



**House Appropriations Budget Hearing Testimony
Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
March 2, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chairman Harris, Chairman Struzzi, and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to discuss Governor Shapiro's 2026-2027 proposed budget for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR). I want to personally thank Governor Shapiro and members of the General Assembly for their commitment to ensuring DCNR can continue to conserve and sustain our natural resources for years to come.

The eyes of the world will be on Pennsylvania this year as America celebrates its 250th birthday. From the NFL Draft at Point State Park to the Christmas Day reenactment at Washington Crossing Historic Park, our public lands will be places where people go to see large events, and to learn more about the history and the story of this country. And, of course, our parks and forests are free, open, and accessible to all – providing families and residents with an affordable getaway and time outdoors.

It is more important than ever that we continue to improve Pennsylvania's public lands by protecting and improving the infrastructure in our state parks and forests because, if we do not, they will be left behind in safety, accessibility, and quality—making it harder to enjoy the outdoor spaces that define our Commonwealth.

Governor Shapiro's proposed budget underscores a shared commitment to stewardship, service, and the long-term health of Pennsylvania's natural resources. It reflects a vision that supports today's needs while preparing for the generations to come. Thanks to Governor Shapiro's commitment over the past three years, Pennsylvania made the single largest investment in park and forest infrastructure in decades, and we will be bringing on our 125th state park at Laurel Caverns in Fayette County.

Outdoor recreation is critical to our economy and to our health. Building on previous strategic investments, we are thankful that the Governor's proposed Commonwealth budget for the 2026-27 Fiscal Year from all sources includes \$665 million for DCNR to support our work.

Pennsylvania's parks and forests and the outdoor industry contribute more than \$19 billion to the Commonwealth's gross domestic product and around 120,000 jobs to our workforce. Governor Shapiro knows that small towns and small businesses around the Commonwealth benefit from our presence and our investments in these resources, and we are closely connected to the people and the places near DCNR locations.

Recreation is an important part of the public services DCNR provides whether it is on state parks or forests or municipal parks and open space. In addition to recreation, DCNR manages the Commonwealth's largest working forests. They provide a sustainable flow of forest products that are key to a \$24 billion forest products industry. We also work closely with private landowners to maximize their conservation and forestry goals.

Just last month, DCNR announced a nearly \$82 million investment in new state funding to support more than 295 recreation and conservation projects across Pennsylvania. This is a significant investment statewide that will create new recreational opportunities, expand outdoor access, protect natural resources, and strengthen local communities.

The funding will support projects in 58 counties, helping communities improve parks and playgrounds, build and repair trails, conserve open space, restore rivers and watersheds, and grow local economies through outdoor recreation. We also recently announced a \$2.1 million investment in funding for new ATV and snowmobile facilities as well as trail projects.

When it comes to workforce development, our Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps shows what is possible when we align programs with real-world opportunity. The corps has empowered more than 1,400 young people with hands-on job training while strengthening our public lands. So far, 128 corps members have been hired in jobs in conservation, with 62 members hired at DCNR.

Public safety also remains a cornerstone of the Governor's proposal. DCNR's wildfire crews, rangers, and first responders play a critical role in protecting visitors, communities, and natural landscapes. The FY 2026-2027 proposed budget reinforces this mission by supporting the staff, training, and equipment needed to keep Pennsylvanians safe in every corner of the Commonwealth.

It is going to be an exciting year ahead and we hope that the members of the General Assembly and all Pennsylvanians get out there and enjoy the outdoors. Again, I want to thank you for helping secure much needed funding that will strengthen and protect our natural resources while benefiting Pennsylvania's communities, businesses, and residents. We look forward to partnering with you in the coming year to further our mission and ensure that people, businesses, and communities across our Commonwealth continue to thrive.