

June 23, 2021

TO: Governor Tom Wolf and Members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly

RE: American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

Dear Governor Wolf and Pennsylvania Senators and Representatives:

The Conservation & Natural Resources Advisory Council (CNRAC) is writing to ask your support for allocating funding for State parks and forests infrastructure through Federal funds provided by the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. Such funding is critical for Pennsylvania to maintain these vital natural resources at a time when they are most needed by our citizens and businesses.

CNRAC is a legislatively mandated Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) advisory board. We are charged with reviewing conservation and natural resource policies, laws and programs of the Commonwealth and making appropriate suggestions and recommendations to the Department, the Governor and the General Assembly.

During the pandemic, we saw Pennsylvania citizens confirm the essential nature of our parks and forests, as these resources provided the needed space for maintaining physical and mental health. Visitation rates at Pennsylvania state parks and forests have skyrocketed, with more than a million additional visitors per month. DCNR staff are working tirelessly to provide a quality experience to first-time and long-time visitors within a limited budget and with infrastructure needs across state parks and forests exceeding \$1 billion. With the significant increase in visitors, daily and short-term maintenance costs have also increased. Without additional funding for infrastructure and maintenance, Pennsylvania citizens may suffer the consequences of the lack of reinvestment in these natural resources and experience closures due to safety concerns.

Many of Pennsylvania's small and rural communities rely on outdoor recreation and tourism through our state parks and forests to support their economies and have been helped by the substantial increase in visitation to our public parks, forests and trails. Pennsylvania parks and forests support a \$29 billion outdoor economy and 251,000 jobs.

Other states are recognizing the value of investing in their outdoor resources with Federal funding, including Michigan where the Governor has proposed an investment of \$250 million, Florida where an investment of \$625 million is being proposed, and Colorado where park infrastructure is part of more than \$400 million proposed for investment in state resources.

During these unprecedented times, we urge you to invest ARP funding in state parks and forests, resources that are available to all Pennsylvanians and a critical part of our economic and personal health.

Sincerely,



Geralyn Umstead-Singer, CNRAC Chair

cc: Cindy Adams Dunn, Secretary, DCNR
Gretchen Leslie, DCNR, CNRAC Liaison