

# S h a p i n g

A Sustainable Pennsylvania



DCNR's Blueprint for Action



**BUILDING  
UPON OUR  
MISSION**

With its two core bureaus—State Parks and Forestry—dating back more than 100 years, DCNR's predecessors historically have been defined as land management agencies entrusted with the stewardship of public lands. Since its establishment in 1995, DCNR maintained this core responsibility and began reaching beyond its borders and into communities with the addition of community recreation and conservation assistance and geological expertise.

This core mission of protecting and enhancing Pennsylvania's natural resources remains a cornerstone of DCNR's service. Today, we see additional need for advocacy and leadership on broad environmental issues around land and water. DCNR is uniquely



qualified to contribute leadership, knowledge and resources in support of Pennsylvania's citizens and their environment.

This plan lays out a new future for the agency, one in which DCNR is viewed as the steward for our state park and forest lands; a chief advocate for the natural resources of the state; the lead agency for land conservation and outdoor recreation; and a critical player in economic growth and community revitalization. Within this expanded approach to our mission, we will work to improve stewardship and management of state parks and forests; promote statewide land conservation; create outdoor connections for citizens and visitors; and help to build sustainable and attractive communities.

*The primary mission of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources is to maintain, improve and preserve state parks; to manage state forest lands to assure their long-term health, sustainability and economic use; to provide information on Pennsylvania's ecological and geologic resources; and to administer grant and technical assistance programs that will benefit rivers conservation, trails and greenways, local recreation, regional heritage conservation and environmental education programs across Pennsylvania.*

## A PUBLIC PLAN

Contained within DCNR's action plan are the goals and targeted actions that more broadly interpret DCNR's mission as a leading advocate and steward of the state's natural resources.

The plan is a culmination of a year of input and communication with people from both inside and outside DCNR. More than 1,800 people participated in the development of the plan in 2003 and early 2004 by attending meetings and planning sessions, providing written or online feedback, or helping to write or review early concept papers and the draft plan.

In the end, people from inside and outside the agency helped to chart the future of DCNR. This open communication served to confirm the department's core mission of protecting and enhancing Pennsylvania's natural resources. It also reinforced the belief that DCNR can reach beyond its borders and use its programs and expertise to help improve the quality of lives of all Pennsylvania residents.

The full version of *Shaping a Sustainable Pennsylvania*:

*DCNR's Blueprint for Action* is available on DCNR's web site at:

[www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)



## FRAMING THE FOUNDATION FOR SUCCESS

To assure meaningful, ongoing attention to this plan, DCNR will develop annual implementation plans addressing key actions that set attainable, measurable goals. The success of this continuing effort will depend on building DCNR's capacity to carry it out by:

- **Enhancing management and leadership skills within the department**
- **Building stronger communications and input structures within the department**
- **Building capacity through partnerships**
- **Improving marketing, education and communication**
- **Using science and technology as a foundation for decisions**
- **Measuring and learning from the outcomes of our work**

Effective and consistent communication with DCNR staff and stakeholders, governmental agencies and local governments, and the broad citizenry of the Commonwealth, has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of the success of DCNR's action plan.

With wisely directed resources and enhanced internal capabilities, DCNR will play a significant role in the day-to-day lives of the citizens of Pennsylvania and the future of the state.



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# Goal: Improve Stewardship and Management of State Parks and Forests

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DCNR manages nearly 2.4 million acres of state park and forest lands. These lands provide economic, recreational, ecological, geological, and aesthetic values to the Commonwealth. In order to sustain the many uses of these lands for generations to come and



promote healthy ecosystems, we must build our capacity to use the best science and technology to guide our

management. We must look for ways to support economic development through the sound management of natural resources and increased outdoor recreation tourism opportunities. And we must continue to acquire lands that



protect or enhance the existing system, or provide other ecological or recreation values.

**Recommendation 1:** Manage our lands based on the conservation of healthy ecosystems.

**Recommendation 2:** Support economic development through the sound management of natural resources.

**Recommendation 3:** Improve the agency's ability to make resource management decisions.

**Recommendation 4:** Continue to acquire lands that: protect and enhance existing state parks and forests, large forested watersheds and riparian corridors; conserve biologically important areas; and/or create connections with other public lands, open spaces, and outdoor recreation and education opportunities.

**Recommendation 5:** Expand outdoor recreation and outdoor learning opportunities on state park and forest lands.

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# Goal: Promote Statewide Land Conservation



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**DCNR** owns only a small percentage of Pennsylvania's lands and waters. The long-term sustainability of our natural resources is in the hands of local communities, state and federal agencies, nonprofit conservation organizations, and private



landowners. With its resources and expertise, DCNR can help people make informed decisions. DCNR must help communities manage their growth, protect special lands, and reduce the loss of open space. We can also assist the hundreds of thousands of individual landowners understand the conservation values of their properties, and help those with forests develop tools that will produce sustainable results.

**Recommendation 6:** Help communities manage growth and reduce the loss of open space.

**Recommendation 7:** Provide information and educational programs to help protect important ecological lands, wildlife habitat, geologic features, and recreational lands.

**Recommendation 8:** Provide educational, technical and financial assistance to protect and sustain privately owned working forests.

**Recommendation 9:** Work with private landowners and others to encourage responsible stewardship on lands with significant conservation value.



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# Goal: Build and Maintain Sustainable and Attractive Communities

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The natural, heritage and recreational resources within a community contribute to quality of life for its citizens. Lack of planning and intergovernmental coordination threatens these resources and contributes to the decline of Pennsylvania's communities. Using its financial resources and technical assistance, DCNR must help foster regional and county-level planning that conserves natural and heritage resources and promotes recreation. DCNR will target its assistance to

projects that invest in established communities, build green infrastructure and greenways connections, and encourage new outdoor recreation- and heritage-based business development.

## **Recommendation 10:**

Empower county governments and regional planning entities to conserve natural and heritage resources and promote recreational activities through cooperative planning.

**Recommendation 11:** Make reinvestment in our established communities a priority by targeting DCNR programs and leveraging other state and federal agency program activity.

**Recommendation 12:** Advance projects and planning that demonstrate sustainable growth and green infrastructure network development and conservation.



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## **Goal:** Create Outdoor Connections for Citizens and Visitors



Citizens with an appreciation of the outdoors and an understanding of our natural resources are more likely to make choices that will protect these resources. DCNR can create recreational and educational connections with the outdoors by improving visitor experiences and increasing awareness of what is available. We must also expand and target educational messages to help people make lifestyle decisions that will enhance and protect natural resources. Since most Pennsylvanians live within suburban and urban communities, DCNR must create learning opportunities within these areas.

### **Recommendation 13:**

Increase citizens' and visitors' ability to experience the outdoors.

### **Recommendation 14:**

Increase citizens' awareness and knowledge of natural resources and create inspiring experiences in the outdoors to inform their decisions on important conservation issues.

**Recommendation 15:** Bring our stewardship expertise and educational programs to urban and suburban communities.





Commonwealth of Pennsylvania  
Edward G. Rendell, Governor

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources  
Michael DiBerardinis, Secretary

[www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us)