

MINUTES
**CONSERVATION AND
NATURAL RESOURCES
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

May 23, 2018

MEMBERS PRESENT

Gary Kribbs, Chairman
Rocco Ali, Member
Bill Forrey, Member
Greg Goldman, Member
Meredith Graham, Member
Stock Illoway, Member
Joanne Kilgour, Member
Bob Kirchner, Member
Sue Landes, Member
John Norbeck, DCNR
Walt Peechatka, Member
Janet Sweeney, Member
David Trimpey, Member
Ephraim Zimmerman, Member

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser
Katie Woodbury, CNRAC Assistant

GUESTS PRESENT

Anna Ellis, DCNR
Karen Frock, Loyalsock Creek area resident
Mike Kern, DCNR
Paul Zeph, DCNR

WELCOME

Chairman Kribbs opened the meeting and welcomed members and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council unanimously approved the March 2018 minutes.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

John Norbeck, Deputy Secretary

Deputy Secretary John Norbeck gave an overview of the latest hot issues for the Department. Two recent low-interest loans totaling \$50 million given to The Lyme Timber Company has drawn much attention from the media and legislature. While DCNR did not play a role in the deal, the Department became involved because the deal involves DCNR holding a conservation easement on about 9,500 acres of the land purchased through PennVEST money. DCNR considers this

deal a win-win for conservation and the public.

Secretary Dunn had the chance to witness a successful prescribed burn at the Michaux State Forest. She also participated in a sustainability tour highlighting clean energy and solar power.

Mr. Norbeck said DCNR continues to work with the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture on combating Chronic Wasting Disease and Spotted Lanternfly. DCNR has a huge stake in both issues, and will continue to be a strong partner at the table. The United States Department of Agriculture recently gave Pennsylvania \$17 million in additional funding to combat Spotted Lanternfly, an invasive species which has the potential to cause harm to farming and timber industries.

Several members had questions related to the Lyme Timber deal. Deputy Secretary Norbeck responded saying negotiations are ongoing, so DCNR cannot release too much information.

DCNR ADVISER REPORT

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Adviser

Gretchen Leslie mentioned relevant legislation: HR 901 recognizes the 125th anniversary of the state park system; HB 1642 addresses cell towers on Commonwealth land; and HB 2131 requires PennDOT to plant native plants in its rights-of-way.

Ms. Leslie mentioned upcoming public meetings on the district forest resource management plans and invited Council to attend. There is also an ongoing stakeholder process for the overcrowding at Beltzville State Park.

Ms. Leslie highlighted the launch of DCNR Youth Ambassadors, a program developed to connect teens and their peers to state parks and forests.

PRESENTATIONS

Paul Zeph, Bureau of State Parks

Penn's Parks for All

Paul Zeph provided Council with an update on the State Parks Strategic Planning process. The main public survey concluded, and Penn State will be analyzing the data to see if there are any significant findings. The Bureau received 10,186 online survey responses, and 4,090 hard copy responses from visitors to state parks. There are two additional surveys targeting different citizen groups that have not yet been completed.

Mr. Zeph mentioned that the Bureau received and is reviewing CNRAC's comments on the process. Council members have a diverse range of backgrounds, so the Bureau appreciates the insight each member brings to the table. State Parks will continue to engage CNRAC throughout the strategic planning process.

Mike Kern, Bureau of Forestry

DCNR's Forest Fire Protection Program

Mike Kern explained the Bureau of Forestry's role in providing fire protection and prevention. The system for volunteer forest fire wardens began as far back as 1915, but DCNR's duty to protect

the Commonwealth gained momentum with Act 18 in 1995. Currently DCNR relies on important partnerships with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency, local fire departments, county emergency management agencies, and volunteers.

Since its inception, fighting wildfires has become a much more effective endeavor: in the late 1800s, around 500,000 acres of land burned annually; today only around 5,000 acres per year burn from wildfires.

The Bureau of Forestry also plans prescribed fires to benefit ecosystems; this program continues to expand.

DCNR also works cooperatively with other state agencies when assistance is needed. Pennsylvania can also request resources from other states when necessary.

**Nicole Faraguna, Director of Outreach and Education
Pennsylvania Land Trust Association**

Nicole Faraguna provided background on the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association (PALTA). The organization's first major policy accomplishment was the enactment of the Conservation and Preservation Act- one of the best tools for conservation in the country.

In 2010 PALTA launched conservationtools.org, a website aimed at providing resources and technical guidance to environmental organizations throughout Pennsylvania. Organizations use tools such as model easement documents to increase the pace of land conservation. Other websites maintained by PALTA include conserveland.org, keystonefund.org, and greenwaysandtrails.org.

Ms. Faraguna described PALTA's education and outreach initiatives. Much of the strength in the environmental community comes from forming important partnerships, and PALTA plays a role in building conservation community networks. Many of the accomplishments thus far could not have been executed without the support of land trusts and organizations throughout the state.

PALTA also relies on state investments to further its mission; the Keystone Fund, Agriculture Preservation Program, and Environmental Stewardship Fund are crucial to the work of the organization.

Stock Illoway asked if PALTA has any take on the eminent domain threat in Lower Merion Township.

Ms. Faraguna replied that PALTA is following the situation closely. Natural Lands is directly involved in the dispute.

WORKGROUP REPORTS

Bob Kirchner said the motorized recreation workgroup has a call with a representative from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources on May 25.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Karen Frock, a resident of the Loyalsock creek area, provided Council with written comments

regarding drilling in the Loyalsock State Forest and potential PGE pipelines running from the top of the ridge to the valley on both sides of the Loyalsock creek. Ms. Frock said this area is among the last untouched areas of the state, and PGE's current plans will damage economic and natural benefits.

MEETING ADJOURNED

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

Notice of the May 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.