

**Conservation Congress
South Shore Cultural Center
March 13, 2013**

1. Sustainable Resource Development and Extractions

- Strengthen DNR/EPA partnership
- DNR doesn't do a good job planning for match. When federal grant opportunities come up, DNR should have a pool of money that can be used to match those grants and obtain new funds.
- Endangered species consultations are not done as thoroughly as they should.
 - There is an issue with accessibility to information for decision makers, who may not be aware what sort of consultations is needed. DNR should provide better guidelines.
 - There is a need for improved collection of threatened/endangered species data by DNR.
 - Permitting of projects need to include adequate public participation.
 - Consolidate permitting information into a one-stop shop to make the process less confusing and make sure that planners are aware of all permits needed (not only DNR but also permits from other state agencies, such as historical preservation)
 - There is a need for user friendly language
 - Initial pre-planning project consultations with DNR should be encouraged.
 - Information on consultation need and requirements should be provided in areas where others can easily access it (example used was Waukegan library).
 - DNR should reach out to other organizations to compile protected species data.
- For resource extraction, use successful models such as Independence Grove in Lake County. Mining revenue was used to fund ultimate park project.
- IL turned down severance fees on extraction. Use other states for models, for example MN, for collecting and using severance fees. Long term impacts need to be considered.

2. Sustainable Resource Harvest

- DNR needs to understand different needs and perceptions of various cultural groups in Chicago region.
 - Example 1: harvest of plants for medicinal purposes, even though some of those plants may be protected.
 - Example 2: Asian carp is bought live and kept live till processed for consumption. Also, tradition of keeping carp and releasing back into the waters when it reaches a certain size.
- DNR may need to present message that goes against cultural traditions. Work with youth to provide education and messages since it's hard to change adult traditions.
- DNR needs to have a strong stance on invasive species and needs to provide a message as to "why"
- Need to develop phone apps that would allow people to report invasive species

3. Sustainable Provision of Outdoor Recreational Access

- Reach kids, be assertive with outreach
- It's hard to reach teenagers. They need to be engaged in an age-appropriate way, with tools that they use and with type of activities that they find appealing.
- Take kids out to nature. Any nature exposure is great, it doesn't have to be a trip to an intact preserve.
- If you engage kids, they will pass the information on to adults. Connect with kids through art. Also, reach out to faith organizations and connect with constituents through them.
- Provide liability protection to private owners who open their lands for public use, such as biking or water trail access.
- There is need for improved access for water trails that considers user age. There is a greater use of water trails by aging population.
- Develop apps that provide information on availability of recreational opportunities, access points, ect. Understand that current technology, such as smart phones and apps, provide an important connection to the world for youth.
- DNR should provide more access points for water trails.

4. Sustainable Resource Protection

- Overall message during this session was to invest in greening of facilities, modernizing, and using models
 - Energy conservation – investigate use of geothermal technology, investigate energy efficiency measures for new and remodeled facilities
 - Invest in prototypes of energy efficiency models
 - Amenities need to be foremost clean and comfortable. Investigate amenities that conserve resources.
 - For parking facilities, use “gravel grass” for overflow or weekend parking instead of traditional asphalt
- To address threat of climate change, provide corridors that allow for species movement and tie habitats together
- Corridors can also be used for recreation, can incorporate wetlands
- Create a land acquisition/conservation plan to facilitate creation of corridors
- Make sure corridors are considered on a watershed level
- DNR could provide funds to local governments to reimburse for conservation easements, establish small revolving fund to assist municipalities with such issues as storm damage
- Engage kids in outside activities and provide an explanation “why” this is important
- Create partnerships with private land trusts
- Create partnerships/provide incentives to educational institutions, such as community colleges

- Invest in training, education, and stewardship
- Generate revenue by
 - implementing user fees
 - selectively harvesting timber from non-native species such as walnut

5. Building Bridges

- Use new communication tools such as apps, social media, video cameras. Past communication models such as brochures are obsolete.
- Need better communication with partners and other agencies
- Reach constituents through organizations they frequent, such as faith organizations
- Gather input from younger and culturally diverse group, invite young constituents to such events as Conservation Congress
- Organize a focus group of teens, 16-18 year old, multicultural groups
- Open up grant opportunities for land acquisition to non-profits
- Streamline and follow through on land acquisition partnerships with land trusts
- Be willing to innovate and think outside the box
- Streamline processes, build trust, cut red tape
- Stop producing print materials
- Provide tools and educational materials to teachers
- Reach teachers in training to encourage conservation/environmental ethic that can be passed down to students
- Bring DNR programs to schools and reduce complexity of programs and of outcomes desired from students