

PENNSYLVANIA NATURAL RESOURCE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (PA-NRLI)

Program Overview | June 2015

In June, 2015, 48 people representing a diverse cross-section of organizations that manage Pennsylvania's natural resources met to endorse the development of a Pennsylvania Natural Resources Leadership Institute (PA-NRLI). This group recognized that Pennsylvania's natural resources have been, and will continue to be, essential to the Commonwealth's communities, quality of life, and state economy. Effective management of these natural resources requires skills and expertise in natural resource science, effective leadership, collaboration, conflict management, and working with diverse stakeholders. These skills are required of all who play a role in managing the state's natural resources, including nonprofit staff, business and industry representatives, professionals in public agencies, and volunteer citizens. Yet there are few opportunities in the Commonwealth for stakeholders to learn these skills in a setting that encourages collaboration and engagement with people from differing perspectives. The workshop participants felt that the time is right to create a program in Pennsylvania.



What would a PA-NRLI do that is different from existing leadership programs?

While there are many leadership programs in the Commonwealth, especially within existing organizations, there are none that workshop participants could identify that purposely seek to create **collaborative** natural resource leadership **at a state level**. There are three main components of a PA-NRLI that distinguish it from other programs:

- An emphasis on growing inter-organizational leadership. The program would create opportunities for participants to develop networks among professionals and volunteers from non-profit organizations, public agencies (county, state, and federal), local governments, businesses, and educational institutions.

- An emphasis on skills that are essential to addressing complex, multi-stakeholder issues, especially public engagement techniques, facilitation, communication, and conflict management.
- Opportunities to learn about the array of natural resource issues that confront Pennsylvanians from all parts of the Commonwealth and to collectively seek to understand the multiple ways in which these issues affect people and natural resource management – and the decision-making processes – both near and far.

What would PA-NRLI look like?

At the workshop, participants developed several recommendations for how a PA-NRLI would be structured. These recommendations evolved from both listening to presentations about programs in other states and their own deliberations about what would be essential to a Pennsylvania program. These recommendations include:

- A cohort of participants comprised of diverse stakeholders, with opportunities to develop relationships among individuals from differing perspectives, agencies, organizations and regions
- A programmatic structure that includes multiple sessions over time (perhaps 12-18 months) each held in differing parts of the state to increase familiarity with a range of natural resource issues and perspectives
- A focus on collaborative leadership skills to enhance the capacity for facilitation, conflict management, programmatic cross-pollination, and public engagement
- Sessions that are experiential and interactive, to increase the opportunities for hands-on learning and engagement with colleagues and partners across the state
- A partnership among organizations, agencies and institutions of higher education to oversee the program
- A sustainable, diverse funding model to support the program
- A strong, research-based evaluation process to identify critical desired outcomes and measures that can effectively substantiate those impacts

How Will PA-NRLI Get Off the Ground?

Workshop participants identified the first step as the establishment of a broad-based advisory committee to guide program development. The committee develop the program structure, identify funding opportunities for a pilot program, and enhance support among partner organizations.

How You Can Play a Role

If you would like to volunteer to participate in the advisory committee, receive updates about PA-NRLI, or offer ideas or suggestions related to PA-NRLI, please contact Kathy Brasier at 814-865-7321 or kbrasier@psu.edu. We also ask that you share this information with the appropriate colleagues within your organization and provide us with feedback as we continue to explore this opportunity.

For additional information about the workshop, please go to: <http://bit.ly/PA-NRLI>