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Resources

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OUTDOOR TASK FORCE SUBMITS FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO GOVERNOR

HARRISBURG -- The 16-member task force named to develop key recommendations to strengthen the bond between citizens and the natural world is proposing the establishment of a Governor's Commission on People and Outdoor Connections, among other recommendations submitted this week in its 40-page report to Governor Edward G. Rendell.

The Governor named the task force last summer after hosting a two-day conference in March 2007 that studied the trends, ideas and solutions relating to the growing disconnect between citizens and the outdoors. The group was led by co-chairs Doug Austen, executive director of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, and Caren Glotfelty, director of the environmental program for The Heinz Endowments.

"We knew we had an important, yet challenging task: to come together as a diverse group and, within a short period of time, develop ideas and recommendations on a topic that affects the future well-being of this state," said Austen.

Glotfelty said the task force members look forward to continuing their leadership role through discussions with the governor, other elected officials and community leaders. "We are proud of what the task force has accomplished, and we look forward to

making the case for a new commission so that it can begin to act on the ideas and recommendations in this report,” said Glotfelty.

The report and a detailed appendix are posted online at www.connectoutdoors.state.pa.us.

The report summarizes the findings of the conference and the five public gatherings that followed last spring and summer. More than 500 people provided input and ideas, which were then formulated into key themes and recommendations by the task force.

In addition to the recommendation of a commission, the task force suggested 42 other action items worthy of further pursuit by the commission, government agencies, organizations, businesses and educational institutions.

“We knew the Outdoor Conference was only the start of the work to address the trends that show citizens, and especially children, no longer spend as much time connecting with the outdoors,” said Michael DiBerardinis, secretary of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, whose agency was charged by the governor to oversee the conference and post-conference activities. “This report helps to continue the conversation about how to protect and enhance those connections, and in the process build good stewards of our natural resources. I congratulate the task force for its commitment and service and a job well-done.”

Other members of the task force were:

- Kathleen Paul, director, Pennsylvania Center for Environmental Education
- H. Eric Martin, owner, Wilderness Voyageurs
- Gary San Julian, professor of wildlife resources, Pennsylvania State University
- Bob Griffith, executive director, Pennsylvania Recreation and Park Society
- Richard Butler, executive director, Three Rivers Rowing Association

- Carl Roe, executive director, Pennsylvania Game Commission
- Mark McLaughlin, director, Shavers Creek Environmental Center
- Matt Ehrhart, Pennsylvania executive director, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- Ben Moyer, journalist and author, Pennsylvania Outdoor Writers Association
- Beth Olanoff, policy director, Pennsylvania Department of Education
- Allison Topper, executive director, Pennsylvania Advocates for Nutrition and Activity
- Lori McKean, assistant director for programs, U.S. Forest Service at Grey Towers National Historic Site
- Lee Steadman, director of arts and humanities, Stairways Behavioral Health
- Fran Rodriguez, chief of staff for Rep. P. Michael Sturla

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