

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

**FINAL REPORT**  
**to**  
**Joint Committee on Government and Finance**  
**2016 - 2017 Interims**

*Members*

*Senate*

*Senator Robert Karnes, Co-Chair*  
*Senator Douglas Facemire*  
*Senator William Laird*  
*Senator Kent Leonhardt*  
*Senator Mike Hall*  
*Senator Mark Maynard*  
*Senator Herb Snyder*

*House*

*Delegate Allen Evans, Co-Chair*  
*Delegate Brent Boggs*  
*Delegate Daryl Cowles*  
*Delegate Jeff Eldridge*  
*Delegate Bill Hamilton*  
*Delegate Don Perdue*  
*Delegate Ruth Rowan*  
*Delegate Danny Wagner*  
*Delegate Brad White*

**The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met three times during the 2016-2017 period beginning in August 2016 to discuss and study parks, recreation and natural resources issues.**

During the 2016 – 2017 Legislative Interim meetings, your Subcommittee has met with the representatives of state government and forest industry and **REPORTS** as follows:

**AUGUST 2016**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, August 22, 2016 at 8:00 a.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Lieutenant Colonel David Trader, WV Division of Natural Resources, who discussed the recent flooding efforts from the Natural Resources officers. A number of officers quickly went into affected areas of White Sulphur Springs, Ronceverte, Richwood, and many other areas. Their primary responsibility was search and rescue missions. In addition, they were incredibly helpful in transporting medical and other supplies into the affected regions using their rescue boats. Following the presentation, Colonel Trader responded to questions and comments from the committee members.

The second presenter was Mr. Don Bailey who discussed a number of the damaged areas from the recent flooding. Mr. Bailey said, that unfortunately, some affected regions of the state fell outside of the FEMA declaration, leaving that cost solely to the State of West Virginia. Mr.

Bailey outlined some of the damage incurred at Babcock State Park and Greenbrier State Forest and believed the cost to fix a large land slide in Greenbrier County could cost upwards of \$30 million to repair. Mr. Bailey responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The next of business was a presentation from Mr. Brad Leslie, the Chief Engineer for the WV Division of Natural Resources. Mr. Leslie turned the committee's attention to a number of the recent upgrades at a number of the State Parks around the state. For example, Blennerhassett Island has developed a new boat dock, Chief Logan State Park has undergone a number of recent renovations including a new filtration system, updated cabins, and a new restroom. Pipestem Lodge was able to get their HVAC upgraded recently, along with a new water supply system at Droop Mountain State Park. Following the presentation, Mr. Leslie responded to questions and comments from the committee.

Mr. John McBrayer, Division of Highways, briefly addressed the committee regarding SCR 43 and the request to map the state's unlined, unpaved roads that could be used by ATVs and ORVs. However, Mr. McBrayer stressed the importance of some direction and collaboration from both the legislative and executive branch so that the DOH understands the scope of the project. Following the presentation, Mr. McBrayer responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The final order of business was the discussion of a possible Parks Tour to a number of the flood-affected parks and state forests. Following some discussion, Co-Chair Evans motioned for staff and the DNR to work out a proposed tour and for it to be presented to the Joint Committee on Government and Finance for approval. Chairman Karnes put the motion before the committee and the motion was adopted.

## **SEPTEMBER 2016**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Sunday, September 18, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Robert Beanblossom, U.S. Forest Service volunteer, discussed the deforestation and wildfire problem in parts of the United States. Approximately 10 million acres burnt last year alone. In addition, in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, we would lose approximately 50 million acres a year through deforestation. Mr. Beanblossom also showed the committee a clip from a movie entitled "The Cradle of Forestry in America" that helped put this problem into context for the members. Mr. Beanblossom also responded to questions.

Col. Jerry Jenkins, Chief of Law Enforcement Section, spoke regarding the Law Enforcement Program Fund. Col. Jenkins said one of the main things that fund allows DNR to do is the relief work; such as during this past June. Also, all the training the DNR is required to do is paid for with money from that law enforcement program fund. Currently, the fund has a surplus due to officers retiring and not rehiring all those positions. However, DNR is looking to purchase and repair rescue boats in the next few years and the cost is \$80,000 for one new boat. Following his presentation, Mr. Jenkins responded to questions and comments from the committee.

## **TOUR OF STATE PARKS FACILITIES SEPTEMBER 11-13, 2016**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on September 11-September 13, 2016 at Babcock State Park in Fayette County, West Virginia for a tour of the park and surrounding facilities. Additionally, the Sub-Committee toured Hawks Nest State Park along the New River Gorge and the Greenbrier River Trail where substantial amounts of damage from the June floods were examined. Questions were presented to administrators and park superintendents in regard to budget and specific needs for 2017.

## **JANUARY 2017**

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, January 9, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Mr. Gary Foster, WV Division of Natural Resources, Assistant Chief of Big Game Management, to discuss the 2016 Big Game Report. Following his presentation, Mr. Foster responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The next order of business was a presentation from Mr. Randy Kelley, WV Division of Natural Resources, Elk Project Leader, to discuss the status and implementation of the Elk Restoration Project. Following his presentation, Mr. Kelley responded to questions and comments from the committee.

*Respectfully Submitted,*

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*Senator Robert Karnes, Co-Chair*

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*Delegate Allen Evans, Co-Chair*