

Public Statement on Gov. Wolf's Announcement of the PULSE Solar Energy Initiative

March 25, 2021

Background:

On Monday, March 22, Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf announced a major clean energy initiative that will produce nearly 50 percent of the state government's electricity through seven new solar energy arrays to be built around the state. Part of the governor's GreenGov initiative, Pennsylvania PULSE (Project to Utilize Light and Solar Energy) will go into operation on January 1, 2023. The project is the largest solar commitment by any government in the U.S. announced to date.

Solar arrays will be built in seven locations in six counties: Columbia, Juniata, Montour, Northumberland, Snyder and York. When completed, the total 191-megawatt project is expected to deliver 361,000 megawatt-hours of electricity per year, supplying 100 percent of electricity for 434 accounts across 16 state agencies, or about half the electricity used by state government. The solar project will create 400-plus jobs and begin lowering carbon dioxide emissions statewide by 157,800 metric tons each year – the equivalent of the emissions from nearly 27,000 homes or taking 34,000 cars off the roads.

The Solar Renewable Energy Credits, or SRECs, generated by the project will be retired upon purchase by the commonwealth, ensuring that such SRECs cannot be used for compliance or voluntary purposes by any other entity, thereby preserving the existing SREC market.

Clean energy industries added nearly 7,800 jobs in Pennsylvania in 2017-2019, for an 8.7 percent average job growth rate, significantly exceeding the average overall job growth in the state, according to the [2020 Pennsylvania Clean Energy Employment](#) report.

SWPA Environmental Health Project Statement:

The SWPA Environmental Health Project applauds Governor Wolf for this bold initiative, which demonstrates a commitment to addressing public health issues brought about by fossil fuels. The PULSE initiative acknowledges that the Commonwealth must respond immediately to climate change in order to better control the health risks associated with natural disasters, poor air quality, insect-borne diseases, and respiratory infections like COVID-19. Further, the initiative signals a just transition away from the extraction and burning of fossil fuels and towards more reliance on renewable energy, which will improve the welfare of all Pennsylvanians, while better protecting the health of those who live, work, and go to school in areas where shale gas is extracted and transported.

More than two dozen peer-reviewed epidemiological studies show a correlation between shale gas development and a range of health issues, including asthma, cardiac hospitalizations, and adverse birth outcomes. Increased exposure to air pollution can make the symptoms of infectious lung diseases, such as COVID-19, worse. Studies also show that shale gas activities can lead to psychological distress, which can cause depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, and a host of other mental health issues. Governor Wolf's PULSE initiative is one step toward a more health-protective policy that clearly benefits Pennsylvania's families and communities.

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