

Talking Points for the 125th Anniversary Celebration of the PA State Forest System and PA State Parks

-It is truly an honor for me to be here with you to celebrate this special occasion.

-Today we celebrate some of the greatest natural treasures God has given to our Commonwealth—our state forests and our state parks.

-Fortunately for Pennsylvanians, some of our great grandmothers and great grandfathers had the foresight and vision to understand the importance of carefully managing our vast state forest resources—2.2 million acres strong—and creating the special nature gems, which are our state parks. Those seeds of preservation first planted in 1893 are reaping benefits for all of us today.

-I am proud to say that some of those early visionaries were women—Mira Lloyd-Dickey, “the mother of forestry” and noted conservationist, Rachel Carson. They were trailblazers and pioneers in their day, and they inspire us today.

-The importance of our state forests and state park system is not merely about preserving beauty for beauty’s sake—although surely Pennsylvania’s natural beauty rivals any other region of the world. There are serious economic, environmental, and moral reasons for preserving and properly managing our forest resources. From our hardwood industry to eco and recreational tourism, our natural lands and forests generate billions of dollars in economic activity and support tens of thousands of jobs. Preserving the environmental integrity of our state forest lands protects the health and safety of the citizens of our commonwealth. And finally, preserving these natural treasures is a moral imperative—it is incumbent upon us to carry forward the natural legacy handed to us by Pattison, Lloyd-Dickey, Carson, Pinchot and Goddard among others, and pass it on to our children, who can then pass it on to their children.

-Secretary Goddard wanted all Pennsylvanian’s to live within twenty-five miles of a state park. I am fortunate to have a state park in my county, French Creek, and the Nolde Environmental Education Center in my district. I have also had the pleasure of working with staff at DCNR and private groups dedicated to conservation to add new lands to the roles of our state park and forest lands—like Gibraltar Hill and Buck Hollow. To be sure, these are names well-known mostly to locals and preservationists, but nonetheless, all are important pieces of this larger natural puzzle that we steward and are obliged to sustain.

-Our state parks and state forests are nationally recognized for their beauty, importance, and how well they are managed. Indeed, the health and vitality of these Pennsylvania natural wonders is achieved not just by government agencies and our dedicated state employees alone, but also by the extensive network of non-profit, private and volunteer organizations—like the PA Parks and Forest Foundation, 10,000 Friends, the Natural Land Trusts, and local conservation organizations—each working cooperatively and collaboratively to make our state forests and parks the best system in the nation. And that network of public and private partnerships will help ensure that our state parks and forests endure the stress and challenges we humans impose on nature and guarantee that the Pennsylvanians of today and future Pennsylvanians enjoy the economic, environmental and recreational benefits that Pennsylvania nature has to offer for generations to come.

Thank you.