Wondering how Pennsylvania can do something big on global warming? Here’s how:

On Oct. 3, Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Wolf announced a plan to commit the commonwealth to join the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI). RGGI, a partnership of Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states, caps carbon emissions from power plants, makes the plants pay for their pollution, and allows states to invest in clean energy.

That’s why the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative might be the most important climate program most Pennsylvanians have never heard of.

**Bipartisan, pollution-reducing action**

The Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative was created with bipartisan support in 2008, and continues to earn bipartisan support for slashing power plant emissions that contribute to global warming.

The initiative currently includes nine Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states that are providing a model that the rest of the country can follow, especially in the face of federal back-pedaling on climate solutions.

And Pennsylvania’s effort to join RGGI sends a huge message in the fight to solve climate change, as it becomes the first “swing” state with a long-standing history in fossil fuel extraction joining the program.

“We applaud Gov. Wolf for this important act,” said PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center Executive Director David Masur. “Given a choice between living in the past with dirty fuels or being on the right side of history, Pennsylvania’s leaders

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Pennsylvania’s favorite beaches at risk from pollution

With Pennsylvanians from every corner of the state spending summer days at their favorite beaches, PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center released its newest clean water study, “Safe for Swimming?,” this past summer, which revealed fecal bacteria levels at 28 beaches tested across Pennsylvania.

The study looked at common destination beaches for many Pennsylvanians — the beaches along the Jersey Shore, and those along Lake Erie. Five Lake Erie sites were potentially unsafe on at least a quarter of the days tested. Lake Erie’s worst offenders were Beach 11 East and West in Thompson Bay, which had bacteria levels high enough to put swimmers at risk for 17 of 39 days tested — or 44 percent.

“Swimming at the beach is a prime summertime joy for so many Pennsylvanians, but clearly we have more work to do to make sure the water at all our beaches is safe,” said Ashleigh Deemer, Western Pennsylvania director with PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center.

PA missing opportunity to tap into clean energy

A new study by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center shows that while Pennsylvania has been increasing its renewable energy production in wind and solar power, the commonwealth is not keeping up with many states that are more aggressively tapping into clean energy opportunities.

The report, “Renewables on the Rise,” found that Pennsylvania ranked just 22nd in the nation for solar energy production, even though the state has seen a 47-fold increase in solar over the past decade. Pennsylvania has also more than doubled the state’s wind capacity over the past decade yet doesn’t crack the top 15 states for increases in wind generation nationally.

“We’re seeing some progress on solar and battery storage here in the commonwealth,” said Flora Cardoni, Climate Defender campaign director for PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. “But we’re falling behind and missing huge opportunities to protect our health and climate by taking clean energy to the next level. We must do more to make Pennsylvania a clean energy leader.”

Get the Lead Out: PennEnvironment releases new back-to-school toolkit

What should a parent or teacher do if they discover the drinking water in their local school is contaminated by lead?

On Sept. 12, PennEnvironment released a free toolkit by PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center to “Get the Lead Out” of schools’ drinking water in Pennsylvania. In communities across Pennsylvania — from urban centers to suburban neighborhoods to rural communities — newly available testing data reveal a high percentage of schools with lead-laced drinking water. The toolkit is meant to help parents, teachers and school administrators grapple with the serious health threat of lead in drinking water in school buildings that’s facing our children.

“Lead is a potent neurotoxin, affecting the way our kids learn, grow and behave,” said Stephanie Wein, clean water and conservation advocate for the PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center. “Many parents had a new water bottle on their ‘back-to-school’ list, we want to make sure the water that’s going into those bottles is safe to drink.”

Get more updates on our work online at http://pennenvironment.org.
are showing they’re ready to do what’s right and protect our communities and future generations across the state.”

**Pollution cut in half, billions raised for clean energy**

The results so far are promising. The program has cut the states’ carbon power plant pollution in half compared to 2005 levels. And the effects of Pennsylvania joining RGGI become clear when you consider that Pennsylvania’s carbon pollution from the power sector is 82 million tons, a higher amount than the nine current states are allowed to emit cumulatively under RGGI.

At the same time, RGGI has also raised more than $2.7 billion, enabling the states to invest more than $1 billion in energy efficiency and $270 million in clean and renewable energy. By 2030, RGGI could raise another $7 billion for energy conservation and clean energy programs.

States have used RGGI funds to weatherize buildings, not only reducing pollution but also making homes and businesses more comfortable and saving people money on their energy bills. Funds have also gone to new solar panels and wind turbines, turbocharging the clean energy revolution throughout the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic.

To ensure the success of Pennsylvania joining RGGI, it will be crucial for state officials to follow the lead of the other RGGI states, and direct the incoming revenue to clean energy programs.

**Growing stronger**

Opposition to Pennsylvania’s efforts to join RGGI came swiftly. Just weeks after the announcement, a bipartisan group of politicians in the state legislature announced their effort to strip away the ability of Gov. Wolf and the Department of Environmental Protection to tackle global warming pollution from dirty power plants.

PennEnvironment Research & Policy Center has been working to defend the program from attack and help get it over the finish line.

“After the climate strikes and U.N. Climate Summit this fall, many Pennsylvanians wondered what could be done right here in our state,” said David.

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*The program has cut participating states’ carbon power plant pollution in half compared to 2005 levels.*

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Thank you for standing with us as we closed out 2019 with more progress toward the greener, healthier world we want to live in. Looking at all we’ve accomplished together, despite all the challenges we face, always gives me hope for the future of our movement.

So thank you once again for making it all possible with your action and support.

David Masur  
Executive Director
PennEnvironment testifies in support of pro-recycling ‘bottle bill’

When someone chooses to recycle a bottle or can, it helps ensure that the container doesn’t end up in a landfill or incinerator — or worse, littering our streets or neighborhoods.

That’s why on Sept. 30 PennEnvironment Executive Director David Masur testified before the House Democratic Policy Committee in support of House Bill 1322, which would implement a five-cent deposit for all beverage containers sold in Pennsylvania. Similar laws exist in 10 other states and have been on the books for nearly five decades.

“Bottle bill legislation has been proven to be the most successful and cost-effective system to incentivize consumers, retailers and distributors to recycle,” said David in his testimony. “It improves recycling rates, reduces litter, helps to tackle climate change, creates jobs and provides an additional revenue stream for states who implement it. Hopefully Pennsylvania will tap into this opportunity.”

The bill’s lead sponsor is Bucks County State Rep. Wendy Ullman (Doylestown), a leader for the Zero Waste PA legislative package in the state capitol, one of PennEnvironment’s top policy priorities.

PennEnvironment Executive Director David Masur testified before the House Democratic Policy Committee in support of House Bill 1322.