

**Testimony of Patrick W. McDonnell**  
**Secretary, Department of Environmental Protection**  
**Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee**  
**May 8, 2019**

Chairman Yaw, Chairman Yudichak, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to be here today. I am honored to be appointed again by Governor Tom Wolf to serve as the Secretary of the Department of Environmental Protection.

I began my career at DEP in 1997 as a Pennsylvania Management Intern. Over the last 22 years, I have moved through the ranks at DEP under the leadership of five different governors, while remaining steadfast in my commitment to protecting the environment, our natural resources, and the health of all Pennsylvanians. Throughout every level I worked at, I have worked beside the professionals at DEP to solve some of the most pressing environmental issues we have faced in this state over the last two decades.

We have turned environmental problems like acid rain, mine drainage, abandoned mines, and brownfields into success stories. I have also seen other environmental problems persist, like abandoned oil and gas wells, climate change, and nutrient pollution into Pennsylvania's waterways. In 1997, the agency could not have foreseen that our state would become the second largest energy exporter in the country through the technological advancement of unconventional well drilling. Through economic boom and bust, and fluctuating state budgets, DEP's responsibilities have steadily grown. We have managed the increased responsibilities of the shale revolution and absorbed other necessary environmental mandates from EPA, like addressing stormwater and removing nutrients from our waterways.

In the three years since I assumed the role of Acting Secretary, I have met with all of you, listened to your concerns, worked together to solve problems, and have led the Department through a sea change in how we operate. Through my actions and those of the men and women that work at DEP, there has been a landscape-level change throughout our agency.

DEP staff have improved our engagement with communities to ensure that they are aware of developments in their area. We are holding public meetings and public hearings in the communities that will be affected and making information available on our website. DEP is working to ensure that all Pennsylvanians, from all walks of life, have the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that affect where they live and work.

We have also overhauled the inspection process, utilizing electronic tools like tablet computers to allow our inspectors to spend more time in the field, enabling us to better protect our air, water, and land.

At the end of the day, the number one goal of the Department of Environmental Protection is to protect Pennsylvania's air, land, and water from pollution and to provide for the health of citizens through a cleaner environment. We are working to accomplish that in many ways, across the many varied programs at DEP. Through commonsense changes, we have dramatically reduced air pollution from

existing coal-fired power plants, improving air quality across the state. We have developed groundbreaking scientific analysis techniques to be able to better assess our rivers and streams to make sure that they are clean and meeting the needs of the people. We are continuing our monitoring and control of the mosquitoes that can carry West Nile Virus, ensuring that summertime pests do not become a health crisis. And we have taken steps to make sure there is adequate oversight of drinking water, one of our most important roles.

We have held operators accountable that have not complied with DEP permit conditions and regulations. DEP's unprecedented oversight has led to not just penalties, but other actions to ensure that Pennsylvanians are not paying the price for pollution.

We are achieving our mission and showing that environmental protection and economic development can go hand in hand.

New unfunded federal requirements have sometimes brought controversy but also opportunity. DEP has been actively engaging with county and municipal governments to reduce water pollution in ways that best make sense for their communities. We recognize this is a significant challenge for local governments and DEP is committed to remaining flexible and creative in finding solutions to the federal requirements. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to flood protection, pollution reduction, and stormwater management, but we are working diligently to identify solutions that are right for our communities.

On a larger scale, we are also grappling with how to address climate change, not just what role Pennsylvania can have in reducing the greenhouse gas emissions that cause it, but also what must be done to protect Pennsylvania communities from the unavoidable effects of it. DEP just finalized and released our 2018 Climate Action Plan, which outlines actions that can be taken by communities, businesses, and the legislature to mitigate carbon emissions and help communities and businesses adapt to a changing climate. The recommendations in the action plan can play a major role in reaching the goal of reducing emissions by 26 percent by 2025 and will not only reduce the threat of climate change but put Pennsylvania businesses and communities a step ahead in a 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.

The challenges we face are great, there is no question about that. I know that DEP and the General Assembly can continue to work together to address them.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the tremendous work of DEP staff. They are a passionate, professional, and diligent workforce, committed to protecting Pennsylvania's air, land, and water, and delivering consistent service to the regulated communities. The improvements that DEP has accomplished over the past three years are a reflection of their dedication and it is a privilege to serve alongside them.