

**CLIMATE CHANGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
April 22, 2025
9 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Rachel Carson State Office
Building, and via Teams**

MEMBERS/ALTERNATES PRESENT:

In-Person:

Chairperson Elizabeth Marx
Vice Chairperson Lindsay Baxter
Joe Sherrick (for Chairperson DeFrank)
Patrick Henderson

Marc Mondor
Kevin Warren
Steven Krug
Rep. Ben Sanchez
Kevin Warren
Glendon King (Rep. Perry Stambaugh)
Terry Bossert
Zachery Smith
Paul Morris

Online:

Jason Kelso
Jaret Gibbons
Adam Walters (for Rick Siger)

MEMBERS ABSENT: Sara Innamorato, Daryl Metcalfe, Christopher Sandvig, Flora Cardoni, Greg Czarnecki (for Cindy Dunn), Jennifer Greenburg

PA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (DEP) STAFF:

In-Person: Lindsay Byron, Chris Nafe, Danielle Lewis, David Althoff, Jessica Kelly, Amanda Ayers, Kerry Campbell, Kelsey Irvine, Collen Unroe, Lena Smith, Naimul Islam, Maria Solomidou

Online: Christopher Guise, Amanda Amsbaugh, Joshua Dziubek, Robert Reiley

INVITED GUESTS:

None

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:

Online: John Kolesnik, Roy Gothie, Grant Gulibon, Brian Smiley, Machamer Trent, David Hess, Laura Edinger, Nate Reagle, Nathan Eachus, Paul DiRenzo, Mark D. Huncik, Bill Sabey, Emily Wildman, Evan Franzese, Andrew McMenamin

MEETING: The April 22, 2025, meeting of the Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC or Committee) was called to order at 9:01 a.m. by Chairperson Elizabeth Marx. With 11 of 21 seated members present at the start of the meeting; a quorum was established.

MINUTES: The February 18, 2025, CCAC meeting minutes were presented to the Committee for approval. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Patrick Henderson and seconded by Mr. Joe Sherrick. No one opposed the motion. The motion to approve the minutes without amendments was carried by a voice vote and passed.

MEETING SUMMARY: (This narrative provides a summary of the discussions that took place during the meeting. It is not a transcript of the proceedings.)

Public Comment

Mr. Nate Eachus provided the committee with a public comment notifying them of his frustration to publish his comment in full within the summarized meeting minutes and informed them he has filed a complaint with the DEP Inspector General. Additionally, he expressed his disappointment that training on the DEP PennEnviroScreen was not included in the recent CPRG outreach workshops and emphasized that tools like this should be included in the final Climate Action Plan.

Status of DEP's Orphan and Abandoned Well Plugging Initiatives in PA

Mr. Christopher Guise of DEP's Bureau of Oil and Gas Planning and Program Management provided an overview of current efforts to plug orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells.

Pennsylvania faces a significant challenge with its large number of orphaned and abandoned oil and gas wells. Estimates suggest that between 100,000 and 560,000 wells are unaccounted for in state records, while the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) actively tracks around 27,000 wells that have no viable owner to plug them. Since 1989, DEP has plugged approximately 3,500 such wells through its Plugging Program, which operates under the authority of the Oil and Gas Act of 1984. This act mandates that non-producing wells be plugged and provides funding through fines, penalties, and surcharges on drilling permits. In 1992, the Orphan Well Plugging Program was established to target wells abandoned prior to April 18, 1985, funded by an additional fee structure.

Plugging efforts are carried out through two primary mechanisms: Emergency Contracts and Invitation for Bid (IFB) Contracts. Emergency Contracts are used when a well poses an imminent threat to public health or the environment, allowing for expedited plugging—eight wells were plugged this way in 2023, and 16 in 2024. IFB Contracts, on the other hand, are competitively bid and recently funded through the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). This funding has supported projects such as the plugging of 12 wells on State Forest lands in collaboration with DCNR and 33 Class II injection wells with the EPA. Notably, Pennsylvania received a \$25 million Initial Grant from the IIJA, which has funded 13 plugging contracts since January 2023, resulting in the plugging of 220 out of 221 targeted wells. The state is also eligible for an additional \$305.6 million in Formula Grants and \$70 million in Performance Grants to enhance regulatory oversight and expand plugging efforts.

Looking ahead, DEP plans to implement regional well plugging projects, improve documentation of undocumented wells, conduct drone surveys, perform document reviews and responsible party searches, and carry out soil, groundwater, and methane remediation.

Discussion:

Mr. Marc Mondor asked in this era of GIS and drone technology, is it reasonable to assume that over 95% of abandoned wells can be accurately located? If so, is plugging them primarily a matter of funding, or are there legal obstacles as well?

Mr. Guise answered while GIS and drone technologies are helpful tools, accurately locating over 95% of abandoned wells remains a challenge. These technologies can't always detect specific well locations, especially in areas with limited records or dense vegetation. So, it's not just a matter of technology—funding is also a major barrier. Additionally, legal issues, such as unclear ownership and liability, can complicate plugging efforts.

Mr. Kevin Warren said He is aware of efforts using satellite data, such as work by EDF. With current funding levels, how much of the abandoned well problem can realistically be addressed?

Mr. Guise said satellite data is helpful for identifying general areas where wells may exist, but it's not precise enough to pinpoint exact locations. Unfortunately, with the current level of funding, we can only address a very small fraction of the problem.

Safeguarding Pennsylvania - Resilient Microgrids in Our Communities

Microgrids can strengthen energy resilience across the state by operating independently during grid disruptions, ensuring a continuous supply of power to critical facilities and communities even when the main grid fails. Ms. Jessica Kelly, DEP, talked about a recently published report distinguishes between community (FTM) and facility-level (BTM) microgrids, both of which improve reliability, flexibility, and energy independence. Using data from FEMA, NREL, the Red Cross, and more, the PA Energy Programs Office and SEPA identified 28 potential community sites and 240 high-priority facility-level locations. These findings are now guiding strategies to deploy microgrids where they're most needed—supporting critical, municipally owned infrastructure.

Discussion

Mr. Steve Krug asked if there is an existing inventory of critical sites in Pennsylvania that already have backup power or other resiliency measures in place. Ms. Jessica Kelly responded that the report did not assess existing infrastructure; it focused solely on identifying where resiliency is most needed. When Mr. Krug asked if any estimates existed, Ms. Kelly confirmed there were none, as no direct outreach to facilities had occurred.

Ms. Lindsay Baxter asked about the use of front-of-the-meter (FTM) microgrids. Ms. Kelly gave an example involving a municipality-owned police and fire station that could share an FTM microgrid. Mr. Dave Althoff added that this project helps unify separate Energy Programs Office initiatives, such as DOE critical facility mapping and local climate planning, into a broader statewide strategy to support resilient infrastructure.

Mr. Kerry Campbell emphasized that the state previously lacked a clear way to prioritize critical facilities, which limited planning and funding coordination. This new report now provides a starting point for aligning high-need sites with funding opportunities.

Mr. Krug asked if the 240 identified facilities were notified or if agencies like FEMA were involved. Ms. Kelly explained that the facilities were not contacted directly; data was used for mapping purposes, though FEMA was informed of the report's development.

Mr. Kevin Warren asked whether Act 129 eligibility was considered and if the report included total kW capacity. Ms. Kelly said the focus was on vulnerability, not capacity estimates, and that cost-effectiveness was not assessed—site-specific evaluations would be required. Some facility capacity examples were included.

Ms. Elizabeth Marx pointed out the broader vulnerabilities of the grid and the absence of a unified state utility planning strategy. She stressed the need for investments in hospitals and other critical services. She also asked if water and wastewater facilities were included. Ms. Kelly confirmed they were identified as critical facilities, but coordination with water authorities was outside the scope of the study.

DEP Updates

EPO staff provided brief updates on recent community engagement efforts and clean energy initiatives. As part of the Climate Pollution Reduction Grants (CPRG) program, DEP hosted eight in-person workshops and five virtual sessions to gather input from over 300 participants statewide. These sessions helped shape Pennsylvania's climate strategy by identifying local priorities and community needs. Staff also highlighted clean energy milestones, including municipal fleet electrification projects funded through the Alternative Fuels Incentive Grant (AFIG) program. AFIG supports local governments, nonprofits, and businesses in replacing gasoline and diesel vehicles with cleaner alternatives by offsetting the costs of purchasing electric vehicles and installing charging infrastructure. Recent AFIG awards helped Allegheny County, Delaware County, and Warrington Township transition portions of their municipal fleets to electric vehicles. These projects are expected to displace nearly 15,000 gallons of gasoline annually, reduce greenhouse gas emissions by over 130 metric tons, and generate significant fuel cost savings.

EPO staff shared the following upcoming events with the CCAC to highlight opportunities for engagement and collaboration around clean energy and climate planning:

- **April 24:** Drive Electric Pennsylvania Coalition Meeting (DEP with PennDOT and the Electrification Coalition)
- **April 24:** Clean Energy Opportunity Spotlight – Local Climate Action Program and Shared Energy Manager Model
- **May 8:** “Community Climate Conversations” – Climate Action Plan Workshop (CPRG initiative)

Next Meeting

Lindsay Byron reminded the committee that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 24, 2025, and shared a proposed agenda for that meeting.

New Business

- Ms. Elizabeth Marx emphasized the need for a swift release of the report (CAP). She also proposed the idea of hosting a field trip-style fall meeting aligned with Sustainability Week in October.
- Mr. Dave Althoff echoed support for the fall meeting and contributed comments in favor of this approach.
- Mr. Steve Krug suggested potential venues for future meetings, including the Drake Well Museum to connect with Pennsylvania's energy history. He also mentioned Swarthmore College and West Chester University, which both have geothermal systems and meeting spaces that could serve as appropriate venues.

Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Sherrick and seconded by Mr. Mondor, motion carried, and the meeting was adjourned at 11:00am.