

Conservation Committee Report

Volume 26 Issue 6

Jack Walters—Conservation Chairman

June 2024



The Conservation Pledge

I give my pledge as an

American to save and faithfully defend from waste, the natural resources of my country; the soil, the water, the air, the minerals, the plant life and the wildlife.

This is my Pledge!

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EPA Announces Partnership to Increase Access to Healthy Foods and Improve Public Health

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, in partnership with the Appalachian Regional Commission, announced the selection of six communities that will receive technical assistance through the Local Foods, Local Places

program. This shared effort will develop local food systems to advance environmental protection, strengthen local economies and further sustainability goals.

"Access to fresh, quality food is essential to good health, and supporting local-

ly grown food options can help to reduce pollution, including greenhouse gas emissions," said **Vicki Arroyo, EPA Associate Administrator for Policy**. "Our Local Foods, Local Places program provides technical

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U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR Program Launches New Resources to Help Americans Make Energy Efficient Home Improvements

The United States Environmental Protection Agency announced the launch of two new ENERGY STAR resources to help households across America take advantage

of Inflation Reduction Act incentives for energy-saving home upgrades. Together, a new home improvement savings web tool and the new ENERGY STAR Home Upgrade Service Provider Partnership address two of the largest barriers Americans face when it comes to upgrading their homes with en-

ergy efficient products and equipment – the cost and complexity associated with purchase and installation. These resources will make it easier for all Americans to take advantage of upgrades that will help

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EPA Announces Partnership to Increase Access to Healthy Foods and Improve Public Health (continued)

assistance with proven strategies to help communities address their nutritional needs and economic development and environmental goals.”

Through this assistance, each community will pursue their local project planning goals:

- **Braxton County, West Virginia** is working with the town of Sutton to expand plans for its farmers market and transform a two-acre Main Street space.
- The city of **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania** plans to engage residents and stakeholders to reimagine the Carrick Neighborhood Farmers Market.
- **Turner Station in Baltimore County, Maryland** intends to create more opportunities for healthy food access through a Turner Station food access and aggregation plan.
- The town of **Spring City, Tennessee** plans to improve access to local foods, with new community gardens and a farmers’ market to address priority health challenges such as obesity.
- The **Rabbit Valley Farmers Market, Inc. in Ringgold, Georgia** intends to improve community awareness about the market and related food programs on childhood health, nutrition education, improved food access and more.
- The **City of Wellston, Ohio** has proposed a centrally located downtown open-air market reutilizing a vacant city-owned lot.

More detailed descriptions of each community’s goals are included below.

In all six communities, EPA’s Office of Community Revitalization will convene federal, state, regional and local partners for two-day in-person workshops. This assistance will improve public health by increasing access to healthy foods for families and create jobs while protecting the environment. EPA’s Local Foods, Local Places program also helps to integrate food-system assets into communities, boosting local revitalization efforts and encouraging more active lifestyles, thereby improving overall quality of life, especially within marginalized communities. The program emphasizes sustainable food systems and expands economic opportunity, especially for local growers and value-added food processor entrepreneurs.

A pool of applicants from Appalachia was identified building upon a long-standing and productive relationship between EPA and ARC.

“Increasing the availability of locally grown foods not only provides healthy options for the residents of our Appalachian communities, but also spurs economic diversification across the region,” **said Gayle Manchin, ARC Federal Co-Chair.**

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EPA Announces Partnership to Increase Access to Healthy Foods and Improve Public Health (continued)

"I'm heartened to know that ARC's partnership with EPA will continue to support Appalachia's longstanding agriculture industry and create new job opportunities."

Three communities that will receive Local Foods, Local Places technical assistance (Ringgold, Georgia; Wellston, Ohio; Turner Station in Baltimore County, Maryland) are also participating in an innovative new pilot program through EPA's [Superfund Redevelopment Program](#). The Superfund Redevelopment Program provides technical assistance to support holistic planning, reuse and redevelopment at or near Superfund sites. The program works with communities on project planning and design to utilize spaces outside Superfund site boundaries to address legacy environmental justice issues. This technical assistance will support communities seeking increased healthy food access, community connections and overall revitalization and economic recovery near designated Superfund sites.

"Communities that have faced long-term impacts from local Superfund sites may be ideal candidates for participation in the Local Foods, Local Places program," **said Cliff Villa, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Land and Emergency Management**. "These three pilot workshops will help communities learn how the program can help them provide healthy local foods and benefit the local economy."

Since 2014, the Local Foods, Local Places program has provided assistance to 137 communities across the country.

Communities Selected for 2024 [Local Foods](#), [Local Places Program](#) Technical Assistance

EPA Region 3

The **County of Braxton, West Virginia** is working with the town of Sutton to expand its farmers market and transform a two-acre Main Street space, identified through a Brownfields assessment, into a mixed-use community building. The revitalized site would connect Sutton's downtown with a trailhead to the new Elk River Rail Trail. The project coordinates with other efforts, including the Sutton Main Street program, ARC Partnerships for Opportunity and Workforce and Economic Revitalization Initiative grants and EPA Brownfield grant resources for land revitalization planning.

"This award will enable Sutton and Braxton County to develop a stronger, more robust plan to create a farm-to-market strategy. It will strengthen our capacity to develop a community-based food market and to increase access to healthy foods for our citizens," **said Lisa Godwin, Braxton County Commission President**. "Local Foods, Local Places will help us expand local agriculture production, foster community engagement and enhance economic opportunities."

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EPA Announces Partnership to Increase Access to Healthy Foods and Improve Public Health (continued)

The city of **Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania** is seeking assistance to engage residents and stakeholders to reimagine the Carrick Neighborhood Farmers Market, located in a neighborhood facing several social and economic challenges. Local Foods, Local Places assistance will help ensure the new market meets the needs of the community and yields greater participation of residents. The effort will improve neighborhood access to healthy foods, support local growers, and provide a safe urban green space for community gatherings.

The site may also be utilized to support a local composting pilot program.

“The City of Pittsburgh is very excited for the opportunity to engage with EPA to wrap our arms around the Carrick Farmers Market and work with neighbors, our market vendors, and community partners to make this market a thriving asset in the community,” **said Kathryn Vargas, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation**. “We hope that this opportunity can serve as a model for community and stakeholder engagement for our other Neighborhood Farmers Markets.”

Turner Station in Baltimore County, Maryland is a predominantly African American neighborhood impacted by the Bear Creek Sediments Superfund site and most recently the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse. In partnership with the Turner Station Conservation Teams, the community seeks to create more opportunities for healthy food access through a Turner Station food access and aggregation plan. This includes redevelopment of Logan Village Shopping Center, which previously housed a neighborhood grocery store, and expanding food production by implementing a watering system for the Turner Station community garden.

The effort aligns with a larger commitment to address community needs by elevating residents' voices to county and state leaders, a key goal even before the bridge collapse focused attention on the community.

“It has been almost 5 years since Turner Station lost our closest grocery store and the community was classified as food insecure,” **said Gloria E. Nelson, President of Turner Station Conservation Teams, Inc.** “Ensuring our residents have access to fresh, healthy food is imperative, so we are excited by the opportunities the partnership with EPA’s Local Foods, Local Places program will provide, in elevating resident voices and advocating for critical community infrastructure.”

EPA Region 4

The town of **Spring City, Tennessee**, plans to bring together several local groups to improve access to local foods, with new community gardens and a farmers' market to address priority health challenges such as obesity.

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EPA Announces Partnership to Increase Access to Healthy Foods and Improve Public Health (continued)

The work will be coordinated with downtown revitalization planning efforts to create community gardens as green infrastructure, to mitigate flooding risks and promote community gathering places.

“The Town of Spring City is proud to have been selected to be part of the Local Foods, Local Places program,” **said Stephania Motes, City Manager**. “Our focus will be to create a farmers market and a community garden to help meet community needs as well as to boost our downtown revitalization efforts and to Agri-tourism in the area.”

The **Rabbit Valley Farmers Market, Inc. in Ringgold, Georgia**, envisions farmers markets not only as a place to purchase fresh local foods, support local agriculture and promote healthier lifestyles, but also as a community gathering place for socialization, celebration and connection. The farmer’s market is seeking to collaborate with a more diverse set of local partners to improve community awareness about the market and related food programs on childhood health, nutrition education, improved food access and utilizing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits.

Other local environmental education initiatives include composting, water conservation and community gardening. “My hope for this project is to create a more community-centered downtown and market, with a collective focus on health, wellbeing, environmental stewardship and service to others,” **said Samantha Leslie, Executive Director of the Rabbit Valley Farmers Market**.

EPA Region 5

The **City of Wellston, Ohio**, has proposed a centrally located downtown open-air market. Re-utilizing a vacant city-owned lot that was originally the industrial Milton Coal and Furnace Company site, the new market would improve residents’ access to healthy food options. It complements local efforts to develop more complete streets and bike path networks, an Ohio Department of Transportation grant for streetscape improvements to better accommodate people with disabilities, and renovation of the old train depot as a community center.

“This project will not only benefit the citizens of Wellston, but potentially the entirety of Jackson and Vinton Counties,” **said Mindy Barry-Eisnaugle, Administrative Assistant for the City of Wellston**. “This will assist in our downtown revitalization and tourism efforts, all while providing our residents with healthier access to healthier food options and recreational opportunities.”

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR Program Launches New Resources to Help Americans Make Energy Efficient Home Improvements (continud)

them save energy and money while enjoying a healthier and more comfortable home for years to come.

"For decades, the ENERGY STAR program has guided consumers towards efficient products that reduce energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions, resulting in substantial savings for both the individual and the nation as a whole," **said EPA Administrator Michael Regan**. "These new resources are key to making progress in fighting the climate crisis and will help make energy efficient options more affordable and accessible, particularly for millions of low-income and disadvantaged households across the nation."

The new [home savings web tool](#) is a zip code-based resource that allows people to identify all of the energy efficiency incentives available in their area. It highlights utility rebates, federal income tax credits, and -- starting today -- Inflation Reduction Act state rebates for home efficiency improvements. More than that, it is a one-stop-shop that includes energy efficiency incentives, buying guidance, information on eligible products, and links to local retailers and installers.

The [federal tax credits](#) provide annual discounts of 30% of project costs, up to \$3,200, for products such as heat pump HVAC, heat pump water heaters, windows and insulation.

New York is the first state to launch its Inflation Reduction Act rebate program, which offers incentives targeted to low-income households. Several [other states](#) are following closely behind.

To help American families navigate the challenging home improvement process, the EPA is pleased to announce the new ENERGY STAR Home Upgrade [Service Provider Partnership](#) and [six charter members](#). This partnership features companies and community-based organizations that specialize in offering concierge services that help customers with sales, installation, incentives, and financing for more comprehensive efficiency upgrades. To be recognized by the ENERGY STAR program, they have been screened based on their Quality Control procedures, installer qualifications and oversight, and fair financing practices. The charter partners are:

- Air Service Professionals
- Pearl Certification
- Philadelphia Energy Authority
- QuitCarbon
- Sealed Inc.

Sears Home Improvement

ENERGY STAR Home Upgrade Service Provider Partners bring added value to their customers by helping them adopt elements of an [ENERGY STAR Home Upgrade](#) -- a set of six high-impact improvements that work together to deliver significant energy and cost savings by addressing the biggest energy users in most homes. They include an ENERGY STAR certified heat pump, heat pump water heater, smart thermostat and windows -- plus a well-insulated and sealed attic and electric-ready wiring/panel improvements. These improvements can be made all at once or as equipment needs replacing. Once completed, they are estimated to deliver average energy bill savings of over \$500 each year. Accelerating the adoption of these upgrades and capitalizing on incentives presents an opportunity for almost every home in America to lower energy bills while improving home comfort and health.

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U.S. EPA's ENERGY STAR Program Launches New Resources to Help Americans Make Energy Efficient Home Improvements (continud)

As our nation continues to embrace cleaner and more renewable energy sources, taking advantage of these ENERGY STAR tools and resources can help American households of all income levels prepare for a clean energy future, while enjoying energy savings and a more comfortable home today.

About ENERGY STAR

ENERGY STAR® is the government-backed symbol for energy efficiency, providing simple, credible and unbiased information that consumers and businesses rely on to make well-informed decisions. Thousands of industrial, commercial, utility, state and local organizations rely on their partnership with the EPA to deliver cost-saving energy efficiency solutions. Since 1992, ENERGY STAR and its partners helped American families and businesses avoid more than \$500 billion in energy costs and achieve more than 4 billion metric tons of greenhouse gas reductions. More background information about [ENERGY STAR's impacts](#).

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The United States Environmental Protection Agency

Biden-Harris Administration Selects Five Recipients to Receive Nearly \$15M in Grants to Address Climate-Damaging Hydrofluorocarbons as Part of Investing in America Agenda

As part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced the selection of five recipients from across the country for grants to tackle the climate crisis by reclaiming and destroying hydrofluorocarbons, highly potent greenhouse gases commonly used in refrigeration and air conditioning. Collectively, recipients will receive nearly \$15 million in HFC Reclaim and Innovative Destruction grants from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act, the largest climate investment in history.

"This diverse set of projects will tackle the destruction and reclamation of HFCs in innovative ways to help protect our climate and bolster American technologies," **said Joe Goffman, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation.**

The funding made possible by President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act will range from \$1,500,000 to \$3,801,100 and support broader Biden-Harris Administration efforts to support a growing American industry on effectively managing HFCs. The selectees for this grant program are The University of Washington, Texas A&M University, Drexel University, University of California-Riverside, and the Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Technology Institute. By increasing the reuse of existing HFCs, selected projects are expected to further reduce our economy's need for new HFCs and reduce overall HFC impacts on our climate.

HFCs are a class of potent greenhouse gases commonly used in refrigeration and air conditioning, aerosols, and foam products. Their climate impact can be hundreds to thousands of times stronger than the same amount of carbon dioxide. Under the bipartisan American Innovation and Manufacturing Act, the Biden-Harris Administration is phasing down HFCs to achieve an 85% reduction below historical levels by 2036. President Biden also signed the U.S. ratification of the Kigali Amendment, and international agreement to phase down these super-polluting HFCs and avoid up to 0.5 °C of global warming by 2100.

With today's announcement, this Administration is continuing to deliver win-wins for climate action and U.S. manufacturing competitiveness while ensuring that American workers reap the benefits of a growing global market for HFC reclamation and destruction. These projects help facilitate the phasedown of HFCs under the AIM Act by helping increase the amount of HFCs that can be reclaimed and reused in the economy and by developing innovative techniques to destroy unusable HFCs, ensuring they do not contribute to climate change.

EPA anticipates that grants to the selected applicants will be finalized and awarded in the summer of 2024 once all legal and administrative requirements are satisfied, and that selected applicants will begin projects in the fall and winter of this year.

To learn more about the [Hydrocarbon Reclaim and Innovative Destruction grants](#), visit the HFC Reclaim and Innovative Destruction grants webpage.

Selected Grant Applicants

University of Washington

Biden-Harris Administration Selects Five Recipients to Receive Nearly \$15M in Grants to Address Climate-Damaging Hydrofluorocarbons as Part of Investing in America Agenda (continued)

- Seattle, Washington

University of Washington's project will evaluate and demonstrate via alkaline hydrolysis a novel way to destroy HFCs. The project aims to reduce the pollution emissions associated with HFC destruction since it does not release hydrogen fluoride or gaseous carbon dioxide. UW has an outreach plan to engage with disadvantaged communities and intends to hold workshops, public input meetings, and community consultations and incorporate that feedback into the methodologies of the project.

Texas A&M University

- College Station, Texas

Texas A&M's project aims to reduce the time and cost of reclaiming HFCs in two ways: 1) by designing and testing a technology capable of separating a range of HFC mixtures and 2) by incorporating a data-driven decision framework for reverse logistics with high supply chain visibility that includes quality, cost efficiency, changing market dynamics, stakeholder collaboration, safety, and environmental regulation. This project intends to achieve a 30% increase in reclaimed HFC and at least a 25% reduction in cost from the baseline operation.

Drexel University

- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Drexel University's project aims to develop a portable and energy efficient HFC destruction device by integrating liquid injection incinerator and nonthermal gliding arc plasma, which will provide refrigerant reclamation companies with an on-site treatment option for the reduction of HFC emissions. The project intends to develop a community engagement plan to evaluate environmental impacts on local communities.

University of California - Riverside

- Riverside, California

University of California – Riverside's project aims to develop scalable catalytic and assisting technologies for efficient HFC destruction, which would create a competitive and cost-effective integrated destruction system. The project intends to contribute to climate change mitigation and sustainable practices in disadvantaged communities by advancing an innovative and replicable HFC destruction technique through pilot scale demonstration.

Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Technology Institute

- Arlington, Virginia

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Biden-Harris Administration Selects Five Recipients to Receive Nearly \$15M in Grants to Address Climate-Damaging Hydrofluorocarbons as Part of Investing in America Agenda (continued)

Air Conditioning, Heating and Refrigeration Technology Institute is developing a pilot project to chemically convert and destroy mixed HFCs back into components for new commercial use. This zero-emission technique would thereby create value from the destruction process, while also lowering the costs and energy required to destroy HFCs compared to conventional incineration methods.

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Announces the Seventh Annual Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards Winners

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is announcing the winners of the seventh annual National Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards. These awards highlight the accomplishments of federal agencies, states, Tribes, local partners, communities and developers in restoring and reusing contaminated land at federal facilities.

“This year’s winners demonstrate the importance of strong partnerships in transforming contaminated federal facilities into community assets,” **said Cliff Villa, EPA’s Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Land and Emergency Management.**

The 2024 Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse winners are:

- **Superfund National Priorities List Award: Oak Ridge Reservation, Tennessee (Department of Energy – Office of Environmental Management).** This reservation, a former federal uranium enrichment operation using gaseous diffusion, operated until 1985 as part of the U.S. nuclear weapons program. Now, after years of cleanup, planning, and development efforts, the 2,200-acre former plant, renamed the East Tennessee Technology Park, has been revitalized into a multi-use industrial park, including Clean Energy businesses, a Manhattan Project National Historic Park, and a nature conservation area.
- **Base Realignment and Closure Award: Former Norton Air Force Base, California (Air Force).** Under the Base Realignment and Closure Act, the former Air Force base closed in 1994. What was once Norton Air Force Base is now San Bernardino International Airport and a global logistics complex, employing nearly 18,000 people, exceeding the number and diversity of jobs when it was an operating base. Companies on site include Amazon, Kohl’s, Mattel, UPS, FedEx, Stater Brothers complex, and Pep Boys. This site demonstrates how successful partnerships between public and private entities and the local community can facilitate the transformation of a military facility with significant environmental issues into a multi-use area that is an asset to the community, while being a catalyst for revitalization of the surrounding area.
- **Superfund Non-National Priorities List Award: Tuba City Disposal Site, Arizona (Department of Energy – Office of Legacy Management).** This site is leased from the Navajo Nation and located a mile from the Hopi Reservation. The site operated as a uranium mill from 1956 to 1966, contaminating approximately 300 acres of the Arizona desert. Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act in 1978, and the U.S. Department of Energy remediated the site under the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project. Remediation of the nearby groundwater continues today; a 51 kilowatts-direct current solar photovoltaic system provides renewable power

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EPA Announces the Seventh Annual Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards Winners (continued)

for the operation of the groundwater remediation, and an additional 285 kilowatts-direct solar photovoltaic system is tied into the Arizona Public Service electrical grid, connecting it to the community and U.S. electrical grid. A cooperative agreement and partnerships between leaders from the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Reservation, and the Department of Energy is crucial to the site success.

Background

EPA created the National Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse award to recognize exceptional work remediating a federal site for its beneficial use and creating positive impacts to the community.

EPA has ongoing cleanup and property transfer responsibilities at nearly 2,400 federal facility sites, including 175 federal facilities on the Superfund National Priorities List, which are some of the largest and most complex cleanup sites in the U.S. The agency promotes innovative, cost-effective cleanups at other federal facilities by working with federal agencies, state, Tribal, and local governments, communities, and developers to ensure that facilities meet environmental standards and undergo redevelopment for both public and private-sector reuse.

These awards are given to project teams who have demonstrated excellence in working cooperatively with EPA to ensure the reuse of a site complements the type of cleanup actions taken. Award winners have demonstrated excellence in:

1. Working cooperatively and forming partnerships.
2. Complementing redevelopment design with the selected remedy.
3. Innovating beneficial use outcomes.
4. Considering the impacts on and inputs from the local community.
5. Creating jobs, fostering economic development or recreational opportunities, or sustaining mission support.

Learn more about the 2024 National [Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards](#).

Learn more about [cleanups at federal facilities](#).

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

New York State High School Student Wins EPA's 2024 Patrick H. Hurd Award for Eco-Friendly Textile Dyes

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced that Lucia Lammers, a senior at Harrison High School in Harrison, New York, has won EPA's 2024 Patrick H. Hurd Sustainability Award at the 2024 Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles, CA. Lucia's project, "[Spectroscopic and Colorimetric Analysis of Textiles Dyed with Local Invasive Plant Species and Waste-Derived Mordants](#)," explored eco-friendly textile dyes to help mitigate the negative environmental impact of local invasive plant species, municipal wastes, and synthetic dyes.

"Congratulations to Lucia Lammers and all the finalists at the International Science and Engineering Fair," said Chris Frey, Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development. "Lucia's project shows great potential for making a difference that will positively impact our environment. I commend all the participants for their curiosity, drive and dedication, and encourage them to continue to pursue their passions."

As part of her project, Lucia connected with local land conservation experts to identify highly invasive plant species impacting biodiversity. She paired dyes from these invasive plants using substances sourced from readily available waste materials, allowing them to bind to textiles. Her innovative approach produced dyes of a wide variety of saturated colors that were successfully applied to textiles and are both safer and healthier for the environment when compared to synthetic dyes. Additionally, by using a Life Cycle Assessment, Lucia was able to identify the most cost-effective and safe combination of materials. She hopes to use her passion for environmental stewardship to create more eco-friendly textiles and fashion.

Honorable mention went to Sarah Gao, a junior at Canyon Crest Academy in San Diego, California, for her project, "[From Trash to Treasure: Fighting Desertification with Sustainable Soil Amending Hydrogels Synthesized from Food Waste](#)." After observing how quickly soil dries out after rainfall, Sarah reflected on her kindergarten science fair project exploring the absorbency of diapers. She began exploring if the liquid holding properties of diapers could be translated in an environmentally sustainable way to improve moisture retention of soil in regions experiencing or at risk of drought. Sarah converted agricultural waste in the form of peels from locally available fruit into water absorbing hydrogels for farmers and gardeners to use to sustain soil moisture. She used bioinformatics to predict fruits with peels that could be made into hydrogels, synthesized hydrogels, and demonstrated their water-retaining abilities in soil.

EPA's Patrick H. Hurd Sustainability Award provides the funds necessary for the winning student to attend and participate in the following years' EPA National Student Design Expo. The Expo features the university and college student teams of our P3: People, Prosperity and the Planet program which also encourages innovative designs applying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to address an environmental challenge.

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New York State High School Student Wins EPA's 2024 Patrick H. Hurd Award for Eco-Friendly Textile Dyes (continued)

Lucia and Sarah were finalists at Regeneron® International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF), the world's largest international pre-college science competition, a program of the Society for Science. Since 2009, EPA has participated in the ISEF, recognizing projects that demonstrate a commitment to environmental sustainability and stewardship. This year, ISEF brought together 1,699 high school students from 67 countries, regions and territories, who presented their independent research in competition for over \$9 million in awards and scholarships.

Visit [Patrick H. Hurd Sustainability Award](#) for more information about EPA's participation in the Regeneron International Science and Engineering Fair and to see past winners.

Visit [International Science and Engineering Fair](#) for more information about the event.

Check out EPA's [People, Prosperity, and the Planet Student Design Competition](#) for more details about the program.

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Gas Industry, Sen. Bartolotta Seek Legislation To Eliminate Environmental Hearing Board Appeals Of DEP Permits For Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities

On May 16, Sen. Camera Bartolotta (R-Washington) [circulated a cosponsor memo](#) announcing she plans to introduce legislation to eliminate the ability of citizens, local governments and anyone else to appeal permits issued by DEP for natural gas pipelines and related facilities to the Environmental Hearing Board.

She contends the federal Natural Gas Act mandates the federal Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has “exclusive jurisdiction over an appeal which challenges any state agency’s action in either approving or denying a permit when the state agency acts on the basis of federal law.”

That includes any permit DEP issue under the federal Clean Air Act (Air Quality), Clean Water Act (Chapter 102 Erosion and Sedimentation, Chapter 105 Encroachments) or other state permits issued in part under federal statutes.

Sen. Bartolotta said, “Despite this clear mandate, our Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court recently ruled that an appeal challenging DEP’s approval of a permit was properly filed before the Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board (EHB), rather than the Third Circuit Court of Appeals.

“The court’s decision in this regard allows for an additional layer of administrative review of a permitting decision before the appeal can be heard and decided by the Third Circuit, contrary to the express provisions and the clear intent of the NGA,” according to Sen. Bartolotta.

[Click Here for a copy of the memo.](#)

Background

Sen. Bartolotta’s memo brings to light a legal issue that has been fought in the Environmental Hearing Board and state and federal courts for nearly a decade, according to Kacy Manahan, Senior Attorney for the Delaware RiverKeeper Network.

The [Delaware RiverKeeper Network](#), [Clean Air Council](#), [PennFuture](#), [Fair Shake Environmental Legal Services](#) and the [Mountain Watershed Association](#) have been defending Environmental Hearing Board appeals of DEP permits covering gas pipeline facilities.

[See [amicus brief with legal arguments](#) to preserve the right of EHB appeal.]

Gas pipeline companies like Adelphia Gateway and the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line have argued, with the support of the Department of Environmental Protection which is

Gas Industry, Sen. Bartolotta Seek Legislation To Eliminate Environmental Hearing Board Appeals Of DEP Permits For Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities (continued)

defending permits it issued, the federal Natural Gas Act gives the federal Third Circuit Court exclusive jurisdiction in appeals of DEP permits for gas pipeline facilities.

So far, all the challenges brought by gas companies and DEP urging the Environmental Hearing Board and various courts to dismiss appeals in favor of the Natural Gas Act process have lost.

Manahan noted a federal Third Circuit Court decision in 2018 said clearly the Natural Gas Act preempts only state court review of permits, not administrative reviews--

"[T]he NGA explicitly permits states 'to participate in environmental regulation of [interstate natural gas] facilities' under the CWA . . . and only removes from the states the right for their courts to hear civil actions seeking review of interstate pipeline-related state agency orders made pursuant thereto, the NGA leaves untouched the state's internal administrative review process, which may continue to operate as it would in the ordinary course under state law." ([*Tw. of Bordentown v. F.E.R.C.*, 903 F.3d 234, 268 \(3d Cir. 2018\)](#))

Sen. Bartolotta's legislation seeks to reverse this losing record by changing the rules of appeal with a new state law.

One case Sen. Bartolotta referred to in her memo, involved the 2019 appeal of an DEP Air Quality Plan Approval for the Adelphia Gateway Quakertown Compressor Station in Quakertown, Bucks County that was [dismissed by the Environmental Hearing Board](#) based on the National Gas Act exclusive jurisdiction argument. [EHB [Docket #2019046](#)]

However, that dismissal was reversed by [Commonwealth Court in an opinion](#) on June 15, 2021 and remanded back to the EHB for consideration of the appeal.

Adelphia Gateway and the Department of Environmental Protection appealed the Commonwealth Court decision to the PA Supreme Court where it is now.

The Bucks County residents who challenged the Adelphia compressor station are continuing to pursue the case at the PA Supreme Court separate from the Delaware River-Keeper Network litigation. ([See brief filed by residents.](#))

Another case involving the appeal of erosion and sedimentation control permits for the Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC Regional Energy Access Expansion Project to the Environmental Hearing Board also involves this issue. [EHB [Docket #2023026](#)]

In this case, [Transcontinental made a motion to stay this appeal](#), consented to by DEP, based on the Natural Gas Act jurisdiction issues. The [EHB denied the motion](#). The case continues on appeal.

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Gas Industry, Sen. Bartolotta Seek Legislation To Eliminate Environmental Hearing Board Appeals Of DEP Permits For Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities (continued)

A third case now in federal appeals court involves a Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Company, LLC and Department of Environmental Protection joint appeal of a federal Middle District Court order granting the Delaware RiverKeeper Network and PennFuture motion to dismiss the Transco/DEP appeal based on the Natural Gas Act argument.

[DEP's brief supporting the issue](#) of dismissing the EHB appeal lays out the legal arguments supporting exclusive jurisdiction of appeals under the Natural Gas Act. (*Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line, LLC v. Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board*, Docket Nos. 24-1099 & 24-1142 (3d Cir.))

DEP summarized its argument by saying-- "This Court should overturn the District Court's dismissal of Transco's Complaint because the only forum for challenging the REAE Permits is the Third Circuit.

"The Natural Gas Act broadly preempts all state oversight over interstate natural gas transport and sale, excepting and preserving only state agency authority to issue permits and authorizations under the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Coastal Zone Management Act.

"As part of that, Congress intentionally vested the United States Courts of Appeal with "exclusive and original" jurisdiction over challenges to state-issued Federal authorizations."

Reactions To Proposed Legislation

Kacy Manahan, Senior Attorney for the [Delaware RiverKeeper Network](#) said, "This bill would be a huge dereliction of Pennsylvania's authority and duty to regulate natural gas infrastructure, as the [federal] Natural Gas Act allows for state administrative review of permits, and the Third Circuit has stated this explicitly.

"All natural gas infrastructure in Pennsylvania would be essentially subject to 'environmental permitting lite' compared to all other projects, including other non-NGA federal projects.

"The EHB is an essential part of Pennsylvania's permitting system, and a bill that voluntarily truncates the permitting process for a select industry would be constitutionally suspect."

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Gas Industry, Sen. Bartolotta Seek Legislation To Eliminate Environmental Hearing Board Appeals Of DEP Permits For Natural Gas Pipeline Facilities (continued)

Alex Bomstein, Executive Director of the [Clean Air Council](#) said, "For decades, the Pennsylvania Environmental Hearing Board has successfully resolved disputes over state environmental permits. The gas industry doesn't need more special favors from the state, and it certainly hasn't shown it deserves them."

Emma Bast, Staff Attorney for [PennFuture](#), said, "The Environmental Hearing Board is a critical part of Pennsylvania's environmental administrative system. Federal and state courts alike have reached this same conclusion."

"This bill is an effort to create a separate permitting pathway for natural gas projects, and to treat natural gas differently than other forms of energy, the definition of picking winners and losers."

Not First Attempt To Limit Citizen Appeals

This is not Sen. Bartolotta's first legislation to limit the rights of citizens to appeal DEP permit decisions to the Environmental Hearing Board.

Starting in 2019, the Senator introduced [Senate Bill 727](#) that would create a new standard for review of DEP permit appeals by limiting parties appealing permit decisions-- a company or a citizens group-- to issues raised in and information contained in a record of decision of a permit prepared by DEP. [Read more here](#).

This bill was introduced as [Senate Bill 717](#) in 2021 and was reintroduced in 2023 as [Senate Bill 198](#).

Resource Links:

- Manko Gold, Katcher & Fox Blog: [Commonwealth Court Holds Natural Gas Act Does Not Divest The Environmental Hearing Board Of Jurisdiction Over Appeals Of Agency Actions](#)
- Sen. Bartolotta [Reintroduces Bill Narrowing Grounds For Citizen Appeals](#) Of DEP Permit Decisions [PaEN]

Source: PA environment Digest

Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$35,000 rebate for Clean School Bus in Seaford, Delaware as part of investing in America Agenda

The Biden-Harris Administration announced the recipients of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) 2023 Clean School Bus Program rebate competition, funded by President Biden's Investing in America agenda. The rebate will help the Seaford School District, in Sussex County, Delaware, purchase a clean school bus.

The Program will help Seaford accelerate the transition to zero emission vehicles and replace an older, diesel fueled school bus. Diesel fueled school buses have been linked to asthma and other conditions that harm the health of students and surrounding communities.

EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan will join schoolchildren, district leaders and community members in Jackson, Miss., today to make the announcement and highlight how the program will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save schools money, and better protect children's health. The investment will also drive demand for American-made batteries and vehicles, boost domestic manufacturing, and create good-paying jobs.

"President Biden believes every child deserves the opportunity to lead a healthy life and breathe clean air, and his Investing in America agenda is designed to deliver just that," said **EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan**. "With today's latest round of funding, we are transforming the nation's school bus fleet to better protect our most precious cargo—our kids—saving school districts money, improving air quality, and bolstering American manufacturing all at the same time."

"Today's announcement will improve outcomes for human health, the environment, and the clean energy economy," said **EPA Mid-Atlantic Regional Administrator Adam Ortiz**. "Thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, students in fifty school districts across the region will be able to ride to and from school on buses that produce zero emissions. This means reduced health risks associated with diesel exhaust and reduced emissions that contribute to climate change."

In September 2023, the EPA [announced](#) the availability of at least \$500 million for its 2023 Clean School Bus rebates. The rebate application period closed in February 2024 with an outstanding response from school districts across the country seeking to purchase electric and clean school buses. Given the overwhelming demand, including in low-income communities, Tribal nations and U.S. territories, the EPA doubled the amount of available funding to nearly \$1 billion.

This third round of funding will build on the previous almost \$2 billion investment via the [2022 Rebates](#) and [2023 Grants](#) to further improve air quality in and around schools, reduce greenhouse gas pollution fueling the climate crisis, and help accelerate America's leadership in developing the clean vehicles of the future.

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Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$35,000 rebate for Clean School Bus in Seaford, Delaware as part of investing in America Agenda (continued)

The selections announced today will provide funds to school districts in 47 states and Washington D.C., along with several federally recognized Tribes and U.S. territories. Prioritized school districts in low-income, rural, and Tribal communities make up approximately 45 percent of the selected projects and will receive approximately 67 percent of the total funding. The program delivers on President Biden's [Justice40](#) Initiative, which aims to deliver 40 percent of the overall benefits of certain federal investments to disadvantaged communities that are marginalized, underserved and overburdened by pollution.

The EPA is also partnering with the [Joint Office of Energy and Department of Transportation](#) to provide school districts with robust technical assistance to ensure effective implementation.

The EPA is continuing to review selected applications and may make additional awards from this announcement. The EPA is working with those applicants and will notify them of an award if their application meets all program requirements. As additional selections are finalized, the EPA will update the [CSB Awards webpage](#).

The EPA will also make selections through additional rounds of funding, as well as through other funding programs. For example, the **EPA is currently accepting applications for the [2024 Clean Heavy-Duty Vehicles Grant Program](#) until 11:59 PM ET on July 25, 2024** – with EPA offering up to \$932 million in available grant funding and anticipates approximately 70% of the available funding to help pay for new, zero-emission Class 6 or 7 school buses. EPA encourages school districts not selected for the 2023 CSB Rebate Program – and those that did not apply – to participate in currently open funding programs, and future CSB funding rounds.

About the Clean School Bus Program

The EPA Clean School Bus Program was created by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, which provides an unprecedented \$5 billion of funding to transform the nation's fleet of school buses. The Clean School Bus Program funds electric buses, which produce zero tailpipe emissions, as well as propane and compressed natural gas (CNG) buses, which produce lower tailpipe emissions compared to their older diesel predecessors.

The Clean School Bus Program will reduce greenhouse gas emissions, save money for school districts and produce cleaner air. Diesel air pollution is linked to asthma and other conditions that harm students' health and cause them to miss school, particularly in communities of color and Tribal communities. Phasing out these older diesel engines will ensure cleaner air for students, bus drivers, and school staff working near the bus loading areas, and the communities through which the buses drive each day.

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Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$35,000 rebate for Clean School Bus in Seaford, Delaware as part of investing in America Agenda (continued)

The reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from these bus replacements will also help to address the outsized role of the transportation sector in fueling the climate crisis. The Clean School Bus Program will save school districts money as they upgrade school bus fleets, replacing existing buses with brand new zero-emission and clean school buses, while freeing up needed resources for schools.

For more information about the Clean School Bus Awards visit: <https://www.epa.gov/cleanschoolbus/clean-school-bus-program-awards>.

For further information: r3press@epa.gov

Source : U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA)

EPA Releases Information that States and Tribes Can Use to Protect Local Fish from Toxic Tire Chemicals

June 10, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published water quality screening values under the Clean Water Act related to short-term concentrations of 6PPD and 6PPD-quinone (6PPD-q). These chemicals have been found in freshwater ecosystems and linked to runoff from automotive tire dust and debris. Once in freshwater, these chemicals are known toxins that can quickly cause fish-kill events. The EPA's non-regulatory and non-binding screening values provide information that Tribes, states, and local governments can use to monitor their waterways and help protect aquatic life from these harmful pollutants.

"Achieving clean water that protects aquatic life and supports commercial, recreational, and cultural fishing practices takes partnership at all levels of government," **said EPA Acting Assistant Administrator for Water Bruno Pigott**. "6PPD and 6PPD-q can be lethal to fish, so it's important we know where it's polluting waterways. The EPA's screening values provide important information that our partners can use to protect fish populations—especially coho salmon on the Pacific coast. Solutions like stormwater treatment and green infrastructure are effective at reducing concentrations of these chemicals in freshwater ecosystems."

This is the latest in a series of EPA actions to better understand and reduce freshwater aquatic life exposure to these harmful chemicals. In [November 2023](#), the agency committed to consider establishing regulations prohibiting the manufacturing, processing, use and distribution of 6PPD in tires and also announced its intent to publish an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking under the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). The EPA also announced plans to finalize a rule to require manufacturers (including importers) of 6PPD to report lists and copies of unpublished health and safety studies to the agency. In [January 2024](#), the EPA announced the publication of a draft testing method to help Tribes, states, and key stakeholders determine where and when 6PPD-q is present in local stormwater and surface waters. In [March 2024](#), the agency announced investments in the state of Washington to help treat and control stormwater runoff that can contain 6PPD and 6PPD-q.

The EPA's screening values are based on the latest scientific knowledge about the short-term toxicity of 6PPD and 6PPD-q to freshwater aquatic life. Based on current science, the agency believes that concentrations of 6PPD and 6PPD-q at or below these screening values are likely to protect freshwater aquatic life. The EPA's recommended screening values are not regulations and they do not impose any legally binding requirements.

Learn more about the [EPA's screening values for 6PPD and 6PPD-q](#) and other work on 6PPD-q.

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

EPA Announces the Seventh Annual Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards Winners

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is announcing the winners of the seventh annual National Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards. These awards highlight the accomplishments of federal agencies, states, Tribes, local partners, communities and developers in restoring and reusing contaminated land at federal facilities.

“This year’s winners demonstrate the importance of strong partnerships in transforming contaminated federal facilities into community assets,” **said Cliff Villa, EPA’s Deputy Assistant Administrator of the Office of Land and Emergency Management.**

The 2024 Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse winners are:

- **Superfund National Priorities List Award: Oak Ridge Reservation, Tennessee (Department of Energy – Office of Environmental Management).** This reservation, a former federal uranium enrichment operation using gaseous diffusion, operated until 1985 as part of the U.S. nuclear weapons program. Now, after years of cleanup, planning, and development efforts, the 2,200-acre former plant, renamed the East Tennessee Technology Park, has been revitalized into a multi-use industrial park, including Clean Energy businesses, a Manhattan Project National Historic Park, and a nature conservation area.
- **Base Realignment and Closure Award: Former Norton Air Force Base, California (Air Force).** Under the Base Realignment and Closure Act, the former Air Force base closed in 1994. What was once Norton Air Force Base is now San Bernardino International Airport and a global logistics complex, employing nearly 18,000 people, exceeding the number and diversity of jobs when it was an operating base. Companies on site include Amazon, Kohl’s, Mattel, UPS, FedEx, Stater Brothers complex, and Pep Boys. This site demonstrates how successful partnerships between public and private entities and the local community can facilitate the transformation of a military facility with significant environmental issues into a multi-use area that is an asset to the community, while being a catalyst for revitalization of the surrounding area.
- **Superfund Non-National Priorities List Award: Tuba City Disposal Site, Arizona (Department of Energy – Office of Legacy Management).** This site is leased from the Navajo Nation and located a mile from the Hopi Reservation. The site operated as a uranium mill from 1956 to 1966, contaminating approximately 300 acres of the Arizona desert. Congress passed the Uranium Mill Tailings Radiation Control Act in 1978, and the U.S. Department of Energy remediated the site under the Uranium Mill Tailings Remedial Action Project. Remediation of the nearby groundwater continues today; a 51 kilowatts-direct current solar photovoltaic system provides renewable power for the operation of the groundwater remediation, and an additional 285 kilowatts-direct solar photovoltaic system is tied into the Arizona Public Service electrical grid, connecting it to the community and U.S. electrical grid. A cooperative agreement and partnerships between leaders from the Navajo Nation, the Hopi Reservation, and the Department of Energy is crucial to the site success.

Background

EPA created the [National Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse award](#) to recognize exceptional work remediating a federal site for its beneficial use and creating positive impacts to the community.

EPA has ongoing cleanup and property transfer responsibilities at nearly 2,400 federal facility

sites, including 175 federal facilities on the Superfund National Priorities List, which are some of the largest and most complex cleanup sites in the U.S. The agency promotes innovative, cost-effective cleanups at other federal facilities by working with federal agencies, state, Tribal, and local governments, communities, and developers to ensure that facilities meet environmental standards and undergo redevelopment for both public and private-sector reuse.

These awards are given to project teams who have demonstrated excellence in working cooperatively with EPA to ensure the reuse of a site complements the type of cleanup actions taken.

Award winners have demonstrated excellence in:

1. Working cooperatively and forming partnerships.
2. Complementing redevelopment design with the selected remedy.
3. Innovating beneficial use outcomes.
4. Considering the impacts on and inputs from the local community.
5. Creating jobs, fostering economic development or recreational opportunities, or sustaining mission support.

Learn more about the 2024 [National Federal Facility Excellence in Site Reuse Awards](#).

Learn more about [cleanups at federal facilities](#).

For further information: EPA Press Office (press@epa.gov)

Source: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency