

# GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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**Berks County  
Water & Sewer**  
ASSOCIATION

## Pennsylvania's Unemployment Rate At 3.8 Percent

*Total Nonfarm Jobs Hit Record High,  
Unemployment Rate Remains Lowest Since  
1976*

**O**n June 21, 2019, the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) released its employment situation report for May 2019.

Pennsylvania's unemployment rate was unchanged over the month, remaining at the record low set in April of 3.8 percent. State records go back to 1976.

The national rate, at 3.6 percent, was also unchanged from April. The commonwealth's unemployment rate declined by one-half of a percentage point from May 2018 while the national rate was down two-tenths over the same period.

A survey of households found that Pennsylvania's civilian labor force, the

estimated number of residents working or looking for work, was unchanged from April at 6,471,000. Employment rose by 1,000 to a record high, while unemployment declined 1,000.

Total nonfarm jobs rose from April to a record high of 6,051,400. May was the sixth consecutive gain, as well as sixth consecutive record high for jobs. Jobs increased over the month in five of the 11 industry supersectors. Over the year, total nonfarm jobs in Pennsylvania were up 54,900.

Additional information is available on the L&I website at [www.dli.pa.gov](http://www.dli.pa.gov).

**Note:** The above data are seasonally adjusted. Seasonally adjusted data provide the most valid month-to-month comparison.

**Source:** PA Department of Labor & Industry, 6/21/2019

## Senator Yudichak Issues Statement on SR 226 Report

**O**n June 19, 2019, the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee issued its performance evaluation of two of the largest, most widely used environmental permitting programs with the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The report was required by Senator Yudichak's **Senate Resolution 226** <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billInfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2017&sInd=0&body=s&type=r&bn=226> which passed the Senate unanimously in 2018.

"I want to commend the staff of the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee for a thorough report on the deficiencies in critical environmental permitting programs administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection," said State Senator John Yudichak. "While I acknowledge DEP has made strides to reform the permit process, the report clearly demonstrates more management improvements are needed to ensure DEP permits adequately protect the environment and are issued in an efficient, effective and timely manner."

The performance evaluation identified several areas for improvement in the Department of Environmental Protection's administration of the Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control (Chapter 102) and Water Obstruction and Encroachment (Chapter 105) programs. The **final report** is available online at <http://lbfc.legis.state.pa.us/>

**Source:** Senator Yudichak Press Release, 6/19/2019

## Availability of Grants through Driving PA Forward Electric Cargo Handling Grant Program

**T**he Department of Environmental Protection announces an opportunity to apply for \$3 million in grants offered through the Electric Cargo Handling Grant program, one of the new programs under the Driving PA Forward initiative. Applications must be submitted through the Department of Community and Economic Development's electronic single application website, **eGrants** <https://wwwesa.dced.state.pa.us/login.aspx?var=5>.

Applications will be accepted through 4 p.m. on Friday, November 15, 2019. The department will review and score applications after the application period closes on November 15, 2019. Additional information can be found on the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

**Source:** Pennsylvania Bulletin, 6/22/2019 <https://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol49/49-25/934.html>

## Availability of Rebates through the Pennsylvania Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant Program

The Department of Environmental Protection announces the continued availability of grants to commonwealth residents under Pennsylvania's Alternative Fuel Vehicle (AFV) Rebate program. The rebate program offered will be reassessed on December 31, 2019. Additional information can be found on the Pennsylvania Bulletin

**Source:** Pennsylvania Bulletin, 6/22/2019  
<https://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol49/49-25/935.html>

## Request for Applications for Watershed Planning and Restoration Grants through the Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program

The Department of Environmental Protection will accept applications for watershed planning and restoration grants through its Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Grants program. Applications and all supporting documents must be submitted through the Department of Community and Economic Development's electronic single application website, **eGrants** <https://www.wesa.dced.state.pa.us/login.aspx?var=5>. Applications will be accepted beginning at 8 a.m. on Monday, June 24, 2019, through 5 p.m. on Friday, August 9, 2019. Late submissions will not be considered.

Interested applicants with questions may contact Roland Carney at [rscarney@pa.gov](mailto:rscarney@pa.gov) or (717) 783-2944. To obtain more information on the Section 319 Nonpoint

Source Management Grants program, visit the department's **website** <https://www.dep.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx>, (search "nonpoint source"). Additional information can be found on the Pennsylvania Bulletin.

**Source:** Pennsylvania Bulletin, 6/22/2019  
<https://www.pabulletin.com/secure/data/vol49/49-25/936.html>

## Call to Action: Republican Bill Moves To Fundamentally Change Definition of Water Pollution in Pennsylvania

PA Trout Unlimited Chapters, PennFuture and other groups have issued a call to action for Pennsylvanians to oppose **Senate Bill 619** (Yaw-R- Lycoming) <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billinfo.cfm?year=2019&sInd=0&body=S&type=B&bn=619> which makes fundamental changes to the definition of water pollution.

The bill would change the definition of pollution in the state Clean Streams Law so that only a violation of a numeric water quality standard is considered pollution. There are few numeric standards.

It would also let individuals or companies who cause pollution to surface or groundwater determine first if there was pollution under the new definition and second if it should be reported to DEP.

The law now says pollution is, “contamination of any waters of the Commonwealth such as will create or is likely to create a nuisance or to render such waters harmful, detrimental or injurious to public health, safety or welfare, or to domestic, municipal, commercial, industrial, agricultural, recreational, or other legitimate beneficial uses, or to livestock, wild animals, birds, fish or other aquatic life.”

Click here for **more background**

<http://www.paenvironmentdigest.com/newsletter/default.asp?NewsletterArticleID=46878>.

Click here to **register your opposition** to Senate Bill 619 via PennFuture [https://pennfuture.salsalabs.org/sb619\\_protectcleanwater/index.html](https://pennfuture.salsalabs.org/sb619_protectcleanwater/index.html). The bill is moving fast under cover of all the budget bills.

**Source:** PA Environmental Digest, 6/24/2019

## EPA Says PA’s Chesapeake Bay Watershed Plan Comes up Short, Lacks Commitments to Resources to carry it out

**O**n June 21, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency posted its evaluation of Pennsylvania draft Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan saying it comes up 36 percent short in achieving its nitrogen reduction goal.

In addition, **EPA said the Plan lacks the necessary commitments to finding the funding and enacting the legislation needed to actually implement the Plan.**

EPA said:

“According to the simulations performed using the CBP partnership’s Phase 6 suite of modeling tools, Pennsylvania’s draft Phase III WIP achieves approximately 64 percent of the nitrogen and 76 percent of the phosphorus Phase III WIP planning targets overall.

“The draft Phase III WIP generally refers to these initiatives as proposals, recommendations, and things under consideration. Pennsylvania’s draft Phase III WIP lacks implementation details and programmatic commitments on the initiatives identified for achieving nutrient reductions, **including securing the necessary funding and staff, enacting needed legislation, refining programs, and developing necessary regulatory changes.**

”The Phase III WIP efforts should be focused on identifying programs and opportunities that will help Pennsylvania achieve its targets. EPA recognizes that many programmatic expectations, assumptions and practices have been developed and agreed upon by the CBP partnership; however, Pennsylvania is not limited to implementing those agreed upon approaches, and there may be more effective or efficient opportunities for Pennsylvania to achieve its targets.

“EPA understands that making significant progress to reduce nutrient losses in a watershed requires local solutions tailored to local resource needs and opportunities. EPA is available to assist and encourages Pennsylvania to identify more state-specific practices, programs and opportunities for its final Phase III WIP.”



EPA gave DEP high marks for its stakeholder and public involvement in developing the draft Plan.

Click here for a copy of **EPA's 10-page comments**  
[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-06/documents/epa\\_evaluation\\_pennsylvania\\_draft\\_phase\\_iii\\_wip.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2019-06/documents/epa_evaluation_pennsylvania_draft_phase_iii_wip.pdf) .

### Reaction

Similar concerns have been expressed by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and other groups about the draft Plan.

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation-PA Executive Director Harry Campbell said this about EPA's comments:

“Pennsylvania has a lot of work ahead to get back on track toward its clean water commitment. Getting there requires a complete and funded Clean Water Blueprint.

“It is not acceptable that the draft Phase 3 Watershed Implementation Plan only achieves just two-thirds of the nitrogen reduction goal and is **underfunded by nearly \$257 million**.

“The Commonwealth must show leadership and make the necessary investments to empower the conservation community, farmers, and communities, so they can implement a complete Blueprint and provide the clean water that Pennsylvanians deserve.”

### PA Bay Steering Committee

At a PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Planning Steering Committee Friday, DEP released a **summary of the public comments**

[http://files.dep.state.pa.us/Water/ChesapeakeBayOffice/WIPIII/2019/June21/Handout2\\_PhaseIIIWIPCommentResponse\\_DRAFT.pdf](http://files.dep.state.pa.us/Water/ChesapeakeBayOffice/WIPIII/2019/June21/Handout2_PhaseIIIWIPCommentResponse_DRAFT.pdf)

received on the Plan. Copies of the comments themselves are available on DEP's **eComment webpage**

<https://www.ahs.dep.pa.gov/eComment/ViewComments.aspx?enc=8YWleHIdijzUAfiG53Ekjdzx9nfnjA%2bb%2bpS8LS704IE%3d>

DEP's draft schedule for finalizing the plan by the August 9 submission deadline includes drafting a final Watershed Plan by July 1, having the co-chairs of the Steering Committee meet on July 31 to review the draft final Plan and an August 8 Steering Committee meeting.

### County Plans

DEP said the initial 4 counties that have already developed nutrient reduction plans -- Adams, Franklin, Lancaster and York -- are moving ahead to implement their plans.

The Tier 2 counties -- Bedford, Centre, Cumberland and Lebanon -- are scheduled to start work on their plans about September 1.

### Sediment Reductions

DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell said Chesapeake Bay Partners are talking about including sediment reductions in the final Watershed Implementation Plans, when the drafts focused on reducing nutrient pollution.

He expressed the concern a change that big has not gone through public participation and then suddenly appears in the final Plan. He noted discussions are still underway.

For more information and available handouts, visit the **PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Planning Steering Committee webpage**

<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Business/Water/Pennsylvania%E2%80%99s%20Chesapeake%20Bay%20Program%20Office/WIP3/Pages/Public-Meetings.aspx> .

**Source:** PA Environmental Digest, 6/24/2019

## Governor Wolf Commends House of Representatives on PA Farm Bill Passage

**O**n June 20, 2019, Governor Wolf applauded the Pennsylvania House of Representatives for its passage of ten bills related to the governor's PA Farm Bill, a historic proposal to provide support for and continued investments in the commonwealth's agriculture industry.

"I commend the state House of Representatives for its continued support of agriculture and the investments made through this legislative package," said Gov. Wolf. "We look forward to the Pennsylvania Senate lending its support to the Farm Bill in the coming days."

The PA Farm Bill, a bipartisan, bicameral package of legislation that provides support for and continued investments in the commonwealth's agriculture industry, was modeled after the **governor's six-point plan** <https://www.governor.pa.gov/newsroom/governor-wolf-unveils-historic-funding-proposal-for-pa-agriculture/> to cultivate future generations of Pennsylvania's agriculture industry.

"The PA Farm Bill is historic, rooted in need and inspired by the people whose lives are dedicated to and shaped by agriculture," said Department of Agriculture Secretary Russell Redding. "It is comprehensive enough to impact all corners of the commonwealth and all pockets of the industry."

The legislation recently approved includes:

- **HB 1514** (Hershey-R) <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1514> would create the PA Farm to School Grant Program for pre-kindergarten through fifth grade students to support increased nutrition and agriculture education.
- **HB 1516** (Causer-R) <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1516> would continue the fight against the Spotted Lanternfly and would create the Pennsylvania Rapid Response Disaster Readiness Account to provide a quick response to the next agricultural disaster, whether animal health, plant health, or foodborne illness.
- **HB 1517** (Zimmerman-R) <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1517> would create the Conservation Excellence Grant program to support best management practices in priority areas of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed.
- **HB 1518** (DeLissio-D) <https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&>

[body=h&type=b&bn=1518](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1518) would recreate the Agriculture and Youth Development grant program to support workforce development initiatives for agriculture and youth organizations such as FFA and 4-H.

- **HB 1519** (Rabb-D)  
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1519> would create a state-level Specialty Crop Block Grant program to invest in priority crops for Pennsylvania, such as hardwoods, hemp, and hops.
- **HB 1520** (Snyder-D)  
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1520> would provide grants for small farmers or butchers to reimburse costs for federal inspection compliance to access new markets.
- **HB 1521** (Pashinski-D)  
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1521> would codify the PA Preferred Homegrown by Heroes program to recognize and support Pennsylvania's veteran farmers.
- **HB 1523** (Diamond-R)  
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1523> would create the Agriculture Business Development Center to support business planning, marketing, diversification, and transition planning services to Pennsylvania farmers.
- **HB 1526** (Irvin-R)  
[https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1526)

[body=h&type=b&bn=1526](https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1526) would recreate the Agriculture Linked Investment Program to provide low-interest loans for conservation practices.

- **HB 1590** (Owlett-R)  
<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/billinfo/billInfo.cfm?sYear=2019&sInd=0&body=h&type=b&bn=1590> would create the Dairy Investment Program to fund research and development, organic transition assistance, value-added processing, and marketing grants in support of Pennsylvania's dairy industry.

The bills will now head to the Senate for consideration.

For more information about the PA Farm Bill and Pennsylvania's agriculture industry, visit the **Department of Agriculture website** <https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx> .

**Source:** Governor Wolf's Press Office, 6/20/2019

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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.*