

**MINUTES**

**CONSERVATION AND NATURAL  
RESOURCES ADVISORY  
COUNCIL (CNRAC)**

**July 24, 2019**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Ephraim Zimmerman, Chair  
Gary Kribbs, Member  
Clifford David, Member  
Bill Forrey, Member  
Meredith Graham, Member  
Bob Kirchner, Member  
Walt Peechaka, Member  
Geraldyn Singer, Secretary  
Janet Sweeney, Vice Chair  
David Trimpey, Member

**DCNR**

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary  
Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser

**ADMINISTRATOR**

Katrina Harris, Administrator

**GUESTS PRESENT**

Stacie Amsler, DCNR Bureau of Administration (Presenter)  
Tom Ford, DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation (Presenter)  
Paul Zeph, DCNR Bureau of State Parks (Presenter)  
John Childe, PA Environmental Defense Foundation  
Jeffrey Clukey, PA House of Representatives, Appropriations  
Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition  
David Hess, Environmental Digest  
David Mong, DCNR  
Ann Pinca, Save PA's Forests Coalition  
Robert Swift, Capitol Wire  
Katie Woodbury, DCNR

**WELCOME**

Chairman Zimmerman called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. Mr. Zimmerman thanked Mr. Kribbs for his past service as Chair, as well as previous Chairs.

Chairman Zimmerman introduced Katrina Harris, new Council Administrator.

Chairman Zimmerman stated there would be an opportunity for public comment at the end of the Council's meeting, and he invited guests present to introduce themselves.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council unanimously approved the May 2019 minutes.

## SECRETARY'S REPORT

**Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary**

Secretary Dunn thanked Gary Kribbs for his past service and welcomed Mr. Zimmerman as the new Chair and Ms. Harris as the new Administrator. Secretary Dunn highlighted the following topics:

- **Budget:** Secretary Dunn said she was very gratified at the current budget for DCNR and thanked the Council for their interest in the restoration of the Keystone Fund so the full amount will be available for the purposes intended by the original legislation. She advised the fiscal code allowed for \$45 million to be transferred to DCNR. She said they are looking at opportunities to fund a range of needs including infrastructure, programmatic, and grant needs. She discussed the impacts recent extreme weather events have had on the park system. She stated another recent trend is an increase of users of recreational water by less experienced visitors.
- **Restore Pennsylvania:** Secretary Dunn noted Restore Pennsylvania will continue to be promoted as a way to tackle infrastructure needs across the Commonwealth, and that she, the Governor and other cabinet secretaries will be doing events to demonstrate the potential impacts of the program.
- **Green Initiative:** Secretary Dunn advised that as projects are undertaken to restore and upgrade facilities, efforts are also being taken to be more energy efficient and save money by improving aspects such as windows, doors and lighting. She stated the initiative is moving systematically across the state from the west, to central and then to the east. She noted the initiatives are being done in collaboration with the Department of General Services.
- **Outdoor Youth Corps:** Secretary Dunn stated the youth crews of the PA Outdoor Corps have been very active this summer, and executive staff have been spending time mentoring the youth and helping them apply their interests and skills. She invited any interested Council members to join the executive staff in these meetings.
- **Chesapeake Bay:** Secretary Dunn said the Department of Environmental Protection is leading the Commonwealth's efforts to protect the Chesapeake Bay, with the help of the Department of Agriculture and DCNR. She stated a draft Watershed Implementation Plan had recently been submitted to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She noted the preparation of the report included extensive, credible efforts to engage stakeholders at the county level to identify ways to reduce nitrogen and other pollutants going into the Bay.

Secretary Dunn invited questions and none were offered.

## DCNR ADVISER REPORT

**Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser**

Gretchen Leslie mentioned Smokey Bear's 75th birthday is being celebrated at various events, including the Phillies/Pirates games at the end of August. She noted Smokey Bear's message continues to have a strong impact. Ms. Leslie referenced Secretary Dunn's mention of the Outdoor Corps and noted there are 17 youth crews working throughout the state. She said

DCNR tries to visit each of the crews to show support and let them know they have a career path in conservation. Ms. Leslie reviewed upcoming events and invited Council invited to partake in these visits. Ms. Leslie advised the first-ever parks and recreational professional staff recognition had been held the previous week, and extensive social media recognition of these state and local professionals had been done by DCNR.

## PRESENTATIONS

### **Paul Zeph, Bureau of State Parks, DCNR Penn's Parks For All Strategic Plan Draft**

Mr. Zeph noted he had met with the Council several times as DCNR has been going through the preparation of the strategic plan, and today would be sharing the status of the preliminary report, as well as what the data collected had revealed and the recommendations proposed for moving forward over the next 25 years. Mr. Zeph highlighted the following features of the report:

- **Report Design:** Mr. Zeph stated the report is picture heavy to tell the story of state parks which most people do not know, with more text in the sections with recommendations.
- **Data Collection:** Mr. Zeph advised data was collected in 2017 and 2018 through surveys, included some targeted surveys, to be representative of the population across the Commonwealth.
- **Recommendations:** Mr. Zeph noted the report had recommendations divided into five categories: Outdoor Recreation Opportunities, Overnight Accommodations, Protecting the Park's Natural and Cultural Resources, Paying for State Parks, and Improving Services and Facilities.
- **Outdoor Recreation Section:** Mr. Zeph then reviewed the Outdoor Recreation Opportunities section of the report, noting other sections would follow the same format.
  - Survey Results: Summarizes the input collected.
  - Findings-At-A-Glance: Summarizes the degree of agreement with potential ideas.
  - Focused Findings: Short summary of ideas with highest agreement.
  - Recommended Future Directions: Key areas for future strategic planning.
    - Expand Outdoor Recreation Opportunities: includes enhancing landscape-level partnerships to increase connections between publicly accessible lands, improving each park's trail system to ensure accessibility and sustainability, and enhancing water-based recreational offerings by developing innovative water facilities and activities.
    - Protect Resources from Recreation Impacts: establish site-specific prescriptions to manage high-density outdoor recreation at parks where resources, visitor experiences, or communities are being impacted and develop viable solutions through community engagement.
    - Offer More Active Adventure Activities: partner with the outdoor recreation industry to promote active adventure activities consistent with the state parks mission.

Mr. Zeph advised the preliminary report will be issued in August 2019, with the report and PSU data to be posted on the website followed by the availability of hard copies of the report; there will be a public comment opportunity with the ability to submit comments online on each section

of the report. He stated there will be presentations at state parks where Park Managers can provide an overview of the report and discuss with interested citizens. Mr. Zeph invited Council members to let him know of any stakeholder meetings in the next six months where there would be an opportunity for him to discuss the report. He said the final report is targeted for completion in the spring/summer of 2020. Mr. Zeph invited questions and comments.

- Chairman Zimmerman noted he had observed comments submitted by the Council had been addressed in the report. He asked how much public interaction had occurred and whether public comments are available. Mr. Zeph responded the public comments will be put on the website with survey results, and nearly every comment was addressed with the recommendations.
- Chairman Zimmerman stated he would be working with the Council's strategic planning and infrastructure work groups on the Council's questions and comments. He asked how issues potentially related to climate change were able to be incorporated into the recommendations without directly attributing the issue to climate change. Mr. Zeph responded that reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a recommendation, and there is a section upfront which mentions DCNR's report on climate change; he noted there are aspects woven throughout the report. Mr. Zeph said the recommendations are general in nature and will be followed by working sessions starting in the fall of 2020 with stakeholders to discuss implementation.
- Janet Sweeney commented that when recommendations begin to be implemented, it will be important to make a connection with conservation landscapes outside of the parks. She said this will help prevent reinventing anything unnecessarily.
- Bob Kirchner asked if there was anything new in the section of the report on paying for state parks. Secretary Dunn responded as part of DCNR's plan and as part of the Governor's initiative, potential efficiencies are being examined, such as reducing electrical needs and analyzing electric bills to reduce costs and for long-term efficiency and resiliency. She advised the ROI on state parks is phenomenal with every dollar spent returning 12-fold, and parks adding \$1.2 billion annually to the state's economy. She mentioned Philadelphia is starting to plan for the 250<sup>th</sup> centennial and is looking at state parks as a major attraction and wants to have the parks ready for that celebration. Mr. Zeph added the report recommends fees go back to maintenance, repair and improvement of park resources and not for general operations and that the annual state appropriations for general operations be increased by that same amount.

### **Stacie Amsler, Bureau of Administration, DCNR 2019-2020 DCNR Enacted Budget**

Stacie Amsler provided an overview of the 2019-2020 DCNR enacted budget. She advised of all the general funds collected in the Commonwealth, DCNR's share is 35% of each penny or \$.0035 of the dollars collected. She stated DCNR received \$23 million more this year than the prior year. She explained the different funding sources that go into the budget, with the General Fund and Oil and Gas Lease Fund providing much of the operating revenue and park user fees, Federal funds, and timber sales augmenting these funds.

Ms. Amsler showed a three-year comparison of major operating appropriations. She stated this year's budget is sufficient to carry out DCNR's mission. She discussed a chart showing staffing

levels for the past ten years, and noted positions were lost when human resources and IT functions were consolidated.

Ms. Amsler discussed Heritage and Other Parks and noted funding had increased \$250,000 this year, with a portion coming from the Environmental Stewardship Fund. She explained funding from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund had increased due to the transfer out of the Environmental Stewardship Fund which allows additional funds to come into the program. Ms. Amsler reviewed a three-year comparison of the Keystone Fund and noted the numbers are estimated and may change based on actual collection. She displayed a three-year comparison of the Environmental Stewardship Fund and noted the revenues have increased yearly. Ms. Amsler discussed a two-year comparison of restricted accounts and the slight variances between the years.

Ms. Amsler invited questions and comments.

- Meredith Graham asked about camping fees. Ms. Amsler responded that the fees are looked at on an annual basis and can be adjusted annually. Secretary Dunn added that DCNR has the ability to professionally manage the fees, including an assessment of charges by private campgrounds, and allows DCNR to provide a fair overnight accommodation but not overcharge

### **Land and Water Conservation Fund Conversions** **Tom Ford, DCNR Bureau of Recreation and Conservation**

Tom Ford gave a brief background explaining that in 1958 Congress convened a commission which, after three years of study, recommended that the nation needed a Federal funding source to support outdoor recreation. He continued explaining that the Land and Water Conservation Fund was created in 1964; a Federal portion of the fund is used by the National Park Service and other Federal agencies to acquire and develop lands, and a State program which uses an allocation formula to direct funding appropriated by Congress to each state. He advised DCNR directs the funding down to local recreation and conservation projects through applications which require a 50/50 match. Mr. Ford said Congress permanently re-authorized the Act this year, and the bill passed by a large majority. He expressed his thanks for attendees at the meeting who helped promote the reauthorization.

Mr. Ford advised more than 1,600 projects have been completed with these funds. He noted the projects sometimes have an acquisition and development component resulting in approximately 1,200 protected areas referred to as "6F Areas." He explained a boundary is drawn around these parks which cannot be violated without going through a conversion. He gave an example of usage being changed from a park to a new municipal building or for cell towers. He explained the local government would initiate paperwork which goes to the National Park Service for approval and then the 6F Area is altered to remove the portion not being used for recreation. Mr. Ford stated about 20% of the sites are inspected every year by field staff, and in the past five years about 120 potential conversions had to be resolved with the National Park Service. Mr. Ford said he and his staff are working with the National Park Service and local communities to resolve the potential conversions.

Mr. Ford invited questions and comments.

- Chairman Zimmerman asked if the conversion process applied to any property where

DCNR money was used or only if funding was used to purchase the property. Mr. Ford said the process is applicable if any money is invested for acquisition or development.

- Chairman Zimmerman asked if portions could be carved out in advance. Mr. Ford responded that when it is known the municipality has a vision for the property that include non-recreational use, that portion is excluded from the 6F area. He noted the National Park Service may not approve the removal of a portion of the property.
- Bill Forrey asked the amount of funding allocated in the prior year. Mr. Ford said about \$6 million was used for local grants.
- Chairman Zimmerman stated a public comment period had just closed on a proposed land swap with already converted gas lands in North Central Pennsylvania with protected lands in Southeastern Pennsylvania and asked if Mr. Ford could provide insight on comments received. Mr. Ford said two Environmental Assessments were published—one for the Strawbridge Property and one for the White Clay Creek property which are the proposed replacement lands. He explained the Strawbridge Property is going to serve as replacement land for lands utilized for gas development efforts in North Central Pennsylvania, as well as potentially resolve other local conversion issues if approved by the National Park Service. Mr. Ford advised about 40 to 50 comments were received with the majority focused on the appropriateness of the replacement with the general sentiment that the lands should be replaced in the area where they are taken from. He noted some other detailed comments were received from various organizations which were very thoughtful and all comments were appreciated. Mr. Ford said all the comments will be addressed as part of the final assessment prior to sending to the National Park Service for approval.
- Meredith Graham asked if the definition of conversion is well defined or if there are any grey areas. Mr. Ford said there is probably a definition within the Act or National Park Service guidance. Secretary Dunn stated the guidance document is available online. Mr. Ford gave an example of about 10 feet of property being taken for use as a bus stop which resulted in a conversion.
- Janet Sweeney asked if recreational properties are ever purchased or converted to non-recreational use without knowledge of the restriction. Mr. Ford responded that efforts are made to ensure the restriction is known to the municipality, including a letter that the property is protected for recreation in perpetuity.

## **WORKGROUP REPORTS**

### **Bob Kirchner, Motorized Recreation Workgroup Chair**

Bob Kirchner gave Council an update on CNRAC's Motorized Recreation Report which contained 16 recommendations. He said DCNR is advertising to hire an individual in the Bureau of Forestry to focus on motorized recreation which was a recommendation in the report. He explained not all the recommendations fall to DCNR to implement, as some are for the user group and some require legislative action. Mr. Kirchner stated the workgroup will take stock of progress with the report in November and may have an additional document in January 2020 to review the progress. Mr. Kirchner stated the Motorized Recreation Report is on the Council's

website.

### **Geralyn Singer, Infrastructure Workgroup Co-Chair**

Geralyn Singer reported the workgroup's last planned conference call had been cancelled. She advised a letter had been completed and sent to the Governor's Office regarding Restore PA. She noted the group is working to coordinate with PPF Director, Marci Mowery, on outreach efforts on the strategic plan.

### **Gretchen Leslie for Cliff David, Communications Workgroup Chair**

Gretchen Leslie stated Cliff David was not able to be present at today's meeting. She advised Cliff is doing a great job keeping the group focused to be sure Council's issues are heard and that the general public knows what the Council's purpose is and who the Council members are. Ms. Leslie said there is a plan for meeting with key legislative staff once they are in session again; she said DCNR's legislative director, Eric Nelson, can assist with these meetings as can Katrina Harris, Council Administrator.

### **Gretchen Leslie for Strategic Planning Workgroup**

Gretchen Leslie noted the Strategic Planning Workgroup does not have a Chair. She said the last scheduled conference call was cancelled, as the group wanted to wait until after Paul's presentation today and then follow up with a call with Paul and an action plan for the Council.

Ms. Leslie discussed another strategic plan, the statewide outdoor recreation plan, and noted it will be available for public comment in late September or early October. She said the report may fall between meetings, but it will be important for the Council to give input on the recommendations in that report, so she will work on a process for ensuring that happens.

### **Public Comments**

Chairman Zimmerman invited public comments, noting there is a five-minute maximum per person. He said the Council also requests the comments in writing.

- Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition: Mr. Henderson provided a handout with an update on most recent distributions of the Impact Fee.
- Mr. John Childe asked Mr. Zeph if DCNR is working to coordinate the strategic planning report and recommendations with the Bureau of Forestry. Mr. Zeph responded there are ongoing efforts to coordinate with state forest staff, particularly since state forests are often adjacent to state parks. He said efforts are often more opportunistic rather than a bureau-wide deliberate process, and more work needs to be done, which is the intent moving forward. He advised the strategic planning report contains a recommendation to increase the staff dedicated to these efforts and better train state parks and forestry managers. Chairman Zimmerman said the Council can help with these efforts and will continue to work with Paul and look for opportunities in the strategic plan. Mr. Childe stated he believed this is such an important issue that it should be a department issue to consider how the two bureaus can better integrate, as well as the Council recommending how the two bureaus can better cooperate. Secretary Dunn said there have been issues where the two bureaus have worked well together and cooperation has grown over the years.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

Chairman Zimmerman asked for any other business topics, and none were offered.

## **MEETING ADJOURNED**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 a.m.

Notice of the July meeting was published in a newspaper of general circulation in Dauphin County and mailed to individuals and offices in compliance with the Sunshine Act (1986-84). These minutes constitute the official record of the Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council; no official transcript is provided.