



**House Appropriations Budget Hearing
Testimony by Cindy Adams Dunn
Acting Secretary
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

March 16, 2015

Good afternoon Chairman Adolph, Chairman Markosek and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to address the budget priorities of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Governor Tom Wolf has presented a 2015-16 budget that works to rebuild the middle class in Pennsylvania starting with three priorities: jobs that pay, schools that teach, and government that works.

The governor's proposal recognizes that creating new energy jobs, harnessing our natural resources responsibly and protecting our environment will all bolster Pennsylvania's economy for the future.

I am pleased to say that DCNR's proposed budget for the next fiscal year shows an overall increase of about \$8.3 million, which will allow the department to operate as we currently do. I think our budget is a reflection of DCNR's value in the lives of Pennsylvanians, our inspired work, and the fact that we operate a lean and efficient organization.

Under the governor's proposal all of our parks will remain open, and we will continue to pay attention to maintaining and improving our facilities to ensure our visitors have a quality experience.

That's important to local economies, especially in rural areas, as our award-winning state park system generates more than a billion dollars annually in economic activity and supports 13,000 jobs that pay.

The governor's budget for the Bureau of Forestry allows us to continue to manage 2.2 million acres of state forest land for multiple purposes including protecting habitat for wildlife and native plants, providing an array of public recreational opportunities such as hiking, hunting and wildlife watching, and for timber and mineral extraction.

Earlier this year, Governor Wolf signed an executive order reinstating the moratorium on new leases for oil and gas development in Pennsylvania's state forests and parks.

DCNR agrees that this approach recognizes the immense ecological and recreational value of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, while allowing responsible, monitored development to occur on approximately 700,000 acres of existing leases and areas where DCNR does not own mineral rights.

This approach allows the department to focus staff resources on managing existing and future development; continue to monitor impacts of gas extraction; refine guidelines and management practices; and fully engage stakeholders on impacts to a full suite of state forest values.

The governor's budget proposal maintains funding for the geologists and other scientists who lead this work.

Our expertly managed state forests also provide a steady, continuous supply of quality timber to the market, supporting thousands of jobs in Pennsylvania's wood products industries. Governor Wolf has pledged to continue Pennsylvania's traditions of harvesting timber and hardwood and to look at ways to add value to our economy through the forest products industry.

DCNR's role touches not only state park and state forest lands and issues, but communities as well.

Related to recreation and conservation, we anticipate that dollars from the Keystone Fund generated from a portion of realty transfer taxes will be up by about \$1.4 million, continuing our work to support the grants for trails and local projects that add greatly to quality of life and local economies.

Recent economic impact studies of 11 of the state's longer rail trails show they attract more than 3 million visitors a year, and generate more than \$91 million in user-spending annually.

DCNR's community work is built around a landscape-scale approach to conservation, using partnerships at a regional and local level to make communities and economies sustainable by capitalizing on resources including parks, forests, trails and rivers as a local economic development tool.

As just one example, in the Pennsylvania Wilds region in northcentral Pennsylvania increases in tourism related employment earnings and tax revenues are exceeding statewide averages.

The proposed budget takes an important first step in returning stability to our budget by reducing DCNR's reliance on revenues generated from leases of

commonwealth lands for natural gas extraction, restoring \$20 million from General Fund monies to the department's general government, state park and state forest operations.

This positions us in the future to use Oil and Gas Fund revenues to focus on conservation and recreation rather than just operations.

DCNR's many public services – from geological and seismic data to community firefighter training, forest pest management, development of recreational trails, protective oil and gas leases – are all important to jobs that pay and government that works, and to ensuring a vital and healthy Pennsylvania for future generations.

I am proud to be nominated to lead an agency of extremely dedicated men and women who are the best in the country when it comes to land management, providing enjoyable outdoor recreation opportunities and engaging communities. I thank them for their dedication and commitment to our mission. We will continue to do our best to meet our mission with available resources, and to look for innovative ways to do our work more efficiently, more effectively, and more economically. The governor's proposed budget will allow us to manage the department to protect our natural heritage and secure its future for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians. I look forward to working with you.