



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION  
AND NATURAL RESOURCES

**House of Representatives Budget Hearing Testimony**

**Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn**

**Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

**February 24, 2020**

Good afternoon Chairman Saylor, Chairman Bradford, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss the budget for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR).

In his budget address, Governor Wolf reminded us that Gifford Pinchot and Rachel Carson imagined a Pennsylvania with clean air, clean water, and public lands accessible to all. The hard-working staff members of the department are the stewards of Pennsylvania's natural resources and work to honor that conservation legacy for every citizen today and for generations yet to come.

Governor Wolf's vision is to make Pennsylvania a leader in workforce development and give everyone in our commonwealth the opportunity for a happy, healthy, and successful life. DCNR and its partners play a key role in this vision, helping provide for and protect the parks, trails, clean water, breathtaking landscapes, and other amenities that ensure both quality of life and economic growth—benefiting Pennsylvania's local governments, businesses, and citizens alike.

By conserving and stewarding our commonwealth's natural resources, DCNR is vital to Pennsylvania's \$29 billion-dollar outdoor recreation industry—an industry that supports 251,000 direct jobs and attracts people to our state. DCNR also infuses roughly \$47 million annually into the Pennsylvania economy to private engineering and construction companies throughout the state through ongoing park and forest infrastructure projects.

The outdoor recreation opportunities DCNR provides are crucial to helping Pennsylvanians of all ages stay active and healthy, boosting quality of life while reducing healthcare costs. And the department's many public services—such as collecting geological and seismic data, training community firefighters, and managing invasive species—protect our citizens and are essential to having a government that works.

DCNR's proposed total budget of about \$439 million allows the agency to continue anchoring Pennsylvania's outdoor recreation economy and providing these essential services.

This budget includes \$2.5 million for additional rangers to protect the public and safeguard resources in our millions of acres of state parks and forests. Adding more rangers saves taxpayer money—a ranger costs pennies on the dollar compared to the cost to clean up the illegal dumping and vandalism that can occur in unmonitored areas. And the benefit of additional rangers goes beyond state parks and forests—in some communities, DCNR rangers are the only law enforcement presence for miles around.

As we celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Earth Day, the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bureau of Forestry, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of DCNR, our department is well-positioned to enhance our core work while providing effective, common-sense solutions to new challenges facing Pennsylvania. Here are some of DCNR's key initiatives in 2020:

- Bolster youth engagement and workforce development through the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps. This program offers work experience, job training, and educational opportunities to young people who complete recreation and conservation projects. It helps them gain real-world experience and skills that will make them more attractive job candidates for Pennsylvania businesses.
- Collaborate with local stakeholders to plant thousands of trees along waterways, which will prevent costly, dangerous flooding and keep the water safe for drinking, fishing, and swimming.
- Implement practices to protect Pennsylvanians and our natural resources from severe storms, invasive species, wildfires, and other impacts of climate change that threaten lives, the economy, and our natural resources.
- Pioneer energy efficiency and sustainability practices that save money, reduce carbon emissions, and support renewable-energy jobs. For example, installing solar arrays in state parks.

DCNR faces pressing needs in our state parks and forests—there is a documented need of more than \$1 billion to fix and maintain the roads, bridges, dams, sewer systems, and other crucial infrastructure that allows visitors to enjoy our parks and forests safely. And across the commonwealth, local governments and volunteer groups are working to create parks, playgrounds, green spaces, and trails that generate revenue and build community character.

These conservation and recreation projects would be impossible without dedicated funds like the Keystone Fund and Environmental Stewardship Fund and the local money that grants from these funds leverage. Also, Governor Wolf's Restore Pennsylvania proposal would provide significant funding. The boost in funding would help fix deteriorated infrastructure in state parks and forests, prevent destructive flooding, revitalize local parks, and create miles of hiking, biking, and ATV trails—allowing more Pennsylvanians to safely enjoy the outdoors.

DCNR's staff members work tirelessly to welcome millions of visitors to Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, enhance communities, engage young people, and conserve the commonwealth's natural resources and outdoor heritage. I'm proud of them.

We look forward to working with you over the coming year to make Pennsylvania a great place to live, work, and play.