



NEWS AND VIEWS



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK MCDONNELL, DEP SECRETARY

DEP'S PASSION IS ITS SUPERPOWER

By Patrick McDonnell, Secretary

I am honored and privileged to take the oath of office. I believe this is about all the employees in our great agency.

I've often said that our mission – to protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment – drives our sense of duty throughout every day. But it's our passion that takes us beyond, to work tirelessly to achieve the best outcome, the right decision, the one that protects our environment so that we may all prosper.



If you've received this newsletter as a forward, please consider [subscribing](#) so that we can keep you informed on how we're working with a wide range of partners to achieve our mission. And visit our [new blog](#), where you'll find more details about our work to "make a difference" for our residents and our environment.

TOP STORIES



More Than 1 Million Homes Could Be at Risk of Mine Subsidence

New and updated maps of coal mines in Pennsylvania are now available on the DEP Mine Subsidence Insurance website – www.pamsi.org – and homeowners and businesses are encouraged to check to see if they could be at risk for mine subsidence.

"If you've checked before and think your property is not at risk, now is the time to check again," said John Stefanko, deputy secretary of active and abandoned mine operations.

Watch the video above, for more information.



Falcon Banding Event: Three Hatchlings!

Eagle-eyed bird watchers are once again focusing on a pair of peregrine falcons and their three young nesting in downtown Harrisburg. Since 2000, a series of adult pairs have raised their young by using the nest tray located on the 15th floor of DEP's headquarters.

Before the young fledge or are able to fly, the birds are examined and outfitted with leg bands, allowing biologists further insight into the recovery of this state-endangered species. The majority of this site's offspring have survived to adulthood and have successfully nested throughout the eastern United States and into Canada. In Pennsylvania, more than 40 nesting pairs of peregrine falcons are currently nesting in urban areas. As their population continues to recover, biologists are looking for an increase in the number of nest sites located along the river cliffs of the Commonwealth.

For more information about this year's banding event, or to watch the Falcon Cam and learn more about peregrines, visit www.dep.pa.gov/falcons.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

Erie School Students "Bag" 2017 Environmental Excellence Award

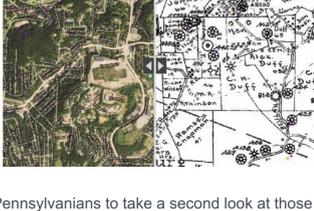
Americans use more than 380 billion plastic bags and wraps yearly, requiring 12 million barrels of oil to create, according to the [EPA](#). Less than 5 percent of plastic is recycled, meaning much of the plastic ever made still exists.

After students in Grades 4-6 in Iroquois School District in Erie County studied how the chemicals in plastic can negatively affect fish up the food chain, they wanted to help improve water quality and the health of aquatic life in Lake Erie. Undaunted by the scope of the plastic bag problem, they took action, carrying out a research program and public outreach campaign:

- The students studied shoppers' habits at a local grocery store to tally how many people bring recycled/reusable bags and determine why people don't recycle plastic bags.
- They concluded the lack of curbside pickup makes it difficult for people to recycle plastic bags.
- They created receptacles at school and started a recycling competition.
- They educated other students on the life of a plastic bag, and taught classmates how to make a reusable bag from a t-shirt.

In two months, the school recycled more than 68,000 plastic bags!

For their project – called "Making a Difference in the Community and Lake Erie Environment by Recycling Plastic Bags" – the Iroquois students were honored with a 2017 Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence. They're one of [21 organizations across Pennsylvania honored this year](#) for their passion, innovation, collaboration, and public service in working to improve the environment for us all.



Partnering with the Public to Tackle the Challenge of Historical Oil and Gas Wells

With oil and gas drilling dating to the mid-1800s, Pennsylvania has hundreds of thousands of historical wells as ordinary-looking as a small piece of metal or concrete pipe poking out of the ground. For Pennsylvanians who've grown up with one in their yard or neighborhood, it's nothing more consequential than a place to put a flowerpot or avoid in a pick-up football game. DEP wants Pennsylvanians to take a second look at those pipes, since many aren't mapped.

These wells, many of which are in western Pennsylvania where most drilling occurred, may be unplugged or insufficiently plugged and leaking methane. If methane migrates, water supply can be affected, and the gas can build up in a home or other structure, creating a potentially serious safety hazard. Stray methane also increases greenhouse gas emissions.

Secretary McDonnell encourages, "Public collaboration in identifying wells is very helpful to our efforts to update data, make it accessible, and mitigate risks."

One of the best ways to help is to check out a new interactive website that combines historical maps in Allegheny County with aerial imagery to show [historical areas of oil and gas development in that county](#). DEP plans to develop interactive maps for other areas of the state as well.

Property owners who discover a well on their property can call DEP at (888) 723-3721, or visit the [abandoned and orphaned well web site](#) to ensure that a well has been properly identified and any potential environmental issues are addressed.

For more information, check out the [video](#), [press release](#), on historical wells in Pennsylvania.

DEP North-central Region Celebrates "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day"

Young Malcolm Ayers knew that his father, Geoff Ayers, was an environmental attorney for DEP, but he never realized his job could be so cool.

Malcolm gasped and laughed at his dad's frightened reaction when Becky Dunlap, a water pollution biologist, dropped a water scorpion into Geoff's open hand. Malcolm was equally impressed to learn that these harmless (yet fearsomely named) aquatic creatures have a caudal breathing tube – or, in Malcolm's words, "They breathe through their butts!"



NCRO staff hold a water scorpion in their hands to show the children.

This memorable science lesson was part of "Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day," a longstanding tradition at the DEP North-central Regional Office in Williamsport. This year, 25 students spent a busy day alongside their parents, taking part in demonstrations and activities on groundwater, recycling, aquatic life, geographic information systems, rocks and minerals, chemical sampling, and more.

"Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day" is a national public education program to connect what children learn in school to the actual working world.

ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS

The best defense against West Nile Virus is to prevent mosquitoes from breeding. *Here's what you can do:*

1. Dispose of cans, buckets, tires, and pots that hold water
2. Turn over wading pools and wheelbarrows when not in use
3. Have clogged roof gutters cleaned every year
4. Wear long-sleeved shirts, long pants and socks when outdoors
5. Use insect repellants according to the manufacturer's instructions
6. Clean and chlorinate swimming pools and remove any water that may collect on pool covers



SOCIAL SCENE



Patrick McDonnell
@SecMcDonnell

Following

Biking benefits everyone! #BiketoWorkWeek
ow.ly/kEfQ30bJVnr @PennDOTNews
@GovernorTomWolf @DCNRnews
@PAHealthDept

Biking is one of those activities that benefits everyone, not just the person in the saddle. Not only are there health benefits to the rider, but there are fewer air emissions from fewer cars on the road, which helps improve overall air quality for everyone.

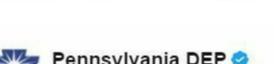
PATRICK MCDONNELL
Acting Secretary, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection



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Following

The sun is rising on solar energy in Pennsylvania: ow.ly/CJ9f30bKaW0
#PaSolarFuture #SunShot @ENERGY



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Following

Did you know DEP had several roles in this building implosion? Read more on our blog: ow.ly/DHPb30ca7kh



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

What percentage of Pennsylvania's electricity does the Finding Pennsylvania's Solar Future statewide planning group aspire to get from solar power?

Find out by reading DEP's Blog, [The Sun is Rising on Solar Energy in Pennsylvania](#).

Have a question you would like to see featured as a question of the month? Submit your questions to, ra-epnews@pa.gov.

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