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Wolf Administration Releases First-Ever Litter Action Plan, Calls for Action Statewide

Lancaster, PA – Governor Tom Wolf, the state secretaries for the departments of Transportation and Environmental Protection, Representative Mike Sturla and City of Lancaster Mayor Danene Sorace joined other administration and community stakeholders today to highlight innovative local anti-littering measures and called for action to combat Pennsylvania’s litter-problem at all levels statewide.

The Wolf Administration released the state’s [first-ever Litter Action Plan \(PDF\)](#)—which reflects the work of more than 100 stakeholders from state and local government, businesses, the legislature, and more—and includes both current initiatives and recommendations to clean up the more than 500 million pieces of litter scattered throughout the commonwealth.

“Pennsylvania is a great place to live, work, and raise a family. It’s a beautiful state with stunning landscapes and bountiful natural resources. But, we’ve got a litter problem,” said Gov. Wolf. “Litter is bad for the environment and our communities, it’s a drain on taxpayer dollars. Today I’m excited to unveil a solution that all 13 million Pennsylvanians can be a part of, it’s a blueprint for a cleaner commonwealth.”

Demonstrating the cost of litter to communities and the commonwealth, PennDOT Secretary Yassmin Gramian noted that the agency’s annual \$14 million cost to clean up litter makes litter prevention especially important.

“We recognize we need to change behavior, not just clean up the mess,” Gramian said. “With this commonwealth Litter Action Plan, we’ve provided examples, resources, and calls to action so we can make some transformative change here in Pennsylvania.”

DEP has funded "Pick Up Pennsylvania" community litter cleanups and illegal dump site cleanups for over two decades, supporting volunteers in removing many tons of trash from the land and waters. As littering has persisted, DEP sponsored with PennDOT the first

comprehensive state study to inform development of the Litter Action Plan, with a focus on changing littering behavior.

"DEP is committed to helping drive a statewide shift to litter prevention," said DEP Secretary Patrick McDonnell. "If we bring the same energy to litter prevention initiatives that thousands of volunteers have brought to cleaning up litter in their communities, we'll turn a corner on Pennsylvania's trash problem. And we'll gain the community and economic benefits of a healthier environment."

In addition to examples and suggestions for the General Assembly, local governments, businesses, and the public, the report outlines 16 recommendations for the commonwealth. Examples of actions state agencies are taking to support the higher-level recommendations in the plan include:

- PennDOT, the Department of Community and Economic Development, and DEP collaboration on an anti-litter campaign anticipated for spring 2022.
- PennDOT analysis of where and how to ensure it has the right litter-reducing tools in place in its public-facing facilities.
- DEP work underway on a new rulemaking to provide convenient and affordable access to waste disposal and recycling services in rural areas of Pennsylvania where trash collection and recycling services are currently not economically feasible.
- The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is complementing their "Leave No Trace" program with working to update their concessionaire agreements to include language aimed at combatting litter, such as requiring food providers to minimize paper straw and disposable utensil use. And when onsite composting is available at a state park, concessionaires will be required to work with DCNR to convert as many of their food service products to compostable, paper-based forest product alternatives and then compost them with the food waste.
- State Police continuing Operation Clean Sweep, which launched this summer and reinforces a zero-tolerance mindset with litter enforcement, while sharing anti-litter messages year-round. This complements their assistance with enforcing Litter Enforcement Corridors that – under a 2018 law – can be designated by the department and local governments to combat litter.
- The Department of Education's review of opportunities to further incorporate anti-litter curriculum into their environmental programming standards.
- Fish and Boat Commission pilot projects, in coordination with DCNR, to properly dispose of fishing line.

"Lancaster residents and I recognize the importance of beautification in our community," said Rep. Sturla. "We implement various innovative approaches to accomplish this aim, especially in significant litter reduction. Lancaster will continue to be a shining example of a city that respects and nourishes its environment."

The plan's workgroups included 17 participants from local governments and among the group's recommendations for local governments is the suggestion to "get creative with public waste infrastructure maintenance." The plan and media event featured the City of Lancaster's Tiny Can Project, which installs "tiny cans" (trash receptacles) every few houses on both sides of the street for an entire city block in three target areas. Residents who have

a “tiny can” in front of their house will be responsible for emptying the receptacles on trash day and will dispose of it with their regular trash collection.

“Innovative solutions like the Tiny Can project in southeast Lancaster will help us boost community pride and strengthen our neighborhoods, block by block,” Mayor Sorace said. “We thank the Wolf administration for their leadership on this quality-of-life issue and are happy to do our part in tackling this challenge in Lancaster City.”

The event participants discussed the need for statewide action from all levels to address littering as a cost and quality of life issue. The plan’s recommendations for the General Assembly feature several proposed changes to existing laws and three new proposed laws. Recommendations for businesses and the public will be continually shared through the workgroup participants moving forward.

[DEP identifies many ways](#) Pennsylvanians can be anti-litter at www.dep.pa.gov/litter.

PennDOT provides litter information and many additional litter cleanup volunteer opportunities, including Adopt-A-Highway, Litter Brigades, and more on its [Roadside Beautification page](#).

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