

# NEWS AND VIEWS



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK MCDONNELL, DEP SECRETARY

## Restore Pennsylvania and Investing in Our Future

By Patrick McDonnell, Secretary

By now many of you have heard of the Restore Pennsylvania initiative – an ambitious, bi-partisan effort to make needed investments in Pennsylvania's future through things like expanded broadband internet access, blight remediation, flood prevention, and environmental cleanup.

There is a need for Restore Pennsylvania projects across the commonwealth. I and other DEP staff have been to communities with old industrial sites, unclaimed coal refuse, and eroded streambanks that contribute to local flooding. We've heard from local officials and residents about the impacts that these sites have on the community, and how there aren't the resources to fix them. Through Restore Pennsylvania, funding will be available to restore floodplains and reduce flood risk, clean up abandoned brownfields so they can be put into productive use, and remove and reclaim coal refuse piles.



Some of the stories highlighted below show the tremendous need for these types of projects to protect homes and businesses and make Pennsylvania a leader for 21st century.

[Visit Governor Tom Wolf's website to learn more about Restore Pennsylvania.](#)

### TOP STORIES

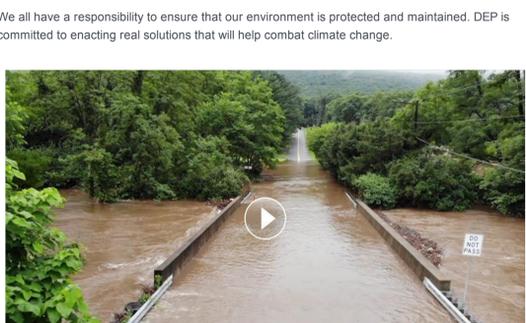
#### DEP Announces Comprehensive Plan to Address Climate Change

Climate change is the most critical environmental threat confronting the world. It is occurring for numerous reasons and will have long-term impacts on our globe, which means Pennsylvania must address it in a comprehensive way.

DEP and the Wolf Administration are tackling climate change on multiple fronts, including offering numerous strategies to reduce air pollution.

In April, [Gov. Tom Wolf announced](#) that Pennsylvania is joining the [United States Climate Alliance](#), a bipartisan coalition of governors committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Led by state governments, the alliance facilitates state cooperation to accelerate the deployment of climate solutions to help each state achieve its climate goals.

DEP has also released the [Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2018](#), which is the new state climate plan developed by DEP and state agency partners with recommendations for government leaders, businesses, and citizens to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate.



[How is climate change affecting Pennsylvania and what can we do about it?](#)

The plan is a result of Gov. Tom Wolf's executive order establishing the first statewide goal to achieve a 26 percent reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2025 and an 80 percent reduction by 2050, from 2005 levels. The executive order also established the Green Government Council to ensure that state government offices lead by example to help achieve these goals.



Additionally, state agencies will reduce energy use in state government and improve energy efficiency of state buildings and vehicles, saving taxpayers money in the process. This includes replacing 25 percent of the state government passenger car fleet with electric cars and electric hybrid cars by 2025.

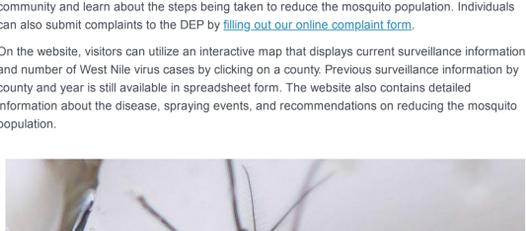
DEP has developed Pennsylvania's Electric Vehicle Roadmap, which outlines 13 strategies to tap the great potential of electric vehicles, from increased building code amendments and financing programs.

To help Pennsylvania meet its diesel emissions reduction goals, the Wolf Administration has developed the Driving PA Forward initiative to improve air quality in Pennsylvania and drive transformation from older, polluting diesel engines to clean technologies through competitive grant and rebate programs. The goal is to permanently reduce oxides of nitrogen (NOx) emissions, a precursor in the formation of ground level ozone and fine particulate matter, by as much as 27,700 tons.

The Wolf Administration has also proposed a Reasonable Available Control Technology (RACT) rule to limit volatile organic compounds (VOC) emissions from the natural gas industry, as required under the federal Clean Air Act.

Finally, the administration's Solar Energy Program makes available millions of dollars in grant funding to be used by eligible applicants to promote the installation of new solar projects and the manufacturing or assembly of solar equipment in Pennsylvania, which not only reduces carbon dioxide emissions, but also creates good family-sustaining jobs and reduces energy consumption, subsequently lowering electric bills.

We all have a responsibility to ensure that our environment is protected and maintained. DEP is committed to enacting real solutions that will help combat climate change.



[Governor Wolf Establishes First Statewide Goal to Reduce Carbon Pollution in Pennsylvania](#)

#### What's the Buzz: DEP's Office of Water Programs Monitors Ticks, Mosquitos, Black Flies

DEP's Office of Water Programs is responsible for monitoring and controlling the populations of waterborne insects and arachnids; specifically, ticks, mosquitoes and black flies. These creatures are not just a nuisance; in some cases, they carry serious illnesses.



[Learn how DEP collects ticks](#)

DEP is conducting a [five-year environmental surveillance of ticks](#) to assess the risk of tickborne illnesses across Pennsylvania. The survey, which started in July 2018 in coordination with county governments, is part of the Pennsylvania Lyme Disease Task Force recommendations for combating the growing incidence of Lyme and other tick-borne diseases.

The survey is taking place in every county in Pennsylvania to track ticks' habitats, life stages and peak activity levels and to test them for human pathogenic diseases. Additionally, 38 counties are conducting a specific survey of nymphal blacklegged (*Ixodes scapularis*) ticks, which can transmit [Lyme disease](#) to humans.

Fall and winter surveillance focuses on analyzing adult blacklegged ticks for emerging and changing disease burdens in public use habitats across Pennsylvania, such as parks, playgrounds or recreational fields.

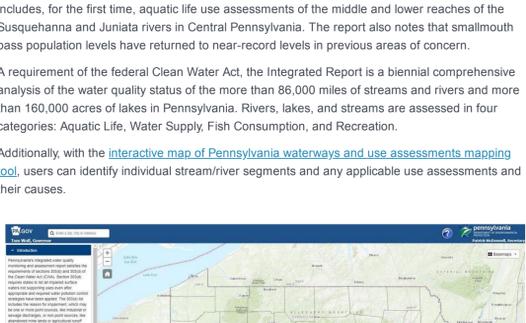
The spring and summer surveillance focuses on collecting three tick species: the blacklegged tick in its immature nymphal stage, when it most often infects humans with Lyme disease, as well as human babesiosis and human granulocytic anaplasmosis; the adult American dog tick, which transmits Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Tularemia; and adult lone tick, which transmits Ehrlichiosis and Tularemia.

The nymphal stage of the blacklegged tick causes the most tickborne illness in Pennsylvania due to its size and activity period. It is significantly smaller — about the size of a poppy seed — than the adult and therefore less likely to be discovered on the human body.

Another disease-carrying creature is the mosquito, which is known for potentially carrying the West Nile virus which was reported in nearly every county last year. DEP recently launched a new interactive [West Nile Virus Control Program website](#) to inform and protect the public.

The newly updated website offers the same comprehensive information that DEP has provided in the past in a new, interactive format so that individuals can see the impact of West Nile virus in their community and learn about the steps being taken to reduce the mosquito population. Individuals can also submit complaints to the DEP by [filing out our online complaint form](#).

On the website, visitors can utilize an interactive map that displays current surveillance information and number of West Nile virus cases by clicking on a county. Previous surveillance information by county and year is still available in spreadsheet form. The website also contains detailed information about the disease, spraying events, and recommendations on reducing the mosquito population.



[So how do we do it?](#)

While black flies are not known to carry diseases, they are a pest that can inundate folks seeking outdoor recreation, especially around rivers and streams.

DEP is currently conducting its annual [Black Fly Suppression Program](#), which entails monitoring [1,700 miles of 48 rivers and streams in 35 participating counties](#) to control black flies. Aerial and ground spray operations will occur once every 10 to 15 days until funding is exhausted.

The program is open to any county that requests the program. Counties typically request this based on residents' complaints. Individuals can also submit complaints to the DEP by [filing out our online complaint form](#).



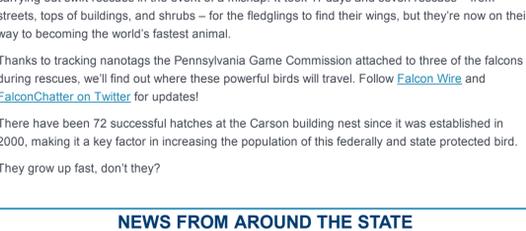
[Learn more about DEP's Black Fly Suppression Program on our blog](#)

#### Report on Health of PA Waterways Detailed in New Interactive Website

Clean water is vital to the health and safety of Pennsylvanians, our wildlife, and our land. DEP biologists across the state are constantly studying our lakes and streams to check on their status, as mandated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency.

DEP has released its 2018 Integrated Water Quality Monitoring and Assessment Report, which details the health of rivers, streams, and lakes across Pennsylvania.

The report evaluates whether waterbodies across Pennsylvania are achieving the water standards that protect clean water. Streams, lakes, rivers, and other water resources are evaluated on how well each waterway is meeting its assessed use, such as drinking water supply, aquatic life, recreation, and fish consumption.

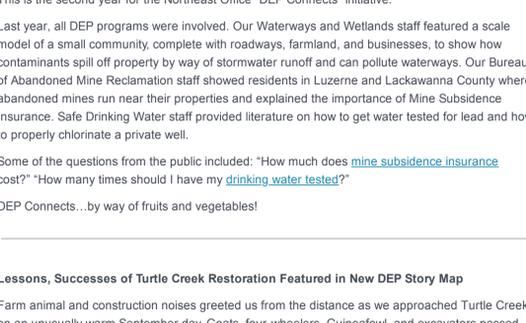


[View the Draft 2018 Integrated Report](#)

Thanks to new scientific analysis techniques pioneered by DEP staff, the 2018 Integrated Report includes, for the first time, aquatic life use assessments of the middle and lower reaches of the Susquehanna and Juniata rivers in Central Pennsylvania. The report also notes that smallmouth bass population levels have returned to near-record levels in previous areas of concern.

A requirement of the federal Clean Water Act, the Integrated Report is a biennial comprehensive analysis of the water quality status of the more than 86,000 miles of streams and rivers and more than 160,000 acres of lakes in Pennsylvania. Rivers, lakes, and streams are assessed in four categories: Aquatic Life, Water Supply, Fish Consumption, and Recreation.

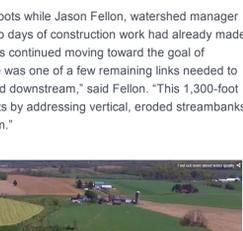
Additionally, with the [interactive map of Pennsylvania waterways and use assessments mapping tool](#), users can identify individual stream/river segments and any applicable use assessments and their causes.



[Explore the Draft 2018 Integrated Report Viewer tool](#)

#### DEP Needs Your Help with a Historic Problem: Legacy Oil and Gas Wells

Oil and gas development has been a part of Pennsylvania's landscape for more than 150 years – and part of that historic legacy are thousands of abandoned oil and gas wells that can pollute air and water. Pennsylvania DEP is urging residents to watch for signs of abandoned oil and gas wells and report them to DEP's Bureau of Oil and Gas Planning and Program Management.



*A legacy well in Pennsylvania*

Hundreds of thousands of oil and gas wells were drilled in Pennsylvania long before the current Marcellus boom and many were drilled long before there were regulations governing how to permit them (nearly a century after the first commercial well was drilled). Today, many of these wells still exist but are unmapped or unidentified.

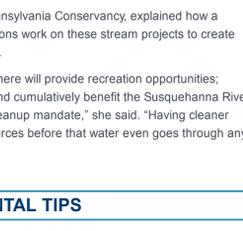
Because abandoned wells can pollute ground and surface water as the wells crumble, and can leak methane gas into the air or other enclosed spaces such as homes and businesses, orphan and abandoned wells can become dangerous, if not volatile. The successful decommissioning through plugging is one of the most responsible actions we can take.

If you see signs of an abandoned well, most common in western PA, please [reach out to DEP and let us know](#).

Learn more about legacy wells at [dep.pa.gov/legacywells](#) and share with friends and neighbors so that these public safety hazards are properly addressed.

#### Four New Harrisburg Falcons Take to the Skies

The Rachel Carson Building seems a bit quiet these days, with the peregrine falcons that hatched in April at the nest on the 15th-floor ledge now soaring the sky.



*A young peregrine falcon in Harrisburg. Photo by DEP intern Sarah Cutshall*

Falcon fans were captivated as [breeding season unfolded](#). In February the longtime pair – female 48/AE and male WV – once again fended off a territorial challenger to start a family at this prime piece of peregrine real estate. By the end of March, they were carefully tending four eggs through storms and late snows.

By the end of April, four hatchlings were gobbling bird carcass as fast as the parents could bring it. Banding took place in May in an event that educated and wowed middle schoolers who attended, as well as [fans who watched online](#).

[Falcon Watch and Rescue](#) began May 31, as the young birds attempted their first flights. Community volunteers and DEP staff and interns participated, observing the birds' activities and carrying out swift rescues in the event of a mishap. It took 11 days and seven rescues – from streets, tops of buildings, and shrubs – for the fledglings to find their wings, but they're now on their way to becoming the world's fastest animal.

Thanks to tracking nanotags the Pennsylvania Game Commission attached to three of the falcons during rescues, we'll find out where these powerful birds will travel. Follow [Falcon Wire](#) and [FalconChatter on Twitter](#) for updates!

There have been 72 successful hatches at the Carson building nest since it was established in 2000, making it a key factor in increasing the population of this federally and state protected bird. They grow up fast, don't they?

### NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

#### DEP Connects at Farmer's Markets

Strawberries, watermelon, peaches, peppers, cucumbers and cabbage: That is your typical farmer's market bounty here in Pennsylvania.



*DEP Connects at a farmer's market in the Northeast in 2018*

But in the Northeast, when visitors at local farmer's markets look to buy fresh fruits or vegetables this summer, they might just find something else that will benefit them a few tables away: environmental information courtesy of the DEP.

The Staff in the Northeast Regional Office will be busy again this summer manning the DEP booth at several farmer's markets to meet with residents, answer questions and hand out literature about various DEP programs. Look for our table and staff at farmer's markets in Scranton, the Lehigh Valley and Schuylkill County.

The DEP tables are positioned right next to tables of apples, plums, fresh broccoli, and apple cider slushies. They are filled with displays, demonstrations and literature on environmental issues that affect people's everyday lives, including West Nile virus prevention, biosolids, disposal of hazardous household waste, recycling tips, and more.

This is the second year for the Northeast Office "DEP Connects" initiative.

Last year, all DEP programs were involved. Our Waterways and Wetlands staff featured a scale model of a small community, complete with roadways, farmland, and businesses, to show how abandoned mines spill off property by way of stormwater runoff and can pollute waterways. Our Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation staff showed residents in Luzerne and Lackawanna County where abandoned mines run near their properties and explained the importance of Mine Subsidence Insurance. Safe Drinking Water staff provided literature on how to get water tested for lead and how to properly chlorinate a private well.

Some of the questions from the public included: "How much does [mine subsidence insurance](#) cost?" "How many times should I have my [drinking water tested](#)?"

DEP Connects...by way of fruits and vegetables!

#### Lessons, Successes of Turtle Creek Restoration Featured in New DEP Story Map

Farm animal and construction noises greeted us from the distance as we approached Turtle Creek on an unusually warm September day. Goats, four-wheelers, Guinea fowl, and excavators passed us on the dusty farm lane as we made our way to the site of one in a series of stream restoration projects on this small, impaired rural stream in Union County, Pennsylvania.

Arriving at Turtle Creek, cool water spilled over our boots while Jason Fellon, watershed manager for DEP's Northcentral Region, explained how just two days of construction work had already made a permanent impact to the stream, as project partners continued moving toward the goal of removing it from DEP's impaired waters list. "This site was one of a few remaining links needed to connect together several restored miles upstream and downstream," said Fellon. "This 1,300-foot restoration project helps the stream and its inhabitants by addressing vertical, eroded streambanks that supply excess fine-grain sediment into the stream."



[Visit the Turtle Creek Story Map to learn more](#)

The story of the long-term, piece-by-piece restoration of Turtle Creek is a story about the power of partnerships, innovation, the environmental stewardship of landowners, and the resiliency of natural systems. Now, Turtle Creek is also the subject of [DEP's latest Story Map](#), an online resource using interactive maps, videos, graphics, and text to tell a success story that suggests broader opportunities for Pennsylvania's waters, and for the Chesapeake Bay.

Renée Carey, executive director of the Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, explained how a partnership of state, county, and non-profit organizations work on these stream projects to create multiple stacked benefits, locally and far downstream.

"We focus on local streams because improvements there will provide recreation opportunities; visibly and measurably improve local water quality; and cumulatively benefit the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay, which is under a federal cleanup mandate," she said. "Having cleaner waterways also improves our local drinking water sources before that water even goes through any sort of treatment."

### ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS

#### Save Energy During Hot Summer Months

Summertime living can be easy, but that hot sun and humid air can drive up energy bills as we turn the temperature down on the thermostat. Improving your home's efficiency when it comes to heating, air conditioning, and other energy use is an easy way to save on your electric bills and cut down on air pollution from power plants.



[Visit our blog to find ways to save energy and money this summer.](#)

### THE SOCIAL SCENE

Did you know DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell does a pretty great Grover impersonation? It's true.

#### Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Story time! The Pennsylvania Department of Education's latest episode of the #PDEBookNook features Sesame Street and DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. Grover is Secretary McDonnell's favorite!

