

NEWS AND VIEWS



TOM WOLF, GOVERNOR • PATRICK McDONNELL, DEP SECRETARY

Pennsylvania At Our Best By Patrick McDonnell, Secretary

Every time I attend the annual Pennsylvania Farm Show, I come away amazed at the strength and vitality of Pennsylvania's agricultural industry.

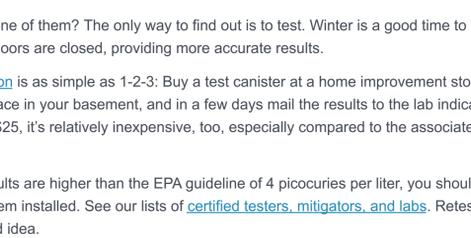
While it's easy to marvel at the almost \$136 billion in annual economic impact from the agricultural sector, my brain focuses on its relationship to the environment as well. I have always believed that Pennsylvania is at our best when we support strong economic opportunity while protecting the environmental resources needed to keep our economic generators healthy.

So, this year, throughout the run of the Farm Show, I kept returning to the factor that brings our economy and our environment together: the partnerships in this state.

More than most other industries in Pennsylvania, agriculture is threaded through our lives, our government, and especially our environment. Farmers depend on the health of the soil to ensure the bounty of their crops, and the productivity in their soils. In turn, their infrastructure, animals, and daily operations can impact the waters and land which are so essential to their industry.

I've enjoyed the week of celebrating the fact that agricultural community is a partner to both the consuming public, and to the environment. As we begin 2018, I expect that this partnership will continue to grow to help us meet our shared challenges.

TOP STORIES



Questions? Call 1-800-23-RADON

Test for Radon and Breathe Easier

Fully 40 percent of homes in Pennsylvania have higher radon levels than the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers acceptable for this odorless, colorless, radioactive gas that can cause lung cancer. We know this from decades of data supplied by state-certified radon testers and labs.

Is your home one of them? The only way to find out is to test. Winter is a good time to test, since windows and doors are closed, providing more accurate results.

Testing for radon is as simple as 1-2-3: Buy a test canister at a home improvement store, open it and set it on a surface in your basement, and in a few days mail the results to the lab indicated on the test. At about \$25, it's relatively inexpensive, too, especially compared to the associated risk of lung cancer.

If your test results are higher than the EPA guideline of 4 picocuries per liter, you should have a radon mitigation system installed. See our lists of [certified testers, mitigators, and labs](#). Retesting every two years is a good idea.

If your test results are lower, you don't need to install a radon mitigation system, but retesting at times of major home renovation or excavation work is advised.

January is national Radon Action Month. Test your home today, and breathe easier.

DEP Suspends Mariner East 2 Construction Permits

On January 3, 2018, [DEP issued an order](#) suspending the Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 permits for the construction of the Mariner East 2 pipeline. The suspension followed a pattern of knowing violations committed by the operator during the construction of the pipeline.

Under the order, all activities permitted under Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 of the PA Code must immediately cease. The permits will be suspended until Sunoco satisfies the terms outlined in the order, including, but not limited to:

- Address all impacts to private water wells in Silver Spring Township, Cumberland County.
- Identify all in-progress or upcoming construction activities and detail the specific Chapter 102 and Chapter 105 permit under which the activity is authorized.
- Submit a detailed Operations Plan outlining additional measures and controls to minimize inadvertent returns.

"Until Sunoco can demonstrate that the permit conditions can and will be followed, DEP has no alternative but to suspend the permits," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "We are living up to our promise to hold this project accountable to the strong protections in the permits."

Some activities are expected to continue during the suspension. Any activities that are not regulated by DEP, such as welding and delivery of materials, can continue. In addition, Sunoco is required to maintain erosion controls throughout the suspension.

NEWS FROM AROUND THE STATE

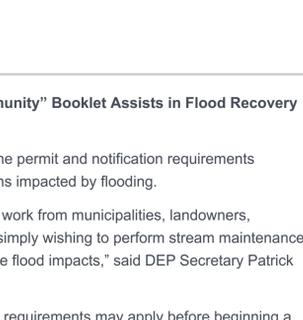
Oil and Gas Inspections: A Game-Changer

After decades of performing oil and gas drilling site inspections using paper forms in the field, followed by data entry in the office, DEP updated to a mobile app in early 2017, and it's been a game-changer.

Because of the efficiency of inputting data on a mobile device, at least 2,000 more surface inspections were completed in 2017 than in 2016, resulting in an 11.5 percent increase. Inspectors' productivity increased an average of 29 percent by the end of the year. The productivity savings will amount to \$500,000, or roughly the equivalent of adding six additional inspectors.

Even more important, our customer service has improved considerably. Because inspectors record results in real time, they can provide outcomes to well operators much sooner--in some cases, the same day. More inspection data are available to the public more quickly, too, because inspectors now collect more robust data and post their inspection reports sooner on the DEP website.

DEP teamed up with PennDOT to build off existing transportation-related technology in this Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management, and Efficiency initiative. "We wanted to switch to all electronic inspections for a while," said DEP Deputy Secretary Scott Perry. "With the [GO-TIME initiative](#), everything came together."



DEP Deputy Secretary Scott Perry

DEP Penalizes Energy Corporation of America for Drilling Violations in Greene and Clearfield Counties

In 2015, when a leak of fluids used in gas drilling killed vegetation and impacted groundwater and a natural spring, DEP staff began a two-year investigation that revealed violations at 17 well sites in Greene and Clearfield Counties. DEP's enforcement efforts, coupled with regulations instituted in 2016, are designed to protect the environment and hold operators accountable. In this case, the operator was assessed \$1.7 million, required to remediate the impacted sites and restore the drinking water supply.

Click [here](#) to read more.

"Guidelines for Maintaining Streams in Your Community" Booklet Assists in Flood Recovery Efforts

DEP has released a [new resource](#) for understanding the permit and notification requirements affecting those wishing to work in or adjacent to streams impacted by flooding.

"DEP receives many inquiries each year about stream work from municipalities, landowners, businesses, and communities affected by flooding, or simply wishing to perform stream maintenance to protect property and infrastructure and prevent future flood impacts," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell.

The guide is a first step in determining what regulatory requirements may apply before beginning a project. It contains a "green, yellow, and red light" list of potential stream activities to indicate whether permits are likely to be required, and additional sections titled "Good Rules of Thumb" and "Myth vs. Reality."

Stream work that is not properly designed and permitted can inadvertently cause conditions to worsen in the next flood event, also impacting downstream neighbors. The new guide is intended to proactively share information with the public so that stream work is done in an environmentally-sensitive manner, and in a way that reduces the likelihood of future problems.

The PDF booklet can be [downloaded from the DEP website](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL TIPS

Going Green in the New Year

[Visit the DEP blog](#) to read about five New Year's Resolutions to go green in the new year!

- Resolution #1: BYOI!
- Resolution #2: Walk, run, bike, carpool, train, trolley, or bus
- Resolution #3: Fight phantom power
- Resolution #4: Cut down on food waste
- Resolution #5: Re-commit to recycling EVERYTHING, ALL THE TIME, EVERYDAY, NO EXCUSES



SOCIAL SCENE

PA Department of Environmental Protection
@PennsylvaniaDEP

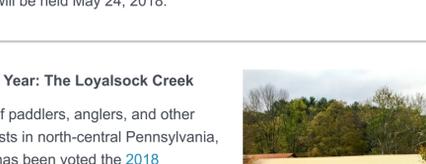
Even nonsmokers can get lung cancer, and the No. 1 cause is radon. The construction of your home plays a big role in radon levels. New or old, every home should be tested. 🏠
Find out how to fix your home: bit.ly/2raVRQJ
#RadonActionMonth

PA Department of Environmental Protection
@PennsylvaniaDEP

"It is a great pleasure to see the tenants move into their new, safe, beautiful homes," said DEP's Cheryl Sinclair as the Wolf Administration celebrated the opening of Lock Haven Court, a new senior housing made possible by DEP cleanup efforts 🏡 ➡️ bit.ly/2rmGPar

Patrick McDonnell
@SecMcDonnell

Mark and Beth Steck, owners of Green Valley Farms in Franklin County, are top-notch environmental stewards! It was great meeting them and their family and learning about their conservation practices at the #PAFarmShow today. #PAFS18 @PAgriculture



TOO GOOD NOT TO SHARE

PEC and Dominion Energy Accepting Applications for the 2018 Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards

Do you know a person or organization improving our environment in western Pennsylvania through technology and innovation, wildlife protection, pollution prevention, natural resource restoration, or energy conservation? The Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Dominion Energy want to hear more. They are accepting applications for the 2018 Western Pennsylvania Environmental Awards. Five winners will be chosen with \$5,000 donated in their honor to the environmental non-profit of their choice.



[Visit PEC's website for more information](#). The deadline for applications is February 8, 2018. The award ceremony will be held May 24, 2018.

2018 River of the Year: The Loyalsock Creek

Home to legions of paddlers, anglers, and other outdoors enthusiasts in north-central Pennsylvania, Loyalsock Creek has been voted the [2018 Pennsylvania River of the Year](#).

The public was invited to vote online, choosing from among five waterways nominated across the state. Results were announced jointly today by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and the Pennsylvania Organization for Waterways and Rivers (POWR).



Photo Credit: Joseph Simons

The Loyalsock Creek is a 64-mile-long picturesque stream, with its headwaters in western York County near the Sullivan County border and its confluence with the West Branch Susquehanna River in Lycoming County. Because of its mountainous terrain and topography, the Loyalsock Creek is prone to erosion and sedimentation challenges, and numerous government and non-government organizations are actively addressing this issue through creek bank stabilization and habitat restoration projects. In addition to providing cold-water habitat for trout, the Loyalsock Creek also supports a natural environment for the Eastern Hellbender, the largest native amphibian growing to two feet in length or more.

Chesapeake Bay Restoration Efforts Showing Positive Trends

Every year, the Chesapeake Bay Program rounds up the latest environmental health and restoration data and information available and releases the Bay Barometer: Health and Restoration in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This year we are excited to report that the majority of our indicators are showing positive trends -- an encouraging sign that our restoration efforts are working.



The headwaters of Mattawoman Creek flow through Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area in Charles County, Md. The estuarine parts of the creek are considered a model for a fully restored Chesapeake Bay. (Photo by Will Parson/Chesapeake Bay Program)

Guided by the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement, Chesapeake Bay Program partners use ten interrelated goals and 31 outcomes to collectively advance the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem and its watershed. Data and information used to track progress toward these outcomes come from a range of trusted sources, including government agencies, academic institutions, nongovernmental organizations and direct demographic and behavior surveys.

Thanks to the efforts of local governments, private landowners and watershed residents, nutrient and sediment pollution entering local waterways and the Bay have declined, but agricultural and urban and suburban runoff continue to be a challenge.

[Read more here](#).

PA Department of Agriculture
@PAgriculture

View the full economic impact analysis for PA agriculture, with recommendations for both the industry and commonwealth, to respond to changing consumer and market demands ➡️ bit.ly/2mioZzJ

(@TeamPA, @econsultsolutns, @TempleUniv Fox School of Business)



QUESTION OF THE MONTH

[Question from Dave Curry @CarlSaganRox on Twitter](#): "There is a bit of a disagreement in my neighborhood about the merits of short vs long-term radon testing. Does PA DEP have an opinion on this?"

Answer: Yes, we recommend that you start out with a short-term test, one lasting anywhere from 2 to 7 days. This is particularly important in Pennsylvania, where we have such high radon levels. The short-term test will tell you more quickly what your radon levels are. If your short-term test results indicate radon levels between 4 and 10 pCi/L or so, you could do long-term testing (365 days) to more accurately assess your long-term average. If the results of the initial test is greater than 10 pCi/L you should follow up with another short-term test as verification. If your initial test was less than 4 pCi/L then you may not have to do any more testing for a number of years.

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