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PA rivers threatened by industrial pollution

We need to defend our rivers and streams

A new study by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center found that industrial facilities dumped excessive pollution into Pennsylvania's waterways 633 times over 21 months, placing Pennsylvania second in the nation for Clean Water Act violations.

The new study, titled "Troubled Waters," comes as the Trump administration works to weaken federal clean water protections, putting Pennsylvania rivers at further risk.

More pollution than permitted

In reviewing Clean Water Act compliance data from January 2016 through September 2017, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center and Frontier Group found that a number of major industrial facilities continue to dump pollution into Pennsylvania's waterways in excess of their permit levels. These violators include:

- Graterford State Correctional Institution in Montgomery County, which exceeded its pollution permit for waste 80 times, releasing waste into the Perkiomen Creek, a tributary of the Schuylkill River. On seven occasions, Graterford exceeded its permit by 500 percent.
- Eastman Chemical Resins Inc., which is located along the Monongahela River in Allegheny County, upriver from Pittsburgh. It exceeded its permitted pollution limits 72 times, 10 of which resulted in the release of more than 500 percent of its permitted limits of chemicals like zinc, aluminum, nitrites, styrene and xylene into the Monongahela.
- P. H. Glatfelter's paper facility in York County, which exceeded its permit 20 times and expelled waste and thermal pollution into the Codorus Creek, a tributary of the Susquehanna River. Eight of those times, it released more than double the permitted level.

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▲ *The Delaware River is one of the many waterways in Pennsylvania threatened by industrial facilities that are violating the Clean Water Act.*

We can stop the pollution

"Decades after the passage of the federal Clean Water Act, it's shocking and appalling that facilities across Pennsylvania, and the nation, continue to violate their pollution permits with impunity," said PennEnvironment's Ashleigh Deemer.

The report also shows that polluters rarely face penalties, and recommends several measures to ensure stronger enforcement of, and better protection for, clean water. With the support of our members, PennEnvironment will work to put an end to this dangerous pattern of pollution.

Staff

Take action

Read the "Troubled Waters" report and a full list of violators at:

www.PennEnvironmentCenter.org

◀ *PennEnvironment's Ashleigh Deemer releases our latest report, "Troubled Waters," which found that industrial facilities are putting Pennsylvania's rivers and streams at risk.*

Staff

You make the difference

Here at PennEnvironment, we're all about protecting the air we breathe, the water we drink, the places we love, and the future our kids will inherit. Platitudes, however, are easy. Putting values into action is the hard part, especially when confronted by real choices.

What, for example, do we value more: clean, healthy rivers and streams, or the dollars saved by cutting funding for environmental enforcement? What's more important: the convenience of plastic foam cups? Or the wildlife that will suffer if those cups end up in our rivers? Are we willing to pay a little more up front for solar and wind power if it means cleaner, healthier energy for the long run?

At PennEnvironment, you can trust that, no matter how tough the choice, we put the environment first on every campaign. Thank you for making all our work possible.

David Masur, Executive Director

Photo: USGS

Toward a greener future

PennEnvironment and PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center gratefully accept bequests, beneficiary designations of IRAs and life insurance, and gifts of securities to support our work to build a cleaner, greener, healthier future.

For more information, call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@PennEnvironment.org.

Your Impact

Uncovering Pittsburgh's biggest air polluters

The Pittsburgh region ranks in the nation's top 2 percent for cancer caused by air pollution, and a recent report by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center found that just a handful of Pittsburgh facilities are releasing the majority of this hazardous air pollution.

"Toxic Ten" uncovered the facilities responsible for emissions of chemicals known to cause cancer, respiratory ailments and other health effects. PennEnvironment created an interactive website to help Pittsburgh residents identify, report and track air pollution from these facilities in their communities.

After the report's release, nearly 100 residents joined PennEnvironment at a rally calling on local officials to address ongoing air pollution issues in the region. "Clean air is a right, not a privilege," said PennEnvironment's Zach Barber. "It's time for local officials to rein in the Toxic Ten and properly protect our health."

Protecting kids from dangerous lead

Parents should be able to send their kids to school confident that the water flowing from drinking fountains and other taps is free of lead contamination. In 2016, PennEnvironment helped win some of the nation's toughest lead standards for Philadelphia's schools—and we recently helped draft legislation to take those protections statewide.

Introduced in March by state Rep. Karen Boback, H.B. 2025 will keep kids safe by requiring schools to set lower thresholds for lead, conduct regular tests, inform the public of all test results, and shut off fountains and sinks that don't meet standards. The bill has bipartisan support from more than 50 cosponsors.

"In an era of political gridlock and hyper-partisanship, it's exciting that our elected leaders on both sides of the aisle can come together to protect our children from the threat of lead in our drinking water," said PennEnvironment's Stephanie Wein.

Tracy Stellino Polovick

PennEnvironment's Stephanie Wein (second from right) joins Rep. Karen Boback to introduce H.B. 2025, a bill that would help get the lead out of drinking water in Pennsylvania's schools.

Public Domain

Preparing for the electric vehicle revolution

With electric cars hitting U.S. streets in record numbers, a new study by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center highlights best practices to help local officials make their cities as electric car-friendly as possible.

The new report, "Plugging In: Readying America's Cities for the Arrival of Electric Vehicles," includes local and state data on the projected number of electric vehicles (EVs) expected on Pennsylvania's roads in the coming years. It also identifies policies to help cities accommodate these new electric cars with enough places to park and recharge.

"Electric cars are leaving gas-guzzlers in the dust in Pennsylvania," said David Masur, executive director of PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. "We have an opportunity to make a positive change after more than a century of vehicles spewing pollutants into the air. In order to plug into this opportunity, local and state officials need to commit to infrastructure that makes the transition to electric cars as smooth and fast as possible."

Four steps PA cities can take now

In particular, the report calls on local officials to implement four priorities to promote electric cars:

- Residential access to on-street electric car charging;
- Access to public charging stations;
- Support for private investment in publicly accessible stations; and
- Incentivized electric car parking and charging.

Electric car sales nationwide increased by 38 percent in 2016, and by another 32 percent throughout 2017 as charging stations became more convenient. Those electric car purchases reflect Americans' values, including a desire to protect our communities' health, reduce global warming pollution, and end our dependence on oil.

Even the auto industry recognizes that the future is electric. General Motors plans to launch 20 EV models by 2023, while Ford announced last month that it plans to invest $11 billion in EVs, with a goal of having 40 models by 2022.

Electric cars are coming to PA

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center's report estimates that Philadelphia, Harrisburg, Erie and Pittsburgh combined could see 47,000 electric vehicles on the road by 2030.

To get ready for the influx of electric cars, Pennsylvania cities need to decide where they will charge, particularly in city centers and neighborhoods without off-street parking. In all, major cities will need to install hundreds to thousands of new publicly accessible electric vehicle chargers to keep up with the increased number of electric cars.

Improving electric vehicle infrastructure is becoming more crucial as local and state officials are called upon to lead the charge on climate change, clean energy and clean cars, and as the Trump administration dismantles federal policies that offered concrete solutions to these issues.

Staff

Explore more online

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center Executive Director David Masur (center) releases our new report on electric vehicles, "Plugging In."

Read the full report at:

www.PennEnvironmentCenter.org.

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Single-use plastic waste ends up in our waterways, where it can injure and even kill wildlife.

Spotlight: Let's end polystyrene pollution

Every day, people throw away tons of plastic "stuff"—cups, containers, bags and more. Too often, this waste washes into our rivers and streams where it harms wildlife.

For a bird, fish or turtle, it's easy to mistake a small piece of plastic for food—especially when there are millions of pieces of plastic floating in the water.

Sadly, ingesting these fragments is often fatal. Animals can starve when they eat too much plastic that they can't digest, and toxic chemicals in plastic can harm animals' health—and make their way up the food chain to people.

For decades, we've known that one of the worst forms of plastic pollution is polystyrene, or what most of us call Styrofoam. Polystyrene breaks apart easily, but it persists in our environment in tiny particles. Incredibly, every bit of it ever made is still out there and could continue to threaten wildlife for hundreds of years to come.

Nothing we use once should pollute our rivers and streams for hundreds of years—especially when we don't need it. That's why we're calling for a statewide ban on polystyrene foam cups and take-out containers.

Plastics companies don't like this idea. Their opposition helped block a ban on plastic foam containers in California earlier this year. But across the country, more than 200 cities have passed polystyrene bans.

Moving beyond polystyrene foam is something we can do right here, right now. With your support, we're calling on our leaders in Pennsylvania to ban polystyrene foam cups and containers and choose wildlife over waste.

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PennEnvironment
Clean air. Clean water. Open spaces.

Your Summer Report

VOLUME 16 | NO. 2 | 2018

PennEnvironment

Our mission

We all want clean air, clean water and open spaces. But it takes independent research and tough-minded advocacy to win concrete results for our environment, especially when powerful interests stand in the way of environmental progress.

That's the idea behind PennEnvironment. We focus exclusively on protecting Pennsylvania's air, water and open spaces. We speak out and take action at the local, state and national levels to improve the quality of our environment and our lives.

Getting Pennsylvania to 100% renewable energy

We have the power to get all the energy Pennsylvania needs from the sun and the wind, and this spring, Pennsylvania legislators took an important step in this direction with the introduction of bipartisan, PennEnvironment-backed legislation.

Introduced by Philadelphia state Rep. Chris Rabb and Bucks County state Sen. Charles McIlhinney, this historic legislation would commit the state to reaching 100 percent renewable energy by 2050, ensuring that Pennsylvania meets the global warming pollution reductions necessary to avoid the worst effects of climate change. This groundbreaking proposal is the first bill of its kind with a Republican primary sponsor.

"With its longstanding history of coal mining and fracking, Pennsylvania has been a major culprit for far too long when it comes to climate change," said PennEnvironment Organizer Flora Cardoni. "Now we can work together to lead the nation in being part of the solution."

Andrew F. Kazmierski via Shutterstock

Support our efforts

Support our efforts to put Pennsylvania on a path to 100 percent renewable energy. Donate online at:

www.PennEnvironment.org

Newly proposed legislation would make Pennsylvania a clean energy leader, committing our state to reaching 100 percent renewable energy by 2050.

Design: Public Interest GRFX | (215) 985-1113
Editor: David Masur Primary contributor: Katrina Riley Layout: Chloe Coffman

Printed on recycled paper.