



April 15, 2020

Dear Stakeholders,

Thank you for your April 1, 2020 letter regarding the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) continued work to enforce all applicable environmental laws within the Commonwealth during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given this challenging time and that all DEP staff are required to work remotely, we continue to update the DEP webpage to provide the most up-to-date information related to our operations.

I can assure you that while operating from telework capabilities, DEP staff are still working to protect Pennsylvania's environment. I have been clear that we cannot allow one public health crisis lead to another. Since the beginning of the pandemic, DEP has included on the COVID Alerts webpage, "All permittees and operators are expected to meet all terms and conditions of their environmental permits, including conditions applicable to cessation of operations." This includes any reporting and monitoring requirements. We have recently reorganized the COVID Alert webpage (<https://www.dep.pa.gov/Pages/AlertDetails.aspx>) and updated the language to make this expectation more visible to all visitors.

DEP has also identified the following as essential activities: permitting, mail processing, deposition of checks and fees, inspections, and emergency response activities. Specifically, critical inspections and emergency response work are occurring when there is an imminent threat to human health or the environment. We have also provided this same guidance to our partners at the County Conservation Districts. During the first four weeks of the stay at home order, DEP staff have conducted 3,163 inspections. While it is lower than inspections conducted during our normal operations, we are still on the ground at the sites most susceptible to environmental impacts.

We also recognize that sometimes the best eyes for protecting the environment come from the residents of Pennsylvania. Our complaint reporting telephone lines have been fully operational during the pandemic response, and staff have been actively fielding calls and responding to complaints. We have also made this information more visible on the DEP webpage for easier access to the public.

As you note in your letter, DEP has established a process for consideration of temporary suspension of regulatory requirements and permit conditions in case-specific circumstances related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because we believe in transparency, I felt it was important that we publicly post the temporary suspensions that have been granted. The basis for temporary suspensions are narrowly drawn, in accordance with the Governor's Orders. The posting allows the public to see the limited scope of approvals granted, and also the unique challenges that Pennsylvania's businesses are facing because of COVID-19.

As always, I appreciate your willingness to provide the perspectives of your organizations and look forward to continuing our good work of protecting Pennsylvania's environment for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick McDonnell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Patrick" and last name "McDonnell" clearly distinguishable.

Patrick McDonnell