

PENNSYLVANIA BIODIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP
Board of Directors Meeting
18 July 2002
PA Fish and Boat Commission Headquarters, Harrisburg, PA

Board Attendees: Jacqui Bonomo, Tom Buzby, Michelle Cohen, Tom Ford, Laurie Goodrich, Randy Gray, Steve Hoffman (for Cindy Dunn), Cliff Jones, Sally Just, Ken Kane, Tom Kerr, K.C. Kim, Doug Kuntz, Peter Pinchot, Blaine Puller, Ann Rhoads. **Others:** Frank Felbaum, Luz Margarita Figueredo Cardona, Joseph Frassetta, MaryLinda Gangewere, Jim Grace, Sue Thompson. **Excused:** Paulette Johnson, John Rawlins, Dessie Severson, Richard Whiteford.

Chair Randy Gray welcomed Luz Margarita Figueredo Cardona, a visitor from Cuba, and noted that Sally Just has replaced Steve Balzano as the representative of DCNR.

Minutes of the April 25, 2002 meeting were approved as presented.

President Sue Thompson presented a financial report showing total operating and program expenses for 2002 as of June 30 of 114,639. It was noted that fees to the Tides Foundation, at \$13,500, were higher than had been anticipated due to their policy of taking administrative fees off the top when grants are received. The report was approved as submitted.

The meeting began with a presentation by James Grace, State Forester, on changes made in the proposed lease of state forestlands for deep well gas exploration and extraction. The amount of land to be offered for lease has been reduced by more than half to 218,000 acres, buffers around exceptional value and high quality streams have been increased to 600 feet and 300 feet respectively and no surface activity will be allowed in state parks, wild areas, or natural areas. In addition lighting at drill sites will have to be shielded to prevent nighttime light pollution. Waivers will only be granted with the approval of the state forester and if they result in an increase in the net environmental protection area. The auction of potential lease holdings is now scheduled for August 8, 2002.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Chairman Gray announced that he would appoint a nominating committee in preparation for the Board meeting that will be held in December.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thompson announced that the Partnership has moved into new offices at 16 Terminal Way, Pittsburgh, PA 15219-1209; tel: 412-481-4100; fax: 412-481-1019.

Proposals have been submitted to the Pennsylvania Environment and Energy Consortium to look at biodiversity data as an indicator of environmental quality (\$31,320) and to look at techniques for listing threatened and endangered species, including the issue of the genetic significance of geographically peripheral populations (\$83,733). A proposal to the Wild Resources Conservation Fund for 2003-2004 for \$31,614 would address the availability of human resources for biodiversity in the areas of science, policy, and education in Pennsylvania.

Shane Mahoney presented a lecture in Harrisburg, co-sponsored by PBP and the Governor's Sportsmens Advisory Council, and one in Pittsburgh, co-sponsored by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy. Thompson was interviewed on the radio and will participate in the Ned Smith Festival on July 27.

Thompson was asked to attend the upcoming meeting of the Pennsylvania Game Commission and reiterate our concerns about the proposed rule to limit surplus tags to private lands.

AGENCY REPORTS

DCNR – Just reported that Steve Balzano resigned from his position as state biodiversity director effective June 30, 2002. She is serving in an acting capacity. DCNR is moving ahead with creation of the Office of Biodiversity Conservation, which is envisioned to include the Wild

Resource Conservation Fund (existing staff of three to move), PNDI oversight (new position), and a biodiversity outreach program (new position). The new state budget contains funding for two new positions for the office plus the biodiversity director. Three additional positions will be sought in the future.

Cliff Jones recommended that the position of biodiversity director not be filled until the new governor is in office in order to get buy-in from the new administration. It was suggested that PBP send a letter to the governor-elect at the earliest opportunity after the election outlining the qualities needed in a state biodiversity director.

Just also reported on the ongoing effort to upgrade the PNDI system. An advisory committee has been formed and will meet for the second time on July 25. The Department is working with ESRI on issues of web accessibility. The goals are to make the review process more efficient, enable pre-process planning to occur, and facilitate conservation planning. K.C. Kim raised the issue of taxonomic expertise, stressing that the PNDI program needed to pay more attention to the quality of data in the system.

PA Fish and Boat Commission – Tom Ford reported that a license fee increase would be sought for 2004. PFBC is currently borrowing funds to complete necessary infrastructure repairs. Proposals are due September 4 for the new round of funding for state wildlife conservation projects, details are available on the PGC website.

TASK FORCE REPORTS

Bioinformatics – Thompson reported for Dessie Severson who was unable to attend, that the PBP listserve is up and functioning.

Education – Thompson reported for Paulette Johnson who was unable to attend, that a grant has been received from DEP to do teacher training on biodiversity. The first phase of that project is developing a list of biodiversity concepts tied to the state curriculum standards. The recommendation was made that the Science Task Force should be involved in the review of the concepts to assure their scientific accuracy.

Science – Cohen reported concern within the task force regarding the possible disposal of the mycological herbarium at Penn State University since the retirement of C. B. Wolfe. Thompson will prepare a letter from PBP to PSU asking that the collection remain in Pennsylvania.

STATE OF BIODIVERSITY REPORT

Progress has been made on the state of biodiversity report. The plan is to print 10,000 copies of the ca 50-page report and 15,000-20,000 copies of a 4-page executive summary. The individual reports from the consultants will be posted on the website. Gray asked board members to submit comments to Thompson on the draft report and recommendations for specific points to be included in the executive summary by August 2, 2002. The finished report should be available for distribution prior to the end of 2002. The next board meeting will be scheduled in conjunction with the rollout of the report. Specific plans to be developed.

approved 4 December 2002