

MINUTES
**CONSERVATION AND NATURAL
RESOURCES ADVISORY
COUNCIL (CNRAC)**
November 20, 2019

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rocco Ali, Member
Clifford David, Member
Greg Goldman, Member
Meredith Graham, Member
Stock Illoway, Member
Joanne Kilgour, Member
Bob Kirchner, Member
Gary Kribbs, Member
Geraldyn Singer, Secretary
L. Richard Sayles, Member

GUESTS PRESENT

Ryan Szuch, DCNR Bureau of Forestry (Presenter)
John Childe, PA Environmental Defense Foundation
Kyle Shenk, The Conservation Fund
Brian Rider, PA Forest Products Association
Terry Brady, DCNR
Jake Newtown, DCNR
Su Ann Shupp, DCNR

WELCOME

Council Secretary Geraldyn Singer called the meeting to order and welcomed members and guests. She was standing in for Chairman Zimmerman, who was unable to make the meeting.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council unanimously approved the July 24, 2019 and October 2, 2019 minutes.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Geraldyn Singer, CNRAC Secretary

Secretary Singer shared the Council's condolences on the loss of Council member Walter

DCNR

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary
Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser

ADMINISTRATOR

Katrina Harris, CNRAC Administrator

Peechatka who served as a council member for 12 years, since 2007. She noted he had served as a past Deputy Secretary for the Department of Agriculture, a lobbyist, and CEO of Penn Ag Industries Association, as well as being a devoted husband and respected by those who knew him as a humble man of strong character and integrity. She advised a contribution had been made on behalf of the Council to the scholarship fund established in his name at Penn State University. Secretary Cindy Dunn added that Walter's impact on conversation will be everlasting from programs such as his erosion and sedimentation program, which is a keystone of environmental impact from construction. Secretary Dunn stated Walter's work will live on as it is embedded in Pennsylvania's conservation programs.

Secretary Singer also offered condolences on behalf of the Council to Stock Illoway and his family on the loss of his wife. Secretary Dunn commented that Eleanor and her family's passion for sustainability, particularly sustainable farming, was remarkable and leaves a lasting legacy.

Secretary Singer read comments from Chairman Ephraim Zimmerman who could not be present regarding the 2019 Natural Areas Association Conference recently held in Pittsburgh and for which he served as program chair: "The Natural Areas Association is a national professional society of academics, conservation practitioners, and agency employees from across the country who focus on stewardship and conservation planning within natural areas. Cindy Dunn was one of the keynote speakers and did a wonderful job. She hit on the importance of ecological conservation as well as addressing the very important initiatives of diversity and inclusion and energy efficiency—her talk was truly inspirational and showed a crowd of nearly 400 conservation practitioners from across the country how DCNR is leading in these efforts here in this region. State Parks staff (from the central office and field offices) provided a number of informational sessions and assisted in leading field workshops focusing on management and educational efforts at Ohiopyle, Jennings and McConnells Mill State Parks. The field workshops were incredibly well received, and I would like to thank everyone involved. I was really happy that we could showcase our state parks to this group and also I'm hopeful that the participants were able to share their experiences with our folks as well. Many thanks to Secretary Dunn and DCNR staff (Parks, Forestry, and Recreation and Conservation were all represented) for their participation in the 2019 Natural Areas Association Conference, as well as being one of the primary sponsors."

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary

Secretary Dunn highlighted the following topics:

- **Council 2019 Accomplishments:** Secretary Dunn thanked Council for another great year of notable activity. She thanked Bob Kirchner and the Motorized Recreation Work Group for their report and noted the recommendations are being carefully reviewed by the Department. She advised internal meetings are ongoing to thoroughly examine the policies and practices of the agency for motorized recreation on public land. She noted action may take longer than analysis and planning, but Council will see actions bloom over the year. She discussed a DCNR group's travel to New Hampshire to study their system; one of the conclusions from the trip was there has to be a strong partnership between local government, state government, and the private sector. Secretary Dunn added a strong relationship with the rider community is also key. She stated other factors are the maturing of the snowmobile and ATV communities which lead to self-policing and expectations on each other as riders. Secretary Dunn noted some funding exists, but larger trail connections of all kinds will rely on Restore PA for sizable financial

commitments. She advised DCNR will continue the dialogue with legislators interested in seeing motorized recreation in their areas.

Secretary Dunn thanked the Council for their letter to restore the Keystone Fund.

Secretary Dunn recognized the Council's work to increase engagement with citizens and stakeholders and thanked Council for hosting the meeting at Bald Eagle State Park in October.

- **DCNR Initiatives:** Secretary Dunn noted she has had a busy fall with the Restore PA and water initiatives. She discussed an initiative at Huntingdon County called the Corrections Conservation Collaborative where soon-to-be-released inmates are being trained on riparian buffer planting and maintenance as part of a job skills program; she noted the inmates were very dedicated to the project. She mentioned a large school complex in York County as another innovative model where state agencies are working with deeply connected teachers on riparian projects.
- **Grants:** Secretary Dunn said the funding of grants has begun over the last few weeks with a number of great projects in the mix. She noted that unfortunately many other great projects will not be able to be funded with the current amount of grant dollars available.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** Secretary Dunn mentioned Gretchen Leslie is leading an effort in DCNR to highlight the nationwide outdoor recreation movement, including looking at the true economic value of outdoor recreation to the Commonwealth. She advised the PA Environmental Council had hosted a meeting the previous week with members of the outdoor rec sector, which DCNR staff attended, as well as representatives from the non-profit sector and the private sector.

Secretary Singer invited questions for Secretary Dunn.

Mr. Cliff David asked how DCNR will balance traditional tranquility with motorized recreation. Secretary Dunn responded the balance will be achieved through good siting, planning, design and management. She noted it is for these reasons that DCNR needs to maintain control over motorized recreation and sustainable trails and would not be supportive of blanket legislation which overrides the needed planning to maintain a balance.

Mr. Stock Illoway stated he had mixed feelings regarding motorized recreation and understood the desire of some to use state resources for this type of recreation – which can be noisy -- with the desire of those looking for more quiet use of the resources. He noted balancing all users' needs is important.

Secretary Dunn noted DCNR is working on sound issues and again siting and planning will be key factors. She said an example might be siting a trail near a busy highway where motorized vehicles might not even be heard.

Mr. Bob Kirchner expressed his appreciation of the Council's support on the work and report prepared by the Motorized Recreation Work Group and the proposed reasonable approach. He stated that he believes Pennsylvania is far behind other states when it comes to motorized activities, particularly when and where they occur, which may be partly attributable to a lack of

organization of motorized groups. He stated that he agrees it is wise to get in front of this issue and solve it before legislation is imposed. He discussed the cultural differences, including land use and population demographics, across the state, as well as evolving technology which may mitigate noise concerns. He encouraged DCNR to be the leader on the motorized recreation program and provide appropriate opportunities.

DCNR ADVISER REPORT

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser

Ms. Gretchen Leslie announced a new Council member has been approved—Ms. Sarah Hall Bagdonas, who is a manager for Northern Tier Hardwood Association and is from the northeastern part of the state. She also advised Rocco Ali has been re-appointed for another three-year term.

Ms. Leslie advised the Governor has signed House Bill 374, the Keystone Tree Restricted Account. She noted the bill allows a \$3 contribution to this account when drivers licenses or vehicle registrations are renewed; the fund will be managed by DCNR for tree planting.

Ms. Leslie noted there would be a celebration of the PA Outdoor Corps on Monday at 1 to 3 p.m. and invited all interested to attend.

Ms. Leslie noted more than 400 people took the online survey on the Outdoor Recreation strategic plan during the 30-day public comment period and that information will be part of the final evaluation process for steps to be taken under the plan. Ms. Leslie advised public meetings continue to be held on the Penn's Parks For All strategic plan and encouraged Council members to attend any meetings being held close to them.

PRESENTATION

Ryan Szuch, Bureau of Forestry, DCNR

Conserving Penn's Woods, Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan

Mr. Szuch stated he would be presenting information on Conserving Penn's Woods, the Bureau of Forestry's Strategic Plan, which is in the early stages of development.

Mr. Szuch stated the Bureau of Forestry's mission is "To ensure the long-term health, viability and productivity of the Commonwealth's forest and to conserve native wild plants." He discussed how the Bureau accomplishes its mission through managing state forests, protecting forestlands from damage, promoting forestry, and protecting native wild flora resources.

Mr. Szuch advised a strategic plan had been developed in 1995 which established the bureau's current mission, moved toward ecosystem management, and set the broad direction for managing state forests and private forest resources.

Mr. Szuch displayed and discussed a plan relationship tree which showed the relationship among different forestry plans that feed into the strategic plan and also take into account enabling legislation/laws, societal values and professional judgment. Mr. Szuch noted a State Forest Action plan was first required by the Federal government in order to receive federal aid in 2010 and a revision is due in June 2020. He stated the Bureau of Forestry uses the Pennsylvania Constitution, Article 1, Section 27, and the Conservation and Natural Resources

Act of 1995 as the foundation for its planning. He discussed various ways societal values are represented, such as advisory committees, as well as new methods of polling and surveys. Mr. Szuch discussed some of the recent survey results regarding resources most valued, most common uses of forest land, and perceived threats.

Mr. Szuch stated professional judgement was incorporated into the strategic planning process through a series of regional meetings where a SWOT analysis was performed with Bureau staff. He explained a SWOT analysis looks at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Mr. Szuch reviewed the timeline for the strategic planning process, noting the writing of the plan will occur in 2020 and organizational alignment will take a number of years.

Mr. Szuch provided a handout of the draft list of priorities and requested the Council's feedback on the priorities.

Mr. Szuch discussed other outreach that would be conducted with the public and stakeholder groups. He noted once a draft plan is available in late 2020, it will be provided to the Council for review and comments.

Council members asked question about the current mission statement and whether it will change in the new strategic plan. Mr. Szuch responded that part of the mission statement is legislatively mandated, but the Bureau is open to changes that might be decided during the strategic planning process.

Mr. Cliff David commented on some of the survey results and asked if education would be part of the future strategic plan. Mr. Szuch advised the Bureau will be assessing the best sources for providing information to the public for targeting some education. He also stated the survey data helps the Bureau to understand why people value forests so perhaps connections can be made to things they do value to encourage greater appreciation for other programs. Mr. Greg Goldman mentioned the Audubon Society has some good resources on communication, and he would be glad to share.

Ms. Joanne Kilgour suggested incorporating information about equity principals and social priorities. Secretary Dun mentioned the Department of General Services had just hired a Deputy Secretary to expand small business and small diverse business involvement.

Secretary Singer suggested the Council's Strategic Planning Work Group initiate the development of comments on the 10 priorities.

Penn's Parks For All Strategic Plan – Council Comments Facilitated by Meredith Graham, Chair of Strategic Planning Work Group

Ms. Meredith Graham referenced a draft letter that had been circulated by email and asked for comments. She noted Chairman Zimmerman had provided his comments by email. Comments offered by Council members included more specifics about branding and engaging new constituencies, reference to the Outdoor Recreation strategic plan, and continuing efforts to recruit Outdoor Corps youth for future DCNR employment.

Secretary Singer suggested any other comments be sent to Ms. Graham by email. It was decided a revised draft would be circulated prior to the January meeting so a vote could be

taken at the January meeting.

**PA's Outdoor Recreation Plan – Council Comments
Facilitated by Meredith Graham, Chair of Strategic Planning Work Group**

Ms. Graham referenced the draft letter that had been distributed by email and noted she had suggested the work group take a broad perspective in putting together the letter. She stated Chairman Zimmerman had also provided his comments by email on this letter.

Ms. Graham asked for input on whether the issue of motorized recreation should be addressed in this letter as Ms. Leslie had mentioned there is a separate plan being prepared on the topic. Mr. Kirchner asked if it is important for the topic to be included, and Ms. Leslie commented that the plan is used as a directive for management programs and grants so the plan is definitely an important tool. Mr. Kirchner suggested the letter acknowledge it as an important issue but defer to the other plan to the extent it is relevant.

Council members discussed other comments including clarifying slightly the involvement of private sector where appropriate, but not encouraging privatization and commercialization.

Council agreed to review a second draft to be sent by email and vote by email so the letter can be submitted by mid-December.

Ms. Leslie estimated the draft plan will be available in February 2020.

WORK GROUP REPORTS

Bob Kirchner, Motorized Recreation Work Group Chair

Mr. Bob Kirchner distributed a handout tracking CNRAC's Motorized Recreation Report 16 recommendations. He said he will be following-up with DCNR's staff to gather information on the current status of the recommendations.

Geralyn Singer, Infrastructure Work Group Co-Chair

Ms. Geralyn Singer summarized some meetings with legislative representatives and staff and noted they expressed interest in future meetings with Council, particularly as it relates to infrastructure needs and budget. She stated there will be limited activity related to Restore PA until the spring. Ms. Singer mentioned the PA Parks and Forest Foundation had held a number of meetings in state parks and invited legislators, media, local stakeholders and businesses to attend; they received good participation and media coverage. Ms. Singer referenced Council's October 2 meeting at Bald Eagle State Park and stated it was a good opportunity to see some of the infrastructure issues at that park and to hear from stakeholders who attended the meeting.

Cliff David, Communications Committee Chair

Mr. Cliff David thanked Secretary Dunn for participating in Council meetings and thanked the Council for helping with the Communications Committee's strategy to be more visible with stakeholders and legislators. Mr. David noted that work is proceeding on updating the web site to include videos, increasing attendance at Council meetings by expanding the email list of

stakeholders, and preparing more articles for DCNR's newsletters to stay visible. He discussed several meetings held the previous day with legislators and their Executive Directors and noted additional meetings are planned. He distributed packets put together for each member with information on their legislative representatives. Mr. David encouraged Council members to take copies of the CNRAC brochure which had recently been developed.

Meredith Graham for Strategic Planning Work Group

Ms. Graham said the Strategic Planning Workgroup will discuss the handout provided today by Mr. Szuch on the 10 priorities for the Bureau of Forestry strategic plan and prepare draft comments.

Public Comments

Secretary Singer invited public comments, noting there is a five-minute maximum per person. She said the Council also requests the comments in writing. No public comments were offered.

OTHER BUSINESS

Secretary Singer asked for any other business topics, and none were offered.

MEETING ADJOURNED

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:14 p.m.

Notice of the November 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.