and Local Governments Working to Switch to Zero- or Low- Emission Vehicles (continued)

Fifteen of the projects will serve environmental justice communities.

The AFIG program supports the transition to alternative fuels including electricity, compressed natural gas, renewable natural gas, liquefied natural gas, propane, hydrogen, hythane, biodiesel, ethanol, methanol, and other advanced biofuels.

Getting more zero- and low-emission vehicles on the road in Pennsylvania helps reduce harmful air pollutants, including nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds. It also helps lower the level of carbon dioxide, helping to address climate change.

Gasoline and diesel vehicles generate 47 percent of nitrogen oxides emissions in Pennsylvania, contributing to ground-level ozone. This affects the health of children, older people, people who work or are active outdoors, and people with asthma, emphysema, or other lung conditions. The transportation sector makes up 22 percent of Pennsylvania's total greenhouse gas emissions.

These new grant awards are the second and final set of 2022 AFIG grants, following the first set of 2022 AFIG grants, totaling \$1.5 million, [announced in February](#).

The AFIG program was established under Act 166 of 1992 to help create new markets for alternative fuels in Pennsylvania, increasing energy security and improving air quality.

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

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Shapiro Administration Expands Environmental Justice Protections with updated Policy and Improved Mapping Tool

DEP aims to protect every Pennsylvanian's Constitutional right to clean air and clean water and ensure communities most at risk from pollution and climate change have an equal seat at the table

The Shapiro Administration will adopt an updated [Environmental Justice \(EJ\) Policy](#), which expands environmental safeguards throughout the Commonwealth, a milestone in updating a 20-year-old policy the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has used to guide protections for communities most vulnerable to environmental challenges. Environmental justice areas make up 20 percent of the entire Commonwealth.

“Pennsylvanians’ right to clean air and pure water is enshrined in our Constitution and I’m committed to protecting those rights – that’s why my Administration is elevating environmental justice work within DEP and implementing a new policy that will protect communities most at risk,” said Governor Josh Shapiro. “The impacts of climate change aren’t limited to one community or another — they affect rural and urban areas alike, and every Pennsylvanian deserves to be able to let their children play outside without worrying about air quality and drink their tap water without fear of harmful chemicals. At my direction, Secretary Negrin and the Department of Environmental Protection will continue their important work to ensure every community, no matter their location, demographics, or wealth, has equal access to environmental protections.”

A public comment period will follow the implementation of the interim final Environmental Justice Policy, which is expected to be implemented on September 16, 2023. This updated policy will usher in deeper advancements for the Commonwealth’s environmental justice communities and is a critical benchmark towards the final EJ Policy, which is expected to be implemented by 2024. Additionally, DEP has developed an improved mapping tool to better identify EJ areas within the Commonwealth and has expanded the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) and elevated its leadership to a more senior position within the DEP for the first time in Pennsylvania history to better serve EJ areas.

“Through the process of creating this EJ Policy and mapping tool, DEP reached out to community leaders to get input. The policy calls for proactively bringing communities together, to help make people aware of the rights they have around the environment and protect those rights.

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Shapiro Administration Expands Environmental Justice Protections with updated Policy and Improved Mapping Tool (continued)

The emphasis on the Environmental Rights Amendment in this administration is an exciting change in perspective for the agency,” said Rafiyqa Muhammad, a member of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board, the body charged with making written recommendations to the Secretary concerning policies, practices, and actions that DEP may implement to advance the goals of Environmental Justice.

Environmental Justice Policy

The updated EJ policy directs how DEP’s inspection, compliance, and enforcement efforts can better include criteria and concerns of Pennsylvania communities most at risk from pollution and other environmental impacts. Furthermore, the policy outlines the ways in which DEP plans to increase outreach across Pennsylvania and build long-lasting relationships with communities impacted by environmental challenges.

[View the Environmental Justice Policy here.](#)

“Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution establishes that all Pennsylvanians have the right to clean air and pure water,” said **Rich Negrin, Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection**. “The updated environmental justice policy deepens that commitment by reaching out to communities, building trust, and increasing community access to support and assistance before they experience an environmental crisis or have a concern about a new facility.”

Following a public comment period and input from stakeholders from across the Commonwealth, DEP looks to finalize its Environmental Justice Policy in 2024.

PennEnviroScreen Mapping Tool

[The PennEnviroScreen tool is available to the public here.](#)

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Shapiro Administration Expands Environmental Justice Protections with updated Policy and Improved Mapping Tool (continued)

A Screen capture of the PennEnviroScreen mapping tool, which will allow users to clearly identify environmental justice areas can be found below.

This state-of-the-art mapping tool allows DEP to more accurately identify communities facing environmental justice issues using 32 environmental, health, and socioeconomic indicators.

Starting September 16, 2023, the PennEnviroScreen tool will help determine if a permit's facility is located within an environmental justice area. DEP is engaged in a department-wide effort to improve the efficiency and quality of our permitting process. This new approach, in the environmental justice context, will continue to help DEP improve permitting processes while continuing to cut down on wait times.

View additional information regarding the [PennEnviroScreen tool here](#).

Office of Environmental Justice – Staff and Leadership

DEP has appointed **Fernando Treviño as OEJ's special deputy secretary**, elevating OEJ leadership to the level of a deputy secretary for the first time.

The OEJ team has been instrumental in establishing Secretary Negrin's vision to increase outreach around the Commonwealth and build long-lasting relationships with communities in need all across Pennsylvania.

Since his appointment, Treviño is overseeing the completion of the updated EJ Policy and has been instrumental in driving landmark achievements, such as overseeing the community-driven protocol development of a \$5 million environmental mitigation community fund spurred by air emissions violations by Shell Chemical Appalachia, LLC. The local impacted community will also play a crucial role in determining how the money is spent.

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Shapiro Administration Expands Environmental Justice Protections with updated Policy and Improved Mapping Tool (continued)

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

Source: the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Shapiro Administration Provides Additional Updates on Plum Stray Gas Investigation

DEP releases preliminary test results relating to house explosion in Rustic Ridge

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has completed its analysis of preliminary test results from its stray gas investigation relating to the house explosion in the Rustic Ridge neighborhood of Plum Borough in Allegheny County. Preliminary results are not indicative of a stray gas migration incident.

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

DEP inspectors found detectible concentrations of combustible gas throughout this area on August 14, but that gas is no longer detectible throughout soils near the incident. Isotopic samples, which help to identify molecular signatures, were collected by DEP and Peoples Natural Gas (PNG) on August 14 from soils and a nearby PNG gas meter. A total of 18 points of interest were investigated. Gas samples were collected from 5 of those locations for isotopic analysis. Those locations include the area around a leaking gas pipeline, gas in the soil near a People's meter, and under the foundation of the home.

Preliminary results are not indicative of a stray gas migration incident. The findings suggest that concentrations of gas detected on August 14 came from single inundation event, likely the explosion itself.

In addition, DEP identified a total of seven conventional oil and gas wells and two gathering pipelines within a 2,500 ft radius of the home. DEP inspected those wells and pipelines immediately following the incident and determined that they were all in compliance. One of the two pipelines, a suction line to a compressor station, was known to be leaking, but had been taken out of commission one week prior to the incident.

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Shapiro Administration Provides Additional Updates on Plum Stray Gas Investigation (continued)

The other pipeline, a gathering line which ties into the suction line, was taken out of service immediately after the incident out of an abundance of caution. That gathering line passed a pressure test on August 15 with no leaks detected.

Out of an abundance of caution, on August 25, DEP [worked to facilitate](#) the distribution of combustible gas detectors to the 227 houses in the Rustic Ridge neighborhood. DEP estimates that around 90% of the units were picked up for the houses in the community, and remaining residents will be contacted by the Rustic Ridge homeowner's association to secure their detectors should they want them.

The Shapiro Administration also collaborated with Allegheny County to provide support to residents at a [multi-agency resource center](#) held at the Plum Borough Municipal Complex Gymnasium. County, state, and federal agencies helped impacted homeowners with services such as license replacements from PennDOT and assistance with insurance carriers through the PA Department of Insurance.

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

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Shapiro Administration Secures \$100 Million from Monsanto to Help Pennsylvanians Impacted by Environmental Damages

Agreement includes \$8 million for use towards community projects across impacted communities in Pennsylvania

The Shapiro Administration has secured \$100 million through a consent agreement with the Monsanto Company, Solutia INC., and Pharmacia LLC to resolve claims related to their production of products containing polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), which damaged waterways and other natural resources across Pennsylvania.

PCBs, which Congress banned in 1979, are a group of man-made organic chemicals consisting of carbon, hydrogen, and chlorine atoms. PCBs have no known taste or smell, and range in consistency from an oil to a waxy solid. PCBs can accumulate in the leaves and above-ground parts of plants and food crops. They are also taken up into the bodies of small organisms and fish. As a result, people who ingest fish may be exposed to PCBs that have bioaccumulated in the fish they are ingesting.

“The Department has spent years protecting Pennsylvanians from PCBs,” said **DEP Secretary Rich Negrin**. “By securing this settlement, DEP is holding Monsanto accountable for what it did to Pennsylvania’s water and making sure that Monsanto is paying for the work the Commonwealth has done to keep its water clean. This agreement demonstrates our commitment to protecting the rights and resources of all Pennsylvanians.”

The \$100 million settlement recovers costs that the Commonwealth has incurred because of PCB contamination and will be used for further remediation efforts. Under the agreement, \$8 million will be used specifically for the communities impacted by the spread of PCBs. That fund will be invested consistent with the Administration’s commitment to promoting environmental justice across the Commonwealth. The remaining funds will be allocated amongst the agencies that have been responsible for helping to combat PCB pollution in Pennsylvania, including the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Pennsylvania Game Commission (PFBC).

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Shapiro Administration Secures \$100 Million from Monsanto to Help Pennsylvanians Impacted by Environmental Damages (continued)

"For decades, PCB pollution has contaminated fish in our waterways, disrupted recreational opportunities, and impaired a valuable food source for millions of Pennsylvanians," said **Tim Schaeffer, PFBC Executive Director**. "On behalf of the anglers of Pennsylvania, we are proud to join our partner agencies in securing this settlement as we work to protect our cherished aquatic resources."

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

Source: the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Shapiro Administration Secures Methane Detectors for Rustic Ridge Community

Governor Josh Shapiro and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Rich Negrin announced they have secured combustible gas detectors for the Rustic Ridge neighborhood in Plum Borough following an explosion that took the lives of six Pennsylvanians and damaged multiple homes. The detectors will be provided at no cost to residents. The origin of and cause of the incident in Plum remains undetermined and is under investigation.

Olympus Energy, a Pennsylvania-based company, has donated 250 detectors to the Rustic Ridge homeowner's association. DEP personnel are partnering with the homeowner's association to distribute the detectors to residents of Rustic Ridge. DEP's team of experts will provide residents with guidance for identifying the best location in their homes to install the detectors. While the cause of the house explosion in Plum is still under investigation, gas detection alarms maintained for any home are a beneficial safety item.

"It is imperative that as our investigations advance, we continue to do all we can to support this wonderful community," said **Rich Negrin, Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection**. "I met with families in Rustic Ridge this week who have concerns about their safety following this incident. This is one of a number of efforts by the Shapiro Administration to help provide resources to residents, and we will continue to work alongside our local partners, including Allegheny County, to support the Plum community."

Combustible gas, like methane, occurs naturally in the environment and is used in many home appliances. While methane gas from a utility company is odorized to help homeowners detect its presence, a combustible gas monitor will detect gas at very low levels and will also detect sources of gas that are not odorized, such as gas emanating directly from wells or natural sources. These monitors offer an extra safeguard for any homeowners concerned about combustible gas inside their homes and will emit an audible signal upon detection.

"Our team is incredibly saddened by this horrific tragedy and have been looking for a way to offer support to the residents of Rustic Ridge," said **Tim Dugan, president and chief executive officer, at Olympus Energy**. "To further our commitment to safe homes and communities, today, we are donating 250 home methane detectors to Rustic Ridge families to ensure every homeowner within the neighborhood has one installed in their home.

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Shapiro Administration Secures Methane Detectors for Rustic Ridge Community (continued)

Olympus' thoughts and sympathies remain with the residents of Rustic Ridge and the Plum community, as well as the first responders who came to their aid.”

Under the Governor's direction and in coordination with local and county authorities, DEP inspectors began conducting a stray gas investigation at the incident on Monday, August 14, 2023, to look for sources of combustible gas near the site of the explosion and inspecting nearby natural gas-related facilities and infrastructure under DEP's jurisdiction. DEP's investigation is ongoing as it continues to work in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (PUC), Allegheny County Fire Marshal's (ACFM) Office, utility operators, and other county and local emergency service agencies. The ACFM continues its investigation into the cause and origin.

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

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)