

Senate Confirmation Hearing
Remarks by Richard Allan
Acting Secretary
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
May 3, 2011

Good Morning. Madam Chairman, Senator Yudichak, Senators and guests. It is a pleasure to appear before the committee regarding my nomination to become the fourth secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

I also 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 ahead.

First of all, let me say I am honored to be nominated by Governor Corbett to lead DCNR. The agency's programs and services are steeped in history, with parks and forests programs dating back more than 100 years.

Our mission is just as important now as it was then, and will continue to play a vital role in the future of Pennsylvania: maintaining and improving state parks; managing state forest lands to assure their long-term health, sustainability and economic use; administering grant and technical assistance programs that promote land conservation and sustainable communities; and providing outdoor connections for our citizens and visitors.

DCNR has transitioned itself from a land management model to an agency that not only protects and enhances the state's irreplaceable natural treasures, but also improves the health and quality of life of our citizens and supports communities, economies and industries.

I am a life-long resident of Pennsylvania, where I grew up in the scrap recycling industry in the northeastern part of the state. Most recently, I served as the executive director of the Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic Chapter of the Institute of Scrap Recycling Industries. I also

provided environmental and energy consultation to producers and developers of various energy sectors including electric, solar, wind and coal.

I am very familiar with the department and its issues, most recently as a member of Governor Corbett's Energy and Environment Transition Team. I have served on several Pennsylvania government advisory committees, including the Climate Change Advisory Committee, the Recycling Fund Advisory Committee and Recycling Markets Development Center, which is instrumental in innovative market development for hard to recycle materials.

My understanding of the importance of recreation and conservation to our well-being led me to help found the North Branch Land Trust, which manages more than 10,000 acres, and Back Mountain Recreation, which serves two school districts, 10 communities and more than 5,000 students. I have served on the boards of the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and the Pennsylvania Resources Council, making me very familiar with conservation advocacy and citizen action.

I am an enthusiastic bird watcher and also enjoy biking. I have been asked numerous times over the past month to name my favorite state park, and although I would not want to pick one out of the 117, I have spent a lot of time with my family enjoying the outdoors at Ricketts Glenn and Frances Slocum state parks near my hometown in the northeast.

And now, I find myself in a new way responsible for protecting and enhancing the very resources and outdoor opportunities I have enjoyed my entire life.

Great conservation leaders and managers have sat in my seat, and I am humbled to be chosen to follow what they so finely laid out for us. It's a daunting responsibility, but I'm eager to take it on.

I am very fortunate to be taking the wheel at an agency that already has established itself as a national leader. Since beginning my work at DCNR at the beginning of April, we were notified that our state forests are once again independently certified as “well-managed,” recognizing our skills in balancing the different uses of our forests, including Marcellus Shale gas activity.

At the end of this month, our 5-year comprehensive outdoor recreation plan will be recognized as Best in the Nation by the National Association of Recreational Planners. Our report is not just taking up space on a shelf, but is leading to new efforts and partnerships to promote healthy and active communities, trail resources and greater opportunities for people to experience the outdoors and connect with nature.

And, we continue to celebrate our Gold Medal state park system, also chosen as a national model.

I will expect DCNR staff to continue to look beyond the ordinary. We will look for new and imaginative solutions to move our work forward in lean economic times. I have no doubt DCNR employees will deliver what we ask of them.

We are not without our challenges. Being from the coal regions, I understand how resource extraction can have a long-term impact on people and landscapes. I know that we will need to continue to be vigilant about managing and monitoring natural gas activities on our public lands, and to the greatest extent possible limit its impacts on our sustainable community and conservation landscape efforts.

Admittedly, I still have a lot to learn about DCNR, from biodiversity, to nature tourism, to forest pest and mineral resource management. I am working hard and learning fast. In the coming months, I plan to hit the road visiting our parks, forests, conservation landscapes and

regional offices. I believe no one could manage a system so large and complex without understanding its staff, without familiarity of its physical assets and without listening to all its stakeholders. Constant communication will be key to our progress as we seek out ways to make DCNR even stronger.

Of course, I will look to forge strong relationships with you and your colleagues in the General Assembly. We both serve the same constituents, so a free and constant dialogue is necessary to satisfy their needs. I pledge to you DCNR will continue to be accessible and responsive.

I'd like to leave you with an underlying thought about DCNR. Most people don't think of DCNR as an economic development agency.

However, studies show that the visitors to state parks help local communities prosper, returning more than \$9 for every one dollar of state money invested in them; generating more than \$928 million in local expenditures each year. Our certified well-managed forest system supports the state's multi-billion dollar timber and energy industries as well as providing clean water and air, hiking and other outdoor activities, scenic beauty and habitat. Trails also are economic generators. The Great Allegheny Passage in the western part of the state alone provides \$40 million annually in spending by bicyclists and walkers in local communities.

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 the wise use of all of our resources including parks, forests, trails, minerals and rivers as local economic development tools.

These initiatives will continue to play an important role in the economic revival of cities and towns across the state. Strengthening and institutionalizing these and other efforts this year and next, and working to connect deeply to communities and partners will be our focus.

My vision for this department is to hold it up as the best conservation agency in the country, because how we manage our lands; protect our open spaces; grow our communities; inspire our citizens; and preserve precious habitat will shape our future as Pennsylvanians.

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. Thank you for your consideration.