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Departments of Conservation and Natural Resources, Labor & Industry Launch Pa. Outdoor Corps Employment Program

Lewisberry, York County, PA - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today joined Department of Labor & Industry Secretary Kathy Manderino, other state officials, and representatives of the Student Conservation Association in launching the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps at Gifford Pinchot State Park, near Lewisberry, York County.

The new Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps is offering paid work experience, job training, and educational opportunities to young people who complete recreation and conservation projects at state parks, forestlands, and other Pennsylvania public lands. A crew of 10 high school-age students from southcentral Pennsylvania began work Monday at Gifford Pinchot.

“The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps will help to protect and restore public lands and waters, while providing young people with the knowledge and expertise to be good stewards of our natural resources,” said DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, speaking at a park trail site where the young crew was working. “This program will connect youth and young adults with job opportunities relating to the outdoors and the environment and provide training in work skills necessary for future successful employment.”

The DCNR secretary noted the new program is a key element of the department’s Youth initiative -- one of six being pursued by DCNR “to position the department as a leader in areas that go far beyond the operation and stewardship of our state parks and forests.

“This youth employment and enrichment program is managed by DCNR in cooperation with the Student Conservation Association (SCA), with financial and program support provided by DCNR and the Pa. Department of Labor and Industry.”

Initial roll-out of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps is financed through the

Department of Labor & Industry's Reemployment Fund.

"Labor & Industry is pleased to support the PA Outdoor Corps and to collaborate with our sister agency at DCNR," said L&I Secretary Kathy Manderino. "Work experience for high school students is tantamount to later career success and we can't think of a better way to experience working in Pennsylvania than through one of its state parks."

SCA was chosen through a competitive bid process to manage day-to-day operations of the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps.

"In addition to safeguarding the state's natural resources, the Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps will provide participants with empowering leadership and career tracks," SCA Eastern Regional Vice President Christopher Jackson told the gathering. "The widespread benefits of this program will be felt for years to come, and SCA is delighted to be part of this important partnership."

The statewide program will be based in state parks and forests locations in rural and urban locations in all regions of the state, particularly those areas within close proximity to disadvantaged communities and school districts. Crews will be dispatched within the region, working on public lands with resource and infrastructure project needs. Initial site locations are in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Harrisburg, Wilkes-Barre and Johnstown.

While initially project work will be performed on state park and forestlands, DCNR aims to expand the corps work areas on a cost-share basis to local land managers with municipal and county parks and recreation departments in 2017.

The Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps consists of two components: a six-week, summer program for youth between the ages of 15-18; and a 10-month program for young adults ages 18-25, which will launch in early 2017.

The Outdoor Corps will tackle hands-on projects such as trail restoration, tree planting, light construction, shoreline restorations and invasive species management in state and local parks, state forests and other public lands, as well as undertake specialty projects in relation to recreation and conservation, which may include public outreach, research and assessments.

To oversee the program, DCNR appointed Scott Carney as Pennsylvania Outdoor Corps Coordinator. He joins the department with nearly 20 years of habitat management, project management and youth and partnership experience

with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. In addition, he has worked outside of government as an environmental consultant and project manager.

The Student Conservation Association (SCA) is America's oldest and largest youth conservation organization. SCA seeks to conserve land and transform lives by empowering young people of all backgrounds to plan, act and lead, while they protect and restore natural and cultural resources. Founded in 1957, its mission is to build future conservation leaders, and seven in 10 of SCA's 80,000 alumni worldwide are employed or studying in conservation-related fields. For more information: www.thesca.org.

For more details on Pennsylvania Outdoors Corps:
www.outdoorcorps.dcnr.pa.gov

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