

Your Summer Report

PennEnvironment builds support for EPA's proposal to reduce methane pollution

By David Masur, PennEnvironment executive director

Methane, the main component of “natural” gas, is an incredibly harmful air and climate pollutant with 86 times the warming potential of carbon dioxide over a 20-year timeframe. Yet each year, oil and gas companies operating in Pennsylvania release more than 1.1 million tons of methane into the atmosphere—equivalent to the greenhouse gas emissions of more than 5 million cars.

So when the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed implementing stronger methane safeguards, PennEnvironment wanted to show that Pennsylvanians fully support tackling this pollution to protect our health and climate.

Specifically, PennEnvironment worked to mobilize as many concerned Pennsylvanians as possible during the EPA's 60-day official input process. This is where the agency asks the public to give its opinion about the EPA's proposal, and often takes feedback that may strengthen (or weaken) the regulation that the agency has put forth. The EPA collects letters, emails and postcards and holds hearings where concerned citizens can testify in person or over Zoom.

The first step was to make sure that Pennsylvanians were fully informed, and that the state's residents knew that the EPA was holding a public input process in the first place.

PennEnvironment sent emails to tens of thousands of Pennsylvanians letting them know about the public comment period. This included submitting more than 50 letters to the editor to newspapers across the state to inform residents about the EPA's



Field Director Flora Cardoni rallies dozens of activists and volunteers to call on the Biden administration to prioritize reducing methane and to take bold climate action over the next two years.

methane public comment period, sending email alerts, and regularly posting information on Facebook, Twitter and other digital outlets. Our letters were published in the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pennsylvania Capital-Star, Altoona Mirror, PennLive and more.

We also held an educational webinar for interested Pennsylvanians to learn about the dangers of methane and how to make their voices heard. We featured speakers such as Dr. Ned Ketyer of Physicians for Social Responsibility and advocates from Clean Air Council, Moms Clean Air Force, Environmental Health Project, Evangelical Environmental Network and Environmen-

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for making it
all possible

PennEnvironment releases Allegheny County 'Green Agenda'

This spring, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released the "Green Allegheny Issue & Policy Agenda," a nonpartisan document to educate candidates running for local and county offices about the top policy priorities needed to protect the Pittsburgh region's natural environment.

Staff



Deputy Director Ashleigh Deemer speaks at a press conference about the "Green Allegheny Policy Agenda" with the Breathe Project, Clean Water Fund, Food & Water Watch, and Women for a Healthy Environment.

"Pittsburghers from all walks of life want clean air to breathe, clean water to drink, and to protect Allegheny County's incredible outdoor places," said Ashleigh Deemer, deputy director of PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center.

"If implemented, our Green Agenda would put Allegheny County on the cutting edge of sustainability, and make the region a healthier place to live and work."

The agenda makes 50 policy recommendations that leaders have the power to implement today. It will be distributed to candidates running for county executive, County Council and City Council among others, and be a public education tool used to teach local residents about potential local solutions that can protect our air, water, climate and parks.

New study: Whole Foods failing to cut back on plastic

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released a study in March that surveyed plastic packaging used for Whole Foods' in-house "365" brand products.

The report, entitled "Whole Foods' Plastic Problem: A survey report on single-use packaging at Whole Foods," found that despite

the company's efforts to reduce plastic use, customers have limited opportunities to purchase 365 brand items without plastic packaging, with fewer than 50% of the products surveyed available in plastic-free packaging in the majority of Whole Foods stores.

"Plastic waste is clogging our landfills, littering our streets, polluting our parks, and escaping into our rivers and oceans at a rate of 8 million tons per year. Plastic packaging, such as plastic food wrappers, topped the list of most commonly found items of trash polluting our beaches," said Zero Waste Advocate Faran Savitz.

"Our report demonstrates that many Whole Foods food items are needlessly packaged in plastic. To reduce the effects of plastic pollution, corporations need to do their part to eliminate single-use plastic packaging."

Proposal introduced to protect Pennsylvania wildlife habitat

Pennsylvania is home to incredible native species. But many of our beloved wildlife species are threatened by development that chops up habitat, putting ecosystems at risk and making it harder for wildlife to forage, migrate and mate.

So PennEnvironment has teamed up with a bipartisan group of state legislators who have reintroduced a proposal to help protect Pennsylvania's critical wildlife habitat and halt the fragmentation of the outdoor places that Pennsylvania species call home.

"For too long, a labyrinth of roads, fences and sprawl has penned Pennsylvania's wildlife into smaller and smaller habitats," said Stephanie Wein, conservation advocate for PennEnvironment.

"While we can't put that genie back in the bottle, we can get clever about how to connect these small habitat islands through corridors to help Pennsylvania's songbirds, butterflies and game animals traverse these barriers. The proposal introduced by state Reps. Mary Jo Daley and Jason Ortity will help do just that."

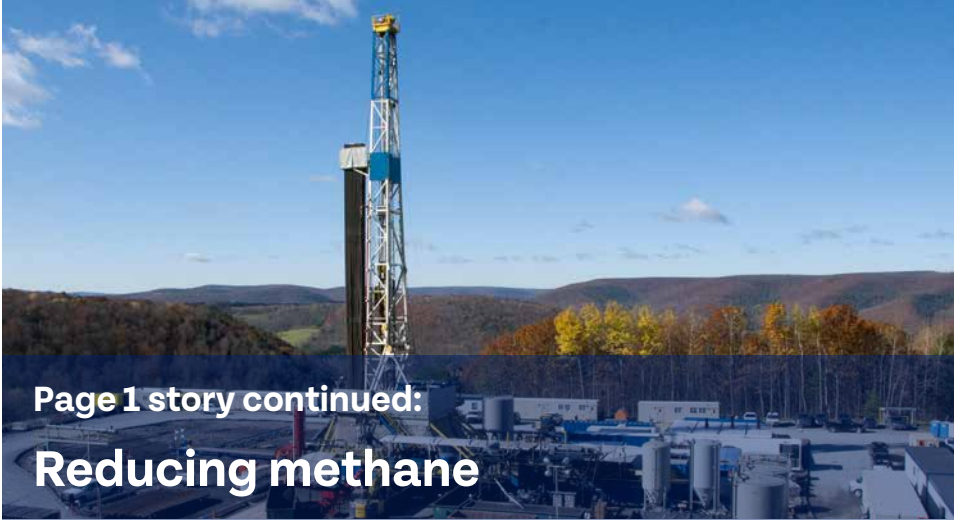


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For more information call 1-800-841-7299 or send an email to: PlannedGiving@PennEnvironment.org

Get more updates on our work online at <https://pennenvironment.org>.



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Reducing methane

tal Defense Fund to educate Pennsylvanians about methane. All told, more than 120 concerned citizens joined our webinar to learn more about the EPA's proposed efforts to reduce methane emissions—and how they could participate in the public input process.

The next step was making sure that concerned Pennsylvanians took the steps necessary to participate in the public input process. To that end, PennEnvironment's staff and volunteers collected 2,300 comments from our network of activists and our citizen members over the 60-day official comment period, calling on the EPA to implement the strongest federal protections against methane pollution.

We also enlisted more than 40 local and state elected officials and 30 health and academic officials to add their names to PennEnvironment's sign-on letter in support of strong methane protections during the public comment period.

To top it all off, PennEnvironment staff worked to recruit Pennsylvanians to testify at the hearings being held by the EPA to gauge the public's support for the agency's proposed methane safeguards. Of the 77 Pennsylvanians who testified during the EPA's virtual public hearing, more than half were recruited and prepped by PennEnvironment.

In total almost 300 people testified in support of strong methane protections, with PennEnvironment turning out 37—making Pennsylvania far and away the most represented state during the nationwide hearings.

With all of this public awareness and engagement around the EPA's proposal to rein in methane pollution from frackers and the oil and gas industry, we are optimistic that federal environmental officials will take the steps necessary to reduce this harmful global warming pollutant and help us do our part to preserve a livable climate for future generations.

Top Photo: Pollution is emitted from a power plant on the Ohio River west of Cincinnati.
 Bottom Photo: Volunteer Dr. Barbara Brandom, M.D. (lower right), testifies during the EPA's public hearings on methane on Jan 11.



Staff

Featured staff



Garen Meserian

David Masur
 Executive Director

As executive director, David spearheads the issue advocacy, civic engagement campaigns and long-term organizational building for PennEnvironment. David has served on the environmental transition teams for Gov. Tom Wolf and Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney, and he had been named one of Pennsylvania's "40 under 40" environmentalists by the Pennsylvania Environmental Council. Under David's leadership, PennEnvironment has won the two largest citizen suit penalties in Pennsylvania history against illegal polluters under the federal Clean Water Act.



PennEnvironment and The Public Interest Network are celebrating 50 years of action for a change.

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Your 2023 Summer Report

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 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.

PennEnvironment responds to Ohio train explosion

After the near-catastrophic freight train derailment and ensuing explosion in East Palestine, Ohio, in early February, PennEnvironment Executive Director David Masur became a resource and national expert for media outlets and policymakers alike. He was quoted in hundreds of media articles, including the Washington Post, BBC News, the Associated Press, Popular Science and dozens of television news stories.

“Of course, the first step is doing everything

in our power to reduce the nation’s reliance on dangerous chemicals and products that put our planet, health, and environment at risk,” said David.

“In the short term, federal officials must take steps to reduce the threat of another disastrous train accident by requiring companies to report the chemicals they plan to ship through communities to local residents and first responders, increase oversight and inspections, and increase fines for safety violations when they are uncovered.”

PennEnvironment worked with U.S. Rep. Chrissy Houlahan to call on the Biden administration to halt the shipment of dangerous liquefied natural gas by rail, as well as worked with Pittsburgh-area U.S. Rep. Chris Deluzio on legislation to help make sure that communities are informed about toxic chemicals being shipped through their neighborhoods.

Executive Director David Masur speaks with WKBW 7 News about the East Palestine train derailment.

