

CNRAC



Conservation &
Natural Resources
Advisory Council



2019 - 2020 Annual Report

Department of Conservation & Natural Resources



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Natural Resources
Advisory Council

**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: Bald Eagle State Park in Centre County, the site of CNRAC's 2019 field trip

September 23, 2020

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 2019-2020 annual report of our activities in fulfillment of our obligations to provide advice and recommendations to the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

CNRAC continues to closely follow issues that impact the programs and services of DCNR. The challenges presented by this year's pandemic were many, and CNRAC recognizes and appreciates the extraordinary efforts of DCNR staff to meet those challenges. As the impacts of the pandemic increased, state parks saw exponential growth in visitation, with some parks experiencing more than a 100% increase over the previous year. CNRAC appreciates your recognition of the importance of outdoor recreation on the physical and mental health of the citizens we serve. Outdoor recreation is an enormous, vital industry in Pennsylvania, generating \$29.1 billion annually in consumer spending and sustaining a quarter of a million direct Pennsylvania jobs.

Along with these significant 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. We look forward to working with DCNR, your office and legislators on the challenging issue of the backlog of more than \$1 billion in parks and forests infrastructure needs.

CNRAC continued to actively participate in the development of strategic plans, policies and programs for state parks and forests, outdoor recreation, and motorized recreation. We are excited about the possibility of creative and innovative programs to continue to serve current users of our parks and forests and to encourage new users to take advantage of these unique resources. CNRAC has established a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Group to devote expertise and time to working alongside DCNR staff to develop goals to increase access and develop relevant activities to ensure all citizens have opportunities to enjoy our parks and forests.

We are excited to begin to see the strategic plans implemented and are committed to continuing to work with your office and DCNR staff to ensure the Commonwealth's natural resources are protected while offering vital recreational opportunities to our citizens.

Sincerely,



Geralyn Umstead-Singer
CNRAC Chair 2020-2021

CNRAC COUNCIL MEMBERS 2019-2020

GOVERNOR'S APPOINTMENTS



Silas Chamberlin -- York, PA; B.A. History, Temple University; M.A. History and Ph.D. Environmental History, Lehigh University; Vice President of Economic and Community Development of the York County Economic Alliance; term expires January 2023.

Meredith Odatto Graham -- Pittsburgh, PA; B.S. Natural Resources, Cornell University; J.D. University of Pittsburgh School of Law; environmental lawyer and community volunteer; term expires January 2022.



Joanne C. Kilgour -- Lancaster, PA; B.A. Philosophy, Carnegie Mellon University; J.D. University of Pittsburgh School of Law; Executive Director, Ohio River Valley Institute; term expires January 2022.

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.



Steve Stroman -- Lancaster, PA. B.A., Political Science, Vassar College; M.A. Political Science, Duke University; conservation/environmental policy consultant and family caregiver; term expires January 2023.

One Vacancy Pending Appointment

Terms Expired in 2020



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.

Ephraim Zimmerman -- Pittsburgh, PA; B.S. Wildlife Biology, Colorado State University; M.S. Forest Ecology, University of Michigan; Ecological Assessment Manager, PA Natural Heritage Conservancy.



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 2023.

L. Stockton Illoway -- Phoenixville, PA; B.A. Liberal Arts, Harvard University; M.S. Financial Science, American College; Senior Sales Associate, 1847 Financial; awaiting re-appointment.



Robert E. Kirchner -- St. Marys, PA; B.S. Health & Physical Education, Slippery Rock University of PA; Owner, WhyNotSafety, LLC; Past President, American Council of Snowmobile Associations; Board Member, West Creek Recreational Trail Association; term expires January 2023.

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; retired Resource Manager, Kane Hardwood Division of Collins Pine Company; term expires January 2021.

One Vacancy Pending Appointment

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE APPOINTMENTS



Sarah Hall-Bagdonas -- Lake Ariel, PA; B.S. Biology, Millersville University; Program Manager, Northern Tier Hardwood Association; term expires January 2023.

Greg Goldman -- Philadelphia, PA; B.A. Northwestern University; Master of Public Policy Studies, University of Chicago; Senior Director, Mid-Atlantic National Audubon Society; term expires January 2021.



Dean Jackson -- Columbia Cross Roads, Bradford County, PA; owner, Mt-Glen Farms; term expires January 2023.

Gary M. B. Kribbs -- Havertown, PA; B.A. Geology, University of Toledo; M.S. Geology, University of Toledo; President, AEON Geoscience, Inc.; awaiting reappointment.



Ted Tharan -- Clarion, PA; Clarion County Commissioner; term expires January 2023.



One Vacancy Pending Appointment

Terms Expired in 2020



Clifford C. David, Jr. -- Lower Gwynedd, Montgomery County, PA; B.A. Psychology, Bucknell University; B.S. Botany, University of Vermont; M.S. Organization and Management, Antioch College; President, Conservation Economics.

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



CNRAC OFFICERS AND STAFF

DCNR Secretary – Cindy Adams Dunn

Chairman – Ephraim Zimmerman (2019-2020); Geralyn Singer (2020-2021)

Vice Chairman – Janet Sweeney (2019-2020); Bob Kirchner (2020-2021)

Secretary – Geralyn Singer (2019-2020); Meredith Odato Graham (2020-2021)

DCNR Council Adviser – Gretchen Leslie

Council Administrator – Katrina Harris (contractor)

CNRAC WORK GROUPS

CNRAC Work Groups continued to meet and discuss current issues to provide input and recommendations to DCNR. In 2020, CNRAC established a new Work Group—the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Group, to reflect a key priority of DCNR. Membership of each Work Group and highlights of activities for the past year are summarized below.

Motorized Recreation Work Group

Bob Kirchner, Rocco Ali, Gary Kribbs, Stock Illoway

In 2019, the Motorized Recreation Work Group published a report with 15 recommendations regarding expanding motorized recreation opportunities in Pennsylvania, including the growing demand for ATV riding opportunities. Since publication of the report, the Work Group has had discussions with DCNR on its recommendations and provided reports to CNRAC on the status of each recommendation. In March 2020, the Work Group reviewed the proposed changes to DCNR's ATV Trail Development and Management Policy; changes to the policy were one of the Work Group's recommendations in its 2019 report. The Work Group is awaiting DCNR's responses to the many comments received by DCNR on the proposed changes.

Strategic Planning Work Group

**Meredith Odato Graham, Janet Sweeney, Dave Trimpey, Silas Chamberlin, Sarah Hall-Bagdonas
(Rick Sayles, Ephraim Zimmerman and Cliff David, appointments ended January 2020)**

The Strategic Planning Work Group reviewed the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan and developed comments. The Work Group also reviewed the state parks strategic plan, *Penn's Parks for All*, and the priorities for the upcoming Bureau of Forestry strategic plan and provided comments. The Work Group will continue to monitor updates to these planning documents and assist with the implementation of the final plans.

Communications and Outreach Work Group

**Sarah Hall-Bagdonas, Gary Kribbs, Greg Goldman, Geralyn Singer
(Cliff David, appointment ended in January 2020)**

The Communications and Outreach Work Group continued to monitor relevant legislation and met with leaders of the Senate and House Environmental and Energy Resources Committees to keep legislators informed of CNRAC activities and viewpoints. The Work Group continued its work with DCNR staff on updates to the CNRAC website with meeting minutes and Council reports/letters. The Work Group also continued to grow its stakeholder list to maintain communication and notify interested groups and citizens of CNRAC meetings. Council also responded to several questions/comments submitted by citizens through the website.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Group

Joanne Kilgour, Janet Sweeney, Geralyn Singer, Greg Goldman, Steve Stroman

In 2020, CNRAC formed a new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Work Group to support DCNR's objectives in this area, following a presentation at its January 2020 meeting by Ms. Emily Hendrickson, DCNR's new DEI coordinator. The group is establishing its priorities and goals for the next year, including frequent discussions at CNRAC meetings.

Infrastructure Work Group

**Stock Illoway, Geralyn Singer, Gary Kribbs, Janet Sweeney, Dave Trimpey
(Ephraim Zimmerman and Bill Forrey, appointments ended January 2020)**

DCNR manages and maintains more infrastructure than most state agencies. Maintenance encompasses a wide range of activities and investments—routine maintenance, preventative maintenance, and corrective maintenance. Maintaining infrastructure requires funding for staff and materials, as well as engineering and other contracted services. Unfortunately, the money required for maintenance has not kept pace with the needs. The Infrastructure Work Group continued to focus on and highlight the tremendous funding need for infrastructure upgrades and maintenance at state parks and forests, now totaling more than \$1 billion. The needed investments range from bridges to wastewater treatment facilities, dams and invasive plant removal, and from roads to trails. The Work Group continued to monitor proposed legislation and discuss the needs with legislators. The Work Group is partnering with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation in their outreach efforts, as well as initiating CNRAC communications and outreach activities.

SUMMARY OF CNRAC MEETINGS

JULY 24, 2019

PRESENTATIONS

Penn's Parks for All Strategic Plan Draft Paul Zeph, Bureau of State Parks

Mr. Zeph highlighted sections of the draft strategic plan for state parks, including data collection and recommendations. He reviewed the activities underway for obtaining public comment and input on the draft plan and invited CNRAC members to assist with the outreach. CNRAC members provided initial observations and comments about the draft plan.

2019-2020 DCNR Enacted Budget Stacie Amsler, Bureau of Administrative Services

Ms. Amsler provided an overview of the 2019-2020 DCNR enacted budget and showed a three-year comparison of major operating appropriations. She advised of all the general funds collected in the commonwealth; DCNR's share is 35% of each penny or \$.0035 of the dollars collected. She explained the different funding sources that go into the budget, with the General Fund and Oil and Gas Lease Fund providing much of the operating revenue, and park user fees, federal funds, and timber sales augmenting these funds.

Land and Water Conservation Fund Conversions Tom Ford, Bureau of Recreation and Conservation

Mr. Ford gave an overview of the Land and Water Conservation Fund and how DCNR directs the funding down to local recreation and conservation projects. He noted that more than 1,600 projects have been completed with these funds in Pennsylvania, since the program began over 50 years ago. The Bureau of Recreation and Conservation staff inspect about 20% of the sites each year to ensure that lands funded by LWCF are not converted to non-recreation uses.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition, gave Council an update on the impact fee in Pennsylvania.

Mr. John Childe inquired about how the Bureau of State Parks and Bureau of Forestry are coordinating their strategic planning efforts and encouraged better integration of the two bureaus on important issues.

Other attendees included:

John Childe, PA Environmental Defense Foundation
Jeffrey Clukey, PA House of Representatives, Appropriations
Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition
David Hess, Environmental Digest
David Mong, DCNR
Ann Pinca, Save PA's Forests Coalition
Robert Swift, Capitol Wire
Katie Woodbury, DCNR

OCTOBER 2, 2019 FIELD TRIP

Bald Eagle State Park

CNRAC held its October 2, 2019 meeting at Bald Eagle State Park. The Council invited numerous stakeholder groups to attend the meeting and participate in small group discussions on the recommendations of the draft *Penn's Parks For All* strategic plan.

Prior to the meeting, Council members met with the park manager, Mike Winters, and toured several areas of the park to see firsthand unique park features, as well as infrastructure needs. From the Nature Inn to the unlimited horsepower boating, 369-slip marina, and newly built Environmental Learning Center, Council members experienced some of the distinctive attributes of the park, which are used by more than 550,000 visitors each year.

Mr. Winters highlighted a few of the infrastructure needs including modernizing water and sewer systems, buildings, and park roads. Such modernization will reduce emergency repairs and continue to enhance the visitor experience. He also reviewed with the Council staffing challenges and visitors' changing expectations for camping venues and technology.

As part of their public portion of the meeting, council members and public attendees received an overview of the *Penn's Parks For All* strategic plan by DCNR's Paul Zeph. Council members then worked with the stakeholder organizations in small groups to discuss the strategic plan's recommendations. The Council used the input from the stakeholders as it prepared its own comments and suggestions on the plan.



NOVEMBER 20, 2019

PRESENTATIONS

**Conserving Penn's Woods, Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan
Ryan Szuch, Bureau of Forestry**

Mr. Szuch discussed the Bureau's strategic plan, Conserving Penn's Woods, which is in the early stages of development. He noted the timeline for the plan is development in 2020, following by organizational alignment, which will take a few years. Mr. Szuch provided a handout of the draft list of priorities and requested the Council's feedback on the priorities. He noted once a draft plan is available, it will be provided to Council for review and comments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comments were offered at this meeting.

Other attendees included:

Kyle Shenk, The Conservation Fund
Brian Rider, PA Forest Products Association
Terry Brady, DCNR
Jake Newtown, DCNR
Su Ann Shupp, DCNR

JANUARY 22, 2020

PRESENTATIONS

**Proposed Revised ATV Policy
John Norbeck, DCNR Deputy Secretary for Parks and Forestry
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR Policy Director**

Mr. Norbeck and Ms. Faraguna reviewed the history of Pennsylvania's ATV policy and provided background on DCNR's ATV trail system and grant program. They presented on the environmental and enforcement challenges that resulted in an ATV Trail Moratorium in 2001 on any new trails on DCNR lands. The growing demand from the public for long-distance trails and connections between communities is driving proposed changes they presented in a revised ATV policy. Ms. Faraguna stated the changes would rescind the 2003 moratorium and permits DCNR to explore opportunities for new trails/connectors on state forest lands, while continuing to prohibit ATV trails in state parks. Ms. Faraguna said DCNR is looking at increased ATV usage as an opportunity to help ATV users have a stronger stewardship connection by establishing a network of stewardship leaders within the ATV community. DCNR is looking to the ATV community and industry for help in developing this stewardship connection.

DCNR's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative
Emily Hendrickson, DCNR DEI Coordinator

Ms. Emily Hendrickson presented on DCNR's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative to help improve the agency's demographics, and she was hired as the coordinator for DCNR's DEI efforts. She stated 1,500 employees were trained on diversity, and an employee mentor program was launched to increase inclusion with new employees. She added that an action plan has been prepared, and DEI is becoming a conversation in all the agency's work.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comments at this meeting focused on the proposed changes to the ATV policy and are summarized below:

- **Jerry Walls, Pine Creek Watershed Council/Pennsylvania Wilds Land Use:** Mr. Walls expressed appreciation for CNRAC working on issues and considerations to fulfill DCNR's responsibilities under the Pennsylvania Constitution. He said the Watershed Council is not opposed to ATV trails so long as they are in the appropriate locations, but expressed concerns about funding and possible impact on streams.
- **Cindy Barrick, PA State Snowmobile Association, Region 10 Director:** Ms. Barrick said her association also is not opposed to ATV trails and focused her comments on proper maintenance of existing and new trails, and concern that snowmobile use may be impacted by increased ATV use. She also expressed interest in knowing how associations can work with DCNR to help maintain the roads including the use of volunteers.
- **Eric Bruggeman, PA Off-Highway Vehicle Association:** Mr. Bruggeman commended DCNR for the proposed changes and thanked Council member Bob Kirchner on the motorized recreation report. Mr. Bruggeman said the Association believes the proposed changes will help balance the demand for off-road recreation and provide a great way to get people outdoors who do not always have the means for accessible recreation.
- **Steve Salisbury, American Motorcyclist Association:** Mr. Salisbury said he was pleased to hear about the out-of-state research being done and encouraged DCNR to have a dedicated staff person for the off-road programs with appropriate authority. His comments focused on funding issues a concern that Pennsylvania does not currently register off-road motorcycles.
- **Jim Laird, DCNR Trails Advisory Committee:** As the off-highway motorcycle representative on the Trails Advisory Committee, Mr. Laird stated Pennsylvania has a good opportunity to capture Canadian recreational users, in addition to the increasing number of ATV users in Pennsylvania. Mr. Laird said there are also many unregistered ATVs which could be contributing through registration fees. He also expressed his belief that this type of recreational use provided a great opportunity for cross-generational participation, as well as accommodation and inclusion.

Other attendees included:

Sarah Corcoran, Sierra Club
Jim Laird, DCNR Trails Advisory Committee Member
Fred Brown, motorized advocate
Cindy Barrick, PA State Snowmobile Association
Steve Salisbury, American Motorcyclist Association
Eric Bruggerman, PA Off-Highway Vehicle Association
Sarah Scholl, PA Parks and Forests Foundation
Marci Mowery, PA Parks and Forests Foundation
Jerry Walls, Pine Creek Watershed Council/PA Wilds Land Use
Nate Lotze, DCNR
Justin Royer, DCNR
Elissa Garofalo, Delaware and Lehigh National Heritage Corridor
Bob Pento, PennDOT
Sean Gimble, PA Fish and Boat Commission
Alex MacDonald, DCNR
Terry Brady, DCNR
Shea Zwerver, DCNR
Jake Newton, DCNR
G. Guliban, PA Farm Bureau



MARCH 18, 2020

The March 18, 2020 meeting was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

MAY 27, 2020 (VIRTUAL MEETING)

PRESENTATIONS

**Proposed Revised DCNR ATV Policy
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR Policy Director**

Ms. Faraguna gave the status of the proposed revised draft ATV policy, which was released on January 27 for a 60-day comment period. Ms. Faraguna said approximately 75% of the comments were supportive of the changes, with 25% indicating some concerns or overall opposition. She noted DCNR will be balancing the public comments with other survey and polling data more representative of all of Pennsylvania. Ms. Faraguna advised the next steps include preparing a response to comments document by the late summer, adapting the policy as needed, and having a final policy in early to mid-fall.

**DCNR's Operations of State Parks and Forests During the Pandemic
John Norbeck, DCNR Deputy Secretary for Parks and Forestry**

Mr. Norbeck reviewed the status of parks during the pandemic, noting the evolving changes needed to respond to conditions, while prioritizing the need to provide outdoor recreation as an essential part of maintaining a healthy lifestyle. He covered the challenges of managing all aspects of the agency, but particularly dealing with the record visitation state parks and forests were experiencing. With increased usage came a significant amount of illegal ATV use, an increase in graffiti and trash, and other illegal activity from visitors not familiar with the rules and regulations of these public lands.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Jim Laird submitted questions relating to OHV use.

Other attendees included:

Aara Vinsh, DCNR
Eric Nelson, DCNR
Shea Zwerver, DCNR
Ellen Shultzabarger, DCNR
Chris Novak, DCNR
Sherri Anderson, DCNR
Stacie Amsler, DCNR
Ryan Madara, OA OIT
Cindy Thomas, DCNR
Darek Jagiela, DEP
Cliff David, Conservation Economics
Sarah Corcoran, Sierra Club

Jim Laird, DCNR Trails Advisory Committee Member
Nick Troutman, Office of Senator Gene Yaw
Lisa McManus, Pennsylvania General Energy Co.
Heather Empfield, Campbell Oil & Gas

Council Actions

- December 2019 letter to Secretary Dunn commenting on the draft Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- January 2020 letter to Paul Zeph commenting on draft Penn's Parks for All.
- March 2020 letter to Ryan Szuch commenting on Bureau of Forestry's priorities for upcoming strategic plan.
- March 2020 letter to John Norbeck commenting on proposed changes to ATV Trail Development and Management Policy.
- June 2020 letter to Alex MacDonald commenting on recommendations and action steps developed as part of the Land and Water Trail Network Strategic Plan.

Documents are available upon request.

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:



Membership as of January 1, 2020.



Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council (CNRAC)

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