

West Virginia Legislature
PARKS, RECREATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES SUBCOMMITTEE

FINAL REPORT
to
Joint Committee on Government and Finance
2017 -2018 Interims

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The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met multiple times during the 2017-2018 period beginning in August 2017 to tour, discuss and study parks, recreation and natural resources issues.

During the 2017 – 2018 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 21, 2017 at 8:00 a.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Mr. Adam Hodges, New River Gorge Trail Alliance, who discussed a number of new tourist opportunities at the New River Gorge and the surrounding areas. He spoke about the alliance's focus on future development of the region, particularly as it relates to connecting trails in Fayette and Greenbrier counties. In addition, Mr. Hodges spoke about the focus of applying for federal grants in order to achieve these goals and to spur economic growth in West Virginia. Following the presentation, Mr. Hodges responded to questions and comments from the committee members.

The second presenter was Dr. Christian Albidso, Professor, West Virginia University, who began his presentation discussing a number of West Virginia's serious health concerns including heart disease and diabetes and particularly how lack of exercise and activity is the leading contributor to those chronic diseases. Dr. Albidso also spoke about the importance of encouraging bicycle riding and safety throughout the state by prioritizing bike parking and making our cities more bicycle friendly. Following the presentation, Dr. Albidso responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The next order of business was a presentation from Mr. Bill Currey with the Coal River Group. Mr. Currey spoke about the explosion in popularity of flat water kayaking throughout West Virginia, but particularly in Southern West Virginia. He spoke about the tremendous tourism opportunity and economic development possibilities of kayaking. Mr. Currey also shared with the committee that the Dick's Sporting Goods in Charleston, WV sells more kayaks than any of their locations within a five-hundred-mile radius. Following the presentation, Mr. Currey responded to questions and comments from the committee.

SEPTEMBER 2016

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Tuesday, September 19, 2017 at 12:00 p.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Mr. Randy Block, Eastern Representative, Sharetrails.org and Blue Ribbon Coalition. Mr. Block discussed how the adventure economy is a growing, billion-dollar industry that West Virginia needs to get a piece of. Mr. Block said approximately \$51 billion is spent annually on the off-roading economy and provides for just under one million jobs all throughout the nation; generating millions of dollars in state and local taxes. In addition, Mr. Block discussed the importance of protecting access to public lands. They provide the backbone of these RV and off-roading opportunities. Following the presentation, Mr. Block responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The second order of business was a presentation from Mr. Steve Salisbury, Government Affairs Manager, Off-Highway American Motorcyclist Association, discussing a number of ways to promote the motorcycle lifestyle and protect the future of motorcycling. He spoke about the terrific example the Hatfield-McCoy Trail has done at using trail systems for economic development and to encourage tourism throughout the region. In addition, Mr. Salisbury spoke of legislation from the previous session that the government affairs team was focused on, SB 691, which passed during the 2017 Regular Session and added definitions for OHV and OHRV, and called for digital road maps. Following the presentation, Mr. Salisbury responded to questions and comments from the committee.

TOUR OF STATE PARKS FACILITIES SEPTEMBER 10-12, 2017

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on September 10-12, 2017, to tour Cacapon State Park, Berkeley Springs State Park, and Ridge Fish Hatchery. Questions were presented to administrators and park superintendents in regard to budget and specific needs for 2018.

NOVEMBER 2017

The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Sunday, November 12, 2017 at 3:00 p.m. The first presenter before the committee was Mr. Kent Spellman, Consultant, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Washington D.C. Mr. Spellman discussed how his organization is constantly working to improve and add additional new trail systems within the state of West Virginia. Also, Mr. Spellman discussed what an economic driver the rail trail system is. The adventure economy is a growing, billion-dollar industry that can benefit West Virginia. Following the presentation, Mr. Spellman responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The second presenter before the committee was Ms. Christy Bailey, Executive Director, National Coal Heritage Area Authority. The National Coal Heritage Authority recognizes the coalfields of Southern West Virginia as a place of national historic and cultural importance. The authority helps southern West Virginia to gain new prominence on the national tourist maps. Ms. Bailey also discussed the economic importance of the National Coal Heritage Area Authority, including the over \$200 million in economic activity, over 2,700 jobs, and over \$16 million in state and local tax revenues. Following the presentation, Ms. Bailey responded to questions and comments from the committee.

Further, the Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, November 13, 2017 at 3:30 p.m., to travel to tour the Elk Management Area within the Tomblin Wildlife Management Area in Logan County, WV.

DECEMBER 2017

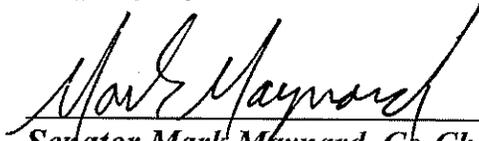
The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Tuesday, December 5, 2017 at 8:00 a.m. The presenter before the committee was Sam England, Chief, Division of Parks and Recreation, Associate Superintendent, spoke about the Department of Education's Simulated Workplace Program in state Parks and state forests. Mr. England also responded to questions and comments from the committee.

JANUARY 2018

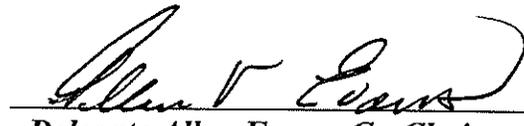
The Parks, Recreation and Natural Resources Subcommittee met on Monday, January 8, 2018 at 8:00 a.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Mr. Sam England, Chief, Division of Parks and Recreation, Associate Superintendent, spoke about the economic significance and positive impacts of state Parks and state forests. Mr. England also responded to questions and comments from the committee.

The final order of business was a presentation from Mr. Gary Foster, WV Division of Natural Resources, Assistant Chief of Big Game Management, to discuss the 2017 Big Game Report. Following his presentation, Mr. Foster responded to questions and comments from the committee.

Respectfully Submitted,



Senator Mark Maynard, Co-Chair



Delegate Allen Evans, Co-Chair