

Senate Confirmation Hearing
Remarks by Cindy Adams Dunn
Secretary
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
April 30, 2019

Good Morning. Chairman Yaw, Chairman Yudichak, members of the Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee, and guests. It is a pleasure to appear before the committee regarding my nomination to remain for another four years as the secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

I am honored to be nominated for a second time by Governor Wolf. The last four years have been the culmination of a life-long goal of mine to protect the extensive and wonderful natural resources of this commonwealth and connect people to outdoor experiences. I believe we have achieved a great deal in the last four years, but there is much work still to be done.

I have appreciated the opportunity to meet individually with many Senate members. I am grateful for the time and courtesy extended to me, and I value our conversations and the opportunity to work with each of you in the months and years ahead.

This is a time of great reflection for me about the mission of conservation as we just celebrated Earth Day, and look to its 50th anniversary next year, and as we work together toward a Pennsylvania that is sustainable and resilient to the impacts of climate change.

I am fortunate that I had parents that enabled me to have a close relationship with the outdoors as I was growing up. They connected me to DCNR's mission at a young age.

Now as an adult, I see lots of opportunities to make Pennsylvania's environment better, and to provide experiences in nature for all of our citizens.

Governor Wolf's vision is to make Pennsylvania a leader in workforce development – providing opportunities for citizens and creating the talented workers that draw businesses to our communities.

In our commonwealth, those workers can expect to find walkable cities with green spaces and nearby trails; small towns along rivers with parks close to home; breathtaking forests and landscapes for exploring in all four seasons -- a blend of economic development and quality of life.

These are the amenities that DCNR and its partners provide to Pennsylvanians. Our work supports our recreational, tourism, and forest products economies and ensures that we are conserving our natural resources, protecting our people and the environment.

Our millions of visitors to state parks help local communities prosper, generating more than \$1 billion in expenditures each year and supporting almost 13,000 local jobs.

Our forest system supports more than 60,000 jobs in the state's multi-billion-dollar timber and energy industries. State forests also promote clean water and air; conserve scenic beauty and habitat; and act as a haven for those who like to hunt, fish, hike, and pursue other outdoor activities.

Investments made in local parks and places to play outdoors are proven in their power to build a sustainable economy for Pennsylvania. Our support of regional approaches to conservation empowers citizens, local governments and organizations to take private action on behalf of the communities and landscapes they love.

Studies show trails provide visitors with unique experiences and result in millions of dollars to related businesses in the towns that border them.

The department's many public services – collecting geological and seismic data, community firefighter training, forest pest management, planting urban trees, development of recreational trails – are all important to a government that works, and to ensuring a vital and healthy Pennsylvania for future generations.

Of course, we are not without our challenges.

The vision of great conservation leaders at critical times in Pennsylvania's history has resulted in the system of state parks and forests that Pennsylvanians enjoy and love today.

Our modern challenge is caring for our public lands, focusing on improvements for aging facilities; protecting our resources against a changing climate; maintaining our well-managed forests; and ensuring high management standards for our award-winning state parks.

For me, helping the commonwealth confront our changing climate will be an important part of my time as secretary should I be fortunate enough to be confirmed for a second time. We at DCNR will continue our leadership on efficiency and green practices by taking measurable steps to reduce our carbon footprint on the lands we manage. Given our current trajectory, we will derive 50 percent of our electricity in state parks and forests from renewables by 2030, mainly through solar installations.

We'll also help communities and partners reduce flooding and sequester carbon through tree plantings and provide grants and technical assistance to implement green infrastructure and sustainable practices.

I can't emphasize enough how important a role our forests will play in the future. We already know how important they are in sequestering carbon and harmful gases and reducing flooding, and those needs will only grow exponentially in future years. Engaging partners in

putting acres of trees in the ground along streams to improve the quality of our water and prevent flooding will be vitally important to the sustainability of our communities.

Over the next four years, I intend to work with Governor Wolf to improve the efficiency of our current assets and operations. The Governor's Restore Pennsylvania infrastructure plan will provide significant funding to enable environmental projects and new recreational opportunities across the state. Restore Pennsylvania will include infrastructure and maintenance projects in state parks and forests, creation and revitalization of new local parks, and funding for hiking, biking, and ATV trail projects.

It's the only plan that can truly address the commonwealth's infrastructure needs, including key environmental priorities.

My team also will focus on growing our efforts around youth engagement through DCNR's Pennsylvania Outdoor 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. We need young people to be actively engaged in caring for the environment, so we have future stewards to carry out the work of DCNR and our partners. The PA Outdoor Corps 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.

At DCNR, we have tremendous staff with outstanding dedication to the mission of the organization. We also have terrific partners. Both are needed to ensure the future success of the agency.

Of course, the relationships we have built with you and your colleagues in the General Assembly are also vital to our success. I look forward to continuing our work together.

It would be an honor to follow in the footsteps of the great conservation leaders before me. I ask that you give me the opportunity to do so, to make Pennsylvania a great place to live, work, and play.

Thank you for your consideration.