



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 19, 2016

DCNR Secretary Extends Invitation to Visit Renovated Poe Paddy Tunnel, Section of Mid State Trail

Weikert, Centre County, PA - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today joined other state officials and hiking group leaders in extending an invitation to visit the newly renovated Poe Paddy Tunnel and trestle, and Mid State Trail section on the Centre-Mifflin-Union county line.

Dunn led a dedication officially marking the end of the major reconstruction project on the widely popular trail threading through Bald Eagle State Forest and paralleling Penns Creek.

"Certainly today's turnout and support for this project is indicative of the special place this area holds in the hearts of hikers, anglers, hunters, bikers and local residents who just enjoy walking the trail," Dunn told the gathering. "With completion of this large-scale project, we know an increasing numbers of visitors will be drawn to the rugged beauty of this area and appreciate these improvements.

"Now they are able to travel a safer tunnel and bridge in pursuit of their outdoors adventures."

Stretching almost 100 yards through West Paddy Mountain, the Poe Paddy Tunnel is very popular with visitors to Poe Paddy State Park and the surrounding Bald Eagle State Forest. It was closed in February 2013 because of deteriorating conditions.

The project -- including tunnel work, trail widening and reinforcement, and redecking of the trestle bridge -- was completed in October 2015. Crossing Centre, Mifflin and Union county lines, and passing through West Paddy Mountain, the tunnel, trestle and rail trail all are located within Bald Eagle State Forest District, one of 20 state forest districts across the state overseen by DCNR.

"A strong collaborative thread runs through this project," Dunn said. "Not only were three DCNR bureaus involved but so, too, were the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission and the Pa. Game Commission."

The trail passes through more than 300 acres of state Fish and Boat Commission land, the Ralph W. Abele Memorial Glen, and adjoins a world-class trout stream the commission oversees and protects.

"It is exciting to be here today to celebrate the restoration of the Poe Paddy Tunnel with others who enjoy wild places and wild things," said PFBC Executive Director John Arway. "We are grateful to Secretary Dunn and DCNR staff for reopening the gateway to some of the most remote portions of Penns Creek. The rail trail is a convenient pathway for anglers to access one of the best wild brown trout fisheries in the eastern U.S. The timing of today's tunnel

reopening is especially important since it will provide angler access to the stream for the magnificent annual green drake hatch which is about to begin in a week or so."

"The Mid State trail epitomizes the wild character of Pennsylvania," said Keystone Trails Association Executive Director Joseph Neville, speaking at the dedication. "Its ridges, hillsides, vistas and ruggedness all add to its unique character. This tunnel, trestle and trail brought our organizations together to provide access while protecting the bats we share the environment with and improving access for fishermen, hikers and others who use the trail."

The work and the project's remote location presented a few unique logistical problems. The project was broadened to include decking replacement on the railroad trestle bridge leading to one side of the tunnel. On the other side, more than two miles of rail trail had to be shored and resurfaced to facilitate heavy construction trucks reaching the site.

Also, it was determined the Poe Paddy Tunnel is an active bat hibernation site in winter. As a result, the contractor worked closely with the Pa. Game Commission incorporating bat habitat into the tunnel project.

A \$1.2 million contract with Jay Fulkroad and Sons of McAlisterville, called for the entire three-phase project. Work included: rehabilitation work on the old railroad bridge spanning Penns Creek; lining of the tunnel; and re-surfacing of the trail approaching the both the bridge and tunnel.

Popularly known as "The Wildest Trail in Pennsylvania," the trail snakes 325 miles through the heart of Pennsylvania's remote interior, stretching from the New York to Maryland borders.

For details on Bald Eagle State Forest and Poe Paddy State Park, visit www.dcnr.pa.gov.

MEDIA CONTACT: Terry Brady, 717-772-9101, tbrady@pa.gov

#