



2021 Legislative Agenda



Tackling climate change

It's clearer than ever: we must take concrete, far-reaching steps—and fast—to avoid the worst effects of climate change. That means halting our emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050. Unfortunately, for far too long Pennsylvania has been part of the climate change problem, currently emitting the fourth highest emissions of global warming pollution in the nation. It's time to make Pennsylvania part of the solution, and tackle climate change. PennEnvironment supports:

Capping climate change pollution: Gov. Wolf has proposed to have Pennsylvania join the multi-state climate program called the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI) to reduce the state's carbon footprint. Sadly, instead of embracing this climate solution, legislators have attempted to strip PA-DEP's authority to regulate carbon pollution and prevent Pennsylvania from joining this successful program. The General Assembly should support RGGI and oppose legislative efforts to attack this initiative.

Reducing our reliance on dirty, dangerous energy sources: To protect our environment and public health, we must end our reliance on dirty and dangerous forms of energy. The General Assembly should oppose efforts to subsidize fossil fuels and other dirty sources, such as the massive petrochemical tax break passed in the previous session.

Promoting clean energy

Pennsylvania is uniquely positioned to tap into the new clean energy economy that relies on homegrown renewable energy sources like wind and solar power, and prioritizes energy efficiency and conservation. PennEnvironment supports:

Transitioning to 100% renewable energy: The science is clear—we need to transition Pennsylvania and the nation to 100% clean, renewable energy by 2050 if we're going to prevent the worst impacts of climate change. Following on the heels of other states, bipartisan legislation has been introduced to achieve this goal (HB1425 and SB630 in the previous session). The General Assembly should move on this proposal as quickly as possible.

Renewing Pennsylvania's renewable energy law: The Alternative Energy Portfolio Standard (AEPS) requires all electricity suppliers in Pennsylvania to get a certain percentage of their energy from wind and solar power. Without action by the legislature, the program is set to sunset in May 2021. The General Assembly should renew this program and increase the clean energy requirements to achieve 17% renewable energy by 2025 and 30% by 2030 in order to reduce air and climate pollution.

Promoting state appliance efficiency standards:

Adopting energy efficiency standards for appliances and commonly-used household products can have a significant impact on our energy and water use, in turn reducing air and water pollution and climate-altering carbon pollution. The General Assembly should enact efficiency standards for appliances and commonly-used household products (HB2136 and SB1099 in the last session).

Helping communities invest in solar:

To assist the transition to solar energy, Pennsylvania must open up access to solar energy for all residents. “Community Solar” allows multiple people, homeowners, or businesses to share energy from a single solar project, providing options for those who cannot put solar on their roofs because of physical or financial barriers. The General Assembly should pass Community Solar legislation (HB531 in the last session).

Fighting Fracking

From cradle to grave, fracking poses far-reaching threats to our health, environment and communities. PennEnvironment supports:

Keeping radioactive fracking waste out of drinking water:

Radioactive wastewater from fracking is being dumped at landfills and sent into public water supplies. This waste includes dangerous forms of radiation that are unregulated, untreatable by municipal water systems, and often don’t even require testing. Lawmakers must close loopholes that are allowing this dangerous risk to our drinking water.

Implementing basic protections on fracking:

When a grand jury investigated Pennsylvania’s oversight of the fracking industry, they found that leaders had “failed” to protect the public from the dangers of fracking. The General Assembly should implement the eight policies recommended by the grand jury, including: expanding ‘no-drill’ zones, requiring the public disclosure of fracking chemicals, and more.

Banning fracking: The only way to fully protect Pennsylvanians from the toxic scourge of fracking is to ban the process entirely.

Defending clean water protections:

In the last session, legislation was proposed (SB790) to dramatically weaken protections from oil and gas drilling. This bill included allowing well operators to replace drinking water sources they contaminated with water that do not meet safe drinking water standards, eliminating the requirement to report oil spills of 200 gallons or less and brine spills of 600 gallons or less, and allowing fracking wastewater to be applied to unpaved roads as a dust suppressant. The legislature should oppose this proposal or similar legislation that puts our health and environment at risk.

Preserving Pennsylvania’s natural heritage

From the Delaware Water Gap to Ohiopyle, Pennsylvania is defined by its incredible natural heritage. More than ever, these outdoor places are a destination for millions of visitors to hike, fish, and camp. In fact, visitorship increased by over 7 million in Pennsylvania’s state park system in 2020. Preserving Pennsylvania’s great outdoors must be a top priority for the General Assembly. PennEnvironment supports:

Funding our conservation programs and agencies:

Over the past 13 years, the General Assembly has taken over \$3.4 billion from dedicated environmental funds and diverted them to the state budget. Legislators should defend cornerstone programs from budget cuts, particularly Growing Greener, the Keystone Fund, Recycling Fund and Farmland Preservation Program, as well as environmental agencies such as PA-DEP, DCNR, Fish and Boat Commission, and river basin commissions (DRBC and SRBC), and instead work to increase their funding.

Protecting wildlife corridors: Roads, development and fossil fuel expansion are fragmenting Pennsylvania’s forests and threatening the wildlife that call Penn’s Woods home. The General Assembly should support the bipartisan wildlife corridors legislation (HR 670 in the last session), which creates a study of the gaps and opportunities for conservation corridors, where corridors should be created, and develop cross-agency cooperation.

Climate solutions for our transportation systems

Transitioning cars, trucks, buses, and other modes of transportation to clean, renewable electricity is not only possible, it's a critical step in the fight against climate change. Carbon pollution from the nation's transportation sector accounts for roughly one fifth of our climate burden in the U.S. PennEnvironment supports:

Increasing electric vehicle infrastructure:

Bipartisan legislation was introduced last session (SB596) to facilitate the development of electric vehicle infrastructure and charging stations across the state. Supported by businesses, labor unions and environmental groups, the legislature should move swiftly to pass this proposal in the 2021-2022 session.

Opposing onerous fees for electric vehicle (EV) owners:

Instead of working to incentivize the transition to electric vehicles, legislation has been proposed to saddle EV owners with onerous, annual fees. Data shows that these additional fees stymie consumer and business purchases of clean EVs, hindering our ability to reduce climate pollution and our reliance on fossil fuels. The legislature should oppose proposals that will set unfair fees for EV owners in the Commonwealth.

Renewing and increasing funding for public transit:

Pennsylvania's 74 transit agencies are facing a financial crisis created by plummeting ridership during the COVID-19 pandemic. They will also lose a huge revenue stream in 2022 when the transfer of turnpike toll revenue drops from \$450 billion to \$50 billion. The General Assembly must come up with sustainable and long-term funding to assist Pennsylvania's public transit agencies to support the millions of residents who use and rely on them.

Zero waste for PA

There is no "away" in our current throwaway society. Pennsylvanians toss millions of plastic cups, containers, and other single-use plastic items every single day. This pollution clogs our landfills, ends up in incinerators, pollutes our environment, and litters our communities. PennEnvironment supports the Zero Waste PA legislative package, including:

Updating Pennsylvania's electronic waste recycling:

Electronic waste is the fastest growing segment of our waste stream. Yet Pennsylvania's current laws haven't effectively addressed the state's growing e-waste problems. Legislators should support policies to expand and improve electronic waste recycling in Pennsylvania, and ensure we divert this waste from our landfills, incinerators and illegal dumping.

Reducing plastic bag waste: We use plastic bags just once and then they clog landfills, create litter, and pollute our environment for centuries. Legislators should support policies to ban or set fees upon single-use plastic bags statewide—and repeal the preemptions restricting municipalities from implementing their own local bans or fees on single-use plastics.

Eliminating Styrofoam waste: The General Assembly should put a statewide ban on one of the most egregious single-use plastics (HB627 last session): takeout containers and cups made of polystyrene, more commonly known as Styrofoam.

Giving consumers the Right to Repair: Every consumer and small business should have access to the parts, tools and service information they need to repair products, so we can keep things in use and reduce waste. Yet manufacturer barriers exist on everyday products like smartphones, tractors, and life-saving devices like ventilators. The legislature should adopt "right to repair" reforms (HB2326 last session) to allow consumers and businesses to fix their property and devices in order to reduce waste and save money.



Protecting our rivers, streams, and drinking water

Pennsylvania is blessed to have incredible water resources, from Pittsburgh's Three Rivers to the Delaware and the streams that crisscross the Commonwealth. They provide incredible recreational opportunities and supply drinking water for nearby communities. It's critical we protect Pennsylvania's water resources from stream to tap. PennEnvironment supports:

Getting the lead out of drinking water: After the Flint, Michigan catastrophe, it's clear that we must take greater steps to protect public health from the threat of lead in our drinking water. The General Assembly should support bipartisan legislation to require that all schools in Pennsylvania set health-based limits on lead in schools' drinking water, require regular testing for lead, make the findings publicly available, and provide funding to remove lead from schools' water (HB930 in the previous session).

Protecting the Clean Streams Law: Legislation proposed last session (SB619) would change the definition of water pollution under one of the state's bedrock clean water safeguards, the Clean Streams Law. This rollback would allow most discharges and spills into our streams and rivers to no longer be defined as "water pollution," lets

polluters to determine if a spill should be reported to the DEP, and removes DEP's authority to require the company to clean up or fix the cause of the spill. The General Assembly should oppose this and other attacks on our clean water protections in the 2021-2022 session.

Protecting PA's pristine streams: More and more of Pennsylvania's pristine streams are threatened by pollution and encroaching development. Studies have shown that by protecting the forested stream front buffers, we can keep pollution out of our streams and protect communities against flooding. The General Assembly should support legislation to preserve remaining 100-foot stream buffer zones across the state, and improve the Exceptional Value (EV) and High Quality (HQ) protection programs for our waterways.

Stopping efforts to weaken DEP oversight: A package of bills crafted under the guise of "regulatory reform" has been introduced in the previous two sessions that will instead dramatically weaken environmental safeguards. This package undercuts DEP's ability to develop and implement needed safeguards. It also prevents the agency from effectively holding polluters accountable who violate our laws and threaten the quality of our air and water. The General Assembly should oppose these efforts to weaken our environmental protections.