of response activities among Commonwealth agencies employed by agencies in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The department is taking steps to combat these changes through its Clean Energy Program, which supports energy efficiency and renewable energy projects. This initiative promotes sustainability, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and helps slow climate change.

"Energy efficiency drives positive impacts across our lives," said Secretary McDonnell. "Every time a business or home improves its energy efficiency, they're taking a step for Pennsylvania and the nation toward independence from fossil fuels. It creates good-paying jobs in our communities."

The department also highlighted the recent announcement of the Pennsylvania Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) in Low-Interest Loans for High-Impact Projects. This program will provide low-interest loans to help fund critical conservation and natural resources projects in Pennsylvania. The department is working with the H. Sullivan Charitable Trust and the Reinvestment Fund at the Leon H. Sullivan Human Services Corporation to implement this program.

DEP recently announced that $30 million has been invested through the Watershed Partnerships Program, which funds projects that protect water quality and quantity and improve waterways. Grants were awarded to projects that focus on infrastructure improvements that reduce pollution, provide water quality improvements, and provide public access to Pennsylvania's waterways.

In addition to its Clean Energy Program, DEP is also working to promote energy efficiency through its Driving PA Forward program, which focuses on reducing emissions from the transportation sector. This program includes Rebate to Assist in Renovating an Existing Facility (RARE) grant program, which provides funds to assist businesses in renovating existing facilities to improve energy efficiency.

DEP recently announced its 2022 Black Fly Season with City Island in Philadelphia. This visit highlights how DEP partnerships and a watershed-based planning approach are helping protect Pennsylvania's waters and watersheds. DEP also announced the appointment of Justin Dula as the OEJ director, who is working on an extensive outreach that led to the Environmental Justice Policy currently being released for public comment.

Secretary McDonnell also noted that DEP Showcases City of Reading's Local Climate Action for Earth Day. "We are proud of the City of Reading for their commitment to reducing their carbon footprint and improving their community's quality of life," said Secretary McDonnell. "They are an example of how local governments can take action to address climate change and create a more sustainable future."

In addition, DEP and PennDOT recently joined a community litter cleanup event in Waynesboro in Franklin County. This event is part of a larger effort to improve the quality of the environment and encourage residents to take better care of their community.

Recommended precautions for anyone venturing outdoors include: wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants, using insect repellent, and checking for ticks after returning indoors. Secretary McDonnell said, "Lyme disease has been present in all 67 counties for some time, and unfortunately, the prevalence of serious tickborne diseases like Lyme is expected to increase in the future.

The department also announced the appointment of Thomas Pescatelli as the successor to former OEJ director Allison Acevedo. This appointment comes as DEP continues to work on an extensive outreach that led to the draft Environmental Justice Policy currently being released for public comment.

"The Environmental Justice Policy is designed to address environmental discrimination and ensure that all communities are treated fairly and equitably," said Secretary McDonnell. "We are working to create a more just and equitable future for all Pennsylvanians."

Finally, Secretary McDonnell noted that the Peregrine Falcon Ledge in Philadelphia is a key part of a transition to clean renewable energy that will reduce our nation's dependency on fossil fuels. The falcons were once threatened by pesticides like DDT, but thanks to foresight by people like Rachel Carson, the Peregrine Falcon has made a remarkable comeback.

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