

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 27 Issue 89

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

September 2025



The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an

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

This is my Pledge!

Inside this issue:

EPA Announces Permitting A to Provide Clarity, Expedite Construction of Essential Power	5
DEP Plugs Two Actively Leaking Abandoned Wells in Erie County, Supporting the Shapiro Administration's Historic Well	6
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Up Opportunities for Pennsylvania Hunters, Announces Permits on Sale for Deer Management	7
MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Strategy to Make Our Children Healthy Again	13
Shapiro A Plans for Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests, Phased Approach for 2025-26 Season on Public Lands	15
Shapiro Administration Awards Over \$5.2 Million to Clean Up Abandoned Mine Lands, Keep Pennsylvanians Safe While	19
Shapiro Administration Releases First-Ever Comprehensive Trail Data Resource for Pennsylvania State Parks, Helping Hikers and Visitors Experience 1,700 Miles of Trails	24

Standing Up for Pennsylvania Miners

Shapiro Administration Calls on Trump Administration to Keep Pittsburgh Research Lab Open, Protect Thousands of Jobs

Secretary Shirley wrote to the HHS Secretary urging the Trump Admin-

istration to keep the Pittsburgh Research Laboratory (PRL) operational

PRL's mission is to eliminate mining fatalities, injuries, and illness through relevant research and impactful solutions, serving approximately 3,000

miners in the Commonwealth

Cuts to staff threaten mine safety and mine rescue training, putting Pennsylvanian miners at risk.

(continued on page 2)

Shapiro Administration Requires Plastic Manufacturer to Pay \$2.6 Million for Environmental Pollution in Beaver County

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection is seeking millions in remediation and penalties from Styropek for repeatedly polluting Racoon Creek

and the Ohio River, with funds directed toward watershed rehabilitation and restoration projects

The Shapiro Administration through the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), together with nonprof-

its Three Rivers Waterkeeper and PennEnvironment, Inc., filed a proposed consent decree in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania with

(continued on page 3)

Standing Up for Pennsylvania Miners continued)

This week, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Secretary Jessica Shirley sent a letter to Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., calling on the Trump administration to keep the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health's (NIOSH) Pittsburgh Research Laboratory (PRL) open so that it can continue its critical mine safety research that contributes to keeping the approximately 3,000 Pennsylvania miners — and miners across the country — safe.

DEP's Bureau of Mine Safety routinely works with the PRL to provide training, best practices, and tools to aid the mining industry. This collaboration has resulted in technical guidance and best practices for mining companies on topics like mining near unconventional gas wells and methane emissions control systems. The facility has also hosted mine rescue training activities at its experimental mine. PRL has pioneered lifesaving research and technology to monitor for respirable crystalline silica and coal dust, prevent unsafe noise levels, and ensure that roofing supports are sufficient to keep miners safe. The Pittsburgh office helped develop specialized drilling equipment and a detailed protocol following the 2002 Quecreek Mine disaster, in which nine miners were trapped underground for 77 hours before finally being rescued.

"Pennsylvania has a long legacy of mining — stretching back hundreds of years — and we owe it to our mine workers, their families, and mining communities to ensure their safety and continue this critical research," said **DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley** in the letter. "Since its inception in 1910 as the Bureau of Mines, the work accomplished by this group has undoubtedly saved lives and advanced the industry forward. Losing this facility will impede advancements in mine safety, harm the mining industry, and put workers at risk."

[The full text of the letter is available on the DEP website](#)

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Shapiro Administration Requires Plastic Manufacturer to Pay \$2.6 Million for Environmental Pollution in Beaver County (continued)

BVPV Styrenics, LLC and Styropek USA, Inc. (collectively, “Styropek”). If approved by the court, the agreement will require Styropek — an expandable polystyrene (plastic) pellet manufacturing facility in Monaca Borough, Beaver County — to pay **\$2.6 million** in penalties and remediation costs for repeated pollution violations that discharged plastic pellets into Raccoon Creek and the Ohio River, funding watershed rehabilitation and restoration projects.

“Pennsylvanians have a right to a clean and safe environment,” said **DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “This consent decree holds Styropek accountable for its violations and requires they act to stop further unlawful discharges while supporting the cleanup of a treasured creek in Beaver County.”

On October 18, 2022, DEP inspectors observed plastic pellets on the ground at several locations at the Styropek facility. A follow-up survey along Raccoon Creek and the Ohio River on December 13, 2022, revealed numerous pellets downstream of the facility’s outfalls. Ten days later, DEP issued Styropek a Notice of Violation (NOV) for the unauthorized discharge of plastic pellets onto land and into Raccoon Creek.

These releases constitute pollution and the unlawful discharge of industrial and solid waste under the Pennsylvania Clean Streams Law, the Pennsylvania Solid Waste Management Act, and the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The pellets entered waterways both through the facility’s wastewater treatment unit and from inadequate containment on-site, which allowed pellets to blow across the property and wash into stormwater outfalls.

While DEP was developing enforcement actions, PennEnvironment, Inc. and Three Rivers Waterkeeper filed a federal complaint against Styropek. DEP later joined that case.

Under the proposed decree, Styropek must take significant steps to stop future pollution, including installing new turbidity curtains at the facility’s lagoons; upgrading wastewater treatment with cloth media filters and other improvements; and implementing stricter monitoring and stormwater control procedures.

In addition, Styropek will pay **\$100,000** in civil penalties to DEP’s Clean Water Fund and **\$2.5 million** for environmental restoration projects in the Raccoon Creek and Ohio River watersheds.

Of the \$2.5 million restoration funds:

- **\$2 million** will support the Raccoon Creek Plastic Remediation Fund, which will investigate and clean up polystyrene pellet pollution in the watershed’s sediment, water, and banks. Styropek will be responsible for carrying out remediation under DEP oversight.

(continued on page 3)

Shapiro Administration Requires Plastic Manufacturer to Pay \$2.6 Million for Environmental Pollution in Beaver County (continued)

- **\$500,000**, along with any unspent remediation funds, will create the Raccoon Creek Benefit Fund, administered by the Foundation for Pennsylvania Watersheds. This fund will support projects that restore, preserve, and protect water quality in the Raccoon Creek watershed and nearby areas of the Ohio River watershed.

The proposed consent decree must be submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice for a 45-day review period before it can be entered by the court. It may be viewed by requesting an [informal file review via DEP's website](#).

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

EPA Announces Permitting Reform to Provide Clarity, Expedite Construction of Essential Power Generation, Reshore Manufacturing

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin announced [new guidance](#) on New Source Review (NSR) preconstruction permitting requirements to provide much needed clarity for the buildout of essential power generation and reshoring of manufacturing. This action provides flexibility to begin certain building activities that are not related to air emissions, such as installing cement pads, before obtaining a Clean Air Act (CAA) construction permit.

With this action, the Trump EPA is addressing America's energy needs and promoting the development of data centers critical to making the U.S. the Artificial Intelligence (AI) capital of the world, all while taking necessary steps to protect human health and safeguard our environment.

"For years, Clean Air Act permitting has been an obstacle to innovation and growth," said EPA Administrator Zeldin. "We are continuing to fix this broken system. Today's guidance is another step to allow the build out of essential power generation, data centers, and manufacturing projects that will bring about America's Golden Age."

EPA intends to initiate a rulemaking to revise the definition of "Begin Actual Construction" in EPA's NSR regulations and codify how permitting authorities may distinguish between emissions units and other parts of a stationary source facility that are not an emissions unit or part of an emissions unit. By doing so it will be easy to understand what parts of construction need an NSR permit and what construction activities can proceed without an NSR permit. This will also allow cut down on construction deadlines.

Background

The CAA's NSR program is a preconstruction permitting program that requires certain stationary sources to obtain permits prior to beginning construction. The NSR permitting program applies to both new construction and to modifications of existing sources.

Making America the AI Capital of the World is a core pillar of Administrator Zeldin's Powering the [Great American Comeback Initiative](#). In July, Administrator Zeldin attended [the Pennsylvania Energy & Innovation Summit](#) and participated in a roundtable alongside President Trump and National Energy Dominance Council (NEDC) partners where industry leaders announced over \$90 billion in investments in the Keystone State, creating jobs and helping to unleash American energy to power the AI revolution.

In a Fox News op-ed published following the trip, Administrator Zeldin highlighted EPA's proposals to streamline permitting and regulations to accelerate American data center development. EPA will continue to do its part advance America's leadership in AI while maintaining its core mission of protecting human health and the environment.

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

DEP Plugs Two Actively Leaking Abandoned Wells in Erie County, Supporting the Shapiro Administration's Historic Well Plugging Campaign

DEP has plugged more than 315 wells throughout the Commonwealth under Governor Shapiro's leadership

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) began plugging two actively leaking abandoned wells under an emergency contract today in Millcreek Township, Erie, PA. Under Governor Shapiro's leadership, DEP has made historic progress, plugging more than 315 wells throughout the Commonwealth, protecting public health and creating jobs in the process.

The first of the two wells to be plugged sits on the bluff overlooking Baer Beach, directly behind Crystal Point Condos (3300 Baer Rd), which is home to 90 residents. Members of the DEP Oil and Gas program were joined on site by Senator Dan Laughlin and other state leaders and their respective staff, to see the plugging process firsthand and learn about the importance of addressing dangerous abandoned wells.

"Any time you have an actively leaking well in a residential neighborhood, it is a concern to public health and safety and needs to be evaluated immediately," said **DEP Northwest Regional Office Oil and Gas Manager, Scott Dudzic**. "Plugging these wells will remove the possibility of methane gas migrating into enclosed structures, causing a potential explosive atmosphere."

Once plugging operations behind Crystal Point Condos has been completed, DEP contractors will mobilize to the site of the second well located at 1602 Linwood Ave. Much like the first, this well has no responsible owner and is actively leaking methane in a residential area. Both well plugging projects are expected to be completed within the upcoming weeks.

Erie County is home to some 3203 active wells and 448 orphan and abandoned wells. DEP is in the process of finalizing a proposed project, through the Department of Interior (DOI), that will utilize Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding to plug 28 wells.

In addition, the Shapiro administration just awarded over \$7 million to 35 well plugging projects across the Commonwealth through the [Methane Emissions Reduction Program](#) (MERP), focusing on reducing methane emissions, creating jobs and supporting small business across Pennsylvania. Five of those projects in Erie County will address the plugging of 28 marginal conventional wells.

Source: The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Up Opportunities for Pennsylvania Hunters, Announces Permits on Sale for Deer Management Assistance Program in Pennsylvania State Forests and Parks

More than 28,000 permits are available across 1.2 million acres in 95 units—areas specifically designated to manage wildlife and promote healthy forests and disease prevention—for expanded antlerless deer hunting opportunities.

Offering white-tailed deer hunters more hunting opportunities across Pennsylvania, state forestlands and state parks are participating in the **Pennsylvania Game Commission's** Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP).

The program allows landowners to apply for permits to encourage antlerless deer harvests on their property, enabling the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources** (DCNR) and private landowners to manage white-tailed deer populations. Out-of-balance deer populations impact other wildlife and disrupt forest regeneration, which is vital to healthy, sustainable forested ecosystems.

“White-tailed deer play an important role in our forest ecosystems, but when populations grow too large, they can hinder regeneration and impact overall forest health,” said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. “Our state forest and state park staff regularly monitor habitat conditions and use science-based data to guide where and how DMAP is implemented. This program helps us maintain a healthy balance between sustaining deer populations and ensuring long-term forest vitality.”

DCNR is offering hunters 28,607 permits in 95 units totaling more than **1.2 million acres**. This year, **27 state parks** and **18 state forest districts** are participating in the program.

DMAP tags are now on sale. Hunters obtain permits directly from [license issuing agents](#) or the [Pennsylvania Game Commission website](#).

Requests for program-targeted areas, and the number of permits sought, are science-driven. DCNR has a statistically based vegetation sampling protocol, with more than 10,000 plots across 2.2 million acres of state forestland, which assists in determining where the program should be applied.

The department's goals for the [Deer Management Assistance Program](#) are to:

- Promote a diverse, healthy natural habitat that supports wildlife diversity and healthy deer populations.
- Provide additional hunting opportunities.
- Establish and maintain regeneration to support sustainable forestry practices with minimal need for deer fencing.

(continued on page 8)

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Up Opportunities for Pennsylvania Hunters, Announces Permits on Sale for Deer Management Assistance Program in Pennsylvania State Forests and Parks (continued)

- Promote a healthy, sustainable forest and native, wild plant communities.

Applicants for DMAP permits can find Department of Conservation and Natural Resources tract locations and maps, availability numbers, past hunter success rates, and other information on an [interactive map](#).

Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests

Earlier this year, **Governor Josh Shapiro** signed [House Bill 1431](#) into law, repealing Pennsylvania's longstanding ban on Sunday hunting. This new bipartisan law delivers real freedom for Pennsylvania's 850,000 licensed hunters, empowers the Pennsylvania Game Commission to expand Sunday hunting opportunities, and strengthens wildlife conservation efforts while growing rural economies across the Commonwealth.

DCNR announced [a phased approach](#) to [expanding Sunday hunting](#) in state parks and forests, ensuring that the rollout balances Pennsylvania's rich hunting traditions with the recreational needs and safety of millions of visitors to public lands. Hunters planning to participate in DMAP hunting on DCNR lands should review all hunting regulations for their intended location and note that all Sunday hunting dates will be permitted in state forests but only on three Sundays in state parks for the 2025-26 season. **The Sunday hunting dates in state parks are November 16, November 23, and November 30.**

Extended Firearms Season

An extended firearms season for antlerless deer will be open on all DMAP properties from December 26, 2025, through January 24, 2026. An antlerless license can only be used in the extended firearms season within Wildlife Management Units (WMUs) with an open extended firearms season. On DMAP properties outside those WMUs, a hunter needs a valid DMAP permit for the property they're hunting to take part. DCNR recognizes the need for adaptive management when tackling complex issues like forest health and deer management and will carefully evaluate changes to program engagement and DMAP harvest that arise from the extended season for DMAP tags.

DMAP areas have been established in 18 of the 20 forest districts across the state. Snowmobiling is permitted in all forest districts when conditions allow; however, the northcentral, northeast, and southwest regions typically offer the best conditions and highest usage in the Commonwealth. The Bureau of Forestry anticipates opening snowmobile season on schedule, following the conclusion of the [statewide regular firearms deer season](#), which ends December 13, 2025, as established by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

(continued on page 9)

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Up Opportunities for Pennsylvania Hunters, Announces Permits on Sale for Deer Management Assistance Program in Pennsylvania State Forests and Parks (continued)

Hunters participating in the extended DMAP season should be aware that, depending on weather and snow conditions, snowmobile use may coincide with late-season hunting. This creates a period of dual use on state forest lands, particularly on joint-use roads and designated snowmobile trails.

Considerations for participating hunters:

- Snowmobile season depends on sufficient snow cover and may not begin immediately following deer season if conditions are not favorable.
- Snowmobile use is limited to designated trails and state forest roads.
- Hunters may encounter snowmobiles and trail grooming equipment during the extended DMAP season, so they should exercise caution and stay alert.
- Parking areas may be limited during peak snowmobile use or after significant snowfall.
- Hunters should review [snowmobile trail maps](#) to understand where trails are located within the areas they plan to hunt.
- Snowmobilers will be encouraged to wear orange during periods of joint use, but hunters should not rely on this. As always, clearly identify your target and what lies beyond it.

This overlap highlights the need for awareness and cooperation among all users of state forest lands to help ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

Safety During Hunting Season

Hunters are reminded that hikers, bird watchers, skiers, cyclists, and other visitors may also be present in parks and forests and are not required to wear fluorescent orange. For everyone's safety:

- Hunters should follow all hunting regulations, wear required orange, and use extreme caution.
- Visitors are encouraged to wear orange, stick to trails, and avoid dawn and dusk when visibility is low.

(continued on page 10)

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Opens Up Opportunities for Pennsylvania Hunters, Announces Permits on Sale for Deer Management Assistance Program in Pennsylvania State Forests and Parks (continued)

Tips for hikers and other visitors to be safe during hunting season:

- Wear fluorescent orange that is visible from 360 degrees to be easily seen by hunters.
- Stick to established trails.
- Avoid hiking during dawn and dusk.
- Increase your dog's visibility with a bright orange vest, collar, or leash.
- Inform someone of your hiking plans and expected return time.

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

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

MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Strategy to Make Our Children Healthy Again

The Make America Healthy Again Commission (MAHA Commission) released the [Make Our Children Healthy Again](#) Strategy, a sweeping plan with more than 120 initiatives to reverse the failed policies that fueled America's childhood chronic disease epidemic. The strategy outlines targeted executive actions to advance gold-standard science, realign incentives, increase public awareness, and strengthen private-sector collaboration.

The MAHA Commission is tasked with investigating and addressing the root causes of America's escalating health crisis, with a focus on childhood chronic diseases.

"Protecting human health and the environment while powering America's comeback isn't just about serving Americans today; it's about ensuring future generations inherit clean air, land, water, and the foundation for healthy lives," **said EPA Administrator Zeldin said.** "The Make America Healthy Again strategy outlines the keys to success from pro-growth policies that advance research and drive innovation to private sector collaboration and increased public awareness. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively across the federal family to ensure our kids and our environment are *protected*."

"The Trump Administration is mobilizing every part of government to confront the childhood chronic disease epidemic," **said U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** "This strategy represents the most sweeping reform agenda in modern history—realigning our food and health systems, driving education, and unleashing science to protect America's children and families. We are ending the corporate capture of public health, restoring transparency, and putting gold-standard science—not special interests—at the center of every decision."

"Today's MAHA Commission report is another historic milestone for our country and a testament to President Trump's leadership and commitment to Make America Healthy Again," **said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins.** "America's farmers and ranchers are at the heart of the solution — alongside doctors, parents, and communities - to fight chronic disease and protect future generations. Under this Administration, we are not just talking about healthy outcomes; we are delivering them by securing voluntary commitments to remove artificial food dye from major brands, providing technical assistance to States interested in restricting junk food and soda from SNAP, and providing growers with new tools to maintain and improve soil health, including the introduction of a regenerative farming practice pilot program. Together with our partners at HHS and EPA, we are charting a new course, strengthening the health of our families, and ensuring the United States leads the world with the safest, strongest, and most abundant food supply."

"For too long health care has used a reactive approach to chronic diseases," **said U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Marty Makary said.** *"I am pleased to support the findings of the MAHA commission and to promote a more proactive approach, tackling root causes undermining the health and happiness of American children."*

(continued on page 12)

MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Strategy to Make Our Children Healthy Again

*“The MAHA Report provides a blueprint for the entire government to focus on solving the chronic disease crisis facing American children,” said **National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya** said. “We must make America healthy again so our children live longer and healthier lives than we will.”*

Key Focus Areas of the Strategy:

Restoring Science & Research: Expanding NIH and agency research into chronic disease prevention, nutrition and metabolic health, food quality, environmental exposures, autism, gut microbiome, precision agriculture, rural and tribal health, vaccine injury, and mental health.

Historic Executive Actions: Reforming dietary guidelines; defining ultra-processed foods; improving food labeling; closing the GRAS loophole; raising infant formula standards; removing harmful chemicals from the food supply; increasing oversight and enforcement of direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising laws; improving food served in schools, hospitals, and to veterans; and reforming Medicaid quality metrics to measure health outcomes.

Process Reform & Deregulation: Streamlining organic certification; easing barriers to farm-to-school programs and direct-to-consumer sales; restoring whole milk in schools; supporting mobile grocery and processing units; modernizing FDA drug and device approval; and accelerating EPA approvals for innovative agricultural products.

Public Awareness & Education: Launching school-based nutrition and fitness campaigns, Surgeon General initiatives on screen time, prioritizing pediatric mental health, and expanding access to reliable nutrition and health information for parents.

Private Sector Collaboration: Promoting awareness of healthier meals at restaurants, soil health and land stewardship, and community-led initiatives, and scaling innovative solutions to address root causes of chronic disease.

With this strategy, the MAHA Commission leads the most ambitious national effort ever to confront childhood chronic disease and Make America Healthy Again.

Today’s MAHA Commission press event included: EPA Administrator Zeldin, HHS Secretary Kennedy, Domestic Policy Council Director Vince Haley, USDA Secretary Rollins, NIH Director Dr. Bhattacharya, FDA Commissioner Dr. Makary, HHS Deputy Secretary Jim O’Neill, National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett, Council of Economic Advisors Vice Chair Pierre Yared, and Office of Science and Technology Director Michael Kratsios.

Source: U.S. EPA

MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Strategy to Make Our Children Healthy Again

The Make America Healthy Again Commission (MAHA Commission) released the Make Our Children Healthy Again Strategy, a sweeping plan with more than 120 initiatives to reverse the failed policies that fueled America's childhood chronic disease epidemic. The strategy outlines targeted executive actions to advance gold-standard science, realign incentives, increase public awareness, and strengthen private-sector collaboration.

The MAHA Commission is tasked with investigating and addressing the root causes of America's escalating health crisis, with a focus on childhood chronic diseases.

"Protecting human health and the environment while powering America's comeback isn't just about serving Americans today; it's about ensuring future generations inherit clean air, land, water, and the foundation for healthy lives," **said EPA Administrator Zeldin**. "The Make America Healthy Again strategy outlines the keys to success from pro-growth policies that advance research and drive innovation to private sector collaboration and increased public awareness. I look forward to continuing to work collaboratively across the federal family to ensure our kids and our environment are *protected*."

"The Trump Administration is mobilizing every part of government to confront the childhood chronic disease epidemic," **said U.S. Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr.** "This strategy represents the most sweeping reform agenda in modern history—realigning our food and health systems, driving education, and unleashing science to protect America's children and families. We are ending the corporate capture of public health, restoring transparency, and putting gold-standard science—not special interests—at the center of every decision."

"Today's MAHA Commission report is another historic milestone for our country and a testament to President Trump's leadership and commitment to Make America Healthy Again," **said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins**. "America's farmers and ranchers are at the heart of the solution — alongside doctors, parents, and communities - to fight chronic disease and protect future generations. Under this Administration, we are not just talking about healthy outcomes; we are delivering them by securing voluntary commitments to remove artificial food dye from major brands, providing technical assistance to States interested in restricting junk food and soda from SNAP, and providing growers with new tools to maintain and improve soil health, including the introduction of a regenerative farming practice pilot program. Together with our partners at HHS and EPA, we are charting a new course, strengthening the health of our families, and ensuring the United States leads the world with the safest, strongest, and most abundant food supply."

(continued on page 14)

MAHA Commission Unveils Sweeping Strategy to Make Our Children Healthy Again

“For too long health care has used a reactive approach to chronic diseases,” said U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Dr. Marty Makary said. “I am pleased to support the findings of the MAHA commission and to promote a more proactive approach, tackling root causes undermining the health and happiness of American children.”

“The MAHA Report provides a blueprint for the entire government to focus on solving the chronic disease crisis facing American children,” said National Institutes of Health (NIH) Director Dr. Jay Bhattacharya said. “We must make America healthy again so our children live longer and healthier lives than we will.”

Key Focus Areas of the Strategy:

Restoring Science & Research: Expanding NIH and agency research into chronic disease prevention, nutrition and metabolic health, food quality, environmental exposures, autism, gut microbiome, precision agriculture, rural and tribal health, vaccine injury, and mental health.

Historic Executive Actions: Reforming dietary guidelines; defining ultra-processed foods; improving food labeling; closing the GRAS loophole; raising infant formula standards; removing harmful chemicals from the food supply; increasing oversight and enforcement of direct-to-consumer prescription drug advertising laws; improving food served in schools, hospitals, and to veterans; and reforming Medicaid quality metrics to measure health outcomes.

Process Reform & Deregulation: Streamlining organic certification; easing barriers to farm-to-school programs and direct-to-consumer sales; restoring whole milk in schools; supporting mobile grocery and processing units; modernizing FDA drug and device approval; and accelerating EPA approvals for innovative agricultural products.

Public Awareness & Education: Launching school-based nutrition and fitness campaigns, Surgeon General initiatives on screen time, prioritizing pediatric mental health, and expanding access to reliable nutrition and health information for parents.

Private Sector Collaboration: Promoting awareness of healthier meals at restaurants, soil health and land stewardship, and community-led initiatives, and scaling innovative solutions to address root causes of chronic disease.

With this strategy, the MAHA Commission leads the most ambitious national effort ever to confront childhood chronic disease and Make America Healthy Again.

Today’s MAHA Commission press event included: EPA Administrator Zeldin, HHS Secretary Kennedy, Domestic Policy Council Director Vince Haley, USDA Secretary Rollins, NIH Director Dr. Bhattacharya, FDA Commissioner Dr. Makary, HHS Deputy Secretary Jim O’Neill, National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett, Council of Economic Advisors Vice Chair Pierre Yared, and Office of Science and Technology Director Michael Kratsios.

Source: U.S. EPA

Shapiro Administration Announces Plans for Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests, Phased Approach for 2025-26 Season on Public Lands

After Governor Shapiro signed historic legislation ending the ban, the 2025-26 season will limit Sunday hunting in state parks while allowing full access in state forests, balancing tradition with visitor safety on Pennsylvania's public lands.

This phased approach prioritizes safety, protects non-hunting visitors, and allows staff to adjust operations for a smooth rollout.

Beginning next year, most state parks that allow hunting will expand Sunday opportunities through a park-by-park review.

After Governor Shapiro signed historic legislation ending the ban earlier this year, the **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** announced a phased approach to [expanding Sunday hunting](#) in state parks and forests, ensuring that the rollout balances Pennsylvania's rich hunting traditions with the recreational needs and safety of millions of visitors to public lands.

For the **2025-26 season, Sunday hunting in state parks** will be limited to three dates: **November 16, 23, and 30** — while **state forests**, which cover 2.2 million acres and generally have larger, less crowded hunting areas, **will continue to permit hunting on all Sundays approved** by the **Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC)**. The Game Commission-approved Sunday dates for 2025 are:

- September 14, 21, and 28
- October 5, 12, 19, and 26
- November 2, 9, 16, 23, and 30
- December 7

"Hunting has always been a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's outdoor heritage, and it remains one of our most important tools for managing healthy forests and wildlife," said **DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**. "With the expansion of Sunday hunting, we have a responsibility to roll out these opportunities in a way that reflects the many ways Pennsylvanians use our public lands. As we plan for broader access in state parks starting in 2026-27 season, our team is looking closely at recreational patterns, park layouts, and community needs to ensure hunting can be expanded safely, responsibly, and in a way that maintains high-quality experiences for hunters and non-hunters alike."

(continued on page 16)

Shapiro Administration Announces Plans for Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests, Phased Approach for 2025-26 Season on Public Lands (continued)

Earlier this year, **Governor Josh Shapiro** signed [House Bill 1431](#) into law, repealing Pennsylvania's longstanding ban on Sunday hunting. This new bipartisan law delivers real freedom for Pennsylvania's 850,000 licensed hunters, empowers the PGC to expand Sunday hunting opportunities, and strengthens wildlife conservation efforts while growing rural economies across the Commonwealth.

Beginning in the 2026-27 hunting license year, DCNR plans to expand Sunday hunting opportunities to most state parks that currently allow hunting, with decisions made on a park-by-park basis.

DCNR's approach to Sunday hunting in state parks for the 2025-26 season is guided by three priorities: protecting the experience of non-hunting visitors, balancing competing uses in high traffic areas, and giving staff the necessary time to adjust park operations and communications to ensure visitor safety.

Planning for 2026-27 Expansion in State Parks

Starting July 1, 2026, DCNR will expand Sunday hunting opportunities in most state parks where hunting is already permitted. Each park will be reviewed individually to determine how Sunday hunting can be addressed safely, based on park layout, visitor use, and proximity to residential communities.

Hunting in State Parks and Forests

Hunting is currently permitted on about 240,000 acres across 99 of Pennsylvania's 124 state parks, often with restrictions such as archery-only areas to enhance safety near homes and heavily used recreation areas.

State forests, by contrast, are a major hub for hunting, offering large tracts of land where the activity is an important management tool for sustaining forest health.

Safety During Hunting Season

Hunters are reminded that hikers, bird watchers, skiers, cyclists, and other visitors may also be present in parks and forests and are not required to wear fluorescent orange. For everyone's safety:

- Hunters should follow all hunting regulations, wear required orange, and use extreme caution.

(continued on page 17)

Shapiro Administration Announces Plans for Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests, Phased Approach for 2025-26 Season on Public Lands (continued)

- Visitors are encouraged to wear orange, stick to trails, and avoid dawn and dusk when visibility is low.

Tips for hikers and other visitors to be safe during hunting season:

- Wear fluorescent orange that is visible from 360 degrees to be easily seen by hunters
- Stick to established trails
- Avoid hiking during dawn and dusk
- Increase your dog's visibility with a bright orange vest, collar, or leash
- Inform someone of your hiking plans and expected return time

Parks with Hunting Restrictions

Parks that currently do not allow any hunting are:

- Bendigo
- Buchanan's Birthplace
- Cherry Springs
- Fort Washington
- Fowlers Hollow
- Hyner View
- Laurel Mountain
- Laurel Summit
- McCall's Dam
- Memorial Lake
- Milton
- Mont Alto

(continued on page 18)

Shapiro Administration Announces Plans for Sunday Hunting in State Parks and Forests, Phased Approach for 2025-26 Season on Public Lands (continued)

- Patterson
- Penn Roosevelt
- Poe Paddy
- Point
- Prouty Place
- Ralph Stover
- Ravensburg
- Samuel Lewis
- Sand Bridge
- Shikellamy
- Susquehanna
- Upper Pine Bottom
- Washington Crossing

Parks that allow only mentored youth or controlled hunting are:

- Benjamin Rush
- Neshaminy
- Norristown Farm Park
- Presque Isle
- Tyler

For additional guidance and detailed information on hunting in Pennsylvania state parks and forests, visit [DCNR's website](#)

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

Shapiro Administration Awards Over \$5.2 Million to Clean Up Abandoned Mine Lands, Keep Pennsylvanians Safe While Supporting Local Jobs

The Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has awarded **\$5,222,250** for the environmental restoration of seven abandoned mine lands (AML) projects as part of the [Abandoned Mine Lands and Acid Mine Drainage Grant Program](#).

Pennsylvania has the largest inventory of abandoned coal mines in the nation, with a roughly \$5 billion need for reclamation and stream restoration. To date, Pennsylvania has rehabilitated approximately 159,000 acres of abandoned mine land across the Commonwealth, and with this federal funding, will be able to continue this vital work that protects the health and safety of our communities.

“Abandoned mine lands leave scars across Pennsylvania. Reclaiming these areas is an important part of the work DEP does to restore the environment and protect the communities in the Commonwealth, all while simultaneously creating jobs and bolstering the economy,” said **DEP Secretary Jessica Shirley**. “These grant recipients are taking on projects to pave the way for meaningful efforts in improving water quality, fostering ecosystem recovery, and revitalizing communities for a greater quality of life for Pennsylvanians.”

The funding was awarded through the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA), which has invested more than \$700 million into reclaiming Pennsylvania’s abandoned mine lands since 2022. In addition to planned projects, this funding also pays for emergency situations like subsidence and sinkholes that can endanger people and damage or destroy homes and property. Funding for the program was frozen by the Trump Administration in early 2025, but thanks to the efforts of [Governor Josh Shapiro](#), grant funding has continued uninterrupted.

These projects focus on reclaiming AML, decreasing abandoned mine drainage (AMD) and treating AMD through the construction, operation, and/or maintenance of treatment facilities

DEP prioritizes grant funding to address serious human health and safety problems resulting from abandoned coal mines, as well as treating AMD to continue watershed restoration efforts under the AMD Set-Aside Program and prevent the loss of restored streams.

Grant recipients will be reimbursed on project costs up to the limit specified below. The following projects will be awarded:

(continued on page 20)

Shapiro Administration Awards Over \$5.2 Million to Clean Up Abandoned Mine Lands, Keep Pennsylvanians Safe While Supporting Local Jobs (continued)

Elk County:

Elk County Conservation District – \$437,761

- **Winslow Hill IV (Lime Silos O&M)** – Continued operation and maintenance of two lime silos located in Winslow Hill, Saint Mary's City.

Fayette County:

Indian Creek Valley Water Authority – \$733,200

- **Melcroft (Pine Slopes WLEXT)** – Due to well water degradation as a result of past coal mining practices and to provide a reliable source of quality drinking water to 17 residents in the Pine Slopes Road area, a water line extension project will be completed.

Indiana County:

Natural Streams Foundation, Inc. – \$501,615

- **Commodore** – Engineering design work for an abandoned mine land site located in Green Township along the North Branch Two Lick Creek.

Northumberland County:

Shamokin Creek Restoration Alliance – \$689,229

- **Excelsior (AMD Discharges)** – Project development work to study the effect of AMD impacts of Shamokin Creek, Coal Township.

Schuylkill County:

Woodlands for Wildlife – \$550,361

- **Branchdale East** – Engineering design work for an AML site in Branch Township to improve West Creek and the Schuylkill River Watershed.

(continued on page 21)

Shapiro Administration Awards Over \$5.2 Million to Clean Up Abandoned Mine Lands, Keep Pennsylvanians Safe While Supporting Local Jobs (continued)

Washington County:

Natural Streams Foundation, Inc. – \$203,426

- **Marianna** – Project engineering and permitting work to reclaim an AML site in Marianna Borough.

Westmoreland County:

Murrysville Area Watershed Association – \$2,106,658

- **White Valley Active Treatment Plant** – Project development and design engineering to reduce the effects of AMD in the Upper Turtle Creek Watershed, Murrysville Borough.

Source: PA DCNR

Shapiro Administration Boosts Rural Economies, Outdoor Recreation with New ATV Route Designation in Tioga County

Route 49 in Tioga County is the first route in the state to gain the ATV designation under new PennDOT policy.

Today's announcement builds on the Shapiro Administration's efforts to boost rural economies, while expanding safe ATV access.

Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Secretary Mike Carroll and **Pennsylvania State Forester Seth Cassell** announced the first designated All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) Route in the **Shapiro Administration's** latest action to boost rural economies and the **Commonwealth's \$19 billion outdoor recreation industry**.

Route 49 in the Borough of Westfield, Tioga County is the first route approved under a new process where municipalities or regional organizations that manage trail networks can request an ATV route designation from PennDOT.

"Governor Shapiro's focus on Pennsylvania's economy, travel safety, and supporting Pennsylvanians' freedom were drivers in PennDOT's decision to create this collaborative process," **Secretary Carroll** said. "Building on existing ATV trail successes, we've developed a way for ATV riders to travel safely and efficiently while supporting our rural economies. I look forward to supporting more growth in other communities across the Commonwealth."

Proposed routes cannot be an interstate or multi-lane highway and must connect ATV trails or other state, local, or the **Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)** forest roads open to ATVs, or business destinations for ATV traffic. PennDOT then conducts a Traffic and Engineering Study to evaluate various route safety factors such as traffic volume, speed limits, and lane widths. The new process was implemented following [DCNR's regional ATV trail network](#) pilot in northcentral Pennsylvania.

The 3,700-foot section of Route 49 connects previously designated ATV routes to provide access to the businesses along Route 49 in Westfield Borough. Signs are in place along this route to inform ATV riders and the public that ATVs are permitted to travel on the roadway.

ATVs are permitted to operate on this section of roadway during daylight hours only and limited to the Northcentral Regional ATV Trail (NRAT) riding season established by DCNR. The riding season begins the Friday prior to Memorial Day and ends on the last Sunday in September each year.

"This project is a great example of the power of collaboration between state agencies, local communities, and outdoor recreation advocates," said **Cassell, who also serves as the**

(continued on page 23)

Shapiro Administration Boosts Rural Economies, Outdoor Recreation with New ATV Route Designation in Tioga County(continued)

director of DCNR's Bureau of Forestry. "By working together, we're expanding safe and sustainable ATV access that helps more Pennsylvanians connect with nature, while supporting rural economies and small businesses that depend on outdoor recreation."

Now in its second full year, the trail has quickly become one of Pennsylvania's premier outdoor recreation destinations. A recent [study](#) found the trail system generated **\$13.1 million** in economic impact for Potter and Tioga counties in 2023 — up from \$10.4 million the previous year.

Potter and Tioga counties are a part of the Pennsylvania Wilds, a 13-county conservation landscape aimed at revitalizing rural communities through sustainable tourism development — all while inspiring a stewardship ethic in residents and visitors. The Pennsylvania Wilds spans more than 2 million acres, which is comparable to Yellowstone National Park and offers:

- Tremendous outdoor adventures
- Abundant wildlife
- Hundreds of miles of land and water trails
- Rich lumber and oil history
- Charming small towns
- Authentic experiences

The **Shapiro Administration** [recently announced \\$2.1 million](#) in new investments to expand and improve all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and snowmobile trails and facilities across Pennsylvania. More information about [ATV and Snowmobile grants](#) can be found on the DCNR website and check out [DCNR's Calendar of Events](#) for events on public lands.

Motorists can check conditions on major roadways by visiting www.511PA.com. 511PA, which is free and available 24 hours a day, provides traffic delay warnings, weather forecasts, traffic speed information and access to more than 1,000 traffic cameras. 511PA is also available through a smartphone application for iPhone and Android devices, by calling 5-1-1, or by following [regional X alerts](#).

Information about state infrastructure in Pennsylvania, including completed work and significant projects, can be found at PennDOT.pa.gov/results. Find PennDOT's planned and active construction projects at pa.gov/DOTprojects.

Subscribe to local [PennDOT news](#) or [statewide PennDOT news](#) on the department's website.

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

Shapiro Administration Releases First-Ever Comprehensive Trail Data Resource for Pennsylvania State Parks, Helping Hikers and Visitors Experience 1,700 Miles of Trails

New digital trail information covers more than 1,700 miles across Pennsylvania state parks, creating a more robust resource park visitors, land managers, and developers.

DCNR data initiatives support the broader goals making Pennsylvania a leader in the outdoor sector.

All of Pennsylvania's 124 state parks and forests are free and open to the public.

the **Shapiro Administration** released the most complete digital trail data resource and data resource ever compiled for Pennsylvania state parks, mapping more than 1,750 miles of formal trails across 119 parks.

The new digital trail information — now publicly available through the **Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR)** is designed to support everything from outdoor recreation and mobile app development to land management, conservation planning, and emergency response.

"This new trail data resource marks a major advancement in our geospatial resources," said **State Parks Director John Hallas**. "We've gone beyond simply mapping trails — each segment now includes more than 30 detailed attributes that show how trails are used and maintained, and how they fit into larger ecological, recreational, and infrastructure systems. This will be an essential tool for GIS professionals, land managers, researchers, and developers alike."

To build the trail inventory, DCNR staff physically surveyed every state park trail using GPS equipment and a custom-built mobile data collection app. Field teams documented details such as width, surface material, and use designation. The information then underwent rigorous review by GIS specialists and park managers to ensure accuracy.

In addition to the open trail data, expanded trail information has been added to each individual state park webpage, giving visitors more detail than ever before on trail difficulty, loop or out-and-back design, and notable features along the route.

The new digital trail resource creates opportunities for:

- Mobile mapping tool integration
- Resource planning and land management
- Environmental and usage research

(continued on page 25)

Shapiro Administration Releases First-Ever Comprehensive Trail Data Resource for Pennsylvania State Parks, Helping Hikers and Visitors Experience 1,700 Miles of Trails (continued)

- Search and rescue preparedness
- Accessibility assessments and infrastructure planning

Trail information is now available on:

- [DCNR Open Data](#)
- [PA GeoData](#)
- [DCNR Interactive Map](#)
-
- CNR is also digitizing additional park features — such as boat launches, scenic overlooks, playgrounds, picnic areas, and restrooms — to give Pennsylvanians and visitors a complete, data-driven view of the amenities available at each park.

Outdoor Recreation Driving Growth

From day one, **Governor Josh Shapiro** has made [strategic investments](#) to strengthen outdoor recreation as a cornerstone of Pennsylvania's economy and communities.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, the outdoor recreation industry contributed **\$19 billion to Pennsylvania's economy in 2023** — a 10 percent increase over the previous year. The sector supports more than **168,000 jobs** and generates **\$9 billion in wages**, making Pennsylvania a national leader in outdoor recreation.

All of Pennsylvania's 124 state parks and forests are free and open to the public. To explore trails and outdoor recreation opportunities, visit [DCNR's website](#)

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