

Testimony of Patrick W. McDonnell

Acting Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection

Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee

May 9, 2017

Chairman Yaw, Chairman Yudichak, and members of the committee, I greatly appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today. I am both humbled and honored to be appointed by Governor Tom Wolf to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

Over my almost twenty years in state government, I have had the chance to see almost every aspect of the agency, from our policy-making and regulatory functions to our budget and human resources functions. Through it all, I have prided myself on being open to collaboration, being honest about problems, and listening to all perspectives to help my colleagues and me make meaningful decisions.

It is no secret that the Department faces challenges. Over the past year, we've continued to address those issues. We are modernizing and improving our permitting processes. We're collaboratively addressing the Commonwealth's Chesapeake Bay obligations. We've created an e-permitting platform and an e-inspection app, to improve our partnerships with the regulated community and increase transparency.

We have refocused on engaging with our stakeholders to identify problems and solutions. And we have begun reinvesting in the most critical asset we have in the Department: our people.

To lead the Department is an absolute privilege, one I take very seriously. The employees of DEP are passionate about their work, and it is that passion that has allowed us to maintain our services over the past decade of budget cuts. It is my job to provide them with tools and training to ensure we are meeting the core mission of the Department efficiently and effectively. I truly believe we can deliver fantastic service to the regulated community while protecting public health and our environment.

I also must take a moment to thank my wife Colleen and my four children for their support and understanding as I have taken on this new role. You have a better sense than most of the impact a life of public service can have on your family. I could not ask for a better partner or cheerleader in life than Colleen.

Finally, I want to thank you for your work with staff in the Department and with me over the past year. Your support is appreciated more than I can say. My hope is that we can continue to work together in partnership to address these challenges.

I look forward to answering your questions.