

PA Environment Digest

An Update On Environmental Issues In PA

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Member Of DCNR's Conservation Advisory Council Resigns

The [Patriot-News reported](#) Thursday Paulette Viola, a member of DCNR's [Conservation and Natural Resources Advisory Council](#) since the mid-1990s, resigned from her position saying the Corbett Administration made it impossible for the Council to "effectively and efficiently meet the spirit of the law or its responsibility to the public."

Viola was quoted by the Patriot-News as saying the council has lost its independence as an advisory body, has lost its executive director and its secretary, has had its budget disproportionately slashed and has been slowly starved of information and greeted with a "hostile atmosphere created by the administration for public input."

She told the Patriot-News she believed what's happening to the council goes well beyond budget concerns.

"We were provided information that the Secretary believed we acted outside our jurisdiction," she said. "He suggested that we were only to comment on things in DCNR and not on resources in Pennsylvania in general."

Viola said in the past the council has commented on the deer population and its effect on regeneration of the forest, believing it an appropriate concern for DCNR.

More recently, she said, the council has been investigating drilling.

She said the council has held at least two day-long field trips to drilling sites and hosted public forums on drilling on public lands.

"Of all the resource management topics, that is the one we've spent the most time on," she said.

Since its creation, the primary concern of the council, Viola said, has always been effective public input on policy issues.

That mission, she said, is now in jeopardy.

A spokesperson for DCNR said, "Paulette has served many years on Council and we thank her for those years of service. DCNR welcomes feedback and input from council members, including Paulette's unique perspective. However, DCNR does not believe the points made in her resignation letter are factual, nor do we agree with them."

“DCNR will continue to support the work of the council, and we value its advice and recommendations. We look forward to working with the new council appointee and will welcome a fresh perspective.”

Viola was appointed to the DCNR Advisory Council during the Ridge Administration. The Council was [formed in 1995](#) when the former Department of Environmental Resources was reorganized into the Department of Environmental Protection and DCNR.

In addition to the Secretary of DCNR, the Council is made up of 18 members appointed by Governor, President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

The Council is charged with giving advice to DCNR on conservation issues and “shall review all conservation and natural resources laws of the Commonwealth and make appropriate suggestions for the revision, modification and codification.”

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