

## MINUTES

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

November 15, 2017

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

Gary Kribbs, Chairman  
Cliff David, Member  
Cindy Dunn, Secretary  
Meredith Odato Graham, Member  
Stock Illoway, Member  
Bob Kirchner, Member  
Walt Peechatka, Member  
Rick Sayles, Member  
Dave Trimpey, Member

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser  
Katie Woodbury, CNRAC Assistant

#### GUESTS PRESENT

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

#### WELCOME

Chairman Gary Kribbs called the meeting to order and opened the floor for council and audience member introductions.

#### SECRETARY'S REPORT

**Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary**

Secretary Dunn announced the closure of the 17-18 budget process and went over specifics of the final package. The 2017-2018 budget for DCNR is a tight, so staff will focus on taking care of public-facing services first. Partners and stakeholders like CNRAC were instrumental in advocating for the preservation of special funds. CNRAC could help the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) educate legislators on the different special funds of DCNR for the upcoming budget cycle.

Secretary Dunn also mentioned important issues on the horizon for the Department: some state parks are being overused, so DCNR is conducting studies and leading discussions on how to

resolve those issues; the spotted lanternfly remains a threat to PA's farms and exports, so effectively communicating the message to the public will be a top priority for DCNR and the PA Department of Agriculture; and Chronic Wasting Disease continues to be a threat for the wild deer population. Much of the work on these issues will require cooperation with sister state agencies.

Secretary Dunn highlighted many of her recent travels and events, including dam removal in the Michaux State Forest, and the official openings of the LEED certified Weiser District Forest Office and Buchanan District Forest Office. Solar energy and green technology will be a large focus of the green initiative team in 2018.

Rick Sayles asked if DCNR has any electric-powered trucks in its fleet.

Secretary Dunn responded saying not at the moment, but there could be potential in the future based on new technology.

## **ADVISER REPORT**

### **Gretchen Leslie, Senior Adviser**

Gretchen Leslie updated Council on ongoing initiatives of the Department. The State Parks Strategic Planning public survey concluded at the end of October, and Paul Zeph will now be conducting stakeholder outreach as part of the ongoing planning process. Both PA Outdoor Corps crews are finished for this year, so Scott Carney has started recruiting for the next 10-month crews. Staffing additions include Emily Hendrickson, a William Penn Fellow, and an Urban Outdoor Fellow who will be working with the Lancaster Recreation Commission.

Cliff David asked about vacancies on Council.

There are currently three vacancies.

Rick Sayles and Walt Peechatka asked if DCNR has resolved the funding issue related to the PA Outdoor Corps.

The issue has not been resolved; the Reemployment Fund needs to be reauthorized.

Meredith Graham commended DCNR for its work with the PA Outdoor Corps.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **Marci Mowery, President**

#### **Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation (PPFF)**

Marci Mowery gave a presentation related to volunteerism in Pennsylvania's state parks and forests. PPFF relies on a 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. Each Friends Group is unique to its location and contributes to the park or forest in different ways.

Stock Illoway asked how the organization keeps track of its volunteer hours.

Ms. Mowery said the volunteers track all of the work.

**Jen Bowman, Bureau of State Parks  
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

Jen Bowman presented information on the Conservation Volunteer Database, which tracks volunteer hours for campground hosts, trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and programming. Last year 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.

Meredith Graham asked how DCNR communicates with volunteers.

DCNR emails all volunteers, and the individual park or forest office contacts the volunteer.

Rick Sayles asked if DCNR has a volunteer recognition program.

Ms. Bowman said there is a recognition event each year.

**Sara Nicholas, Policy Director  
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

Sara Nicholas gave a presentation to Council on 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; DCNR will be partnering with Penn State and the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy on this effort.

Cliff David asked who would hold easements.

Ms. Nicholas said the easement holder could be nonprofits, government entities, etc.

Stock Illoway asked if the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA) is involved.

PALTA has been a key participant on the Green Ribbon Task Force, and is intimately involved in the conversations.

Ms. Nicholas highlighted a recent project funded by PennVEST. The Lyme Timber Company received a low-interest loan to purchase land that will be sustainably managed and put under easement, and restore some abandoned mine land. This is the first time an entity like PennVEST funded this type of project for water quality benefits.

Stock Illoway asked who will be doing the land monitoring under a conservation easement program.

Ms. Nicholas said those details have yet to be decided.

Mr. Illoway suggested drone monitoring as a possible option.

Ms. Nicholas elaborated on the challenges in developing an easement program. Details like monitoring and enforcement, as well as lease agreements for activity like hunting need to be addressed. While the conversations are preliminary, Ms. Nicholas said the work is advancing and is an exciting development.

**LeeAnn Murray, Executive Director  
DEP Citizens Advisory Council**

LeeAnn Murray gave a brief background on the Citizens Advisory Council (CAC) and its role in advising the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The group strives to have a good working relationship with the Department, and would like to be involved in larger policy issues like budgeting, staffing, etc. CAC does not have an external presence other than social media.

CNRAC members discussed the possibility of working with CAC on a more regular basis.

**WORKGROUP REPORTS**

Bob Kirchner reported that the Motorized Recreation Workgroup is waiting for the Larson Design Connectivity Report.

Cliff David reported that the Strategic Planning Workgroup spoke with Seth Cassell of the Bureau of Forestry; major topics for the upcoming plan will include forest fragmentation, education, invasive species, and forest fire wars.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Patrick Henderson of the Marcellus Shale Coalition provided Council with a breakdown of the current tax on the gas industry. Mr. Henderson said the conversations around the severance tax are inaccurate; the gas industry does pay a severance tax. Mr. Henderson requested Council to keep this in mind in future conversations.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

The Chairman and Council adjourned the meeting at 12:00 p.m.