

MINUTES

CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES ADVISORY COUNCIL (CNRAC)

May 24, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT

Rocco Ali, Member
Silas Chamberlin, Member
Matt Gabler, Member
Meredith Graham, Secretary
Bob Kirchner, Vice Chair
Marcus Shoffner, Member
Geraldyn Singer, Chair
Janet Sweeney, Member
Dave Trimpey, Member
Jerry Walls, Member
Ephraim Zimmerman, Member

DCNR

Gretchen Leslie, CNRAC Advisor

ADMINISTRATOR

Katrina Harris, CNRAC Administrator

GUESTS PRESENT

Mike Walsh, DCNR (presenter)
Angie Jaillet-Wentling (presenter)
Greg Czarnecki (presenter)
Jake Newton (presenter)
Eric Nelson, DCNR
Aara Vinsh, DCNR
Alex MacDonald, DCNR
Michelle Tarquino, PennDOT
Kristin Zeigler, DCNR
Rebecca Bowen, DCNR
Tyler Sempler, DCNR
Andrew Rohrbaugh, DCNR
Nathan Reigner, DCNR
Ali Bowling, DCNR
Joseph Kellert, DCNR
Emily Eyster, PA Senate
Natalie Shearer
Randy Green

WELCOME

Gretchen Leslie opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to CNRAC's hybrid meeting for May 2023. She stated virtual audience members are muted, but can be unmuted to receive

any public comments or they can put comments in the Q&A and chat features of the virtual call. 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.

Geralyn Singer, Chair, welcomed everyone and reviewed the meeting agenda. Ms. Singer invited Council members present in-person and virtually to introduce themselves.

Ms. Singer advised Secretary Dunn is not present for the meeting as she is with Governor Shapiro at Lehigh Gorge State Park. Ms. Singer stated Council will be connecting virtually to hear Secretary Dunn's and Governor's Shapiro's comments later in the meeting. (Council members were connected virtually with the event to hear the comments during the meeting.)

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD

Ms. Singer noted the first public comment period is primarily for anyone wishing to make a comment on a topic not on the meeting agenda. No comments were offered.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Ms. Singer asked for a motion on the March 2023 minutes. Council unanimously approved the March 2023 minutes.

COUNCIL REPORT

Geralyn Singer, CNRAC Chair

Ms. Singer provided an update on Council appointments, noting there is one vacancy under the Governor's membership slots and Silas Chamberlin has been re-appointed. She reviewed the House seats noting there is one vacancy, Greg Goldman has decided to not seek re-appointment, and Sarah Hall and Ted Tharan are awaiting re-appointment. Ms. Singer advised all six Senate membership slots are filled, with Bob Kirchner and Rocco Ali having been re-appointed.

Ms. Singer noted recent Outdoor Recreation stakeholder meetings were attended by Council members, with three Council members also serving on the Outdoor Recreation Coalition. Ms. Singer asked Mr. Chamberlin to give a summary of the meetings. Mr. Chamberlin stated the meetings had 511 participants over 9 meetings, with a wide diversity of conversation topics, including conservation, outdoor recreation, economics of outdoor recreation, how to engage local governments, equity and access, and marketing. He advised Outdoor Recreation Director Nathan Reigner is reviewing the input and preparing a draft report, and then Coalition and other stakeholders will review the report with a goal of making a final recommendation regarding the establishment of a PA Outdoor Recreation Office. Jerry Walls mentioned the Lycoming County meeting was well attended, and feedback reinforced the economic value of outdoor recreation in PA. Marcus Shoffner stated the Pittsburgh area discussion included many positive comments of how an Outdoor Recreation Office can be a central party to better connect DCNR with citizens, and he is looking forward to further engagement. Mr. Kirchner noted he agreed with the other comments and added it may be a historic opportunity to reduce or dismantle some silos. Mr. Chamberlin noted there was good local and regional coverage, and Ms. Leslie noted there was also national attention focused on what Pennsylvania is doing regarding outdoor recreation.

Ms. Singer discussed the Council establishing its priorities for the next year and noted Council will be further developing action steps for each of the priorities.

Mr. Matt Gabler discussed Council members' tour the previous day of the PA Geological Survey. He noted this bureau provides critical services, including housing a large number of core samples in its library. He added that the bureau plays an important role in the discussion of carbon capture and storage.

DCNR SECRETARY REPORT

Mike Walsh, Deputy Secretary for Administration

Mr. Walsh noted the budget process for the next fiscal year is underway, and the current administration has positively engaged with DCNR staff and reinforced the importance of DCNR's mission in the Governor's first budget address. Mr. Walsh noted DCNR's proposed budget includes focusing on workforce diversity to reflect the diversity of the Commonwealth, with recruitments events at state parks and forests being fruitful. He noted the Governor's Executive Order has removed the college requirement for more than 90% of state jobs with work experience equivalency as an option.

Mr. Walsh advised he was recently in Pittsburgh where \$750,000 has been designated for creating parks on both sides of the Allegheny River and three iconic bridges (Carson, Warhol and Clemente bridges).

DCNR DEPARTMENT REPORT

Gretchen Leslie, DCNR Senior Advisor

Ms. Leslie advised the dates of the remaining CNRAC meetings for 2023 are July 26, September 27, and November 15.

Ms. Leslie discussed several staff departures including Ellen Shultzabarger who will be joining the U.S. Forest Service and Lauren Imgrund, who has joined the National Park Service.

Ms. Leslie advised that DCNR had submitted comments on the Duke Low MOA Environmental Assessment and read some of the comments.

Ms. Leslie noted there is a proposal to create PA's first national marine sanctuary at Lake Erie. She noted the public comment period ends July 18, and she can provide additional information to Council by email. Mr. Chamberlin asked if the designation would come with restrictions on recreation, and Ms. Leslie responded it was likely there would be restrictions, but she would obtain details and provide them to Council.

Ms. Leslie advised that two independent audits of the state forestry system had recently been completed with excellent results showing full conformance and no corrective actions needed. She stated the report commented on the excellent public involvement opportunities, a quality water protection program, and excellent design and construction of roads within the forestry system.

DCNR LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Eric Nelson, DCNR Director of Legislative Affairs

Mr. Nelson advised the focus in June will be on budget hearings, including meetings with legislators to discuss priorities.

Mr. Kirchner asked for the tentative date for Secretary Dunn's confirmation, and Mr. Nelson said it would likely be early June.

COUNCIL BUSINESS

Geralyn Singer, CNRAC Chair

Ms. Singer noted the Duke Low MOA letter had been finalized by email, with a quorum approving the letter, one member voting no, and one abstention. She asked for a motion to ratify the letter. A motion was made, seconded and passed to ratify the letter.

Ms. Singer thanked the Nominating Committee (Bob Kirchner, Matt Gabler, and Janet Sweeney) for working on the slate of officers for the fiscal year beginning July 1. Mr. Kirchner presented the proposed officers: Silas Chamberlin for Chair, Meredith Graham for Vice Chair, and Rocco Ali for Secretary. A motion was made, seconded and passed to elect the proposed officers.

PRESENTATIONS

Cultural Resources Program

Angie Jaillet-Wentling, DCNR's Cultural and Historical Resources Program Coordinator

Ms. Jaillet-Wentling noted DCNR's Cultural and Historical Resources Program is about two years old and was identified as a need in 2021 in the *Penn's Parks for All* report. She reviewed the state and federal legal requirements related to the need for the program, including state interagency cooperation and advance approval of construction affecting historic resources. She noted these requirements are in place to preserve, contextualize and manage the shared public heritage and cultural resources of all people to the benefit of future generations. She stated the goal is to establish DCNR as the steward of cultural resources for the Commonwealth's parks and forests.

Ms. Jaillet-Wentling explained a cultural resource is a pre-contact, indigenous, or historic period artifact, site, building, structure, landscape or collection usually older than 50 years.

Ms. Jaillet-Wentling discussed the status of documenting the resources in a digital format and noted many cultural and archeological resources remain to be identified and recorded. She stated the PA Outdoor Cultural Resources crew leadership operates year round, with the field crew operational from March through December with a focus on research.

Ms. Jaillet-Wentling explained exploratory archaeology work being at segregated CCC camps, noting it is an understudied area. She stated there were 151 such camps in Pennsylvania which operated in the 1930s and 1940s to provide work for immigrants, with only 2 camps subject to investigation prior to 2021. She noted more than 76,000 square meters were verified and more than 2,300 artifacts were recovered during the first field season last year.

Ms. Jaillet-Wentling stated upcoming projects include increasing visibility and accessibility with interpretive trail development and providing impactful public outreach.

DCNR's Climate Action Update

Greg Czarnecki, Director of Applied Climate Science

Jake Newton, Executive Energy Project Coordinator

Mr. Czarnecki showed recent headlines regarding climate change and the impact on temperature and wildfires. He discussed temperature projections for Pennsylvania and showed comparison graphics for 2041 through 2070 and also through the end of the century. He also discussed graphics showing the average number of days with temperatures exceeding 90 degrees, with more than three months of such days projected by the end of the century.

Mr. Czarnecki noted Pennsylvania is the first natural resource agency in the country to take a holistic look, including a Climate Change Adaption and Mitigation study. He stated he would be providing some examples of actions being taken as a result of that study. Mr. Czarnecki discussed facility design and construction changes that are being implemented at state parks and forests which will allow aquatic organism passage and reduce sediment buildup. He also highlighted several initiatives undertaken by the Bureau of Forestry including partnering with Western PA Conservancy on species inventories in old growth forests and estimating above-ground carbon stocks; developing a rapid assessment protocol to monitor the condition of old forests over time; and, developing tree species planting recommendations that include climate and pest/pathogen susceptibility. Mr. Czarnecki discussed several initiatives at state parks, including prescribed burns and converting cropland to pollinator meadows. He stated the Geologic Survey is leading the nation in carbon capture research, including establishing an interagency workgroup.

Mr. Czarnecki referenced a report posted on DCNR's website the previous day: DCNR Climate and Sustainability Initiative.

Mr. Czarnecki next discussed DCNR's Climate Action Plan which will build upon past successes while adding more stakeholder input and new data. He welcomed Council's input on the plan as well as ideas for gathering stakeholder input.

Mr. Czarnecki mentioned another recently completed document developed in partnership with Maryland on the impact of forest management and wood utilization on carbon sequestration and storage. Ms. Leslie advised she would share the link for this report. Mr. Czarnecki listed three major reports that will be issued in 2023: the Fourth National Climate Assessment, Pennsylvania Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the Pennsylvania Climate Impacts Assessment. He also mentioned the establishment of a PA Climate Network, a collaboration between government, NGOs, academia, and businesses.

Jake Newton reviewed several of DCNR's sustainability projects including high performance buildings which use 25% less energy with the costs of the buildings being recouped through energy savings. He noted all new construction needs to comply with high performance building standards, with 17 high performance building projects in place.

Mr. Newton discussed sustainable transportation programs, including the conversion of vehicle fleets to electric and hybrid vehicles. He advised some state parks and forests have charging stations which are offered at no cost to the public; 41 stations are in place and an additional 20

are in the design and construction stage.

Mr. Newton briefly discussed the use of solar installations at state parks and forests. He advised DCNR's goal for renewable energy is to offset 50% of electricity usage by 2030.

Mr. Newton next discussed the updating of concession contracts to reduce single-use plastics and other materials and increase the use of composable or paper products, as well as encouraging the adoption of composting into concessionaires' business models if offered by the state park.

Mr. Gabler stated it is important to be discussing proper considerations and trade-offs for grid-scale solar, even though DCNR has stated it does not have regulatory authority to implement grid-scale solar at forests.

Mr. Chamberlin asked about the rationale for offering electric charging stations at no cost, and whether it could be a source of revenue in the future. Mr. Newton responded that the cost of installing the equipment needed to accept payment was not economically efficient when initially examined, but discussions are ongoing about the best approach for the future. Ms. Sweeney asked about usage, and Mr. Newton said only 16 of the locations have dedicated meters. Mr. Ephraim Zimmerman asked if campgrounds advertised the availability of the charging stations, and Mr. Newton responded they do not but the stations do get listed on public charging stations listings.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No additional comments were offered.

MEETING ADJOURNED

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 12:34 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.