

**January 10, 2024 Meeting of the  
Coastal Zone Advisory Committee**

The regular meeting of the Coastal Zone Advisory Committee (CZAC) was called to order at 9:30 a.m. This meeting was held in hybrid format, provided both in-person at the RCSOB 12<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room and virtually via Microsoft Teams.

**The following committee representatives were in attendance:**

Stacey Box	Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP)
Casey Hanson	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC)
Sean Gimbel	Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC)
Drew Ames	Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT)
Michael Stutts	Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC)
Cynthia Dunlap	PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)

**The following agency representatives (non-CZAC members) were in attendance:**

Randy Brown	DEP, CRMP Southeast Regional Staff
Emily Ashberry	DEP, CRMP Southeast Regional Staff
Shelby Clark	DEP, CRMP Northwest Regional Staff
Susan Weaver, P.E.	DEP, CRMP
J. Samantha Burton	DEP, CRMP
Joe Sieber	DEP, CRMP
Matthew Walderon	DEP, CRMP
Shane Gutsie	DEP, CRMP
High Garst	DEP, Policy Office
Robert Banks	Erie County Dept. of Planning and Community Development
Amy Verbofsky	Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC)
Kristen Walczesky	Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC)
Ernest Szabo	Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA)
Erin Wiley Moyers	PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
Greg Czarnecki	PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR)
Ellen Brody	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
Diana Olinger	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

**I. Introductions:**

Stacey Box began the meeting at 9:30 a.m., welcomed attendees and led the introductions.

## **II. Review and Approval of Minutes:**

Stacey Box asked for approval of minutes from the previous CZAC meetings. Having a quorum today, the minutes of the last four meetings (6/14/23, 1/18/23, 1/15/22 and 6/16/21) were approved.

## **III. Coastal Resources Management Grant Program Update:**

Stacey Box said that the FY 2023 grant awards announcement is pending, awaiting approval to be announced. The announcement will be shared with CZAC members upon approval. Also, the FY 2024 grant round had closed as of October 2023. The Department received 23 applications, including 14 from the Delaware Estuary Coastal Zone and 9 from the Lake Erie Coastal Zone. The Coastal Resources Management Program (CRMP) did not submit competitive Bipartisan Infrastructure Law applications this year and plans to hire someone to develop a grant application and guidance for a competitive grant round for 2025 funding.

Stacey reported that CRMP submitted an application to NOAA for non-competitive Inflation Reduction Act Funding. NOAA offered non-competitive formula funding similar to annual coastal zone grant Section 306 funding. Applications were due in early November and funds will be available April 1, 2024. Programs will have five years to spend the funds.

## **IV. Guest Speaker - Climate Change in Penns Woods, What Does the Future Hold?**

Greg Czarnecki, Director of Applied Science (DCNR) provided CZAC with a presentation on climate change, illustrating current and projected environmental changes in Pennsylvania. Greg presented measurable, observable global climate trends and adverse effects on the state, such as changes to carbon dioxide concentrations over time, temperature and precipitation increases. He shared future heat projections as well as increases in extreme rainfall and weather events and reduced snow cover. It is expected that invasive plant and aquatic species will proliferate and produce adverse effects in our forests, ponds, streams and lakes.

Greg presented additional projected impacts in terms of greenhouse gas emissions and threatening sea level rise studies with potential damaging levels upon the Delaware Estuary and Lake Erie. Greg noted DCNR's response to climate change for its forests and parks which receive millions of visitors each year. To protect its vast array of buildings, dams, bridges and water treatment plants, DCNR is reengineering its infrastructure in a manner to combat the forces of climate change and supports and promotes green infrastructure and natural solutions. Greg discussed the use of forest carbon sequestration, and urban tree planting that can serve to capture carbon.

Relatedly, Drew Ames of PennDOT added that his agency has received an \$850,000 grant to develop wildlife crossings, connectivity and work with climate mitigation partners throughout the state.

## V. Local Coastal Zone Updates

### **Delaware Estuary Coastal Zone Update:**

Amy Verbofsky, Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) presented updates on many trail projects in the southeast region, including news that the K&T trail, a \$2.5 million project, is now open. The Cobbs Creek trail project is under construction and will be a four-mile connector trail. Amy updated CZAC on the Christian to Crescent construction project on the Schuylkill Banks trail. This project is expected to be completed by 2025 and will connect to the swing bridge crossing slated to open later this year.

Amy discussed the status of the Tinicum to Heinz Refuge Connector feasibility study, the Route 291 Chester safety improvements, the Reaney Street project, Chester city, and Keep Delco Beautiful, all project located in Delaware County.

Finally, Amy announced the municipal coastal vulnerability snapshots tool, ([www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)) highlighting success stories and climate change planning efforts among Delaware Estuary communities.

### **Lake Erie Coastal Zone Update:**

Shelby Clark updated the group on various projects and activities of the Lake Erie region. She noted that Robert Banks is the new Erie County Department of Planning and Economic Development Administrator of the Coastal Resources Management Program.

Shelby reported that Presque Isle Bay was designated as an Area of Concern (AOC) in 1991, due to two beneficial use impairments in Erie's industrial past. The Bay was removed from the AOC list in February 2023, and staff will monitor, sample macroinvertebrates, fish, water quality and sediments in the bay watershed. Data analysis will be conducted in 2024, and a report will be developed.

The US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) will dredge the federal waters portion of Presque Isle Bay in 2024. This area includes the entrance channel, harbor basin, approach area and two harbor areas. DEP has asked USACE to complete a Dredged Material Management Plan that will evaluate options for dredge materials disposal other than in the open lake. Dredging is expected to occur between June 15 and September 15, 2024.

The Oliver Hazard Perry Shipyard (OHPS) is in the application process with the US Navy to donate a decommissioned ship to be used as a public museum. If the process is approved, a donation recommendation would then be made. If the donation request is accepted, the application for permitting process could then begin.

Two seaplane base landing areas were opened in May 2023, including one in Presque Isle Bay and one on Lake Erie. Both are located parallel to the Presque Isle peninsula.

Shelby announced partner updates for controlling invasive species in the region. Several

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partners are addressing terrestrial and aquatic invasives through innovative techniques, including the Lake Erie Watershed Cooperative Weed Management Area Committee that treated hydrilla on several Elk Creek Watershed sites. Relatedly, the PFBC now has an aquatic invasive species disposal station at the Walnut Creek Marina. Sea Grant released its smart phone application for identifying aquatic invasive species, now available to the public. Finally, Shelby reported on the “Sea Grant Lagers to Lakes” educational events. This effort is a Sea Grant partnership with a local brewery to craft several beers designed to promote awareness of invasive impacts to the environment, and to emphasize the importance of clean water.

### **VI. Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study**

Matt Walderon provided an overview of the Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study. In September 2022, DEP signed a nine-party cost share agreement with the seven other Great Lakes states and the USACE. This study will be conducted over a five-year period and will begin with a basin-wide analysis. USACE will compare existing data sets and examine Great Lakes modeling, conduct 14 workshops throughout the member states and then compile the various recommendations received from workshops in each state. Issues involved for study and analysis are projecting future lake levels and conditions, low and high-water trends, storms, flooding, erosion and accretion.

The study will provide recommendations and lessons learned in a final report, which may be similar to that of the *2022 South Atlantic Coastal Study Report*. For more information, please see:

[News Releases -- South Atlantic Division \(army.mil\)](#)

and

[Great Lakes Coastal Resiliency Study > Great Lakes and Ohio River Division > Programs \(army.mil\)](#)

### **VII. Agency Updates:**

Sean Gimbel (PFBC) announced that the application period for the Commission’s Lake Erie Access Improvement Grant Program and Boating Facilities Grant Program closed on December 30, 2023. PFBC staff will soon begin reviewing the applications and expect to recommend projects for funding in the spring of 2024. Sean noted that some applications were received from applicants in the lower Delaware River Basin.

Cindy Dunlap (DCNR) noted that DCNR announced the Autumn round of ATV/snowmobile grant availability. The grant round opens on January 16<sup>th</sup> and will close in April 2024. Also, the Bureau of Recreation and Conservation has an opening for a position to develop a strategy and guide diversity, equity and inclusion.

Casey Hanson (PHMC) noted that the Commission’s Keystone Grant round has a deadline of March 1, 2024.

### **VIII. Public Comment:**

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There were no public comments.

### **IX. Other Business:**

Matt Walderon said that the CRMP is involved with a significant project with the Coastal States Organization and Great Lakes Commission, involving the development of a fish spawning habitat on a 10-acre site in Lake Erie. CRMP is seeking a state agency to be a permittee for the project. At this time, the Great Lakes Commission has applied for \$12 Million from NOAA for this project, and a funding announcement is expected in April 2024.

Stacey Box said the CRMP (Matt Walderon) has been working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to undertake a Water Resources Development Act Section 1135 study to address adverse environmental and physical impacts from the structure at Conneaut Harbor just across the state line in Ashtabula, Ohio. Downdrift impacts have been seen since construction of the harbor structure decades ago, and this project has been a CRMP priority for almost as long. CRMP has asked for NOAA permission to use NOAA funding for the Commonwealth's obligations for this project, and will partner with Ohio to cost share in the effort.

Ellen Brody (NOAA) relayed that there are no updates regarding the development of the Lake Erie Quadrangle National Marine Sanctuary. The previous federal open comment period has ended and NOAA is moving forward with the nomination process at this time.

### **Adjournment:**

The meeting adjourned at 11:42 a.m.