

**West Virginia Legislature**  
**PARKS, RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE**

**FINAL REPORT**  
**to**  
**Joint Committee on Government and Finance**  
**2014 - 2015 Interims**

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*Delegate Ruth Rowan*

**The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met each month during the 2014-2015 period beginning in May 2014 to discuss and study parks, recreation and natural resources issues. The topics assigned to the committee by the Joint Committee on Government and Finance were as follows:**

**SCR 88-** Requesting Joint Committee on Government and Finance study financial aspects of state parks' and forest' amenities

- Study additional funding sources for state parks

During the 2014 – 2015 Legislative Interim meetings, your Committee has met with the representatives of state government and the forest industry and **REPORTS** as follows:

**MAY 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Tuesday, May 20,

2014. Art Shomo, Wildlife Resources Section Public Information Specialist III, presented the West Virginia Hunting, Fishing and Trapping Map demonstration. Bob Beanblossom, District Administrator, Parks and Recreation Section-Management Areas, and Emily Fleming, Assistant to the Director of Natural Resources, presented an overview of SCR 89- Reassignment of five wildlife management areas to DNR. Curtis Taylor, Chief, Wildlife Resources Section-Management of Wildlife Management Areas answered various questions from members of the committee in regard to SCR 89. Discussion followed.

## **JUNE 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Tuesday June 17, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. Curtis Taylor, Chief, Wildlife Resources Section of DNR, provided the committee with update on changes to the West Virginia Hunting and Fishing License system which will be implemented on January 1, 2015. Bob Beanblossom, District Administrator, Parks and Recreation Section, DNR, discussed the upcoming committee visitation planned for July 14-July 16, 2014 to Pipestem Resort State Park, Bluestone Wildlife Management Area and Tour of Bluestone Wildlife Management Area (Bull Falls Section).

## **TOUR OF STATE PARKS FACILITIES JULY 2014 14-16, 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, July 14-July 16<sup>th</sup> at Pipestem State Park for a tour of the park and surrounding facilities. Members toured Pipestem Resort State Park, Bluestone Wildlife Management Area and the Bull Falls Section of Bluestone Wildlife Management Area. Members of the subcommittee met with various park administrators and superintendents on site. They discussed the various needs and what is entailed in keeping these areas open and available to the public as well as various ongoing resource management issues.

## **AUGUST 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met for out of town interims scheduled in Bridgeport, West Virginia. Members met at Prickett's Fort State Park on August 26, 2014, from 2:00-5:00 p.m. for a tour of the state park and facilities. Questions and discussion were ongoing throughout the on-site visitation. Members were able to meet with park administrators and employees do discuss the history and ongoing needs for this state park as well as budget concerns.

## **SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, September 8, 2014 at 11:00 a.m. John McGarrity, Senior Planner, WV Development Office discussed Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, Land and Water Conservation Funding. Mr. McGarrity fielded various questions from members. Noelle Starek, Staff Counsel, discussed the committee visitation planned for September 28-September 30, 2014 to Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, Greenbrier River Trail, Watoga State Park, Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park

and Beartown State Park. Questions and discussion followed.

## **TOUR OF STATE PARKS FACILITIES SEPTEMBER 28-30, 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on September 28-September 30, 2014 at Cass Scenic Railroad State Park for a tour of the park and surrounding facilities. The Subcommittee toured Cass Scenic Railroad State Park, Greenbrier River Trail State Park, Watoga State Park, Droop Mountain Battlefield State Park and Beartown State Park. Questions were presented to administrators and park superintendents in regard to budget and specific needs for 2015.

## **OCTOBER 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on October 20, 2014 at 4:00 p.m. Steve Brown, Planner, WV DNR- Wildlife Resources Section presented an overview of the stream restoration project. Paul Kinder, West Virginia University discussed the role that West Virginia University plays in regard to research and education of stream restoration.

## **NOVEMBER 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, November 17, 2014 at 10:00 a.m. for a Joint Interim Meeting of the Joint Commission on Economic Development and the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee. SCR 84 was discussed on behalf of the Joint Commission on Economic Development requesting that Joint Committee on Government and Finance study implementation of advertising programs to promote tourism. Commissioner Amy Schuler Goodwin, Deputy Secretary, Commissioner, Division of Tourism, Department of Commerce discussed the impacts of social media. Joe Black, Research Analyst of the WV Division of Tourism presented overnight visitor profiles for West Virginia. Chairman Laird chaired the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee portion of the meeting. Dave Arnold, Class VI, Mountain River at Adventures on the Gorge, gave a presentation concerning the challenges facing the rafting industry within the state. Rick Johnson, River Expeditions, provided members with a synopsis concerning the decline in tourism dollars and corresponding decline in whitewater tourists.

## **DECEMBER 2014**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, December 15, 2014 at 5:00 p.m. Curtis Taylor, Chief of Wildlife Resources Section, presented the Bobcats Population Dynamics Study and corresponding supporting research. Brad Leslie, Assistant Chief of Parks and Recreation Section, District Administrator of Vacation Areas, presented the committee with an update on the Cass Scenic Railroad lease agreement, and the status of the Beechfork and Cacapon Resort development projects..

**JANUARY 2015**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee will meet on January 12, 2015 at 5:00 p.m. Paul Johansen, Assistant Chief in Charge of Game Management, West Virginia DNR will discuss the big game hunting season statistics. The Final Report will be presented to the Committee as well.

Your Committee **RECOMMENDS** that it continue to meet and receive updates related to the forest industry.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

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*Senator William R. Laird IV, Chair*

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*Delegate Jeff Eldridge, Co-Chair*

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*Delegate Danny Wells, Co-Chair*