Pennsylvania Constitution
Article I, Section 27

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and aesthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania’s public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustees of these resources, the commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.

MISSION STATEMENT
Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council

Drawing upon the diversity of experiences and perspectives of its appointed citizen members, the council will provide to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, to the Governor, to the General Assembly, and to the public, advice regarding the conservation and stewardship of the commonwealth’s natural resources.

The powers and duties of the council will be carried out as legislatively mandated in Section 315(d), Act 18 of 1995.

On the Cover: French Creek State Park, a stop on CNRAC’s 2018 field trip
October 1, 2019

The Honorable Tom Wolf
Office of the Governor
225 Main Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Dear Governor Wolf,

The Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council (CNRAC) is pleased to present its 2018-2019 annual report of our activities in fulfillment of our obligations to provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

CNRAC continues to follow issues that impact the programs and services of DCNR. Through our bi-monthly meetings and field trips over the past year, we engaged in discussions with DCNR staff, partners, and key stakeholders on climate change resilience, outdoor recreation planning, community conservation, planting and management of forested riparian buffers, and natural gas development. Our Communications, Motorized Recreation, Infrastructure, and Strategic Planning work groups have further investigated critical issues affecting our state forest and park lands. CNRAC contributed to development of key strategic plans that will guide the agency’s work in the near future. Specifically, Council provided written comments on “Penn’s Parks for All,” the 25-year strategic plan for DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks, and our Motorized Recreation workgroup completed their report recommending future steps to manage motorized recreation opportunities in Pennsylvania. As we recognize that limited resources have the potential to affect DCNR’s ability to fully carry out its mission, we urge you and the legislature to continue to protect the agency’s special funds and to dedicate more of the state’s General Fund to the operational budget of the agency.

We continue to be impressed by the highly motivated, extremely competent staff and administration within DCNR. Additionally, DCNR’s commitment to collaboration is evident and these partnerships clearly contribute to success of its programs, despite limited financial resources.

We hope this report and our future actions will give you an indication of our commitment to these and other important issues.

Sincerely,

Ephraim Zimmerman
CNRAC Council Members 2018-2019

GOVERNOR’S APPOINTMENTS

Meredith Odato Graham -- Pittsburgh, PA; B.S. Natural Resources, Cornell University; J.D. University of Pittsburgh School of Law; environmental lawyer and community volunteer; term expires January 2022.

Joanne C. Kilgour -- Lancaster, PA; B.A. Philosophy, Carnegie Mellon University; J.D. University of Pittsburgh School of Law; Director, Sierra Club Pennsylvania Chapter; term expires January 2022.

L. Richard Sayles -- Harrisburg, PA; B.S. Developmental Psychology, Penn State University; Dauphin County Area Coordinator for the Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of the Capitol Region; term expires January 2020.

Geralyn Umstead-Singer -- Hershey, PA; B.A. in Communications, Lycoming College; Certification Elementary Education, Wilson College; community volunteer and family caregiver; term expires January 2021.

Ephraim Zimmerman -- Pittsburgh, PA; B.S. Wildlife Biology, Colorado State University; M.S. Forest Ecology, University of Michigan; Ecological Assessment Manager, PA Natural Heritage Conservancy; term expires January 2020.

One Vacancy

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE OF THE SENATE APPOINTMENTS

Rocco S. Ali -- North Apollo, PA; B.S. Biology and Chemistry, Geneva College; M.S. Orthopedics and Neurology, University of Pittsburgh; Physical Therapist and Clinical Supervisor, Nova Care Outpatient Rehabilitation; term expires January 2020.

L. Stockton Illoway -- Phoenixville, PA; B.A. Liberal Arts, Harvard University; M.S. Financial Science, American College; Senior Sales Associate, 1847 Financial; term expires January 2020.

Robert E. Kirchner -- St. Marys, PA; B.S. Health & Physical Education, Slippery Rock University of PA; Owner, WhyNotSafety, LLC; Immediate Past President, American Council of Snowmobile Associations; Vice President, Allegheny Forest Alliance; term expires January 2020.

Walter N. Peechatka -- New Cumberland, PA; B.S. Forestry, Penn State University; Senior Consultant, Versant Strategies; term expired January 2016.

Janet L. Sweeney -- Luzerne, PA; B.A in Sociology, State University of New York; M.S. Science in Planning and Regional Development, University of Arizona; Director, Pennsylvania Environmental Council; term expired January 2018 (awaiting reappointment).

David Trimpey -- Pittsfield, PA; B.S. in Forest Science, Penn State University; Resource Manager, Kane Hardwood Division of Collins Pine Company; term expires January 2021.
SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE APPOINTMENTS

Clifford C. David, Jr. -- Lower Gwynedd, Montgomery County, PA; B.A. Psychology, Bucknell University; B.S. Botany, University of Vermont; M.S. Organization and Management, Antioch College; President, Conservation Economics; term expires January 2020.

William C. Forrey -- Camp Hill, PA; B.S. Landscape Architecture; M.S. Regional Planning, Penn State University; Retired Pennsylvania State Park Director; term expired January 2019.

Greg Goldman -- Philadelphia, PA; B.A. Northwestern University; Master of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago; Executive Director of Audubon PA and Vice President of National Audubon Society; term expires January 2021.

Gary M. B. Kribbs -- Havertown, PA; B.A. Geology, University of Toledo; M.S. Geology, University of Toledo; President, AEON Geoscience, Inc.; term expires January 2020.

Two Vacancies Pending Appointment

CNRAC OFFICERS AND STAFF

DCNR Secretary – Cindy Adams Dunn
Chairman – Ephraim Zimmerman, July 2019 to July 2021
Vice Chairman – Janet Sweeney, July 2019 to July 2021
Secretary – Geralyn Singer, July 2019 to July 2021
DCNR Council Adviser – Gretchen Leslie
Council Administrator – Katrina Harris (contractor)

CNRAC WORK GROUPS

Communications Work Group
Cliff David, Gary Kribbs, Greg Goldman

Infrastructure Work Group
Stock Illoway, Geralyn Singer, Gary Kribbs, Ephraim Zimmerman, Walt Pechatka, Janet Sweeney, Dave Trimpey

Motorized Recreation Work Group
Bob Kirchner, Rocco Ali, Gary Kribbs, Stock Illoway, Ephraim Zimmerman, Walt Pechatka

Strategic Planning Work Group
Meredith Graham, Bill Forrey, Janet Sweeney, Cliff David, Dave Trimpey, Rick Sayles, Ephraim Zimmerman
CNRAC Meetings

JULY 25, 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Matt Keefer, Assistant State Forester, DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry
Chesapeake Bay Update
Mr. Keefer provided the Council with an update of the ongoing work associated with the Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP) Phase III. In partnership with the Department of Environmental Protection, DCNR is the lead agency in helping to meet Chesapeake Bay Program goals and TMDL obligations for tree canopy and riparian forest buffer implementation.

Ken Duren, Forest Resource Inventory & Monitoring Section, DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry
DCNR Shale Gas Monitoring Report
Mr. Duren presented data related to the recently released Shale Gas Monitoring Report. The monitoring team includes partners from several groups including DCNR, the US Forest Service, US Geologic Survey, PA Department of Environmental Protection, Susquehanna River Basin Commission Penn State, Marshall University, and Morris Arboretum. The team looks for changes in categories such as water, invasives, infrastructure, forest health, timber products, air and energy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition, gave Council an update on the impact fee in Pennsylvania.

Other attendees included:
Anna Ellis, DCNR
John Norbeck, DCNR
Beth Kern, Chesapeake Energy
Curtis Scheffler, USGS

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NOVEMBER 21, 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Kelly Sitch, Botanist, DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry
DCNR’s Mock Well Pad
Mr. Sitch gave an overview of the Bureau of Forestry’s work with a mock well pad in Tiadaghton State Forest. DCNR tested methods for site reclamation, addressing challenges such as compacted soils, poor grass establishment and invasive species. The Bureau used different soil ripping techniques to see what conditions provide the best environment for native species to establish root systems. The mock well pad provides a great opportunity to educate industry about the best management practices for site reclamation.
Keith Salador, Executive Director  
DEP’s Citizens Advisory Council  
Mr. Salador introduced himself as the new Executive Director. He noted the DEP Citizens Advisory Council will be focusing primarily on environmental justice and abandoned mine land reclamation in 2019. Mr. Salador expressed interest in working with Council on relevant issues.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Fred Brown, a citizen and advocate for off-road motorized recreation, said he looked forward to reading Council’s recommendations for motorized recreation in the state and offered to work with Council on this issue.

Other attendees included:  
Teddy Borawski, DCNR  
Ellen Shultzabarger, DCNR

JANUARY 23, 2019

PRESENTATIONS

Tim Schaeffer, Executive Director, Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission  
Mr. Schaeffer spoke with Council about how the Fish & Boat Commission works with DCNR to advance shared goals. Examples of collaborations include the fishing tackle loaner programs, riparian forest buffer plantings, conservation explorer tool, streambank stabilization, trout stocking, and lake habitat improvements.

Marci Mowery, President of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation  
DCNR Infrastructure Report  
Ms. Mowery presented Council with an overview of the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation’s infrastructure report, which discusses the $1 billion of infrastructure needs in state parks and forests. Some of the major infrastructure needs include: structurally deficient high-hazard dams; more than 3,000 miles of roads in need of repair; the replacement of bridges that serve as connectors between municipalities for emergency vehicles; and natural hazards such as invasive species. Ms. Mowery asked for the Council’s support in educating the public and the legislature about the need for more infrastructure funding.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Other attendees included:  
Brian Palmer, ERG Inc.  
John Kline, Kline Associates  
Robert Swift, Capitol Wire  
Fred Brown, Constituent
MARCH 27, 2019

PRESENTATIONS

Andrew Sharp, Deputy Secretary for Intergovernmental Affairs, Governor’s Office
Sam Robinson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Governor’s Office

Restore Pennsylvania

Mr. Sharp presented an overview of Governor Wolf’s Restore Pennsylvania initiative, an effort that would invest $1.5 billion into the Commonwealth’s infrastructure needs. Mr. Sharp advised Restore Pennsylvania will be transformative for conservation, with funding available for trail and park projects, state park and forest infrastructure, green infrastructure, dams, acid mine drainage remediation, and land conservation.

Diane Kripas, DCNR’s Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)

Ms. Kripas provided Council with an overview of the upcoming SCORP for 2020 through 2024, which is focused on five priorities: health and wellness, recreation for all, sustainable systems, funding and economic development, and technology. She advised a survey had been conducted through Penn State to understand recreational trends. She advised interest in funding for parks and recreation remains steady, and Pennsylvanians continue to value access to open space.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Other attendees included:
Fred Brown, Constituent
Don McClure, McClure Association Consultants
Brian Rider, Pennsylvania Forest Products Association

MAY 29, 2019

PRESENTATIONS

Matt Keefer, DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry,
Nicki Kasi, DEP’s Chesapeake Bay Program Office

Draft PA Chesapeake Bay Watershed Implementation Plan

Mr. Keefer and Ms. Kasi gave Council an overview of the Phase III Watershed Implementation Plan (WIP). Mr. Keefer highlighted how the plan intersects with DCNR’s work and explained one of the plan’s goals calls for planting 83,000 acres of forest buffer. The Plan also intersects with DCNR’s work by highlighting the importance of urban tree canopy and land conservation.

Greg Czarnecki, Climate Change and Research Coordinator, DCNR

DCNR’s Climate Adaptation Plan Progress

Mr. Czarnecki presented an update on DCNR’s Climate Adaptation Plan implementation. DCNR is now a participating member of the Governor’s GreenGov Council, a result of an executive order aimed at boosting green and sustainable practices in state government. DCNR plays a major role in leading by example and educating park visitors how to install sustainable infrastructure. The executive order, signed in January 2019, establishes the first statewide goal to reduce carbon pollution. DCNR’s Climate Adaptation Plan lays out action steps each bureau can take to mitigate the effects of climate change. DCNR sees its role in climate as both a resource manager and an educator.
PUBLIC COMMENT

None

Other attendees included:
Don McClure, McClure Associates
Eric Nelson, DCNR
Brian Rider, Pennsylvania Forest Products Association
Teddi Stark, DCNR

Field Trip – Southeast PA, September 17-19, 2018

Council members spent two days in southeastern Pennsylvania learning how DCNR staff and programs are helping communities address their recreation and conservation needs.

At French Creek State Park in Berks County, council members heard about efforts by the Bureau of Forestry to control the Spotted Lanternfly, a destructive insect that was first identified in the county in 2014 and has quickly spread in southeast and southcentral Pennsylvania, resulting in 14 counties under quarantine. The invasive pest feeds and grows primarily on the ailanthus tree and is a major threat to the agriculture industry in Pennsylvania. Foresters are performing aerial surveys of the forests, checking for tree dieback, mortality, defoliation, and foliage discoloration, and are mapping areas of the ailanthus tree. Council members also heard from Rachel Reyna, chief of DCNR’s Rural and Community Forestry Section, who described the efforts of foresters in that region to help communities build tree cover through the TreeVitalize Program; and Su Ann Shupp, who discussed land conservation efforts in nearby Birdsboro.

CNRAC members traveled to sites in Chester County that are supported through DCNR’s grant programs, such as the Warwick Furnace, a Revolutionary War-era furnace that is permanently protected through conservation easements and land acquisition by the French & Pickering Creeks Conservation Trust.

Council members left the protected rural lands in Chester County for downtown Lancaster where they heard from Mayor Danene Sorace and Ruth Ayn Hocker, the city’s stormwater program manager, about forward-thinking efforts to control runoff in the city through green infrastructure and their park system, partially funded through DCNR grants.
As part of this regional fieldtrip, CNRAC held a public meeting at Columbia Crossing in Columbia, York County to hear from local officials and citizens who have been impacted by DCNR’s work. Columbia Mayor Leo Lutz and business owner Don Murphy spoke of the impact that public investment in parks and trails has had on the borough’s local economy. Phil Wenger, executive director of the Lancaster County Conservancy and Hope Byers, manager of Columbia Crossing, praised DCNR’s leadership in the Susquehanna Riverlands Conservation Landscape, which pulls together community leaders and organizations to protect, promote and develop recreation, heritage tourism and conservation projects in the Susquehanna Riverlands two-county region.

To see firsthand the economic development discussed during the public meeting, CNRAC boarded a trolley for a tour led by Emily Munn, a visitor service representative from Susquehanna Heritage. The tour included a drive through Columbia and Marietta’s historic downtowns; a stop at the Northwest River Trail and business discussion with Chickies Rock Outfitter; and a stop at Breezy View Overlook at Chickies Rock County Park to learn about land protection efforts by the Lancaster County Conservancy.

Council members traveled to the banks of Susquehanna River in Lancaster County to learn about the benefits of multi-use forest buffers at the Falmouth Forest Garden Project at a site near the Falmouth Trailhead of the Northwest River Trail in Bainbridge. Brandon Tennis, stewardship director of the Lancaster County Conservancy, led several members on a tour of the established buffer project, which is growing perennial crops such as black walnuts, persimmons, pawpaws, serviceberries, and hazelnuts for improved wildlife habitat and a demonstration of regenerative agroforestry. DCNR is supporting multi-function buffers through its Forest Buffer grant program.

CNRAC members finished off the regional field trip with a visit to the Zimmerman Center for Heritage, which serves as headquarters for the Susquehanna National Heritage Area at Long Level. Executive Director Mark Platts and staff gave members a tour of the historic riverfront house and grounds. The site serves as Pennsylvania’s Official Visitor Contact and Passport Station for the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail. DCNR funds Susquehanna Heritage as part of its Heritage Areas Program.
Field Trip – Loyalsock State Forest
November 1, 2018

Throughout the past couple of years, CNRAC has received public comment on proposed natural gas activity in the Loyalsock Creek Valley, from people who live in the valley or are familiar with the natural beauty of the area. Concerned that unconventional natural gas could significantly alter forests and waters, threaten fish and wildlife, and impact recreation and hunting opportunities, the local community has written letters and given public testimony at CNRAC meetings.

Several Council members visited Loyalsock State Forest to see firsthand the area and talk with residents affected by the proposed gas drilling.

DCNR’s Bureau of Forestry staff lead a tour for the Council members of a well pad, a recently constructed pipeline right-of-way, and then the same right-of-way from an adjacent ridge so members could see the overall impact on the landscape.

While in the Loyalsock, Council members also met with the citizens group Save the Loyalsock Coalition to hear their concerns and to be more fully informed on the topic. To round out their informational tour, CNRAC members attended a public meeting to learn more about plans for revising the Loyalsock State Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP). A district-level state forest management plan is written for each of the 20 forest districts across the state. Council will continue to stay abreast of the issue and request updates from the citizens group and DCNR.
Council Actions

Council wrote to Governor Wolf and legislative leadership in June 2019 about the need to protect DCNR special funds uses for their intended purposes.

Dear Governor Wolf and Legislative Leaders:

I am contacting you on behalf of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Citizens Advisory Council (CNRAC). As you are aware, CNRAC is charged with providing advice to DCNR regarding the conservation and stewardship of the Commonwealth’s natural resources.

We are once again contacting our elected representatives to express our great concern over the use of various special funds to bring the 2019-20 General Fund budget into balance – specifically, the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund and the Environmental Stewardship Fund, two very important funding sources for DCNR. Both the Environmental Stewardship Fund and the Keystone Fund will lose tens of millions of dollars in the Governor’s proposed 2019-2020 budget. These funds are critical to land conservation, management, and infrastructure maintenance projects in the Commonwealth’s parks and forests, as well as community recreation and conservation projects.

Not only does DCNR rely on funding from these sources to address needs within the Commonwealth’s parks and forests, the expectation of the public is that these funds will be used for the purposes set forth in the legislative language initiating the creation of the funds. The Keystone Fund was created by Act 50 of 1993 from a dedicated portion of the Realty Transfer Tax specifically to support conservation, parks, and recreation. The Environmental Stewardship Fund was given a dedicated funding source in 2002 through an increase in the tipping fee—a fee charged for dumping trash in landfills to be allocated to four state agencies for environmental restoration, land conservation and community recreation and revitalization projects.

The loss of the Keystone Fund, DCNR’s primary source of funding for conservation and recreation grants, would greatly harm DCNR’s ability to achieve its mission. Because Keystone funds must be matched by local sources, transferring these funds will disrupt many significant, high-value, multi-year conservation and recreation projects that often have substantial local participation and investment. Keystone funds empower local people and the private sector to support local recreation and conservation initiatives, that, in-turn, benefit the local economy. According to Keystonefund.org, every dollar in state grants typically leverages at least $1 in other investments and usually the multiplier is much larger. The Keystone Fund alone has leveraged more than $1 billion in public/private partnerships to complete more than 4,500 projects.

The loss of the Environmental Stewardship Fund, commonly known as Growing Greener, would also be extraordinarily damaging to DCNR and its ability to fulfill its mission. These funds have been used to conserve over 200,000 acres of open space, restore clean water and reduce flooding in many rivers and streams, revitalize communities, and have helped the department address a backlog of infrastructure and deferred maintenance projects in our state parks and forests.

We recognize the need to fund Department operations. However, raiding special funds to support agency operations is not the answer. We are asking that these dedicated conservation funding sources remain intact. We would welcome the opportunity to further discuss our great concern with using the monies in these valuable funds for purposes that were not intended. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Kribbs
CNRAC Chairman
Council also produced a report dated January 23, 2019 titled “The Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council’s Review and Recommendations Regarding DCNR’s Role and Responsibilities to Provide Motorized Recreation Opportunities Within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.”

Summary of Report

In 2017, the Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council asked the DCNR administration to identify priorities for Council review. One of the major issues facing the Department was how to address a growing demand for additional ATV riding opportunities within the Commonwealth. DCNR, as the licensing body for snowmobiles and ATVs, found itself at the apex of this issue. CNRAC formed a six-member work group within the Council to study this issue and report their findings to the full Council for consideration.

The Council’s recommendations to address the need were based on a review of appropriate internal and public documents, reactions to public meetings conducted by DCNR-contracted engineering firms, attendance at other public meetings on the topic (including meetings of the Snowmobile/ATV Advisory Committee of DCNR), and a review of current published articles on the issue. Contracted engineering studies of connectivity and potential for connectivity or additional fixed location facilities were considered. CNRAC also sought to identify best practices in other jurisdictions with a similar demand and learn about successful programs currently operating in Northeastern and Midwestern states.

The goal of the report was to thoughtfully provide citizen-based guidance to the Department, Legislature and Governor with an issue that could be described as a monumental multi-faceted challenge for DCNR to tackle alone. As the report points out, ATV usage, as currently contemplated by the user group, the legislature and the public, crosses many jurisdictional lines, poses land use opportunities and challenges, and is revered by some while being rebuked by others.

The report provided eight key findings and 15 recommendations within those key findings. The report also described key department structure, partnership and educational considerations.

The report provided valuable insight from a public perspective on this issue and will be useful as DCNR develops future programs and policies. The report was presented to DCNR at CNRAC’s January 2019 public meeting. A subsequent meeting was held in May with CNRAC members and DCNR staff to further discuss opportunities to advance some of the recommendations.
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

If after reading this report you would like to receive more information about the council or would like to be added to our electronic mailing list, please contact us at:

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Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 8767
Harrisburg, PA  17105-8767
Telephone:  717-772-9084

Website:  www.dcnr.pa.gov/cnrac