Department of Conservation & Natural Resources

2017-2018 Annual Report
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: Spruce Flats Bog, Forbes State Forest
October 1, 2018

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 2017-2018 annual report of our activities in fulfillment of our obligations to provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

Council continues to follow issues that impact the programs and services of DCNR. Climate change, increased demands for recreational opportunities, habitat loss, invasive species, gas leasing and other pressures continue to consume financial and human resources. From the presentations by DCNR staff throughout the year, we know that these 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.

CNRAC is actively participating in the development of strategic plans that will affect the next couple of decades of the agency’s work. We provided early comments to the first State Parks strategic plan in 25 years. Our motorized workgroup also completed its research and analysis of current conditions for ATVs and snowmobiles on DCNR lands and prepared a draft report to recommend what steps can be taken to support motorized recreation.

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

Sincerely,

Gary Kribbs  
CNRAC Chairman 2017-19
CNRAC Council Members 2017-2018

GOVERNOR’S APPOINTMENTS

**Erick J. Coolidge** - Wellsboro, PA; Tioga County Commissioner and Owner/Operator of Le-Ma-Re Farm; resigned July 2017.

**Meredith Odato Graham** -- Pittsburgh, PA; B.S. Natural Resources, Cornell University; J.D. University of Pittsburgh School of Law; associate in the Environmental Services and the Energy & Natural Resources Groups of Babst Calland; term expires January 2019.

**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 2019.

**Susan Landes** – Denver, PA; B.S, Recreation and Parks, Penn State University; M.P.A, Penn State University; Executive Director, Lancaster Recreation Commission; term expires January 2019.

**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 Coordinator, Western Pennsylvania Conservancy; term expires January 2020.

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; President, American Council of Snowmobile Associations & Allegheny Forest Alliance; term expires January 2020.

**Walter N. Peechatka** - New Cumberland, PA; B.S. Forestry, Penn State University; Senior Consultant, Versant Strategies; awaiting reappointment.
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; 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, 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 Engle - Harrisburg, PA; B.S. Geoenvironmental Studies/History, Shippensburg University; M.S. Education, Temple University; resigned March 2018.

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

Two current vacancies

CNRAC OFFICERS AND STAFF

DCNR Secretary – Cindy Adams Dunn
Chairman – Gary Kribbs July 2017 to July 2019
Vice Chairman – Ephraim Zimmerman, July 2017 to July 2019
Secretary – Janet Sweeney, July 2018 to July 2019
DCNR Council Adviser – Gretchen Leslie
Council Assistant – Katie Woodbury

CNRAC SUBCOMMITTEES

Park and Forests Strategic Plans
Bill Forrey, Janet Sweeney, Cliff David, Dave Trimpey, Rick Sayles, Sue Landes

Motorized Recreation
Bob Kirchner, Rocco Ali, Gary Kribbs, Stock Illoway, Ephraim Zimmerman, Walt Peechatka
CNRAC Meetings

July 26, 2017

PRESENTATIONS
Seth Cassell, Division Chief, Forest Resource Planning and Information
Conserving Penn’s Woods (State Forests Strategic Plan)
Mr. Cassell presented on DCNR’s plans to update the Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan, the first update to the plan in 25 years. The plan will provide strategy and direction for the forest resources in the state. Mr. Cassell noted that some of the accomplishments under the last plan include a shift to ecosystem management, the creation of the Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Index, the use of ecological classifications, and the development of private land partnerships.

Ed Raptosh, Chief, Civil Engineering & Design, Bureau of Facility Design and Construction
DCNR’s Dams- Status and Challenges
Mr. Raptosh presented an overview of DCNR’s 127 dams – their classifications and inspection schedules -- and the challenges with funding maintenance and major rehab projects. The Bureau would like to have a dedicated annual fund for dam maintenance, which is separate from major rehabilitation projects.

Michael Chapaloney, Executive Director of Tourism, DCED
Pursue your Happiness
Mr. Chapaloney gave an overview of the branding effort for the new state brand “Pursue your Happiness,” which focuses on the outdoors, history and culture, and urban centers. The state’s Tourism Office focuses on proactive and reactive media relations, a robust social media presence and selected paid advertising in the New York, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. markets to attract visitors to the state.

PUBLIC COMMENT
None

Other attendees included:
Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club
Cooper Leslie, DCNR
Sara Nicholas, DCNR
Michael Chapaloney, DCED
Seth Cassell, DCNR
November 15, 2017

PRESENTATIONS

Marci Mowery, President
Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF)
Ms. Mowery provided an overview of the foundation’s grassroots effort to organize and recruit volunteers and raise money for state parks and forests. Volunteers participate in a variety of projects, including trail maintenance, graffiti removal, bridge building, dock building, and park clean-up. PPFF oversees 40 Friends Groups chapters, each unique to its location and contribution to the state park and forest systems.

Jen Bowman, Bureau of State Parks
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Ms. Bowman presented information on the Conservation Volunteer Database, which tracks volunteer hours for campground hosts, trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and programming. In 2016, the total number of hours surpassed 84,000. Volunteers can become a Conservation Volunteer by submitting a paper application, visiting a park or forest office, or applying online.

Sara Nicholas, Policy Director
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Ms. Nicholas discussed conservation easements and the work that the Green Ribbon Task Force is advancing on land conservation. DCNR received a grant from the US Endowment for Forestry and Communities to analyze land ownership trends in the northern tier and research how other states fund conservation easement programs. Ms. Nicholas highlighted a recent project funded by PennVEST, which allowed the Lyme Timber Company to use a PennVEST low-interest loan to purchase land that will be sustainably managed and put under easement, and restore some abandoned mine land.

LeeAnn Murray, Executive Director
DEP Citizens Advisory Council
Ms. Murray gave a brief background on the Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) and its role in advising the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The CAC expressed interest in working with CNRAC on issues of joint interest.
PUBLIC COMMENT
Patrick Henderson of the Marcellus Shale Coalition provided Council with a breakdown of the current tax on the gas industry.

Others attendees included:
LeeAnn Murray, DEP
Sara Nicholas, DCNR
Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition
Jake Newton, DCNR
Emily Hendrickson, DCNR

January 24, 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Tom Ford, Director, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation
DCNR Special Funds
Mr. Ford explained the origin of DCNR’s special funds – namely the Keystone Fund and the Environmental Stewardship Fund -- their specific purposes, and the impacts they have had since their creation. He noted that the special funds often come under scrutiny to help fill budget gaps although the funds are immediately committed to specific projects once the grants are awarded.

Sven-Erik Spichiger, Entomology Program, PA Department of Agriculture
Spotted Lanternfly
Mr. Spichiger helped the Council the understand the potential impact of the Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive species rapidly spreading in Pennsylvania. The species could have potentially devastating impact on the hops, grapes, hardwoods, and nursery industries. Strategies to control population spread include egg mass removal, tree bands, personal biosecurity, ailanthus tree removal, and community outreach. PDA is working with federal government agencies to develop a more comprehensive control method.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club Volunteer, expressed his concern for a proposed connector trail in Sproul State Forest and the impacts it would have on the forest resource. Mr. Schmidt urged the motorized recreation workgroup to consider negative environmental impacts in its recommendations.

Others attendees included:
Tom Ford, DCNR
Jake Newton, DCNR
Jeff Schmidt, Sierra Club of PA
Jennie Shade, DCNR
Sven-Erik Spichiger, PA Department of Agriculture
March 28, 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Greg Czarnecki, Bureau of Forestry
DCNR Climate Adaptation Report
Mr. Czarnecki gave Council an overview of the process for developing the DCNR Climate Change Adaptation Plan, which identifies vulnerabilities in DCNR bureau and makes recommendations on how to address these potential issues. Each bureau participated on the Climate Action Steering Team, whose work was guided by the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science.

Craig Chapman, Bureau of Forestry
DCNR Pipeline Management
Mr. Chapman explained to Council that the Bureau of Forestry is dealing with an increasing demand for pipeline projects on state lands, both regulated (interstate, FERC-regulated, larger corridors) and nonregulated (intrastate, smaller diameter, smaller corridors) projects. The bureau sets parameters for what is compatible with the Bureau’s mission and uses a strategic approach for negotiations to address challenges like co-location, ecological disruptions, long-term vegetation management, road infrastructure, stream crossings, and recreational management.

Ellen Shultzabarger, Bureau of Forestry
Invasives and Biodiversity
Ms. Shultzabarger explained that the Bureau of Forestry monitors, surveys, and treats DCNR lands for about 20 pests and diseases that kill native plants and affect other species. Although there is limited state and federal funding, states need to focus on preventative, early protection control measures to stop the spread of invasive populations before the issue is uncontrollable; a rapid response fund would help with this strategy.

PUBLIC COMMENT
None

Other attendees included:
Jake Newton, DCNR
Greg Czarnecki, DCNR
Greg Podniesinski, DCNR
Ellen Schultzabarger, DCNR
Jen Quinn, Sierra Club of PA

May 23, 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Paul Zeph, Bureau of State Parks
Penn’s Parks for All
Mr. Zeph provided Council with an update on the State Parks Strategic Planning process, noting that the main public survey elicited 10,186 online survey responses and 4,090 hard copy responses. Penn State will be analyzing the data to see if there are any significant findings and conducting two additional surveys targeting different citizen groups.
Mike Kern, Bureau of Forestry
DCNR’s Forest Fire Protection Program
Mr. Kern explained the Bureau of Forestry’s responsibility for fire protection and prevention throughout the commonwealth. DCNR relies on important partnerships with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, local fire departments, county emergency management agencies, and volunteers. Mr. Kern also elaborated on the bureau’s increased efforts to use prescribed fires to benefit ecosystems.

Nicole Faraguna, Director of Outreach and Education
Pennsylvania Land Trust Association
Ms. Faraguna provided background on the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA), including its role in building conservation community networks through land trusts and other conservation organizations throughout the state. Ms. Faraguna described several e-tools PALTA has deployed provide resources and technical guidance to environmental organizations throughout Pennsylvania including conservationtools.org, conserveland.org, keystonefund.org, and greenwaysandtrails.org.

PUBLIC COMMENT
Karen Frock, a resident of the Loyalsock Creek area, provided Council with written comments regarding natural gas drilling in the Loyalsock State Forest and potential pipelines that would cut through the Loyalsock Creek Valley. Ms. Frock said this area is among the last untouched areas of the state, and the current plans by PGE will damage economic and natural benefits.

Others attendees included:
Anna Ellis, DCNR
Karen Frock, Loyalsock Creek area resident
Mike Kern, DCNR
Paul Zeph, DCNR
Field Trip – Laurel Highlands, September 18-20, 2017
DCNR Advisory Council visits sites in Laurel Highlands landscape

Seeing DCNR programs, services and investments first-hand is the goal of CNRAC’s annual field trip. The September 2017 field visit included stops in state parks and forests, the National Road Heritage Area, and the Great Allegheny Passage in the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape Sept. 18-20.

Council members were impressed by the latest addition to Laurel Hill State Park, the 184-acre Scenic View, which offers a spectacular overlook and significant wildlife and watershed protection. The acquisition also includes several buildings, which offer meeting and overnight accommodation space. Council members questioned Park Manager Mike Mumau about the park’s ability to manage additional land and infrastructure given recent staff and budget cuts. Mumau noted he relies on creativity and partnerships to get the job done.

CNRAC also stopped by the new LEED-certified Visitor’s Center at Ohiopyle State Park to learn about DCNR’s commitment to sustainable practices in its building design. Other stops included Spruce Flats Bog and Mt. Davis in Forest State Forest and Adirondack shelters constructed by the PA Outdoor Corps in a group camping area at Laurel Hill. Some members chose to experience the Great Allegheny passage first-hand with a bike ride into Confluence where they met Brett Hollern, Somerset County, Trails and Greenways Development Coordinator and Cathy McCollom, Trail Towns program to learn about the impact of DCNR’s trail investments on small towns in the region.

The CNRAC field trip concluded with a stakeholder meeting at Laurel Hill State Park’s Scenic View where partners in the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape presented on recent land and water protection and tourism efforts. Marla Papernick, Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Laurel Hill State Park Manager Mike Mumau provided an overview of the Laurel Highlands Conservation Landscape. Jane Menchyk, Western PA Conservancy, Deb Simko from Trout Unlimited and Ann Nemanic from Laurel Highlands Visitors Bureau who talked about land, water and tourism impacts of DCNR and partner work in the region. Paul Zeph, who is leading the efforts to develop DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks’ new strategic plan, gave the council and partners the opportunity to provide early recommendations into the plan, known as Penn’s Parks for All.
Top photos: Members hear from Ohiopyle State Park Manager Ken Bisbee about the sustainable features of the park’s visitor center. Right: Forbes State Forest Environmental Education Specialist Rachael Mahony meets with council at the highest point in Pennsylvania, Mt. Davis. Bottom: The overlook tower at Scenic View at Laurel Hill State Park.
Council Actions

After receiving several presentations from Paul Zeph, who is leading the efforts to develop DCNR’s Bureau of State Parks’ new strategic plan, council penned 10 recommendations as early input into the plan’s development. The following recommendations were presented to the Bureau of State Parks in March 2018:

1. Restore the Oil and Gas Fund to its original intent that is included in the Oil and Gas Lease Fund Act (Act No. 256) signed by Governor George Leader on December 15, 1955. The act authorized the expenditure of rents and royalties from oil and gas leases on Commonwealth-owned land for conservation, recreation, dams and flood control purposes including the acquisition of additional land.

2. Return the Bureau of State Parks’ revenues back to the Bureau as permitted in Act No. 51 of July 1, 1981, into a State Parks’ Major Maintenance Fund to be used for projects such as roof replacements, road re-paving, updating water and sewage treatment plants and building rehabilitation.

3. Oppose a state parks entrance fee or parking fees because of infrastructure limitations, personnel and budget implications and societal impact.

4. Focus future acquisition efforts of new state park land on lands that would add to existing state parks or would eliminate interior holdings. Any new state park should be a significant historic site or a unique natural area and come with additional staff and maintenance funds to operate the area.

5. Continue efforts to work cooperatively with federal, state and local agencies wherever and whenever possible. Examples would be to continue working with local agencies with the Conservation Landscape Initiatives and to connect existing trails to create longer trails.

6. Enhance efforts to promote Diversity and Inclusion in all aspects of state park management, including educational programming, park operations, and staffing. Include goals that further promote educational opportunities to park users and provide programs to increase environmental awareness and an appreciation of nature to people of all backgrounds.

7. Embrace the role state parks play in promoting active, healthy living and obesity prevention for all Pennsylvanians. As an example, state parks consider adopting a ‘no smoking/no tobacco’ policy for certain areas such as buildings, playgrounds, beaches, events and campgrounds.

8. Identify key strategic partners for state parks within the strategic plan and how those partnerships will be strengthened.

9. Fully engage visitors to get ongoing feedback about state park facilities and services to help improve customer experiences.

10. Build public awareness of the value of state parks and the benefits they provide by establishing and implementing the state park brand - who they are, what they do, and why they matter.

11. Acknowledge the threats to management of cultural, recreational, and natural resources from global climate change through education and programming objectives and establish opportunities to demonstrate solutions for reducing carbon emissions through green building and energy efficiency.
Council wrote to legislative leadership in July 2017 about the need to protect DCNR special funds uses for their intended purposes:

July 27, 2017

Dear Legislative Leaders:

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

We write today to express our great concern over published reports that the General Assembly may consider raiding various special funds to bring the 2017-18 General Fund budget into balance. In particular, we are distressed regarding the potential impact on DCNR should monies be transferred from either the Keystone Recreation, Park and Conservation Fund, or the Environmental Stewardship Fund.

Not only does DCNR rely on funding from these sources, but 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, for example, was created by Act 50 of 1993 from a dedication portion of the Realty Transfer Tax specifically to support conservation, parks, and recreation. Further, 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 use of these funds for purposes other than those set out in their originating legislation is of great concern. In fact, the recent landmark State Supreme Court decision in PEDF v. Commonwealth held similar transfers from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund as unconstitutional, given the state government’s responsibilities as trustee of the Commonwealth’s natural resources.

The Keystone Fund is DCNR’s primary source of funding for conservation and recreation grants. The fund has been used to improve over 2,400 community parks, conserve over 117,400 acres of green space, make improvements to 120 state parks and 20 state forests, and build or upgrade over 300 trail projects.

Not only would a loss of Keystone Funds be harmful to DCNR’s ability to achieve its mission, but 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.

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

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 Kribs
CNRAC Chairman
Council also wrote to the Labor and Industry Committee in November 2017 to urge the committee to extend the life of the fund that supported the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps after meeting with Corps members and seeing examples of their work:

November 17, 2017

The Honorable Kim Ward
Senate of Pennsylvania
Chair, Labor and Industry Committee
Senate P.O. Box 203039
Harrisburg, PA 17120-3039

Dear Senator Ward:

I am writing to you on behalf of the members of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Citizens Advisory Council (CNRAC), which is charged with providing advice to DCNR regarding the conservation and stewardship of the commonwealth’s natural resources.

It has come to our attention that the major funding source for DCNR’s successful PA Outdoor Corps Program is about to lapse. On our recent annual field trip, CNRAC members had the opportunity to meet with members of the Greensburg crew of Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps. We were very impressed with the work ethic and accomplishments of these young men and women. Because of their experience in this program, many of them plan to pursue careers in conservation related fields.

The program has achieved great success across the state and has received tremendous support. In 2017:

- The program employed 195 young people in 15 host locations;
- Crews completed 84,150 program hours – 67,320 hours on projects and 16,830 hours on training and education, team building and career exploration;
- Projects resulted in the improvement to 68 acres of green spaces, 13,000 feet of shoreline, 142 miles of nature trails, 1,251 park and forest structures and planting of 567 trees; and
- Projects were completed in 40 state parks and 16 state forests.

As you are aware, the PA Outdoor Corps program is funded by the Reemployment Fund and the transfer of funds to the Reemployment Fund from the Unemployment Compensation Fund expires December 31, 2017. Because of our experience with the PA Outdoor Corps program, and because of all the good the program does statewide, it is our sincere hope that this highly successful and valuable program continue. This will require the legislature to act quickly to eliminate the expiration date for the Reemployment Fund transfer.

Respectfully submitted,

Gary Kribbs
CNRAC Chairman
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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Telephone: 717-772-9084
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