



WELCOME!

Welcome to the latest e-newsletter of the Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) at the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). We're sharing helpful information on OEJ work and policies, important DEP news, government resources, educational opportunities, best practices from community partners, and new developments on issues that may affect EJ communities.

Know someone who'd benefit from this information? Please share and [invite them to subscribe](#). Please help us spread the word! And we want to hear your thoughts on stories/topics you'd like to see.

TOP STORIES

Addressing Racial Justice and Inclusion at DEP

Dear Environmental Justice Partners:

As Pennsylvania and the whole country have seen protests demanding an end to systemic racism, we have all been called to action. At DEP and within OEJ, we have been looking at the actions we have taken and considering how we can do more.



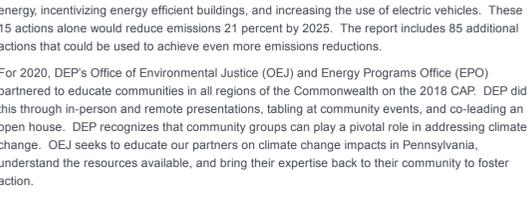
DEP is reaching out to our community stakeholders and partners to affirm that we stand against racism and work to ensure diversity, inclusion and equity in our office and throughout all our work. Our Office of Environmental Justice was founded on principles of equity, inclusion, and justice. Critical connections exist between race, access to information and decision making, poverty, environmental exposure and health outcomes that are exacerbated by environmental injustice and racism. Our work at OEJ and the Department as a whole is dedicated to combating environmental justice and racism by ensuring we address and implement justice in our practices and policies at DEP, create inclusive environments in our office and through engagement with our partners and in work with other government agencies. We are also developing ways through evaluation of data and cultivation of resources to identify and address environmental conditions that have disproportionately impacted Black communities as well as other communities of color, low income populations and other vulnerable residents. We understand that the language of race and racism is at the core of our work. We are working within DEP and with other PA agencies to define environmental justice in a way that speaks to justice and race and racism and incorporates principles of justice and is also meaningful to communities we serve.

I have affirmed to DEP staff and contractors that the agency is anti-racist and racism will not be tolerated in the department. I have charged all staff with ensuring the work we do on every level considers an environmental justice lens. We have also taken steps to develop a Diversity Committee to address diversity and inclusion and race at DEP. The Office of Environmental Justice plays a key role in these diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and will be active participants on the Diversity Committee.

I ask that you join us and partner with us as we do our EJ work. We understand experiences in your communities and your work inform and guide the actions that we take around environmental justice. We want to hear from you to learn how we can do this work better and in a tangible way address race and environmental injustice in Pennsylvania.

Sincerely,

DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell



Commonwealth and COVID-19

As we continue to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to share some updates, resources, and the response from the Commonwealth and DEP to help communities during these challenging times. The Commonwealth of PA is maintaining a very useful webpage that contains [updates and resources on COVID-19](#). We also encourage you to check out the Pennsylvania Department of Health's (DOH) excellent [COVID-19 update webpage](#). Among other useful information, the webpage describes COVID-19 symptoms, ways to minimize spread, and how to protect yourself.

DEP and COVID-19

In order to prevent the further spread of COVID-19, all DEP offices are physically closed and will remain closed until restrictions are lifted. To report environmental emergencies, please call 1-800-541-2050. DEP staff that are capable of teleworking, including Office of Environmental Justice staff, are continuing to telework and fulfill the mission of the department. For the latest updates on the status of other DEP work functions, see our [COVID-19 update page](#). For general inquiries, please continue to [contact DEP](#). Please [contact the Office of Environmental Justice](#) with any environmental justice inquiries.

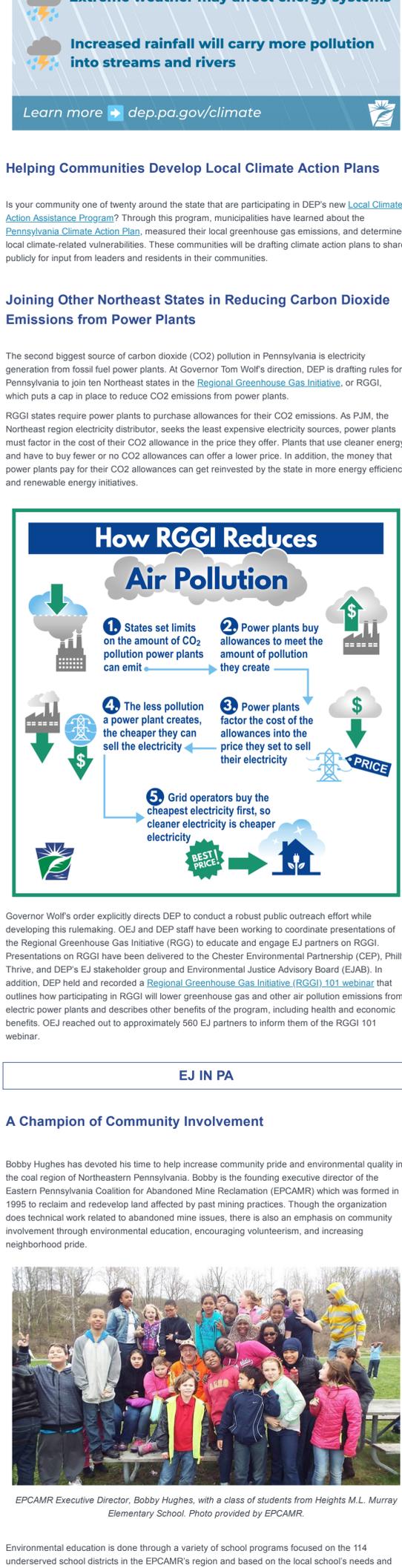
AROUND THE STATE

Climate Action Plan

The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is the state's climate plan developed by DEP and state agency partners every 3 years. The 2018 plan includes recommendations for government leaders, businesses, and citizens on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to a changing climate. The plan describes over 100 actions on how to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The report highlights 15 highly impactful and cost-effective actions, such as increasing renewable energy, incentivizing energy efficient buildings, and increasing the use of electric vehicles. These 15 actions alone would reduce emissions 21 percent by 2025. The report includes 85 additional actions that could be used to achieve even more emissions reductions.

For 2020, DEP's Office of Environmental Justice (OEJ) and Energy Programs Office (EPO) partnered to educate communities in all regions of the Commonwealth on the 2018 CAP. DEP did this through in-person and remote presentations, tabling at community events, and co-leading an open house. DEP recognizes that community groups can play a pivotal role in addressing climate change. OEJ seeks to educate our partners on climate change impacts in Pennsylvania, understand the resources available, and bring their expertise back to their community to foster action.

DEP's [Climate Action Plan webpage](#) includes an [interactive story map](#), the full [PA Climate Action Plan 2018](#), as well as the abbreviated version, called the [PA Climate Action Plan 2018 Summary Booklet](#).



Climate change open house in Harrisburg on February 15, 2020.

Climate Impacts Assessment

If we don't reduce greenhouse gas emissions, what will Pennsylvania look like? The [2020 Pennsylvania Climate Impacts Assessment](#) uses state and federal data to project future climate change-related impacts in three areas: livestock, infrastructure, and water quality. The report was produced for DEP by the Penn State University Environment and Natural Resources Institute. Every county is expected to be warmer and wetter, with many other impacts seen.

CLIMATE IMPACTS

A Changing Pennsylvania

- Average rainfall is projected to increase
- Extreme rainfall events will increase
- Flooding risk will be substantial
- Extreme weather may affect energy systems
- Increased rainfall will carry more pollution into streams and rivers

Learn more [dep.pa.gov/climate](#)

Helping Communities Develop Local Climate Action Plans

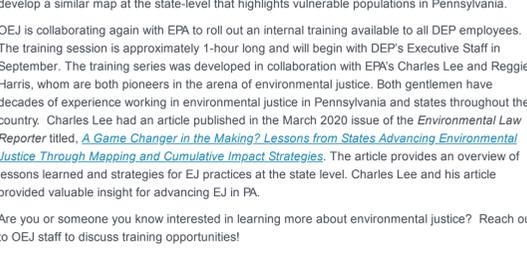
Is your community one of twenty around the state that are participating in DEP's new [Local Climate Action Assistance Program](#)? Through this program, municipalities have learned about the [Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan](#), measured their local greenhouse gas emissions, and determined local climate-related vulnerabilities. These communities will be drafting climate action plans to share publicly for input from leaders and residents in their communities.

Joining Other Northeast States in Reducing Carbon Dioxide Emissions from Power Plants

The second biggest source of carbon dioxide (CO₂) pollution in Pennsylvania is electricity generation from fossil fuel power plants. At Governor Tom Wolf's direction, DEP is drafting rules for Pennsylvania to join ten Northeast states in the [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative](#), or RGGI, which puts a cap in place to reduce CO₂ emissions from power plants.

RGGI states require power plants to purchase allowances for their CO₂ emissions. As PJM, the Northeast region electricity distributor, seeks the least expensive electricity sources, power plants must factor in the cost of their CO₂ allowances in the price they offer. Plants that use cleaner energy and have to pay fewer or no CO₂ allowances can offer a lower price. In addition, the money that power plants pay for their CO₂ allowances can get reinvested by the state in more energy efficiency and renewable energy initiatives.

How RGGI Reduces Air Pollution

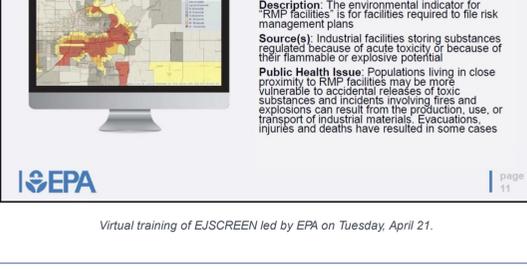


Governor Wolf's order explicitly directs DEP to conduct a robust public outreach effort while developing this rulemaking. OEJ and DEP staff have been working to coordinate presentations of the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to educate and engage EJ partners on RGGI. Presentations on RGGI have been delivered to the Chester Environmental Justice Partnership (CEJP), Philly Thrive, and DEP's EJ stakeholder group and Environmental Justice Advisory Board (EJAB). In addition, DEP held and recorded a [Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative \(RGGI\) 101 webinar](#) that outlines how participating in RGGI will lower greenhouse gas and other air pollution emissions from electric power plants and describes other benefits of the program, including health and economic benefits. OEJ reached out to approximately 560 EJ partners to inform them of the RGGI 101 webinar.

EJ IN PA

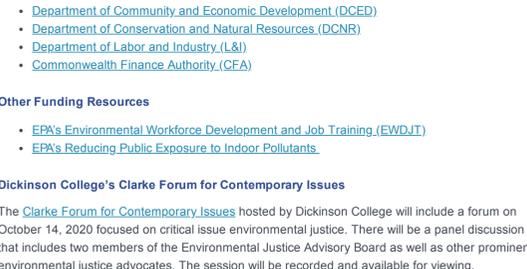
A Champion of Community Involvement

Bobby Hughes has devoted his time to help increase community pride and environmental quality in the coal region of Northeastern Pennsylvania. Bobby is the founding executive director of the Eastern Pennsylvania Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation (EPCAMR), which was formed in 1995 to reclaim and redevelop land affected by past mining practices. Though the organization does technical work related to abandoned mine issues, there is also an emphasis on community involvement through environmental education, encouraging volunteerism, and increasing neighborhood pride.



EPCAMR Executive Director, Bobby Hughes, with a class of students from Heights M.L. Murray Elementary School. Photo provided by EPCAMR.

Environmental education is done through a variety of school programs focused on the 114 underserved school districts in the EPCAMR's region and based on the local school's needs and opportunities. Where possible, students are taken to streams near the school to learn about stream ecology, acid mine drainage and reclamation, and volunteerism.



Newport Lake is affected by acid mine drainage and pollutes the Newport Creek in Newport Township and the City of Nanticoke in Luzerne County. Photo provided by EPCAMR.

EPCAMR has a focus on encouraging volunteerism, environmental education, and empowering communities to take back their towns from environmental degradation. Community pride from residents helps increase volunteerism and can also be a motivation for businesses. Working to encourage economic development opportunities around mine reclamation helps the community in several ways. "With poverty there is a lack of opportunity to even get outdoors in a way that schools and parents feel it is safe," Bobby said. "There is a need to get students and youth out into the environment. Get them involved - plant a tree, pick up litter, plant a garden. We need to create opportunities to get out into the environment."

Is there an EJ champion in your community? Does your community have a success story you would like to share? [Email us your story for publication in the next Your Environment, Your Voice newsletter.](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON EDUCATION

Environmental Education Grants

On June 26, [DEP announced \\$434,168 in Environmental Education \(EE\) Grants have been awarded to support 55 projects](#). Environmental justice, climate change and water are the grant program's priorities. These projects will engage youth and adults on these three topics and expand their understanding of these issues in Pennsylvania and provide skills to take responsible action to protect their environment. "We're especially excited that not only is every region of the state represented, but 77 percent of the grant funding supports 33 projects that will engage Pennsylvanians who live or work in EJ areas, as DEP continues to strengthen its outreach and partnership with EJ communities," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

EJ Education and Training

For 2020, OEJ has been developing a series of EJ trainings in collaboration with EPA. The series has been developed for DEP and Commonwealth employees, and community and environmental justice leaders seeking to advance environmental justice throughout the state. The trainings serve multiple purposes including advancing public-private partnerships, fostering interagency collaboration, and developing capacity and understanding of environmental justice issues.

The first series focused on capacity building, EJ history, and EJ mapping. The EJ history covered historical cases of injustice, formation of the EJ movement, and ways to develop capacity and advance EJ initiatives. The EJ mapping training provided an overview of EPA's EJSSCREEN tool. EJSSCREEN is a web-based mapping tool that combines environmental and demographic indicators. EJSSCREEN allows users to see data in color-coded maps and really understand the big picture behind environmental justice. OEJ is now working with partners throughout the state to develop a similar map at the state-level that highlights vulnerable populations in Pennsylvania.

OEJ is collaborating again with EPA to roll out an internal training available to all DEP employees. The training session is approximately 1-hour long and will begin with DEP's Executive Staff in September. The training series was developed in collaboration with EPA's Charles Lee and Reggie Harris, whom are both pioneers in the arena of environmental justice. Both gentlemen have decades of experience working in environmental justice in Pennsylvania and states throughout the country. Charles Lee had an article published in the March 2020 issue of the *Environmental Law Reporter* titled, [A Game Changer in the Making: Lessons from States Advancing Environmental Justice Through Mapping and Cumulative Impact Strategies](#). The article provides an overview of lessons learned and strategies for EJ practices at the state level. Charles Lee and his article provided valuable insight for advancing EJ in PA.

Are you or someone you know interested in learning more about environmental justice? Reach out to OEJ staff to discuss training opportunities!

Indicator: Proximity to Risk Management Plan Facilities (RMP)
Date: 2019
Description: The environmental indicator for "RMP facilities" is for facilities required to file risk management plans
Source(s): Industrial facilities storing substances regulated because of acute toxicity or because of their flammable or explosive potential
Public Health Issue: Populations living in close proximity to RMP facilities may be more vulnerable to accidental releases of toxic substances and incidents involving fires and explosions can result from the production, use, or transport of industrial materials. Evacuations, injuries and deaths have resulted in some cases

Virtual training of EJSCREEN led by EPA on Tuesday, April 21.

RESOURCES – TOO GOOD NOT TO SHARE

DEP Grants, Loans, Rebates – If your environmental improvement project needs funding, DEP can help. We offer [31 grant and rebate programs](#) to support a range of projects to improve or protect the water, land, and air in Pennsylvania.

- [Small Business Advantage Grant](#)
- [COVID-19 Pennsylvania Energy Development Authority Restart Grants](#)
- [Alternative Fuel Vehicle Grants and Rebates](#)
- [Driving PA Forward Grants and Rebates](#)
- [Coastal Zone Management Grant](#)
- [Recycling and Waste Grants for Local Governments](#)

Other Commonwealth Grants, Loans, Rebates

- [Department of Community and Economic Development \(DCED\)](#)
- [Department of Conservation and Natural Resources \(DCNR\)](#)
- [Department of Labor and Industry \(L&I\)](#)
- [Commonwealth Finance Authority \(CFA\)](#)

Other Funding Resources

- [EPA's Environmental Workforce Development and Job Training \(EWDJT\)](#)
- [EPA's Reducing Public Exposure to Indoor Pollutants](#)

Dickinson College's Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues

The [Clarke Forum for Contemporary Issues](#) hosted by Dickinson College will include a forum on October 14, 2020 focused on critical issue environmental justice. There will be a panel discussion that includes two members of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board as well as other prominent environmental justice advocates. The session will be recorded and available for viewing.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

DEP Events

- September 15 – [Citizens Advisory Council \(CAC\) Meeting](#)
- October 15 – [Environmental Justice Advisory Board \(EJAB\) Meeting](#)
- October 20 – [Citizens Advisory Council \(CAC\) Meeting](#)
- October 27 – [Climate Change Advisory Committee Meeting](#)
- November 17 – [Joint Meeting of the Environmental Justice Advisory Board \(EJAB\) and Citizens Advisory Council \(CAC\)](#)

[Check out DEP's Calendar of Events for more events](#)

QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?

OEJ welcomes your suggestions or inquiries about our work, programs and/or policies. Please contact us at RA-EPOEJ@pa.gov, or directly:

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