
WUC

Water Utility Council of the
PA-Section, American Water
Works Association (PA-AWWA)



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS UPDATE

From Milliron & Goodman Government Relations, LLC.

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WaterSense and Its Partners Encourage Homeowners to Fight Water Waste for the 15th Fix a Leak Week

Easy-to-fix household leaks waste billions of gallons of water across the country each year

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) WaterSense program is encouraging consumers and businesses to celebrate the 15th annual Fix a Leak Week, March 20 through 26, by finding and fixing plumbing leaks in their homes and improving irrigation systems for their landscapes.

"This Fix a Leak Week, I invite you to spend a few minutes checking for leaks around your home," said Director for the EPA Office of Wastewater Management Dr. Andrew Sawyers. "Over the past 15 years, WaterSense partners have engaged their communities to find and fix leaks – helping people save water and money."

To help stop leaks that can waste nearly 10,000 gallons of water per year in the average home, WaterSense partners from coast to coast are hosting community events, educational workshops, public service announcements, and other efforts to show homeowners how to stop water waste and make their water bills more affordable by checking for leaks.

Because toilets are often a source of leaks, EPA recommends checking for silent toilet leaks by placing a few drops of food coloring in the tank and waiting 10 minutes before flushing. If dye is visible in the bowl, there is a leak that may be easily fixed by replacing a worn flapper.

With spring here, EPA recommends checking irrigation components that may have been damaged by winter's cold. A "sprinkler spruce-up" that checks for broken parts, connects system components tightly to avoid leaks, and directs sprinklers to spray on landscapes can help reduce water waste outdoors.

If any fixtures require replacement, look for models that have earned EPA's WaterSense label. The WaterSense label is your guide to identify products, programs, and homes that are independently certified to use at least 20 percent less water and perform as well or better than standard models.

Learn more about finding and fixing leaks <https://www.epa.gov/watersense/fix-leak-week>.

About WaterSense

WaterSense helps protect the nation's water supply by offering consumers simple ways to use less water. WaterSense is both a label to help consumers identify water-efficient products and a resource offering consumers and businesses practical advice on saving water. The program and its more than 2,000 partner water utilities, local

governments, manufacturers, retailers, builders, and other organizations have helped consumers save more than 6.4 trillion gallons of water since 2006.

Learn more about WaterSense
<https://www.epa.gov/watersense>.

For further information: EPA Press Office
(press@epa.gov)

Source: EPA Press Release, 3/20/2023

PUC Damage Prevention Committee Announces Actions Against Underground Facility Owners, Excavators and Project Owners

Plans Hybrid In-Person, Livestreamed and Virtual Meeting on April 11

A total of 231 disciplinary actions, including \$171,575 in administrative penalties, have been taken against 126 underground facility owners, excavators and project owners in the https://www.puc.pa.gov/media/2327/caselist_2023-03-14.pdf by the Public Utility Commission's (PUC's) Damage Prevention Committee (DPC). These actions were taken during the DPC's March 2023 meeting.

The next meeting of the Damage Prevention Committee (DPC) is **Tuesday, April 11, at 9 a.m.** Members of the public, the media and others are invited to join the meeting in person in Hearing Room 1 of the Commonwealth Keystone Building, Harrisburg. Additionally, the PUC will **livestream the DPC meeting on the PUC website** http://www.puc.pa.gov/about_puc/live_streaming_video.aspx. Attendees also will be able to access the virtual conference by clicking on this **Microsoft Teams** [https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OGE4MTNkNTMtMWY4MC00MTVvLTg4MWYtODJmMmUxZmJhY2Iy%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OGE4MTNkNTMtMWY4MC00MTVvLTg4MWYtODJmMmUxZmJhY2Iy%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d)

[47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d](https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_OGE4MTNkNTMtMWY4MC00MTVvLTg4MWYtODJmMmUxZmJhY2Iy%40thead.v2/0?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d?context=%7b%22Tid%22%3a%22418e2841-0128-4dd5-9b6c-47fc5a9a1bde%22%2c%22Oid%22%3a%22d90a3983-778f-4a0d-babb-2e33bba65d80%22%7d) event link or by calling into the telephone conference by dialing 267-332-8737, and then entering passcode 220 277 135# to listen to the meeting. The meeting **agenda** https://www.puc.pa.gov/media/2330/agenda_2023-04-11v1.pdf is available on the PUC's website.

About the DPC

The DPC is a peer-based group of 13 representatives, nominated by their industry or affiliated organization and appointed by the PUC. Creation of the committee was authorized by Act 50 of 2017, which enhances Pennsylvania's Underground Utility Line Protection Act - also known as the "One Call Law." The focus of the DPC is to reduce the number of "hits" on underground lines and utilities.

The DPC meets regularly to review alleged violations of the One Call Law and make informal determinations as to the appropriate response including, but not limited to, the issuance of warning letters, mandatory training programs and/or administrative penalties. **Summaries of actions** <https://www.pucpa.gov/pipeline/damage-prevention-committee/> taken at monthly DPC meetings are available on the PUC's website.

Digging Safety - PA One Call

Every year, Damage Prevention and Safety responds to numerous underground line hits across the state. While underground lines are often "out of sight and out of mind," every hit poses a risk to the contractors and homeowners who are doing the digging; to utility workers and emergency responders who are mobilized when lines are struck; and to bystanders who live, work or travel near the locations of the incidents.

State law requires contractors and residents to contact **PA One Call** <http://www.pa1call.org/> at least three business days prior to excavation - triggering alerts to all utilities within an intended

digging area and prompting utilities to mark where their facilities are located. Pennsylvanians can dial 8-1-1 to connect with the One Call system, while out-of-state residents or businesses can call 1-800-242-1776.

About the Bureau of Investigation & Enforcement

The independent Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement (I&E) enforces state and federal pipeline safety, electric safety and motor carrier safety laws and regulations and represents the public interest in ratemaking and service matters before the PUC's Office of Administrative Law Judge. I&E has the authority to bring enforcement action, seek emergency orders from the Commission or take other steps to ensure public safety.

Source: PUC Press Release, 3/23/2023

Pennsylvania's Unemployment Rate at 4.4 Percent in February, Total Nonfarm Jobs Hits Record High

On March 24, 2023, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) released its preliminary employment situation report for February 2023.

Pennsylvania's unemployment rate rose one-tenth of a percentage point over the month to 4.4% in February. The U.S. unemployment rate was up two-tenths of a percentage point from January to 3.6. The commonwealth's unemployment rate matched its February 2022 level, and the national rate was down 0.2 percentage points over the year.

As of January 2023, Pennsylvania has recovered more than 100% of the 1.1 million jobs lost in the first two months of the pandemic. Pennsylvania's civilian labor force – the estimated number of residents working or looking for work – was up 8,000 over the month due to increases in both employment and unemployment.

Pennsylvania's total nonfarm jobs were up 5,600 over the month to a new record high of 6,094,400 in February. Jobs increased from January in six of the 11 industry supersectors with the largest gain in leisure & hospitality (+3,000). Trade, transportation & utilities jobs remained at a record high level.

Over the year, total nonfarm jobs were up 164,800 with gains in all 11 supersectors. Education & health services (+53,600) had the largest volume over-the-year gain among supersectors with three other supersectors adding over 19,000 each.

Additional information is available on the L&I website at www.dli.pa.gov.

Note: The above data are seasonally adjusted. Seasonally adjusted data provide the most valid month-to-month comparison. February data are preliminary and subject to revision.

Source: Pa Dept. of Labor & Industry, 3/24/2023

Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Budget Hearing Wrap

Acting Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection Rich Negrin, along with Jessica Shirley, Executive Deputy Secretary, Ian Harlow, Acting Deputy Secretary of Administration, Ramez Ziadeh, Deputy Secretary for Field Operations, appeared before the House Appropriations Committee. Republican House members focused their questions on Governor Shapiro's permitting reform proposal and how to ensure this process will produce results. Additionally, Republicans asked questions related to the Governor's apparent change of policy on RGGI and its negative effects on Pennsylvania.

Key Takeaways

- House Republicans applaud Governor Shapiro's plan to expedite the DEP permitting process, but there must be metrics to judge the success of this program.

- This process must include stakeholders and a change in culture at the Department.
- DEP should immediately repeal the Regional Green House Gas Initiative or RGGI regulation, failure to do so will result in energy price increases for all Pennsylvanians.
 - If RGGI remains a part of the DEP’s policy moving forward, Governor Shapiro will be solely responsible for energy price increases.
 - The “revenues” DEP estimates will be gained by RGGI are suspect at best, and the Department has shared no clear plan on how they intend to spend what money will come in.
- DEP should work proactively with local municipalities on storm water issues rather than just levying fines which end up being passed onto taxpayers.
- Plugging abandoned wells should be a priority of DEP, however, the Department must do this through cost efficient means which follow state and federal laws. This has been a struggle for DEP in the past.

Notable Q&A

Rep. Torren Ecker asks how the DEP is planning to execute its plan to expedite the permit process.

Rep. Jim Struzzi talks about the real impact of electricity rates and the loss of jobs if RGGI is fully implemented.

Rep. Natalie Mihalek grills DEP on the legal challenges to RGGI regulations and how any revenues from the program will be spent.

Rep. Clint Owlett asks DEP to clarify comments made in Senate hearing that RGGI is a compact and how the DEP will change the culture of their employees to become more client-driven.

Rep. Ryan Warner looks for clarity from DEP on the logistics of Pennsylvania joining RGGI and what would happen to planned revenues if RGGI was halted by the courts.

Deeper Dive – RGGI

- During his campaign, Governor Shapiro did not publicly embrace the Regional Green House Gas Initiative or RGGI. · The Candidate Shapiro said he needed to test RGGI’s impact and stated: “As governor, I will implement an energy strategy which passes that test, and it’s not clear to me that RGGI does.” He further said RGGI, “is a determination I will make as governor, in close consultation with workers and affected communities.”
- Republican House members are still waiting for these conversations.
- By refusing to repeal the unconstitutional RGGI regulations, Governor Shapiro will be responsible for increasing already high energy prices and killing family sustaining Pennsylvania jobs.

Watch full hearing **here**

[https://www.pahousegop.com/News/32200/Latest-News/Department-of-Environmental-Protection-\(DEP\)-Budget-Hearing-Wrap](https://www.pahousegop.com/News/32200/Latest-News/Department-of-Environmental-Protection-(DEP)-Budget-Hearing-Wrap)

Source: PA House Republican Caucus, 3/23/2023

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Budget Hearing Wrap

Acting Secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Cindy Dunn, along with Michael Walsh, Deputy Secretary for Administration, John Norbeck, Deputy Secretary for Parks and Forestry, and Lauren Imgrund, Deputy Secretary for Conservation and Technical Services. House Republicans focused on the fiscal health of DCNR and how to make the department sustainable. Additionally, Republicans asked questions covering the expansion of ATV trails in state parks, what the department is doing to address and prioritize its \$1.4 billion maintenance backlog, drilling on state lands, the state of the

timber industry, and how DCNR is partnering with private industry.

Key Takeaways

- DCNR needs to use its natural resources and assets to become a revenue generator. The Department could be raising revenues by:
 - Expanding drilling on state own lands.
 - Fully utilizing sustainable timber sales.
 - Charging for use of electric vehicle charging stations.
 - Partnering with private industry for amenities.
 - Reviewing fee structures.
- Infrastructure remains a major problem for DCNR, House Republicans believe this should be prioritized before opening more state parks.
- The Office of Outdoor Recreation should be working with private industry to increase the use and revenues of our state parks.

Notable Q&A

Rep. Eric Nelson asks the DCNR Secretary to expand non-surface impact drilling on state lands to raise revenues.

Rep. Torren Ecker asks if Gov. Shapiro plans on continuing Gov. Wolf's new lease moratorium for drilling on state lands and why certain drilling is exempt from this.

Rep. Natalie Mihalek questions how the DCNR Office of Outdoor Recreation will be working with private industry.

Watch full hearing **here**
[https://www.pahousegop.com/News/32199/Latest-News/Department-of-Conservation-and-Natural-Resources-\(DCNR\)-Budget-Hearing-Wrap](https://www.pahousegop.com/News/32199/Latest-News/Department-of-Conservation-and-Natural-Resources-(DCNR)-Budget-Hearing-Wrap)

Source: PA House Republican Caucus, 3/23/2023

Department of Agriculture Budget Hearing Wrap

Acting Secretary of Agriculture Russell Redding appeared before the House Appropriations Committee along with Greg Hostetter, Executive Deputy Secretary. House Republicans asked questions beginning with agriculture concerns in Western Pennsylvania relating to the Norfolk Southern train derailment. Other questions focused on proposed cuts to the department's Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission, fair market conditions for Pennsylvania dairy farmers, and support of the entire industry beyond organics.

Key Takeaways

- Agriculture is Pennsylvania's number one industry; House Republicans believe investment in this industry is essential.
 - This investment must be made wisely to help end our structural deficit.
- House Republicans remain concerned cuts in the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission will leave the state ill-equipped to deal with the current Avian Flu outbreak.
- Support for our dairy farmers remains a top priority for House Republicans by addressing competitive pricing.
- While House Republicans see the value of investing in Pennsylvania Organics, we cannot forget about the other forms of farming, including cattle and non-organics.

Notable Q&A

Republican Agriculture Chairman Dan Moul asked Secretary Redding to explain how the department plans to address the Avian Flu outbreak while cutting the Animal Health and Diagnostic Commission.

Rep. Clint Owlett presses the Department of Agriculture on the Governor's commitment to dairy farmers.

Rep. Eric Nelson questions the Department of Agriculture on how they will work with farmers who are not certified organic, a considerable amount of the budget is dedicated to organic farming.

Watch full hearing **here**

<https://www.pahousegop.com/News/32197/Latest-News/Department-of-Agriculture-Budget-Hearing-Wrap->

Source: PA House Republican Caucus, 3/23/2023

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This newsletter provides general information, not legal advice as to any specific matter. It should not be used as a substitute for appropriate legal advice.