MINUTES OF
CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL
May 12, 2026

CALL TO ORDER:
Trisha Salvia, Vice-Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 12:33 PM.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COUNCIL (CAC) MEMBERS' PRESENT:

Robert Barkanic	Katherine Heatherington Cunfer
Trisha Salvia	Duane Mowry
George Ambrose	Jerome Shabazz
Jacquelyn Bonomo	Thaddeus Stevens
Carol Collier	John Walliser
William Fink	

DEP STAFF PRESENT:
Ian Irvin, Executive Director
Casey Damicantonio, Administrative Assistant, Policy Office
John Ryder, Deputy Secretary of Field Operations
Noah Fatzinger, Legislative Specialist, Legislative Office
Bo Reiley, Attorney, Office of the Chief Counsel
Lindsay Williamson, Attorney, Office of the Chief Counsel

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:
Trisha Salvia solicited additions or corrections to the April 2026 Minutes.

> **Thaddeus Stevens moved with amendments, Jacquline Bonomo seconded, and April 2026 Minutes were unanimously adopted, subject to amendments.**

DEP UPDATE:
John Ryder- Deputy Secretary of Field Operations, Department of Environmental Protection

SPEED, Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development, is fully staffed with 5 employees, four administrator officers, and one Bureau Director for Bureau of Permit Coordination. Kevin White was selected to be the Bureau Director and started approximately 7 weeks before the May meeting of the Council. Along with SPEED, the Bureau of Permit Coordination will have the Major Projects Permitting Division, which was formerly known as RIPCO, the Regional Permit Coordination Office.

Currently, there are 18 SPEED permits under review, and 6 permits have been issued by the program. Most of the permits under review are for Chapter 102, Chapter 105, and Air Quality. For the six issued permits, 4 are individual permits under Chapter 102, 1 is a Chapter 102 general permit, and 1 is an air quality permit. In the next couple of months, the Bureau will be visiting the regional offices and introducing the staff to one another.

Currently, there are 17 active data centers (i.e., data centers that have permits) in Pennsylvania. DEP is aware of about 34 prospective data centers, but there are no applications or permits. From a land use perspective, data centers are like industrial buildings with style of buildings, access roads, storm water control features, landscaping. While generating less traffic and seeing lower on-site employment numbers, the footprints are comparable. However, what makes data centers unique from an environmental planning standpoint is reliance on two key infrastructure elements: access to robust power utilities and access to water resources. As such, siting and coordination between developers, local government, and environmental agencies critical.

Data centers will need to comply with a range of federal and state environmental structures, including:

- Clean Water Act and Chapter 102 National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits
- Eart disturbance activities
- Post-construction stormwater management
- Stream crossings and/or wetland impacts
- Chapter 105 water obstruction encroachment permits
- Act 537 and sewage planning and wastewater discharges
- Potential dockets with either the Susquehanna or Delaware River Basin Commission
- Safe Drinking Water Act considerations
- Water management permits
- Storage tank permits
- Air quality for onsite or backup power generation

Data center projects will probably involve coordination among multiple federal and state agencies, including the Army Corps of Engineers, the Fish and Wildlife Service, Fish and Boat Commission, and country Conservation Districts.

Questions:

- What does the department consider to be a Data Center? Does “data centers” include cloud storage facilities, AI facilities, crypto mining, or all the above?

At the core, a data center is a secure facility that houses computers, servers, and networking equipment. Data centers can range in size, including smaller ones in already-built open office buildings. However, much of the current discussion on data centers focuses on the larger, unbuilt facilities. The specific uses of the data centers are not something the Department knows, focusing on land use activities, construction, and required environmental permits.

- Of the 17 active data centers in Pennsylvania, how many are, or will be, using a closed loop cooling system?

While there are a sliding scale and different elements that a data center may employ, the Department does not currently collect this information.

- Is there an update on the Microsoft related data center associated with the Three Mile Island facility?

The Department does not have an update but will look into.

- Of the 16 projects listed in the fast-track program, about a third of them are in Luzerne County. Three of those projects are hyperscale data centers, one of those projects is a regular sized data center, and one is an industrial park with the flexibility to be a data center. Summing up these projects, the potential land disturbance can be 6,000 acres. The question is specifically about the fast-track program and how it relates to the 5 or 6 projects in Luzerne County that are utilizing this program?

The experts about the program are in the Office of Transformation and Opportunity, and they entertain projects, determining if those projects meeting the necessary criteria. These permits do not have any special significance, and they are required to get the same permits. The 6 data centers on the fast track still need to meet the same standards and requirements as others.

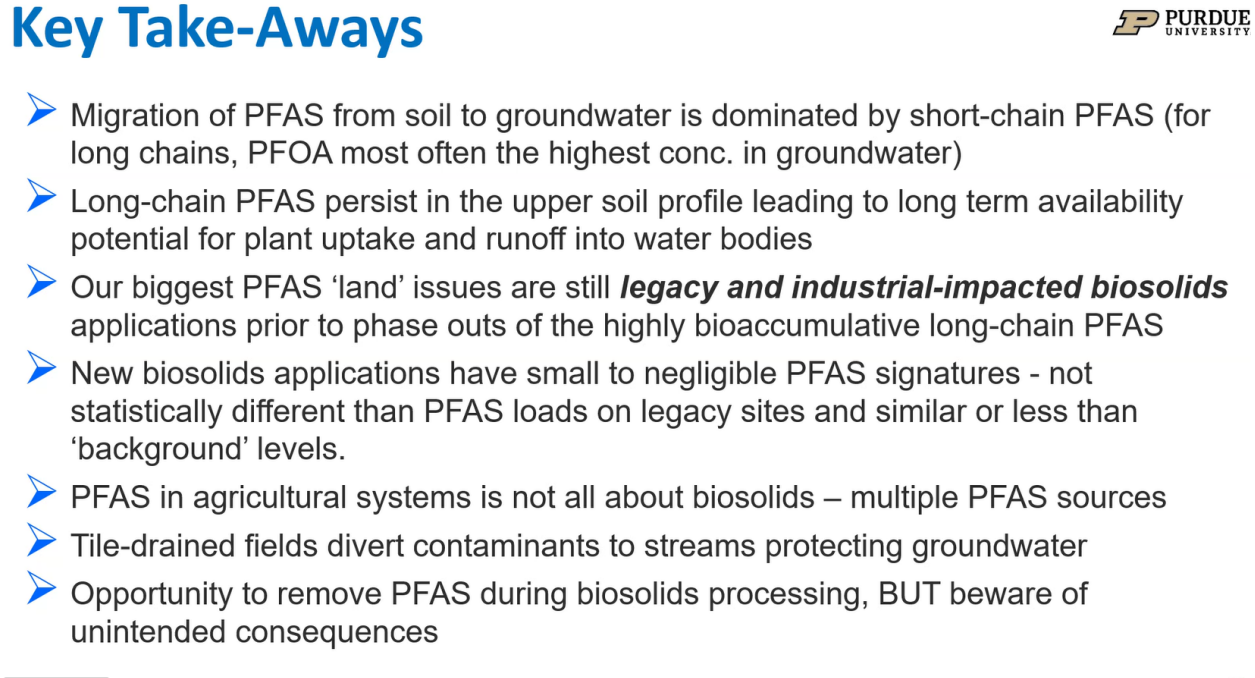
- Another Council member wanted to clarify something from the Sewage Advisory Committee vote – that the Committee did not vote to support current language of rulemaking package, it merely voted that the rulemaking package can move forward.

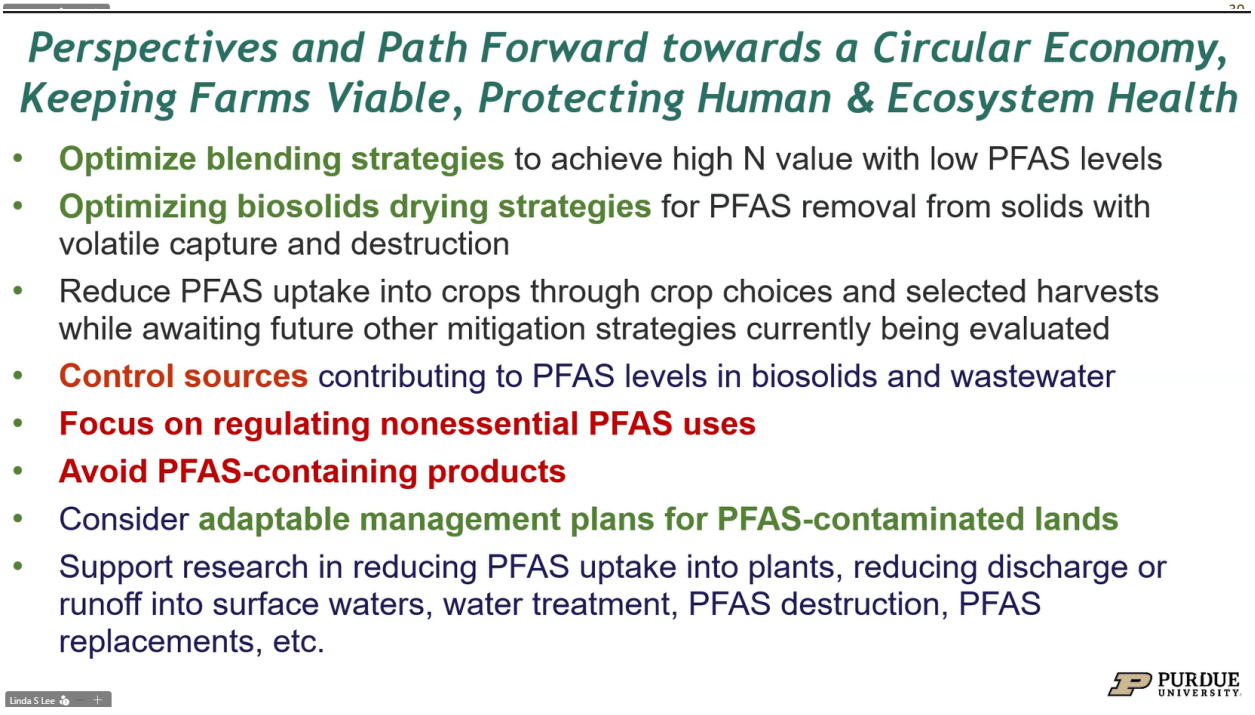
PRESENTATIONS:
Dr. Linda S. Lee – Professor, Dept. of Agronomy and School of Sustainability Engineering and Environmental Engineering, Purdue University
Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances in Agriculture and Wastewater Treatment

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances, PFAS, is a societal issue. PFAS is used in numerous products due to unique properties. There are over 7 million PFAS compounds and classes, such as non-stick, water-repellent, weather-protective, stain-resistant, municipal water and waste treatments, oil and gas, metal plating, aviation, and fire extinguishing. PFAS has a large synthetic diverse chemical family, with chains of varying length, numerous subclasses, etc.

PFAS can be classified as short chain or long chain and precursors or intermediates. Short chains are more mobile and less bioaccumulate, whereas long chains are not very mobile and bioaccumulate with longer half-lives in humans. When entering treatment plants, PFAS enter the biosolids that are applied as fertilizer or are discharged into wastewater. Sources of PFAS in

agricultural soil application include biowastes, atmospheric deposition, and irrigation with contaminated water. PFAS, after application, is taken up by plants and leach into ground water.





Questions:

- Any pre-treatment option from wastewater that could help minimize PFAS or PFOS.

There is a lot of control with the industry looking at the intake from streams and how you should be treating them. Domestic sewage is not going to be able to be completed easily. For biosolids, using dryer ovens before land application can reduce PFAS. Central solid treatment areas or management strategies at large landfills so that PFAS is not being piped into wastewater treatment. A State can help control sources and regulate products containing PFAS.

Notwithstanding the health concerns- there are also externalities on farmers who were impacted economically with PFAS. A farmer's insurance company amended the policy stating that the farmer was not covered for PFAS impacts. A stream on the farmer's land was contaminated by an Air Force base and it accumulated PFAS because cattle were directly drinking from the contaminated stream.

Matthew Edmond - Executive Director, Chester County Planning Commission;
Scott France - Executive Director, Montgomery County Planning Commission;
Rachael Griffith - Sustainability Director, Chester County Planning Commission, and
John Lesher - Environmental Planning Section Manager, Montgomery County Planning Commission.
<u>Montgomery and Chester County Planning Commissions Data Center Ordinance Guide</u>

Data centers in Pennsylvania are of growing interest and controversy, especially in the Southeastern portion of Pennsylvania where Montgomery and Chester Counties are located and where available land is sparse. Despite the limited space, every municipality must provide for all land use; therefore, Montgomery and Chester Counties want to provide resources to municipalities to adequately plan and regulate data centers, focusing on issues instead of full model ordinance. The guide, then, is not straight model ordinance language, being topical instead. Finally, the guide focuses on providing clear guidance on quantitative limits and performance standards.

Issues like zoning, dimensional standards, setbacks, maximum height inclusive to rooftop equipment, building and impervious coverage, energy usage impacts, power demand, colocation of energy generation, power redundancies like backup generators, and threats to local and state climate goals were discussed.

Some major topics of discussion in energy generation - data centers may decide to build their own generation to support the grid either temporarily or permanently, which has different land considerations. Energy generation must be separated from a sensitive receptor as well as siting and screening considerations of substations. All required studies must also consider impacts of proposed energy generation.

Another topic of discussion was water consumption – water cooled date centers consume large amounts of water to avoid overheating and should be using public water suppliers where possible. Data centers could have a closed loop cooling systems or an alternative system.

Data centers have thermal impacts with their own heat island effect. This heat could be potentially used as an adjacent data center to reduce overall energy needs and expenditure, ideally located near or adjacent to a property.

There are other concerns, like noise because of the constant low-frequency noise ventilation fans can result in sleep disturbance and negative impact wildlife and farms.
Other impacts would include electronic waste and its disposition, decommissioning plans, notifications when the data center closes, and a consideration requiring financial assurance.

Questions:

- If the Susquehanna and Delaware River Basin Commissions do not have review all withdrawals, is there something requiring the public water authority to show they have enough water available?

River Basin Commission review happens at the threshold of 5 million gallons a day. For instances not under the River Basin Commission review, the public water supplier will serve a letter to the data center that the supplier has the capacity.

Professor Kenneth J. Davis, Fan Wu, Yueqi Jiang – The Pennsylvania State University (Penn State)
Improving Air Quality State Implementation Plans (SIPS) using Land Surface Remote Sensing

Working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, Princeton, California, and the Department over the last 4 years, the research hopes to understand and simulate the atmospheric boundary layer, measured by a lidar, in order to improve air quality modeling. The current research is about California, which is the problem child for what the research is addressing. Pennsylvania has a similar, albeit more complex, problem.

Using Doppler LIDAR and weather balloons to determine updrafts and downdrafts from the sun heating the ground and mixing the atmosphere, the turbulence during the day and night. These interactions feed into air quality simulation that would affect a state implementation plan to manage air quality in a state.

Running the simulations and using LIDAR and weather balloons, it was found that the models do not adequately account for irrigation and vegetation. Fluxes of heat and water in response to sunlight. Correcting models will help make a difference in air quality. In Pennsylvania, it is unclear what the cause of bias and research is still being done.

Questions:

- What is transparent uncertainty and how are they being measured? How would this be used by the average individual?

Transparent uncertainty refers to the practice of openly acknowledging, measuring and communicating uncertainty in decision making processes. All models are wrong in a sense, but some are useful. Our study would allow you to lower emissions without having a huge impact on the day-to-day operations while improving the air quality. We are currently working with multiple agencies and are still working on data with DEP.

Public Comment

Monica Scriber - See written comments at 2026 Citizens Advisory Council Meeting Schedule | Department of Environmental Protection | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Senator Katie Muth – Senator Muth seconded a lot of the earlier comments, focusing on how data centers have more impacts than a natural gas well. Senator Muth would like some focus on public safety, evacuation, and risk

CAC Committee Reports

Public Participation Committee
The Committee has been reviewing the public comments during Council meetings. Another item of discussion was on whether the Council is allowing enough time for comments with the public.

Strategic issues
Meeting on a regular basis and working on a draft Data Center Report to DEP.

Mining and Reclamation Board
Held quarterly meeting, discussing funds, permits, actions coming in or going out, and what the regions are doing.

New Business/Open Discussion
Nominations Committee – formerly nominating Robert Barkanic and Trisha Salvia for Chair and Vice Chair, respectively for July 1, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

Act 54 Committee – The Council is still open for public stakeholder comments.

2025 Annual Report - Report to be sent to council for review and vote at next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT:

Next meeting will be June 23rd at 12:30 in Room 105 at RCSOB or online.

> **George Ambrose moved to adjourn the meeting. Jermone Shabazz second the motion, which was unanimously approved.**

May 12, 2026, meeting of the CAC was adjourned at 3:37pm.