

## MINUTES

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

September 23, 2020

#### MEMBERS PRESENT

Rocco Ali, Member  
Silas Chamberlin, Member  
Greg Goldman, Member  
Meredith Graham, Secretary  
Joanne Kilgour, Member  
Bob Kirchner, Vice Chair  
Gary Kribbs, Member  
Geraldyn Singer, Chair  
Steve Stroman, Member  
Dave Trimpey, Member

#### GUESTS PRESENT

Kristen Carter, PA Geological Survey (presenter)  
Jean Devlin, DCNR, Bureau of Forestry (presenter)  
Rebecca Brown, DCNR, Bureau of Forestry (presenter)  
John Norbeck, DCNR  
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR  
Eric Nelson, DCNR  
Sherri Anderson, DCNR  
Stacie Amsler, DCNR  
Justin Royer, DCNR  
Shea Zwerver, DCNR  
Aara Vinsh, DCNR  
Ellen Shultzabarger, DCNR, Bureau of Forestry  
Meredith Hill, DCNR, PA Wilds  
Cliff David, Conservation Economics  
Emily Gates, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society  
David Hess, PA Environment Digest Blog  
Patrick Henderson, Marcellus Shale Coalition  
Jim Welty, Marcellus Shale Coalition  
Keith Salador, PADEP CAC  
James Schmid  
John Walliser, Pennsylvania Environmental Council  
Sarah Corcoran, Sierra Club  
William Kunze, The Nature Conservancy  
Ron Ramsey, The Nature Conservancy

#### DCNR

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary  
Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Advisor

#### ADMINISTRATOR

Katrina Harris, CNRAC Administrator

## **WELCOME**

Ms. Gretchen Leslie opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to CNRAC's third virtual meeting. She stated Council has the ability to interact with presenters, and the general public will have an opportunity to speak at the end of the meeting. She noted any public comments not submitted prior to the meeting can be submitted after the meeting and will be incorporated into the meeting minutes. She stated the meeting is being recorded, and by participating, consent is being given to the recording, retention and use of the session recording. Ms. Leslie read a list of individuals who registered to attend the meeting.

Ms. GERALYN SINGER, Chair, expressed appreciation for everyone taking the time to attend. She thanked the DCNR staff helping with the arrangements for the virtual meeting.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Council unanimously approved the July 22, 2020 minutes.

## **COUNCIL REPORT**

**Geralyn Singer, CNRAC Chair**

Ms. Singer announced Council member, Stock Illoway, had submitted his resignation. She stated Mr. Illoway had joined the Council in March 2008 and served for more than 12 years. She noted Mr. Illoway had been a very active member and rarely missed a meeting. Ms. Singer added that Mr. Illoway's thoughtful contributions will be missed.

## **SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary**

Secretary Dunn thanked the Council for staying active during the pandemic and transitioning to virtual meetings. She welcomed members of the public joining the meeting.

Secretary Dunn echoed Ms. Singer's acknowledgment of the service of Stock Illoway and noted he is an avid conservationist. She said he will be missed on Council.

Secretary Dunn highlighted the following topics:

**Pandemic Operating Conditions:** Secretary Dunn noted DCNR is wrapping up one of busiest summers on record. She stated the parks and forests welcomed many new visitors which did come with more incidents from so many first time users. Secretary Dunn advised Labor Day weekend was very busy with camp sites booked at 98% and cabins booked at 97%; during the month of August, DCNR booked 6-1/2 million visits, an increase of 1.4 million visits over 2019. She explained this dramatic increase occurred even with the cancellation of large events. Secretary Dunn stated the overall increase was about 26% with some parks seeing increased visits of more than 100% over the same months in 2019, with a few parks experiencing 200% increases. She noted trail counters are also reporting significant increases in usage, with some experiencing up to a 200% increase in usage. Secretary Dunn stated DCNR is taking steps to keep the increase in usage going, including the use of education and outreach through social media to encourage safe social distancing and to try and re-direct some of the visitors to lesser used parks and trails.

**Trail of the Year:** Secretary Dunn advised as part of Trails Month celebrated in September she was able to announce during a visit that the Ghost Town Trail in Cambria and Indiana counties was selected as the Trail of the Year. She stated this is a good example of two counties collaborating, funding and planning for this 46-mile trail which will attract visitors and boost the local economy.

**Economic Impacts:** Secretary Dunn stated outdoor recreational businesses are reporting an incredible surge in sales; this sector of the economy has done well during the pandemic. She noted many small stores and businesses associated with nearby State parks and trails have also done well. Secretary Dunn advised DCNR construction projects are proceeding and keeping local contractors working as Special Funds are used for these projects.

**Legislative Hearings:** Secretary Dunn mentioned three recent legislative hearings, including one on the value of Friends Groups which John Norbeck of DCNR and Marci Mowery of PA Parks & Forests Foundation spoke at, which was a great opportunity to tell the story of volunteers. Secretary Dunn stated she spoke at another hearing on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on outdoor recreation. She stated another hearing was on the environment and the economy.

**Wildfires:** Secretary Dunn noted wildfires would be on the November meeting agenda. She said 128 firefighters have returned from fighting fires out west and 27 firefighters are still providing assistance. She stated they drove to the west because of COVID restrictions so it was a significant commitment of their time, but provides good experience and training.

**Marsh Creek State Park Spill:** Secretary Dunn noted DCNR staff continue to monitor the park property. She noted a consultant (AECOM) would be coming on board to collect samples that will be part of an assessment of the impacts, both recreational impacts as well as environmental impacts.

**PA Outdoor Corps:** Secretary Dunn said she has conducted some visits with the Outdoor Corps, and the crews are doing great work in parks and forests and on trails. She noted this program is co-funded by the PA Dept. of Labor & Industry.

**Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan:** Secretary Dunn advised the plan will be released the following day. She noted Gretchen Leslie is one of several DCNR staff members who authored the report. Secretary Dunn said she would also be announcing some grant awards the next day at the event in Reading. Ms. Leslie noted she would be happy to send a copy of the plan to anyone who is interested.

## **DCNR ADVISOR REPORT**

### **Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Advisor**

Ms. Leslie reiterated that use of park and forest facilities reached an all-time high this summer and is expected to continue into next year. She noted daily social media messages are being released to encourage visitors to stay safe and try to leave no trace. Ms. Leslie said other communication methods have included short videos to show the impact of trash and website alerts and to try and reduce the overcrowding of some areas with suggestions for new trails and lesser known parks (“hidden gems”) to visit.

Ms. Leslie said DCNR joined with partners to name the Schuylkill to Susquehanna as a

statewide major greenway; the greenway spans Chester, Lancaster, and Montgomery counties and when completed will be 85 miles long.

Ms. Leslie noted fall foliage is coming, and DCNR will be working once again with the tourism staff to send out messages on the best places to see the foliage.

## **LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

**Eric Nelson, Director of Legislative Affairs, DCNR**

Mr. Eric Nelson discussed the following bills:

- **HB 2724:** This bill will allow DCNR to be substituted for the plaintiff in a public prescriptive easement case even if DCNR has not owned or managed land nearby. The bill was voted out of the House committee and it is being held by Representative Oberlander to work on language to amend the bill. DCNR opposes this bill.
- **HB 1706:** This bill will be voted on by the House Tourism Committee on October 1 and allows for the titling and registration of off-highway motorcycles and thus be operated on DCNR lands similar to ATVs. This is of significant concern to DCNR, and Mr. Nelson has spoken with the House Tourism Committee and expressed DCNR's concerns.
- **HB 2646:** This bill allows e-bikes on paths where traditional bikes are allowed, unless a local authority or governing body prohibits, and is being voted on today. DCNR supports this bill.

Ms. Meredith Graham asked for more details on HB 2724. Mr. Nelson explained it was introduced to deal with an issue in Representative Oberlander's district with the Rachel Carson Trails Conservancy and two property owners. He said the Conservancy thinks they have an easement through a private property, but the property owners disagree. He stated the bill would substitute DCNR as the plaintiff. Ms. Graham asked if the legislation is unique to this one case. Mr. Nelson said it would apply to any case dealing with prescriptive easements. Mr. Nelson said DCNR's attorneys have reviewed and believe it is unconstitutional.

Ms. Singer asked if any bills previously discussed have advanced, and Mr. Nelson said they have not advanced. Mr. Nelson said the proposed park fee bill, HB 2806, is not expected to be voted on this year.

## **COUNCIL BUSINESS**

Ms. Singer stated several drafts of a letter on the Marsh Creek State Park pipeline spill had been circulated. Ms. Singer thanked Council members for their input on the letter. She made a motion to accept the most recent draft as the final version. The motion was seconded and approved with no opposition.

Ms. Singer noted Council members have been discussing an anticipated Environmental Assessment from the Maryland Air National Guard to allow low altitude flyovers in the Pennsylvania Wilds area. Ms. Leslie said the release of the Environmental Assessment has been postponed until at least January 2021. Ms. Nicole Faraguna added she has been told there will be a 45-day public comment on the draft Environmental Assessment, and the Air National Guard will provide a schedule as soon as they know when the Federal Register Notice is being prepared for publication. Ms. Singer asked if there has been much public outreach on the proposed action. Ms. Faraguna said the Air National Guard has not done much outreach;

DCNR has provided revisions to their proposed stakeholder list and has contacted a number of groups, individuals and elected officials within the Pennsylvania Wilds area. Ms. Faraguna added there have been a few newspaper articles about the proposed action. Ms. Singer said the Council will continue to discuss this issue and prepare for commenting on the action.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

### **CARBON CAPTURE AND UNDERGROUND STORAGE**

#### **Kristen Carter, Asst. State Geologist, Pennsylvania Geological Survey**

Ms. Kristen Carter explained that Carbon Capture and Underground Storage (CCUS) is the commoditization of emissions. She stated the beneficial use of carbon dioxide in certain situations is a viable addition to the mix of opportunities. She noted carbon dioxide emissions come from many sources including power plants and agricultural applications; the technology used to capture the carbon varies depending on the source. Ms. Carter said the carbon is transported via various types of pipelines from where the carbon is emitted to the final destination.

Ms. Carter advised point sources in Pennsylvania are many and varied including the cement and steel industries. She said the state's geology is varied which provides beneficial use opportunities as well as permanent storage. She explained that depending on the depth, different geologic formations could be amenable to both enhanced recovery with associated storage or injection with additional recovery from methane sources. Ms. Carter continued explaining that the focus is on the more shallow layers of the geologic formations as not as much technical information is available on the deeper geology and it is easier to install wells at shallow depths. She stated deeper formations would need to be tested to determine their potential for use.

Ms. Carter said what has changed in recent years is the availability of tax credits and financial incentives. She noted it is important to realize that CCUS is neither an either/or situation, but an important component of the portfolio of approaches to achieve worldwide climate goals. Ms. Carter said the technology and demonstration of injection and storage projects are in place around the world. She noted CCUS work in Pennsylvania has been ongoing for two decades and showed a list of projects. She also reviewed the history of Pennsylvania's involvement with various programs and initiatives, many of which included collaboration with the U.S. Department of Energy and neighboring states, which has provided good foundational information and a manual of best practices for planning and development. Ms. Carter advised past activities including engaging stakeholders early and often.

Ms. Carter reviewed information she had presented almost a decade ago on the statewide assessment of geologic CCUS opportunities. She noted at that time the focus was on four areas shown in blue on the map in western and northern Pennsylvania. She discussed 2019 oil field case studies done in collaboration with West Virginia which looked at the oil reservoirs present in several locations and geologic borings. Ms. Carter also discussed a map of the state that shows that sufficient reservoirs exist for storage, equivalent to 500 million passenger vehicles being driven in a year.

Ms. Carter summarized current activities including the Midwest Regional Carbon Initiative, which includes 20 states collaborating on responsible development and the CCUS Inter-Agency Work Group, which consists of DCNR, DEP and DCED working together on technical,

regulatory, economic and policy drivers. She stated collaboration is ongoing with several initiatives by the Great Plains Institute, including the Regional Carbon Capture Initiative.

Ms. Carter discussed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for a regional CO<sub>2</sub> transport infrastructure action plan. She explained seven states, including Pennsylvania, have signed onto the non-binding MOU in the last four months.

Ms. Carter summarized some key points for Council members:

- CCS and CCUS technical research is well-established for the state, region and country.
- Full-scale CCS and CCUS projects have been successfully and safely deployed, both domestically and abroad.
- CCS is necessary for meeting emission reductions and for achieving the 2-degree climate mitigation goal.
- Pennsylvania has significant and varied geologic resources that could be used to beneficially use and/or permanently store CO<sub>2</sub>.
- At any given site, one or more reservoirs may be needed to accommodate source emissions, so stacked potential will be important.
- Infrastructure will be important to match sources to sinks, and Pennsylvania is one of seven signatory states (first in the Mid-Atlantic) supporting the regional CO<sub>2</sub> transport infrastructure action plan MOU.

Ms. Meredith Graham asked if transport options other than pipeline are being considered. Ms. Carter said trucking and barging via waterways are options but likely not cost effective.

## **UPDATE TO PENNSYLVANIA'S SCIENCE EDUCATION STANDARDS**

### **Jean Devlin, Natural Resource Program Specialist, Bureau of Forestry**

Ms. Jean Devlin stated the updates are directly tied to DCNR's mission and DCNR is deeply vested in these standards; the science standards are used every day from state parks and forests doing programming for school groups to teacher education. She explained what students are taught is driven by these standards which determine what a student should know by a specific grade level; the standards help students develop skills to be college and career ready and good stewards of Pennsylvania's resources. She continued explaining that state assessment is aligned to these standards in that mandated standards are assessed and thus taught; if there is no standard, it is likely the subject matter will not be taught.

Ms. Devlin stated there are separate standards for science and technology and for environment and ecology. She reviewed the history of the standards, noting the last revision was in 2002. She advised that having these separate standards has set Pennsylvania apart, and other states often look to the Pennsylvania standards as the ones to copy.

Ms. Devlin said the current proposal for changes is moving quickly, having started in 2019, and with a public comment period planned for sometime this fall, although dates have not yet been set. She explained after any revisions are made based on public comments, the final standards will go to the State Board of Education, and if adopted will become the final legal standards Pennsylvania teachers will be mandated to teach. Ms. Devlin noted some changes have been proposed but not adopted since 2002.

Ms. Devlin summarized in-person and virtual stakeholder meetings she has attended regarding

the standards with the information from those meetings being compiled into a document called the Pennsylvania Landscape Report. She stated after the stakeholder meetings, interested parties were invited to apply to be part of a committee for writing the standards or part of the steering committee that would help guide the writing of the standards.

Ms. Devlin said DCNR's position has been that DCNR supports separate environment and ecology standards with the inclusion of climate and local Pennsylvania environmental issues.

Ms. Devlin reviewed the proposed new standards as submitted to the State Board of Education. She explained that for grades kindergarten through five, all the subject matters are in one set of standards to make it easier for teachers. Ms. Devlin said the standards for middle school and high school have been separated into two sets of standards: the science standards for science, environment and ecology and separate standards for technology and engineering. She added that there is no direct standard for environment and ecology and no direct standard for climate change. Ms. Devlin advised the proposed new standards moving ecology and environment into a general science standard are contrary to processes followed by other states including Maryland, California, Wisconsin, and Washington.

Ms. Devlin reviewed the next steps in the review and approval process. She noted the regulatory process was opened in September with the State Board of Education's adoption of the proposed new standards. Ms. Devlin emphasized the importance of providing comments during the fall public comment period. Ms. Devlin suggested anyone interested in more information visit the Department of Education website.

Secretary Dunn added that DCNR is concerned that environment and ecology is being blended with science and technology, and the outcome will be that much of DCNR's mission area will be lost in the teaching of students. Secretary Dunn stated that she believes the changes will impact DCNR's current efforts to encourage a well-rounded environmental education for students. She noted she would be meeting with the incoming Secretary of Education to discuss further.

Ms. Singer said the Council will discuss further and decide whether a current work group or ad hoc committee will take up this topic and help develop comments on the proposed standards. Ms. Devlin said such support would be welcome and suggested the Council also work with Nicole Faraguna. Ms. Faraguna said there may be an opportunity for Council to participate in some environmental focus groups to talk about potential solutions.

#### **UPDATE to DCNR PLANT REGULATIONS**

**Rebecca Bowen, Division Chief, Conservation Science and Ecological Resources,  
Bureau of Forestry**

Ms. Rebecca Bowen stated the mission of the Bureau of Forestry is to ensure the long-term health, viability, and productivity of the Commonwealth's forests and to conserve native wild plants. She noted the regulations were last updated in 2018, but data is constantly being gathered to monitor the need for changes. Ms. Bowen advised there are about 3,000 vascular plants in Pennsylvania, with almost 600 classified as endangered, threatened, rare, extirpated, or tentatively undetermined. Ms. Bowen explained the definitions of these terms.

Ms. Bowen reviewed the legal authority over plants under Pennsylvania law and noted the Bureau is constantly evaluating plants species and listings, as habitats are always changing and

new scientific information frequently becomes available. She stated in the 1980s many species were added to the undetermined classification and the Bureau is now working through those listings.

Ms. Bowen discussed the various technical committees and stakeholders involved in the process for adding, deleting or changing listings and the data used to make changes or suggestions. She also reviewed the regulatory process that is followed to have changes adopted.

Ms. Bowen displayed charts showing the proposed changes. She also discussed a summary chart of the changes: 26 species to be added, 21 species to be upgraded, 5 species to be downgraded, and 31 species to be delisted. She advised the net change would be 5 fewer species listed.

Ms. Bowen advised an announcement is scheduled for publication in the PA Bulletin late next year. She stated the regulatory process is underway including stakeholder outreach through webinars.

## **WORK GROUP REPORTS**

### **MOTORIZED RECREATION WORK GROUP**

**Bob Kirchner, Chair**

Mr. Kirchner said the Motorized Recreation Work Group will have an opportunity to review the ATV policy revision before it is released to the public. He said the work group is also monitoring HB 1706, registration of off-highway motorcycles, which are not addressed in the work group's 2019 report; if it becomes law, the work group would address in the upcoming revision of the report planned for next year. Mr. Kirchner invited any Council members interested in motorized recreation to join the work group.

### **COMMUNICATIONS WORK GROUP**

**Greg Goldman, Work Group Member**

Mr. Greg Goldman stated the group is meeting monthly. He advised Council's annual report is being finalized and will be sent to all legislators; he said the work group will also send each Council member a copy for forwarding to their own representatives and senators. Mr. Goldman said the work group had developed and released its first e-newsletter and received a good response.

### **DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION WORK GROUP**

**Joanne Kilgour, Chair**

Ms. Singer advised Ms. Kilgour had to leave the meeting, but she will be scheduling a meeting of the work group soon.

### **INFRASTRUCTURE WORK GROUP**

**Geralyn Singer, Chair**

Ms. Singer advised the work group continues to work with the Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation on possible legislative tours; some Council members have offered to host tours in

their area.

**STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK GROUP**  
**Meredith Graham, Chair**

Meredith Graham noted the work group is awaiting several plans that they will be reviewing, including the final Penn's Parks for All and the draft Bureau of Forestry strategic plan.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

No public comments were provided.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Ms. Singer asked for any other business topics, and none were offered.

Ms. Singer said the next meeting will be virtual and will be on Wednesday, November 18, 10 a.m.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:07 p.m.

Notice of the September 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.