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Gov. Wolf Announces 'Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021,' Calls for Statewide Action Now on Climate Change

State agencies to highlight the plan virtually at 1:00 PM

Harrisburg, PA – Governor Tom Wolf today announced the *Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021* and called for statewide action on climate change by all sectors: legislative, government, industry, business, agriculture, and community organizations.

"As thousands of Pennsylvanians try to recover from historic flooding and tornadoes related to the remnants of Ida this month, the message is clear: we must move *now* out of a reactive mode on climate change," said Gov. Tom Wolf. "Across sectors, leadership requires knowledge, tools, and proactive approaches to protect Pennsylvanians from the instability set off by the climbing global temperature. In addition to adapting to the level of impacts we're already experiencing, we must significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions if we're to prevent worsening impacts."

The Pennsylvania departments of Environmental Protection (DEP), Transportation (PennDOT), Agriculture, and Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) will highlight the plan at 1:00 PM online at pacast.com/live/dep or facebook.com/PennsylvaniaDEP/.

"The challenge of slowing down climate change and adapting to impacts that are already happening can seem overwhelming. Where to start?" said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "*Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021* is where to start. It charts how we can meet our statewide greenhouse gas reduction goals and adapt to current climate change impacts to help protect Pennsylvanians' health and safety, livelihoods, and quality of life, as well as their children's futures."

Lowering Greenhouse Gas Emissions
In 2019, Governor Wolf set Pennsylvania's first greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals: a 26% reduction by 2025 and an 80% reduction by 2050, compared to 2005 baseline levels.

Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021 shows that statewide greenhouse gas emissions overall were nearly 19% lower in 2017 (the latest year for which data were available for the plan) than

they were in 2005. Emissions decreased from electricity generation, residential and commercial fuel use, and transportation and increased from mining, oil, and natural gas operations and industrial-process heating fuel use.

Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021 details 18 actions that will meet the 2025 and 2050 statewide emissions goals, if partners across sectors start now and carry them out within five years, 10 years, and 10+ years. Actions are needed in electricity generation, transportation, industry, residential and commercial building, agriculture, fuel supply, and, to help increase carbon capture and sequestration, land and forest management.

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from fuel supply (e.g., by transitioning from oil or natural gas to electricity or biogas) and industrial sources (e.g., by switching from single-use oil-fired boilers to biogas-fired co-generation) will be key to reaching the 2025 goal.

Switching electricity generation to renewable and nuclear energy sources, increasing industrial energy efficiency and fuel switching, and increasing use of electric vehicles offer the greatest potential for reaching the 2050 goal.

The plan shows that implementing the 18 strategies will generate an average of 42,000 new jobs yearly by 2050. Jobs will be economywide, such as in clean energy, manufacturing, energy efficiency installation, supply chain, and other occupations.

If action isn't stepped up, Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions in 2050 will exceed 2005 levels.

"We need to cut emissions significantly more to protect Pennsylvanians from worsening climate change impacts," said Secretary McDonnell. "The good news is, we've made a start. The even better news is, there are number of tools at hand that can quickly boost our progress."

These tools include:

- Joining 11 other Northeast states in the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI),
- Requiring commercial buildings to meet higher energy efficiency standards,
- Increasing use of electric vehicles,
- Increasing the Alternative Energy Portfolio Standards to require electricity generators to get more of their energy from clean renewable sources,
- Increasing the energy savings requirements for electric distribution companies (thereby boosting residential and commercial electrical energy efficiency),
- Requiring gas utilities to meet similar energy savings requirements, and
- Increasing capture of biogenic methane from non-fossil sources, including animal manure, food waste, and landfill gas, for use in by commercial and industrial properties.

Adapting to Climate Change Impacts

Pennsylvania Climate Impacts Assessment 2021, announced in May, noted six areas that are at especially high risk of climate change impacts: public health, overburdened and vulnerable populations, infrastructure, agriculture, recreation and tourism, and forests, ecosystems, and wildlife.

Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021 charts adaptation pathways for each. Steps to learn the vulnerabilities and prepare for impacts in each area are identified. These are followed by five to 10 actions to reduce the vulnerabilities and manage the impacts.

For example, already overburdened and vulnerable Pennsylvanians are at disproportionate risk from rising temperatures, heatwaves, and flooding. They include the nearly 30% of Pennsylvanians who live in Environmental Justice areas that have experienced decades of disinvestment. Many actions that leaders can take to help protect these Pennsylvanians are identified:

- Identifying partners and setting metrics to track the equity of impacts and solutions;
- Identifying opportunities to engage meaningfully and partner with community-based organizations and residents;
- Establishing climate equity goals through collaborative convening;
- Identifying opportunities for, and investing in, community capacity-building; for example, creating grants for resilience projects such as a flood-protected community center with a green roof;
- Supporting vulnerable residents when integrating climate risks into local planning; for example, supporting informal heat wave coping practices in emergency planning;
- Improving infrastructure to reduce heat and flooding impacts, such as planting trees and creating cooling shelters in areas with many low-income families and reducing application barriers to flood mitigation grant funding; and
- Training homeless shelter staff and faith leaders on heat and flooding hazards and providing supporting supplies; and more actions.

“DEP listened to concerns expressed by the Office of Environmental Justice and a range of diverse communities,” said DEP Environmental Justice Director Allison Acevedo. “As a result, *Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021* is a blueprint for climate action incorporating environmental justice and equity. We pledge to use this plan to work collaboratively with local communities to increase knowledge about climate change and initiate climate action, and we invite others to join us.”

The greatest climate change impacts on infrastructure will come from flooding and landslides. “Only a few weeks ago, the remnants of Ida dumped rain on Pennsylvania for nearly 24 hours, as well as high winds and even tornadoes, resulting in hundreds of millions of dollars in damage at over 1,200 locations around the state,” said PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian. “Heavy rains and extreme weather wreak havoc on our transportation infrastructure. These are real-world impacts of our changing climate.”

The greatest impacts on agriculture will come from warmer, wetter winters, including flooding.

“Agriculture is zip code neutral — it touches every life across Pennsylvania,” Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding said. “So is climate change. From the stresses of intense, prolonged heat; to severe flooding that destroys crops, eroding soil and polluting our waterways; to an environment that is more hospitable to invasive species, climate change threatens our food supply and impacts our lives and livelihoods. The Department of Agriculture is committed to a comprehensive, collaborative approach to seeking solutions to ensure a resilient, sustainable future for Pennsylvania.”

The greatest impacts on forests, ecosystems, wildlife, and recreation and tourism will come from rising average temperature.

“A more resilient and sustainable Pennsylvania relies on the steps we all take to protect and expand forest land, grow our acres of streamside forest buffers, and help communities with urban trees and green infrastructure,” DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn said. “In addition to sequestering carbon, these natural solutions will help people and wildlife adapt to warmer temperatures as well as improve air and water quality, and address flooding.”

As a result of increasing greenhouse gas emissions from human activity, Pennsylvania’s average temperature has risen nearly 2 degrees Fahrenheit since 1900, according to state, federal and local data in *Pennsylvania Climate Impacts Assessment 2021*. Pennsylvania is on course to climb another 5.9 degrees by the middle decades of this century.

Rising temperatures are intensifying extreme weather events, from flooding and tornadoes in southeast and southcentral counties this month, to record water levels in Lake Erie in 2019, to flooding that led to U.S. Department of Agriculture disaster declarations in 33 counties in 2018.

For the complete *Pennsylvania Climate Action Plan 2021* and a booklet overview, as well as many other resources for statewide climate action, visit www.dep.pa.gov/climate.

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