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Pennsylvania Governor's Budget Invests in Energy Development, Conservation of State Environmental and Recreational Resources

HARRISBURG, Pa., March 3, 2015 /Nassau News Live/ — Governor Tom Wolf's 2015-16 Budget released today will make Pennsylvania an energy



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leader through new investments to take full and responsible advantage of our rich natural resources, including natural gas, coal, wind, solar, and timber. In addition, the plan also invests millions more to protect, clean and conserve the commonwealth's land, air and water.

“To take the reins as the nation's energy leader, we must expand and develop new markets for Pennsylvania's energy technologies, services and fuels, and this budget makes historic investments to bolster and transform our energy economy,” Acting Secretary of Environmental Protection John Quigley said, “Governor Wolf's budget attests to his commitment to create new jobs and protect public health and our environment, all of which strengthens Pennsylvania's economy.”

Acting Secretary of Conservation and Natural Resources Cindy Dunn added, “Governor Wolf's budget prioritizes investing in our parks, forests and open spaces. Our award-winning state park system generates more than a billion dollars annually for local economies and supports 13,000 jobs that pay.”

The proposed spending plan includes a new \$225 million energy investment initiative as part of the Governor's larger economic growth package to ensure a comprehensive energy portfolio that supports gas, coal, oil and renewables, and encourages conservation and clean technology alternatives.

Responsible Shale Development

Governor Wolf's budget proposal provides for the agency's safe and responsible development of Pennsylvania's shale gas resources, while providing a renewed focus on clean energy production. \$225 million in revenue from a new severance tax will be preserved to assist local communities and governments manage the impact of natural gas extraction.

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The Governor's proposal invests \$10 million for additional inspection and oversight of oil and gas operations.

Advancing Clean Energy

Governor Wolf's energy investment initiative includes \$50 million to re-launch the PA Sunshine Solar program that provides rebates on qualifying solar projects. Another \$50 million will provide grants for projects to improve energy efficiency at small businesses, local government units, schools and non-profits, with larger grants awarded for collaborative projects.

The energy investment also includes:

The governor's spending proposal also restores more than \$7.8 million to the Department of Environmental Protection's (DEP) \$147 million general fund budget to protect water and air quality, address abandoned mine reclamation, and improve enforcement of Pennsylvania's environmental laws.

Protecting Our Parks and Forests

The proposed budget for the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) includes an increase in General Fund appropriations of about \$20 million, which previously came from the Oil and Gas Lease Fund.

Activities that provide monitoring and oversight of the department's lands that were previously leased for gas development include:

Governor Wolf's proposal maintains the budget for the Bureau of State Parks at about \$93 million, the Bureau of Forestry at about \$71 million, and anticipates an additional \$1.4 million for the Keystone Fund to support DCNR's grant program for conservation and recreation in local communities, bringing it to about \$51 million total.

The proposal includes 22 new full-time positions in the Bureau of State Parks, primarily to support the transfer of Washington Crossing Historic Park in Bucks County into the state park system and for Point State Park in Pittsburgh.

Dunn added that additional budget highlights include a continued attention to maintaining the department's vast infrastructure and improving its energy efficiency, support for a gypsy moth spraying program to counter the cyclical pest that impacts public and private forests, and continuing to improve cost efficiencies related to workforce safety.

DCNR's proposed 2015-16 budget from all revenue sources is \$342.6 million, which includes \$34.2 million from the General Fund.

For more information about DCNR, visit www.dcnr.state.pa.us. For more information about DEP, visit www.dep.state.pa.us.

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