

**PENNSYLVANIA BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP**  
**Board Minutes**  
**25 April 2002**  
**Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission Headquarters, Harrisburg, PA**

**Board Attendees:** Bill Adams, Steve Balzano, Jacqui Bonomo (for Larry Schweiger), Jim Brett, Tom Buzby, Michelle Cohen, Laurie Goodrich, Randy Gray, Paulette Johnson, Cliff Jones, Tom Kerr, K.C. Kim, Doug Kuntz, Blaine Puller, John Rawlins, Ann Rhoads, Dessie Severson (for Tom Pauley), Dick Whiteford. **Others:** Jo DeBolt, Dan Devlin, Frank Felbaum, MaryLinda Gangewere, Sue Thompson.

Chairman Gray called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM. The minutes of the 31 January 2002 meeting were approved as presented. Kerr presented a financial that showed cash on hand or reimbursable of \$238,379.75 statement as of 31 March 2002. We have received two additional grants, \$50,000 from the Heinz Endowments for the state-of-the-state report and \$20,000 from DEP for an environmental education initiative.

#### **PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

Thompson reported that PBP has rented office space in the Terminal Buildings complex off Carson Street in Pittsburgh's South Side for a monthly rental of \$300. MaryLinda Gangewere has been hired as full-time Executive Administrator. A website is being organized with the domain name pabiodiversity.org.

Thompson has presented several talks, including the keynote address at PA Trout's Coldwater Conference, Bowman's Hill Land Ethics Symposium, and Shippensburg Biodiversity Conference. She will attend an Environmental Leadership Institute 28 April - 4 May and will give a presentation on PBP on 6 May 2002 to the PA legislature's Joint Conservation Committee.

Shane Mahoney will present a talk on 16 May 2002 at the Four Points Sheraton in Harrisburg sponsored by PBP and the Governor's Sportsmen's Advisory Council. He will also participate in several events in Pittsburgh the following weekend.

#### **RELATIONSHIP OF PBP WITH THE TIDES CENTER OF WESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

Gray introduced Jo DeBolt, Director of the Tides Center of Western Pennsylvania. PBP is a project of Tides, a relationship that provides fiscal services, 501(c)3 status, and a structure for employee benefits, payroll, and insurance. PBP pays Tides a flat rate of 9% of income to provide these services. Tides delegates to the PBP board all responsibilities regarding program, employee evaluation, and fundraising.

#### **TASK FORCE REPORTS**

**Education** - Johnson reported that the Pennsylvania supplement to the World Wildlife Fund's Windows on the Wild biodiversity curriculum is in the design stage. At "listening sessions" held by the Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education throughout the state, biodiversity was the topic most frequently selected by participants. Word was just received from DEP that a grant has been approved for teacher training on biodiversity involving several partners including PCEE, PP&L, and DCNR.

**Bioinformatics** - Severson reported that a PA biodiversity listserv has been established with Ken Klemow as moderator. It is open to any interested persons, and board members were urged to spread the word. For now it is limited to a maximum of 4 messages per day.

#### **AGENCY REPORTS**

**DCNR Office of Biodiversity** - Thompson and several other PBP board members were part of a panel that met on 9 Apr 2002 to advise DCNR Secretary John Oliver regarding the establishment of an Office of Biodiversity. After some discussion, it was decided PBP should send a follow-up letter urging Sec. Oliver to move ahead with the creation of the office and to report back to the panel on progress with the goal of having the new structure in place before the current administration leaves office in January.

**DCNR Gas Lease** - Dan Devlin, Chief of the Planning Section DCNR Bureau of Forestry, made a presentation on the proposed auction of deep well gas rights beneath nearly 500,000 acres of state forest lands. Devlin emphasized several points: (1) All affected lands are part of the multiple use forest zone and have been leased before for shallow well gas exploration.; (2) only the deep gas rights are affected, lessees will not have exclusionary rights; (3) state parks, state forest natural and wild areas, and buffer zones have been excluded from the lands to be leased; (4) DCNR has 50 years of experience in leasing lands for gas and oil wells; (5) the lease DCNR has drawn up is very strong, especially in the area of environmental controls and remediation; (6) the cost and risks involved in establishing wells of the depth required will limit applicants to experienced and well-funded companies; (7) maximum density will not exceed 1 well per square mile (640 acres); (8) district foresters will have the final say regarding siting of drilling pads, roads, pipelines, and other surface infrastructure; (9) DEP permits are another layer of environmental control over the process; (10) proceeds from the leases go into the Oil and Gas Fund, which by law must be used for recreation and conservation purposes.

Doug Kuntz, whose company is drilling wells in New York into the same formation, described the seismic exploration process that precedes the actual siting of wells. Kuntz confirmed that the lease requirements are very stringent.

Devlin revealed that DCNR Secretary Oliver had just announced a postponement in the auction date at the recommendation of the Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council, to allow for public comment.

After discussion it was decided that PBP should send a letter to Secretary Oliver expressing concern over the lack of biological and ecological inventory data for the affected areas, for example county natural areas inventories have not been conducted in several of the counties where the leases would be concentrated. Another concern was the potential for fragmentation of large forested blocks.

**Deer Management** - In response to the Pennsylvania Game Commission's recent actions, PBP will send a letter urging that bonus antlerless licenses be made available for use on public as well as private lands. Copies of the letter will be sent to the chairs of the fish and game committees in the House and Senate. This issue must be voted on again at the June meeting of the commission.

#### **BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PLAN UPDATE**

Gray reported that the planning committee met in the morning to review the edited text for the state-of-the-state report. He urged board members to get their comments to Sue by 3 May. In preparation for the next step in the planning process, the planning committee will be expanded. More industry representation is especially needed. Thompson and Gray will visit industry and trade groups to encourage wider involvement. In addition the task forces will be asked to reconvene for the purpose of preparing draft recommendations for inclusion the state conservation plan.

*approved 18 July 2002*