

MINUTES
**CONSERVATION AND NATURAL
RESOURCES ADVISORY
COUNCIL**

March 22, 2017

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rick Sayles, Chairman
Rocco Ali, Member
Erick Coolidge, Member
Cliff David, Member
Cindy Adams Dunn, DCNR Secretary
Bill Forrey, Member
Stock Illoway, Member
Bob Kirchner, Member
Gary Kribbs, Member
Paul Lyskava, Member
Sue Landes, Member
Walt Peechatka, Member
Janet Sweeney, Member
David Trimpey, Member
Ephraim Zimmerman, Member

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser
Katie Woodbury, CNRAC Assistant

GUESTS PRESENT

John Norbeck, DCNR
Richard Martin, PA Forest Coalition
Greg Podniesinski, DCNR
Danielle Beish, DCNR
Coleen Engvall, Joint Legislative Conservation Committee

WELCOME

Chairman Sayles opened the meeting and welcomed members and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairman Sayles offered the minutes up for approval and they were unanimously approved by Council.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Sayles announced his reappointment to Council.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary

Secretary Dunn gave an overview of the DCNR budget hearings in February and March. Members of the PA Legislature gave many personal stories as to why they feel the work of DCNR is important to constituents. Ms. Dunn highlighted how DCNR is a revenue generator through forest products, state parks, and community development and grants. Several legislators had concerns with the shift of reliance for operations funding to the Oil and Gas Lease Fund. Secretary Dunn stated that because the Governor's budget does not include any broad-based revenue enhancements, the Budget Office is looking for new fixes for solving the revenue shortfall, which includes having an increased reliance on the Oil and Gas Lease fund.

Secretary Dunn highlighted efficiencies the administration is implementing to streamline services and identify cost savings: Human Resources and Information Technology bureaus will now be combined and operating out of the Office of Administration; the Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and Department of Aging will potentially become one agency to improve service delivery; and complements will be reduced statewide. Secretary Dunn said that in this tight budget season, it will be important to stress the fact that a small investment in DCNR yields a great return. Secretary Dunn suggested that CNRAC should follow the state budget process closely as the Governor's proposed budget is just the start of the process.

Secretary Dunn addressed the federal budget proposal and its potential impacts on DCNR. Funding for National Heritage Areas was cut from the budget, so progress on some state-designated heritage areas could be threatened. The Land and Water Conservation Fund will most likely be reduced. Other departments like the U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Transportation saw significant reductions. DCNR hopes the congressional delegation will push for the Department's interests.

Secretary Dunn mentioned a few key initiatives at DCNR including DCNR's goal of increasing diversity in the workforce. There were many questions about this topic at the budget hearings, and all three deputies have been working to advance this initiative. The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps is the strongest new program to tackle the issue. Upcoming events for the Department include the PA Wilds Dinner, a buffer planting in Laurel Hill State Park, and a boat launch in Renovo.

Bill Forrey noted that figures for return on investment in DCNR are impressive.

Secretary Dunn responded that thankfully the PA Legislature acknowledges this fact.

Bob Kirchner asked what will happen to the Department if the bond is not available.

Secretary Dunn responded that DCNR is dependent on the Oil and Gas Lease Fund and the PERF bond for operations. There are only three options in a revenue shortfall: raise revenue, cut programs, and borrow money. One of those three options will need to be implemented.

Rick Sayles asked how the state can pay back the money it borrows through a bond.

Secretary Dunn responded saying that these are taxable bonds, payable over time.

Rocco Ali asked about any plans to shift the reliance on the Oil and Gas Lease Fund for

operations to the General Fund.

Secretary Dunn gave a history of the Oil and Gas Lease Fund. Money was transferred to the General Fund in 2009, so DCNR never recaptured the entirety of what the funds were supposed to support. Other funds DCNR relies on include the Keystone Fund and the Capital Program at the Department of General Services. DCNR spends capital funds on repairing infrastructure.

Rocco Ali asked if capital funds need legislative approval.

Secretary Dunn said there are two phases: there is a bill to put projects on the list, and then there is a bill to release the money.

Bill Engle asked for an update on the Ryerson situation.

Secretary Dunn gave a history of the Department's relationship with Consol Energy. DCNR began "Revision Ryerson" with a focus on stream restoration. A 2013 settlement between the state and Consol included giving the company access to additional mineral rights under the park. Consol is currently trying to access those mineral rights, but DCNR has a right to approve the restoration plan, which is in the works.

Bill Engle commented that going underneath streams seems to be setting poor precedent, particularly the use of longwall mining.

Secretary Dunn responded saying DCNR does not own the mineral rights under a majority of state park land. DCNR is looking at Kent Run and making sure the plan is sufficient.

DCNR ADVISER REPORT

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser

Ms. Leslie mentioned that Rick Sayles and Ephraim Zimmerman have been reappointed. There are still several vacancies open on the council. Ms. Leslie also gave an update on the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps and the program for 18-25 year-olds. She highlighted some announcements of new smoke-free state park beaches and additions to pet-friendly camp sites. Ms. Leslie also read updates given to members in the monthly report.

Cliff David asked if any thought had been given to the PHMC/DCNR merger proposed in legislation.

Ms. Leslie replied that that this point the Department does not have a stance.

PRESENTATIONS

Paul Zeph, Planning Division, Bureau of State Parks **State Parks Strategic Planning Process**

Paul Zeph presented information on the upcoming State Parks Strategic Plan, *Penn's Parks for All: Planning for the State Parks of Tomorrow*. The need for the plan stems from the fact that the most recent strategic plan, State Parks 2000, was completed in the 1990s, so it is time to look at the next generation on state parks. This process will not lead the Bureau away from its

mission; the goal is to improve upon its current work. Mr. Zeph went over the timeline for the process. The planning team visited regional offices in January and February 2017 to gather input, and conducted follow-up workshop sessions at the state parks manager meeting in March 2017. Penn State is contracted to conduct online, telephone, and paper surveys to gather input from constituents. Areas of input include recreation amenities, business operations, outreach, visitor experience, and resource management. There will be public meetings after the release of the preliminary report; the final report is scheduled to be released in 2019.

Walt Peechatka commented that visitor experience should be at the top of the planning team's considerations.

Erick Coolidge said he appreciates comments related to collaboration. He said the successful efforts of working together can be seen in the PA Wilds.

Bill Engle said he would like to see an emphasis on what people want in the parks, along with a focus on what people do not want in parks.

Ephraim Zimmerman said the survey should also focus on the importance of unique biological diversity.

Secretary Dunn said conservation groups have volunteered to have tables in parks to distribute the surveys. CNRAC could help DCNR reach all audiences.

Walt Peechatka commented that "glamping" may be the camping of the future.

Bill Forrey said it will be important to watch other states and whether or not they are adequately funding state parks.

**Danielle Beish, Fiscal Management Division
Bureau of Administrative Services**

Danielle Beish gave an update on Governor Wolf's proposed budget. The budget includes a 3.6% reduction in positions, resulting in the loss of 64 positions. The HR/IT consolidation initiative in the Office of Administration will also impact the complement of the Department. Ms. Beish went over different funds the Department receives (General Fund, Oil & Gas Lease Fund, Environmental Stewardship Fund, Federal Funds, etc.). The Governor's budget proposal creates a heavier reliance on the Oil and Gas Lease Fund for operations than the previous year's enacted budget. The Governor's Budget also includes funding for DCNR through a bond program called the Pennsylvania Economic Revitalization Fund (PERF). Ms. Beish also commented on complement reductions over the past 10 years.

Paul Lyskava asked for clarification on the complement reduction and if it included wage positions.

Ms. Beish responded that the complement reduction eliminated wage positions that had not been recently funded.

Paul Lyskava asked for clarification on Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILT).

Stock Illoway asked for clarification on how employee benefits affect the budget.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Richard Martin spoke to Council about how the Department handles ATV use on state land. Mr. Martin gave a background on his familiarity with the issue since he sold ATVs and motorcycles and taught PennDOT safety courses. He expressed concern that the Department's search for connector trails will not stop illegal ATV riders and may even make the situation worse. Mr. Martin said the Pennsylvania Wilds, a region where DCNR has made significant investments, is a hotbed for ATV users. He went over safety statistics and stated that the politics of the situation may be compromising safety.

Secretary Dunn invited Mr. Martin to join the Recreation Advisory Council.

ADDITIONAL BUSINESS

Walt Peechatka suggested the Council should take action related to the state and federal budgets. He moved to authorize the Executive Committee to communicate concerns to state leadership and the congressional delegation.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED

The chairman and council adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.

Notice of the March 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.