

December 9, 2019

Ms. Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17015

RE: Outdoor Recreation Strategic Plan

Dear Secretary Dunn:

The Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council has reviewed the Draft 2020-2024 PA Outdoor Recreation Plan Recommendations and Actions. The Council appreciates the work of the Technical Advisory Committee members for their time and efforts in working with DCNR's Advisory Team in preparing this important Plan. The Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund grant monies made possible by this planning effort are critical to recreation and conservation in the Commonwealth. Overall, the Council supports the draft Recommendations and Actions. The Council offers the following comments for consideration by the Committee and Advisory Team.

1. The Council strongly agrees with the priority of addressing infrastructure and maintenance needs in existing outdoor recreation areas to ensure a positive visitor experience, reduce future maintenance costs, and ensure a safe recreational environment. We encourage the Committee and Advisory Team to continue to prioritize infrastructure needs in its planning and setting of goals.
2. The Council is particularly supportive of the continued strengthening of the PA Outdoor Corps program to ensure its long-term sustainability. Council members have personally met with PA Outdoor Corps members and witnessed firsthand their positive contributions to recreation and conservation. The PA Outdoors Corps can play a key role in addressing infrastructure needs and improving visitor experiences. At the same time, the PA Outdoor Corps provides an invaluable educational opportunity for the young men and women who participate in the program, as well as an important recruiting tool for DCNR.
3. The Council is also pleased to see marketing of Pennsylvania as an outdoor recreation destination and creating a branding strategy included in the proposed actions.

4. The Council recognizes budgets are often limited but encourages the Committee and Advisory Team to continue to pursue creative, cost-effective ideas and actions in their planning.
5. The Council supports appropriate partnerships with businesses, philanthropic organizations and citizens to generate innovative and creative ideas and solutions and potential financial support. The Council does not support privatization or commercialization of state parks.
6. The 2014-2019 PA Outdoor Recreation Plan identified the need for additional motorized riding opportunities, and Council understands this topic will be addressed in a separate trails plan. Council considers motorized recreation an important topic and issued a report with recommendations on this topic in 2019. For purposes of the 2020-2024 PA Outdoor Recreation Plan, Council suggests the Advisory Team consider Council's own recommendations on motorized recreation as well as information developed in the trails plan.
7. The Council noted several findings in the surveys conducted as part of the preparation of the 2020-2024 Plan that did not seem to be specifically addressed and would encourage the Committee and Advisory Team to continue to prioritize these findings. Specifically, the surveys noted a key reason for the lack of younger adults engaging in outdoor recreation activities was not having anyone to accompany them. Also, minority groups indicated they would utilize social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) to obtain information about parks and current activities and that some minorities cited not feeling welcome as a reason for not fully utilizing park facilities. The Council believes these are important findings and would suggest they be given further consideration.
8. The proposed actions include the formation of a new PA Office of Outdoor Recreation as well as a number of new coalitions and teams. While the Council strongly supports the recruitment and involvement of Pennsylvanians in stewardship and use of recreation areas and natural resources, as well as collaboration between agencies, we encourage the Committee and Advisory Team to closely examine the need for additional coalitions and teams to ensure their long-term sustainability and cost effectiveness, and to avoid of overlap with existing organizations.
9. Council suggests the 2020-2024 Plan increase emphasis on the importance of protecting and managing natural and wild areas on state lands. Pennsylvania has natural and wild areas within state parks and state forests. These protected landscapes are often areas of high ecological integrity or value, harboring rare species and providing critical habitat to Pennsylvania's wildlife. Natural and wild areas are also among the reasons why people visit state parks and forests, and therefore very prominent drivers of outdoor recreation.

In addition to the comments above, the Council would be interested in an update on the 2014-2019 SCORP and the progress towards the goals contained in that plan. We believe this retrospective analysis is an important aspect of strategic planning.

Again, thank you for all the work put into the Plan and for the opportunity to provide input.

Respectfully submitted,



Ephraim Zimmerman  
CNRAC Chairman

cc: Gretchen Leslie, DCNR Senior Advisor