

PADEP Announces Permit Backlog Reduction of 98% and Broadens Eligibility of SPEED Program for Permit Review

November 26, 2025

Pittsburgh, PA and Washington, DC

FNREL Mineral and Energy Law Newsletter

Pennsylvania – Mining

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On July 14, 2025, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) announced that it had reduced its permit backlog by 98% since November 2023, from over 2,400 permit applications to fewer than 50. See [News Release](#), PADEP, “Getting Permitting Done: DEP Reduces Permit Backlog by 98% and Has Reviewed Nearly 20,000 Permit Applications So Far This Year” (July 14, 2025). Three of the six PADEP regional offices (Southwest, South Central, and Southeast) have entirely eliminated their permit backlogs. Three specific initiatives launched by the Shapiro administration have allowed PADEP to reach this milestone:

1. PADEP’s modernization of its permit review process by investing in new technologies, including the [Permit Tracker](#) (established January 2025) that allows applicants and residents to monitor the progress of permits as they move through the review process.
2. The [Payback program](#) (established November 2023), which assures a moneyback guarantee for permit applicants if an application is not acted on by PADEP in a set time frame. Between January 1, 2025, and October 21, 2025, PADEP decided on 32,690 applications.
3. The [Streamlining Permits for Economic Expansion and Development \(SPEED\) Program](#) (established July 2024), which began accepting applications on June 30, 2025, allows applicants of select permits to use approved qualified contractors to conduct expedited initial application reviews. PADEP reviews recommendations from the qualified contractor and makes the final decision to approve or deny the permit or issue a technical deficiency letter to the applicant.

On August 20, 2025, PADEP announced the availability of SPEED program review for permit applications in four additional areas: (1) air quality, (2) dam safety, (3) oil and gas well pad construction, and (4) wetland encroachment. See [News Release](#), PADEP, “Shapiro Administration Continues to Move at the Speed of Business by Launching Additional SPEED Permits” (Aug. 20, 2025). With these additions, SPEED reviews are now available for the following permit types:

- Chapter 127 Air Quality Plan Approvals (state only);
- Chapter 105 Waterway and Wetland Encroachment permits;
- Chapter 105 Dam Safety permits;
- Chapter 102 National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) general permits (PAG-01 and PAG-02) for stormwater discharges associated with construction activities;
- Chapter 102 Individual NPDES Permits (previously available);
- Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment Control Permits; and
- Chapter 102 Erosion and Sediment Control General Permit (ESCGP) for earth disturbance associated with oil and gas exploration, production, processing, or treatment operations or transmission facilities.

Reporting on prior milestones by PADEP in reducing permitting backlogs can be found in [Vol. 42, No. 1 \(2025\)](#) of this *Newsletter*.

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