



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Budget Hearing
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Secretary
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Good afternoon Chairman Saylor, Chairman Markosek, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the budget for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

If you pay attention to trends, you'll note that businesses wanting to grow and companies looking to locate pay increasingly close attention to quality of life issues. Skilled workers and business owners want to live in communities:

- With parks where families can play;
- That are walkable and bikeable with diverse recreational opportunities;
- That offer clean water and are sustainable; and
- That integrate quality of life with economic development.

The governor's Amazon in PA website notes our state boasts an ideal blend of thriving cities, walkable urbanscapes, and charming small towns with plenty of rugged woodlands and lush countryside to explore off the beaten path – including 121 beautiful state parks.

These are the amenities that DCNR and its partners provide to Pennsylvanians that both support our recreational and tourism economy through a revitalized park and forest system, and ensure that we are conserving our natural resources, protecting our people, and the environment.

DCNR's proposed total budget of about \$392 million provides funding for our current level of operations, maintains current complement levels, and provides us with the funding we need to continue to make Pennsylvania an attractive place to live, work, and do business.

In his budget address, Governor Wolf emphasized a focus on an ambitious plan to ensure Pennsylvania's workforce has the skills and education to succeed in 21st century jobs.

One of the best examples of the Administration's commitment to workforce development and skills training is DCNR's youth conservation corps.

This program offers work experience, job training, and educational opportunities to young people who complete recreation and conservation projects, mostly on Pennsylvania's lands. It helps them get real world experience on active work projects, and helps them gain skills that will make them more attractive and productive job candidates.

The Outdoors Corps looks to ignite a love of the outdoors and a passion for conservation of natural places in young people, who because of screen time and school schedules are increasingly disconnected from Pennsylvania's natural and cultural heritage.

Makiah Cintron, who participated in the Wilkes-Barre Outdoor Corps crew last year said . . . *“For me as a person, I think I developed a really good work ethic and positive attitude when working with others. I definitely see a different side to myself when I am working outdoors.”*

This youth engagement program is among six strategic initiatives DCNR is focusing on. These agency-wide efforts include practices that are responding to and lessening the impacts of climate change; putting acres of trees in the ground along streams to improve the quality of our water; conserving forest lands and promoting forest product jobs including efforts to address worker’s comp challenges for loggers; and continuing leadership on green practices, including installing chargers for electric vehicles in state parks.

Governor Wolf’s budget proposal helps us continue and expand these crucial initiatives, while also keeping our focus on cost savings and efficiencies. DCNR has ongoing projects aimed at reducing costs and increasing efficiency in operations including Guaranteed Energy Savings Act (GESA) projects that will begin this spring, which will save hundreds of thousands on energy bills while providing significant upgrades to our infrastructure.

Through these efforts, DCNR is continuing to demonstrate that we are a good steward of the commonwealth’s resources, and are using the resources we do get effectively to improve the quality of life of every Pennsylvanian.

One hundred and twenty five years ago this summer, Pennsylvania dedicated its first state park at Valley Forge, now in the national park system. Around the same time the Pennsylvania Forestry Commission was being formed,

with an excerpt from the Forestry Association's publication noting . . . *"the preservation of extensive woodland areas is one of the most important duties the citizen owes to the future."*

We at DCNR take great pride in our conservation history, and draw on it to guide our work as we respond to today's natural resource and environmental opportunities and challenges.

We look forward to working with you in the coming year to uphold the rights to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment guaranteed by our Constitution for all Pennsylvanians.