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## **DCNR Secretary, Others Dedicate Solar Array at Tom Ridge Environmental Center, Presque Isle State Park**

**Erie, PA** - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today joined Bureau of State Parks officials and others in dedicating a new solar array at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center, Presque Isle State Park, Erie.

The first of its kind installed at any Pennsylvania state park, the solar system began operating last month and already has begun offsetting carbon emissions of the innovative building that marks the gateway to Presque Isle and is known for an energy efficiency that has gained it LEED Silver certification.

"This installation marks the start of exciting and innovative things to come at our state parks," Dunn said, speaking at a media event highlighting the newest green energy feature at the Tom Ridge Environmental Center. "We are hoping this renewable energy demonstration not only highlights the 10 kWh solar array providing energy for the center, but also offers the public a chance to learn how to replicate this system at their homes or businesses."

The secretary noted DCNR oversees more than 4,500 buildings in its parks system, more than a hundred waste-water treatment facilities, and thousands of vehicles, and spends millions of dollars a year just in electricity.

"When we started DCNR's Sustainability Initiative last year, we knew there were many opportunities to save money and reduce our carbon footprint," Dunn said. "I am proud to say our team has gotten off to a fast start and is already making a big impact. This solar array displayed today is a key part of this important work in sustainability -- a major beginning if you will, in bigger and better things to come."

Installed to the left of the center's front entrance, the solar panels face south at a 30-degree angle to maximize solar production. The fixed, ground-mounted array was installed at a cost of \$27,950 by Hepler Electrical Contracting, Waterford, and Solar Revolution of Erie and metered to TREC to offset its electric utility charges.

"As the TREC moves into its second decade of operations, this reinvestment in sustainable energy for the building renews our commitment to its LEED certification," said Presque Isle State Park Manager Matt Greene. "This solar array not only will provide many years of green energy, but showcase how this technology has advanced and how our visitors can model this in their own lives."

The Presque Isle event was the second of three state park stops planned this week by the DCNR secretary as part of a "Driving Toward Sustainability" fall tour. Tuesday she highlighted

Point State Park's commitment to sustainability in Pittsburgh; and Thursday she will help dedicate a new energy-efficient visitor center at Kinzua Bridge State Park in McKean County.

Billed as "the gateway to Presque Isle," the Tom Ridge Environmental Center is an educational center dedicated to teaching visitors about Presque Isle and the many different life forms inhabiting the unique peninsula. It serves as a center for research, contributes to conservation efforts, and promotes environmental awareness, helping to preserve the area's beauty. Admission is free to its interactive exhibits and 75-foot observation tower.

Presque Isle State Park, a 3,200-acre sandy peninsula arching into Lake Erie, often is labelled Pennsylvania's only "seashore." It offers visitors a scenic coastline and recreational activities that include swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, bicycling and in-line skating. A National Natural Landmark, Presque Isle offers refuge for migrating birds, and its unique habitat contains many endangered, threatened and rare species of plants and wildlife.

Details on Presque Isle and Pennsylvania's other 120 state parks can be found at [www.dcnr.pa.gov](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov).

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