

MINUTES

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

September 22, 2021

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

DCNR

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary
Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Advisor

ADMINISTRATOR

Katrina Harris, CNRAC Administrator

GUESTS PRESENT

Eric Nelson, DCNR, Legislative Affairs (presenter)
Heather Bollinger, DCNR, Bureau of State Parks (presenter)
Mike Mumau, DCNR, Bureau of State Parks (presenter)
Mike Kern, DCNR, Bureau of Forestry (presenter)
Chuck Lutter, DCNR, Bureau of Facility Design and Construction (presenter)
Andy Evans, DCNR, Bureau of Facility Design and Construction (presenter)
Helen Delano, DCNR, Bureau of Geological Survey (presenter)
Nate Lotze, DCNR
Ellen Shultzabarger, DCNR
Cindy Thomas, DCNR
Nicole Faraguna, DCNR
Justin Royer, DCNR
Chris Novak, DCNR
John Norbeck, DCNR
Aara Vinsh, DCNR
Shea Zwerver, DCNR
Jake Newton, DCNR
Wesley Robinson, DCNR
Todd Wallace, DEP
Nate Reagle, DCNR
John Kline, Kline Associates
Tom Kase, Collins

Jason Swartz, Susquehanna Watershed Outreach Specialist
Griffin Caruso, PA House of Representatives
David Hess, PA Environmental News
Natalie Shearer, Geosyntec Consultants
Sarah Corcoran, Sierra Club
Randy Green, PSSA
Elizabeth Krug, PSSA
Clinton Ivins

WELCOME

Gretchen Leslie opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to CNRAC's virtual meeting for September 2021. Ms. Leslie read a list of Council members expected to be on the call. She stated audience members are muted, but can be unmuted to receive public comments. She explained Council members have the ability to interact with presenters and have discussions among themselves. She stated the meeting is being recorded, and by participating, consent is being given to the recording, retention and use of the session recording. She advised if after hearing the presentations, anyone is interested in making a comment, they can place their name and topic in the Chat feature, and they will be acknowledged during the public comment period.

Ms. Leslie introduced some of the DCNR staff present. She also acknowledged the individuals joining the virtual audience.

Bob Kirchner, Vice Chair, advised he would be filling in for GERALYN SINGER, Chair, and expressed appreciation for everyone taking the time to attend and DCNR's support of the virtual meeting. He also thanked the individuals presenting today who will be providing information and sharing ideas.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Mr. Kirchner noted no requests had been received for public comment; however, there will be another opportunity at the end of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council unanimously approved the July 28, 2021 minutes.

COUNCIL REPORT

Bob Kirchner, CNRAC Vice Chair

Mr. Kirchner advised a series of site tours are being hosted by Pennsylvania Parks and Forest Foundation and CNRAC members are participating.

He noted CNRAC's annual report is being finalized and will be published soon. He stated it will then be delivered to DCNR leadership, as well as the legislative and executive branches. He added that it will also be put on the CNRAC web site.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Cindy Dunn, DCNR Secretary

Secretary Dunn stated Penn's Parks for All had been released recently at an event with Governor Wolf at Pine Grove Furnace State Park. She advised Governor Wolf's comments highlighted the value of the state park system, and the Plan's focus on the next generation of parks which will serve all Pennsylvanians. She advised earlier that week the Supreme Court had announced a decision regarding the \$383 million transfer from the oil and gas fund to the General Fund and ruled it was illegal and should have been used for purpose of the trust as defined by Article 1, Section 27. Secretary Dunn stated the Governor mentioned it would be fair to make good on that decision and return the funding to the corpus through the use of American Rescue Plan funding.

Secretary Dunn also highlighted several other activities:

- Senate Bill 525 which could fund infrastructure needs is gaining co-sponsors.
- September is Trails Month with many celebratory events and a statewide trails conference.
- Walk with a Doc has been launched focusing on the health benefits of walking with medical personnel leading those walks.
- Pennsylvania is hosting several national conferences this fall, which will include state park directors, state foresters, and state liaison officers from across the country.
- Solar arrays have been installed at Presque Isle State Park. The installation will also provide canopy parking to shade cars. Other sustainability events are being held throughout the fall.
- Several legislative tours have been held recently including ones in the Erie area and Pennsylvania Wilds. Good discussions occurred, including the economic value to the state and local communities, particularly rural communities.
- In August, a dedication was held at Shikellamy State Park, Kury Point, to recognize former State Senator Franklin Kury for his authorship of the Environmental Rights Amendment.

Secretary Dunn noted a requested update on the timber market will be addressed at CNRAC's November meeting.

Rocco Ali suggested an update on high hazards dams and plans to mitigate any issues might also be a good topic at a future meeting, and Secretary Dunn agreed such a presentation could be provided if CNRAC would like a presentation.

DCNR ADVISOR REPORT

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Advisor

Ms. Leslie reminded everyone the next CNRAC meeting will be November 17. She noted a decision will be made at a later date as to whether the meeting will be virtual, in-person, or a hybrid meeting.

Ms. Leslie stated September 25 is National Public Land Day, and many parks will be having events; events are listed on DCNR's website. She advised another upcoming event is Walk in Penn's Woods on October 3, with many hiking and volunteer events to honor forest lands.

Ms. Leslie noted DCNR's website has information on the status of fall foliage. She also noted some state parks are hosting vaccine clinics.

Ms. Leslie provided an update on the proposed changes to the Department of Education's science standards. She noted more than 1,400 comments, including CNRAC's, had been received during the comments period. She advised recommendations on the comments are being developed and are anticipated by December 1.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Eric Nelson, Director of Legislative Affairs, DCNR

Eric Nelson referenced the successful legislative tours discussed by Secretary Dunn. He discussed several upcoming legislative hearings and an October tour of the Pennsylvania Wilds. He noted DCNR continues to closely monitor Senate Bill 525.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Mr. Kirchner stated officers are preparing to set up a series of visits with legislative leadership to encourage bringing CNRAC membership up to the full complement of 18 members, among other topics. He encouraged other CNRAC members who may be up for re-appointment to consider joining the meetings.

Mr. Kirchner stated a written public comment received at the last meeting had been discussed by the officers, and the officers had facilitated a connection between the citizen and the appropriate person in DCNR leadership.

PRESENTATION

PREPARING FOR NATURAL DISASTERS AND THEIR AFTERMATCH

Heather Bollinger, DCNR, Division Chief, Park Operations and Maintenance Division, Bureau of State Parks

Mike Mumau, DCNR, Park Manager, Laurel Hill State Park

Mike Kern, DCNR, Chief of Fire Protection, Bureau of Forestry

Chuck Lutter, Engineer, and Andy Evans, Chief of Landscape Design, DCNR, Bureau of Facility Design and Construction

Helen Delano, Bureau of Geological Survey

Ms. Leslie noted September is national preparedness month and a great opportunity to present what DCNR does to keep employees and visitors, as well as resources, safe before, during and after severe weather events. She noted DCNR is the largest land manager in Pennsylvania which presents many challenges.

Ms. Heather Bollinger noted two examples of natural disasters responded to in the past were an F-4 tornado in 1985 at Parker Dam State Park and Tropical Storm Lee at Worlds End State Park in 2011.

Ms. Bollinger advised the Bureau of State Parks does training and planning to prepare for responding to natural disasters. She noted the training and planning includes working with partners such as local emergency management agencies and the Pennsylvania Emergency

Management Agency (PEMA). Ms. Bollinger explained each state park has an emergency manual and instructions for emergency procedures, as well as lists of contacts. She listed the many types of incidents covered by the manual and advised staff park review the manual continually to be prepared for any type of event.

Ms. Bollinger discussed a recent event, Tropical Storm Ida, which occurred in early September 2021. She stated after a call with PEMA, state park staff met and decided to close specific overnight facilities that could be impacted by flooding. She noted some damage occurred to state parks in the southeastern portion of the state from storms and tornados; damage is still being assessed.

Mike Mumau next discussed an event which occurred in late July at Laurel Hill State Park. He noted at approximately 2 p.m. on July 29, 2021, he received a cell phone alert that a tornado had been spotted at Seven Springs and was moving in the direction of the State Park. He stated when these types of events occur, there is little time to respond so it is critical that review of the emergency manual is incorporated into staff meetings. Mr. Mumau added that meeting with local first responders is also important, as well as holding drills and exercises to establish good communication and relationships. Mr. Mumau noted staff at Laurel Hill State Park has a long-standing excellent relationship with County emergency management staff who responded to the July 29 incident.

Mr. Mumau stated on July 29 the park had a full Scout camp, two full group camps (one with special needs), and a half-full campground, totaling approximately 1,200 people staying overnight. He advised the F-1 tornado did not hit the overnight facilities and fortunately no one was injured. He noted damage was sustained to buildings and approximately 75 to 100 fully mature trees were uprooted or snapped apart.

Mike Kern discussed forestry wildfire protection preparation, noting more time is spent on preparation than response. He explained DCNR has a mandate (Act 18) to protect the Commonwealth from wildfires; the Bureau also responds to other natural disasters through PEMA when support is needed (in-state) and through the U.S. Forest Service (out of state). Mr. Kern continued explaining that both DCNR staff as well as staff provided through formal cooperative agreements are used to respond to incidents. He noted there are approximately 2,000 volunteer fire departments in the Commonwealth that DCNR works with to ensure they have proper wildfire training and understand DCNR's response procedures. Mr. Kern noted annual Federal funding is offered through grants to 100 to 150 local fire departments, depending on the amount of funding available; the funding is used for wildfire fighting equipment.

Mr. Kern discussed keeping their radio system maintained in preparation for any type of incident. He noted there are also two incident management teams that are kept trained and used throughout the Commonwealth on large-scale wildfires and other large disasters, as well as search and rescue efforts. This year one of these teams provided incident management control on a western fire, a significant accomplishment and honor for the DCNR team.

Ms. Leslie stated there was a question in the chat asking if DCNR exchanges information with local fire departments, e.g., the number of backyard fires that get out of control. Mr. Kern responded that DCNR does track wildfire reports, and there is information sharing with local fire departments. He explained the information helps with tracking where wildfires are occurring, as well as planning where outreach/education efforts might be needed.

Chuck Lutter next discussed post-storm event assessment of infrastructure after natural disasters. He noted there are approximately 130 dams, 46 of which are high-hazard dams and are required by the Department of Environmental Protection to have an emergency action plan. He clarified a high-hazard dam is not a dam in danger or failing; however, if it did fail, it could cause loss of life and property downstream. He noted the emergency action plans are updated at least every five years, and the information is shared with county and local first responders. Mr. Lutter stated that if damage from a natural disaster occurred, it would be inspected by his department to determine if the dam is safe. Mr. Lutter advised there are also bridges which require monitoring and inspection. He stated PennDOT monitors rainfall events and sends out notifications if inspections are needed.

Mr. Lutter summarized the FEMA Disaster Declarations and how assessments are conducted in order to receive Federal reimbursement for repairs. He noted the Federal funding is 75% of the total cost.

Andy Evans explained a large part of his department's design responsibility is managing stormwater run-off which can have a significant impact on park resources. He reviewed a number of stormwater management best practices and solutions with the goal of getting water away from structures and released at a determined rate. He discussed a current approach called low-impact development or green infrastructure; this environmentally sensitive approach to land development minimizes the effects of site improvements. Mr. Evans also explained several structural best management practices, such as natural structures which focus on vegetation and soil for part of the treatment of stormwater. He continued explaining the goal is to keep the stormwater in contact with the ground for a longer period of time to maximize infiltration. Mr. Evans discussed how soils and vegetation can be improved upon to minimize run-off. He noted buffers slow down run-off to allow for infiltration, as well as filtering silt and debris before it enters lakes.

Mr. Evans reviewed other best management practices of rain gardens, infiltration swales, pervious paving, stream restoration, landscape restoration, and rainwater harvesting.

Meredith Graham suggested a tour of some of the projects discussed might be of interest to Council members. She asked Mr. Evans if he was aware of any good resources for residential properties or community park planners for stormwater best practices. Mr. Evans suggested the DEP Stormwater Manual which can be found online at <http://www.depgreenport.state.pa.us/elibrary/GetFolder?FolderID=4673>. Ms. Leslie discussed a number of other partnerships DCNR has with local park planners to provide information and resources.

Janet Sweeney asked if there is a partnership between DCNR where the best management practices are being implemented and communities which might have MS4 requirements who might be able to receive credit for the green practices. Mr. Evans responded he was not aware of such a partnership. Ms. Sweeney suggested it might be a beneficial partnership to put in place.

Helen Delano discussed the Bureau of Geological Survey's role as primarily an information agency across the state—not just on state lands. She noted a national program by the U.S. Geologic Survey has replaced paper topographic maps with computerized elevation data from across the country; Pennsylvania is a leader in assembling this data. She explained a key use of the data is to assess changes over the past 10 to 15 years. Ms. Delano displayed a chart

showing the financial benefit of the elevation data to state taxpayers.

Ms. Delano noted flooding is the biggest hazard in Pennsylvania. She explained how the data collected is using in planning such as producing higher quality flood maps, improving hydrologic modeling and flood forecasting, and risk management response. She continued explaining how the data can be used to model the buildings in place and the landscape and to visualize and calculate the potential damages from different elevations of flood. Ms. Delano also discussed the upgrading of the state's hydrography data set. She explained her bureau also works with geologic hazards and sinkholes, including looking for predictive areas and responding to events.

WORK GROUP REPORTS

MOTORIZED RECREATION WORK GROUP

Bob Kirchner, Chair

Mr. Kirchner advised the Motorized Recreation Work Group did not have any updates.

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH WORK GROUP

Sarah Hall-Bagdonas, Chair

Sarah Hall-Bagdonas stated the work group continues to issue the e-newsletter and will be assisting the Infrastructure Work Group with the October CNRAC Conversations discussion on infrastructure. She encouraged anyone not currently receiving the e-newsletter to sign up.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION WORK GROUP

Joanne Kilgour, Chair

Joanne Kilgour said the work group continues to meet and receive updates from DCNR's DEI committee. She advised the work group does not have any substantive updates at this time.

INFRASTRUCTURE WORK GROUP

Dave Trimpey, Work Group Member for Geralyn Singer, Chair

Mr. Trimpey mentioned CNRAC members are participating in site tours being held by Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation. He reminded everyone of the second CNRAC Conversations being held October 27 at 9:30, Economics and the Outdoors. He listed the panelists that would be helping to lead the discussion.

STRATEGIC PLANNING WORK GROUP

Meredith Graham, Chair

Meredith Graham advised the work group did not have any updates.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No public comments were offered.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Kirchner asked for any other business topics, and none were offered.

MEETING ADJOURNED

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 11:58 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.