



## **Big Elk Creek Master Planning Task Force Meeting #5 Transcript**

**Meeting Date:** October 23, 2024

**Meeting Time:** 6:00 – 9:00 PM

**Meeting Location:** The Meeting House at White Clay Creek Preserve

*\*All Task Force members have been assigned a number in lieu of their names for the purposes of the meeting transcript.*

### **Task Force Members Present:**

- Absent: 3, 4(dialed in remotely), 5 (dialed in remotely), 7, 17 (represented by 36), 20

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### **Meeting Minutes:**

2 - Everybody ready? All right, let's get this show on the road. So I want to remind everyone the meeting is being recorded, OK? And (name, #36), I'll get you to introduce yourself since you're a new face to the group.

36 – Oh yes. I'm substituting for (name, #17) from New London Township. I'm the zoning officer New London, but I also work for Elk Township.

2- OK, welcome. Anybody have any process questions, agenda questions that they want to get out of the way before we get started? OK, Thanks again for everyone taking time out of your schedule to attend tonight. Really appreciate it. We've got lots to cover. So we're going to get started and I'm going to give the floor to (name, #30) and he's going to cover some of some survey results.

And then I'm going to cover a little bit of survey results and then we're going to get right into the meeting of the agenda, (name, #30).

30 - All right, so the main set of information we're going to share today are two planned concepts developed out of everything that's led up to today. Including all the feedback from the task force and our breakout sessions at the last meeting, those sorts of things.

Before we get to that, we wanted to just go through and remind everyone of the information that has been gathered throughout that whole process. And that will all be in the presentation, which will be shared and available. So hopefully we don't have to read every word on every slide.

All right, so this is a lot of words, but very early on in the process we did - working with DCNR - administered an online survey with a handful of questions and there were over 1000 responses.

And you can see all the things that were strongly recognized or preferred were the regional trail connections, ecosystem health, quality of life in the area. And then activities like walking and hiking, wildlife watching, fishing, water access, biking. So there's nothing all that surprising about some of the survey responses online. While that was going on, we held stakeholder meetings.

There were five different groups and they're listed here with all of the folks who attended those meetings in addition to meeting with the adjoining land managers, government folks, recreation stakeholders, natural resource and conservation stakeholders and historical and cultural interest stakeholders. DCNR contacted directly the federally recognized tribes and nations that have connections to the site. So that process also happened.

So there was, a set of meetings and information gathered from those. And we did summarize those in key principles, most of which, again, are not all that surprising and have been echoed in all the conversations since then.

Environmental responsibility was important. The regional connections were mentioned by that group. Quality of the park experience for visitors, and a wide range of visitors, over quantity of events or quantity of visitation. Community engagement, making sure folks are aware of the park and what's available.

The concept of education and having a place for education and programs for education around the resources in the park was important. Respecting the history of the place. So specifically, some of the historical elements are also the history of the region. Having a low impact, so minimizing specific impact to the waterways, but also to the trails. And accessibility has been important, including in the last meeting actually, providing thoughtful places, thoughtful trails, and providing for people with a wide variety of abilities.

We went through that quickly, but any questions or comments on those? They seemed significant to us and they were drawn from some of those discussions, even if they don't sound kind of profound when I read them in 30 seconds.

So then you all filled out a survey and I think (name, #2)'s going to go through some of the responses there and the feedback.

2 - So over the last few meetings, we have continued to ask you if you would take the time to the natural resource survey from the early meetings. Remember, we had a few site visits, we had a few experts speak to the group about some things around some of these topics.

And then (name, #25) sent out a survey relative to what was discussed to seek your thoughts on and see if those things are some of the things that you have value for or not so much? So I wanted to share. There's about 3 pages here quickly, we're not going to go into extraordinary detail on this. But there were 12 of the task force members who responded.

Regarding riparian buffer plantings, and the comments from the seven people who wrote a comment, are summarized and paraphrased here. So just so you know, this is not word for word for any one person, more like an overall sentiment around riparian buffers, which was that there's not enough environmental assessment and planning done for buffer plantings and we heard that in some of the discussions in the meeting. There were some compliments there - some thought it was good effort and were happy with the results so far and some felt it was too big of an undertaking.

Under grassland meadow habitat restoration work. You can see the responses there. You know, did you agree with what you heard as far as a potential plan or neutral or disagreement? Sentiment was that the idea it was good but there was not enough environmental assessment. We heard that from several of you who have expertise in that area. We also heard worries about disruption of the historic use of the property and impacts of increasing the strength of chemicals to maintain. That sentiment could be applied to a number of different things around other than just grassland.

Wetland restoration work, thinking of it in terms of a future project. You can see how the 12 respondents responded there. Not consensus on whether wetland restoration was beneficial. Some of you believed it was, others not convinced as such. Needed more information on the future proposal.

Stream bank restoration again, future project work consideration. Of the 12 responses, most agreed it would be good work, but some concern about cost and worthiness of the effort and they had a recommendation to get a Stroud involved in that stream bank restoration.

And then we get toward the end here around support in the reduction of ag lands in favor of more natural habitat. Kind of a mixed review here, some agree, some disagree. More people were on the fence around what was discussed so far. 9 comments were made on this this question. All acknowledged agricultural history of the land. Most felt like some ag lands should remain but did favor some changes. Some felt ag lands were beneficial to the environment and property and should stay as-is.

If you remember I said about two or three meetings ago that I think this one thing requires some more thought and there has been more thought around how we proceed regarding maintaining ag lands or conversion to something different. And I think the process and what kind of speed, I think we need a little bit more understanding around that.

Prioritize long term field maintenance over forest habitat conversion. This was kind of the same general area of question in my opinion. Again, we mixed responses here. Probably half the participants look like they didn't agree or disagree. Most acknowledged the history of forested areas on the property and some thought the tree plantings were enough. Some wanted more study on the benefits. There's been a number of studies and this topic has been studied quite often in the literature around the benefits of forest land and cropland and grassland on certain on the ecosystem. So I think we need to have a little bit more digestion around that and come back and put a plan together around that.

Support efforts to control invasives. Most people either agree or strongly agree in this area. And we've had that discussion in some of the earlier meetings around invasive species. Some supported IPM measures; control burns; a suggestion was made to work with some of the local land owners to help around control of invasives. Certainly on the perimeter of the properties where they're adjoining with the farmer or residential communities.

Support protection, interpretation of cultural resources. Most agreed here or strongly agreed. Some people didn't quite understand what interpretation meant and what does that mean when you say 'interpretive processes and efforts', but weren't against it, they just wanted more explanation and study.

Infrastructure at Big Elk. This survey was taken before we'd done a lot of this other breakout work. So I'm not going to spend a lot of time on this question. I just want to cover there's different opinions in the room about infrastructure, what that looks like and how impactful it would be or not and we see them both on this survey. Early in the process of our meetings, most agreed on the need for trails, parking lot and bathroom.

And there was an open question at the end where you could put whatever you wanted to put in there if you felt like you didn't have an opportunity to express your opinion in some of the other questions. And there were a few more comments written here around 'thanks for the survey', more environmental studies, there was a question around preserve designation, and then there's several

individuals that had specific issues that they wanted to bring up. Keep in mind this was I believe meeting two.

There's been a lot of discussion that's gone through the room and through the notes and everything since the survey. Any questions?

36 - Could you refresh my memory on what the time window was that that survey was open for this participation?

25 - It opened June 14th is when we sent it out and it's still open today.

36 - It's still open now.

2 - OK.

30 – (name, #36), do you mean the task Force One or the one that was to the public?

25 - Oh, this was just to the task force.

30 - The public one was May to September of 2023.

All right. So at our last meeting, we worked to gather everyone's input. We broke up into groups and talked about each individual group's potential thoughts on designing the park or the preserve.

And I wanted to share those to just refresh people's memories. So the next couple slides are the different group slides.

This was the first group and the first group - I'll maybe highlight one or two things from each and anybody who's in one of those groups, please chime in if I missed some things – the first group really focused on elements, visitor elements, visitor contact points and facilities around a parking area, potentially even to adjacent property that's not owned by the DCNR at the moment.

And this first group had lots of notes too about parking, about the roads around... Oh, you were about education.

12 – I was in Group 1, and we were about education but also about distributing the use to multiple parking areas. We liked the idea of lots of smaller parking areas.

30 - Excellent. All right, so then Group 2 again seemed to focus some thought and attention around the existing parking area in particular. Anyone from Group 2 want to add any thoughts?

10 - I don't feel like Group 2, at least speaking for myself, contributed a whole lot because I felt like we were on different sides, different opinions, and we talked about that a lot. So I walked away being a little discouraged from that battle and that we didn't really get to share much.

30 - OK. This is Group 3, they focused on the existing property. They noted stream crossings. The yellow dots - those I think were historic structures or points of interest.

8 - One's the bald eagle nest, I think, and a couple ruins are on there. I thought we had an idea of like where some parking would go, which I don't see,

15 - Wherever the parking already is, we talked about that.

8 - I thought we had talked about a couple more.

30 - And then Group 4. We also had (name, #13)'s Trail where she was trying to find relatively flat long trail. We might be calling it that.

13 - Oh no. (*laughter*)

30 - Anything else anybody wants to highlight or talk about? They also distributed parking in different locations.

13 - We also tried to find the underpasses along Spring Lawn Road. I know there are 5, not Stricklersville, but, Spring Lawn Trail. And because we could connect trails through those underpasses, you know, to get down to the Creek or whatever, but, we need to have those located more clearly.

10 - I'll chime in on that I can. We were Group 2, but that was one thing that we mentioned or highlighted because I, as you know, live right down the road from there. And I've taken pictures of the underpass and I've learned the history of what's there. And I think it's an ideal location to create one of these small parking lots.

30 - Which one are you talking about?

10 - I'm talking directly at the end of Spring Lawn Trail.

13 - It's up the road a little bit.

10 - I'm not talking about that one. You're right, there is one a little bit up the hill that's a known like underpass, an old road. But what I didn't even know, and I don't think anyone knows, is there's an underpass literally at the end of Spring Lawn Trail. It's a big corrugated pipe that the Dupont's put in.

13 - Oh yeah, that goes under.

10 - Yes. And it's a marsh right now on both sides of it. It's just a big marsh. Half of it's full of trash.

13 - But isn't that also where they have a big tree planting on the stream side?

10 - I believe you're right.

13 - But anyway, yes, there is an underpass there. There, yes, correct. And we have a little crossing, a little mark right there. Yes, right there, right there.

10 - Because that's also an area, for those familiar, where cars park, pull over and probably 4, 5 or 6 cars can park. I walked in there with the intent of 'could you put a parking lot here' and fearful that it was going to be too close to the stream or too steep a slope. And when I walked in there, I was like, wow, I really think you could do something good. And, and it would be an ideal location. And if you reopened up that corrugated underpass that exists, no one would have to cross over the road. To me, I was excited about the opportunity of that.

13 - And there are those gates right there also that go into that little area on Stricklersville.

10 - So you are right. That's where they did the planting. On the north side.

13 - Well, no parking where there's trees.

10 - No, the parking would be on the South side of the road.

13 - Oh, absolutely. Yeah, that's what we were thinking.

30 - So, so from those exercises and the discussion, we tried to distill some of the things that came out of that. So, and you know, this is also open for discussion for sure. And some of this was not represented by every group visually, but was discussed and seemed to be generally agreed upon or generally shared concepts. So the idea of utilizing existing assets, whatever they are, structures, buildings, infrastructure, trails where possible. Locating for easy access. So where you have parking, you might have restrooms so that that things are easily accessed. Maintaining and formalizing creek crossings so that we reduce environmental damage in the areas of the creek where people are crossing. Pursuing appropriate forest land and restoration while incorporating trails.

Now, what is, you know, appropriate probably deserves more thought and discussion as well as a more environmental study. But some amount of restoration seemed to be a shared concept. Managing land use transitions, and (name, #2) sort of touched on this a little bit when he was talking about the agricultural fields.

You know, how many are transitioned to meadow, field or forest? And if they are, how long is that time horizon? Those kind of questions. And managing those was important now and in the future, managing them sensitively. Upgrading and improving trails, starting with existing trails and creating new ones where needed and maybe removing or decommissioning inappropriate trails or trails that are not easily maintained.

And then understanding the full environmental impact as much as possible before implementing any of the recommendations. So we felt like those concepts were shared generally among the groups and among the discussion within the discussion.

There was a fairly significant difference though between some groups' approach to the idea of an education center. I think that most of the groups thought having something, some kind of building, was necessary and important, but not everybody. And there was one group in particular, and this is why I remember (name, #12), that really thought education was the foundation, or really fundamental to the purpose of the park.

So that one, there wasn't necessarily agreement among everyone. And then there were lots of

specific ideas that were mentioned by one group or sometimes, more than one, but not necessarily sort of discussed or debated or came up by everybody.

So the existing parking lot seemed to draw lots of interest. People focused on that as an area where it's already disturbed. It's already a place people know. Maybe that makes it appropriate for continued use in the future.

There was discussion about purchasing that existing inholding if it was possible. The idea of splitting up parking seemed to come up in most of the groups. So having multiple areas of parking both for ease of access, but also so they could be smaller and have less individual impact.

36 – Does DCNR have a target number of parking spaces that they're looking for in total? You know, loose number, even a range.

30 - I don't know that we've talked about a number.

1 - Other than the generalized term of small parking lots, again, comparable to the capacities that we have in White Clay Creek Preserve.

30 - So (name, #10) started to talk about incorporating existing underpasses and maintaining them. Providing water access for education and maybe recreational purposes was mentioned.

A Creek crossing near the Maryland border came up in multiple discussions, and there probably also would need to be a second one up to the north.

So the area at the western end, currently farmland, was mentioned as having minimal existing infrastructure. And then there was discussion about how much of existing agricultural land to maintain and over what time frame and what its purpose would be. That maybe it would have an educational purpose in addition to the idea of maintaining its historic use.

There was at least one comment about separating hunting from pedestrian access and the main trails. You know, as much as it is feasible to do.

1- I just wanted to jump back. It just popped into my head with conversations about parking. It was that general small parking size discussion again, similar, to the capacities at White Clay Creek Preserve for trailhead access. I think we were talking about some of the more focused improvements and administrative functions. We're bringing people into a central point that obviously we need to have greater capacity than a trailhead parking lot. Similar again to White Clay Creek Preserve.

30 - So that was an attempt at summarizing all the feedback and discussions and input that we've had to date. Very quickly., I just want to run through and recap what (name, #23) presented earlier in a prior meeting about the various types of facilities, and we'll do this very quickly.

This we'll just come back to and refer to if we need, but this was a useful chart showing what facilities and amenities exist in the various areas that are close by right now.

But I don't think we need to look at it in a ton of detail now. So there will be restrooms - comfort stations - somewhere, some locations. These are just examples of other state parks. And we talked about attempting to locate them in ways that minimize their impact on viewshed. So using the

topography of the site to build things in, to hide things where possible, or at least allow the natural viewshed to be most prominent.

Maintenance needs. There is going to be need for some kind of maintenance shed facility. This is an example out of another park. And then the next slide is actually what happens here at White Clay. But something barn-like probably to support the maintenance needs that the park does have.

And then, though much debated, some sort of education/office space. This is a pretty small example of such a building. And the next one is actually also small but larger. But having space to present the educational programs and to share the information that is learned and that we have out in the park and in the region is important, as is providing some space for, DCNR to operate and manage the park. So that's included in our plans that we'll show in a moment.

11 - May I just ask a question? I apologize and I missed the last exercise and I was very sad, but I noticed the components you just touched on, having the maintenance building, and but I didn't see that come up within mapping exercise. So did you all discuss like where that might go? What was people's thoughts about that?

30 - It was in the mapping exercise combined with combined with the Education Center slash office and some parking. So it was like a combo like keeping those things co-located so that parking...

16 - I don't remember that, (name, #30). I remember them being separate.

30 - Oh, they were separate. I'm sorry.

33 - I think you're remembering it that way because most people did put them together, but not everybody thought they needed the education center. Is that right?

16 - No, I don't think that's it.

30 - We can answer this question, but it might have been me not remembering. So it was separate. It was a separate element that people could locate. But as (name, #33) has mentioned, at least some of the groups said, 'well, let's just put it in the same spot as that'. And also some groups didn't want to have that education building.

1 - And on the Strawbridge inholding wasn't that that combo and adapted reuse of the old farmhouse barns and outbuildings?

30 - Yep. So sorry about that.

10 - But that property's not an option.

16 - No, right, it's not.

33 - So we'll talk about that a little.

30 - So with all of that, we've developed two plan concepts that we hope respond to all of that discussion. The first slide is just the existing plan. If we need to reference it, the aerial map and then take us through the two options, we will also pin them up.



So let's talk through what we could potentially do and present these and maybe take just a very short break so people can look at them and gather thoughts.

33 - And then we can mark them up, and remember these are concepts still. OK. I tried to organize this legend a little bit differently than we had been organizing it.

So I'm going to walk from left to right from the more natural elements all the way through the central restoration. On the maps that you had I think people had some trouble moving back and forth from their environmental maps to the aerial map. So we added on this these little dotted lines, which are the 100ft stream buffers that would be required.

We've also added, because we thought it was helpful for floodways, which is in these darker and lighter pools because that starts to talk a little bit to places where we can put parking in there and can't put parking if we're going to block up the floodways.

We didn't overlay all of the pink areas that have all the species because we haven't done the in-depth PNDI studies, but we know they're there and we're not intruding in those areas, but where there were some areas that overlaid close to the road. So where we put facilities, we can hone in and do the PNDI studies more in-depth.

So in other words, are you saying that we know that there are areas that can be locations of sensitive species, but I don't know exactly what.

33 - Well, I bring that up because that swath was pink, but it's actually all farmland right now. So I think there's an error in that data.

So I just want you to know that as we saw over the last several meetings, if we have facilities from parking to an education center, PNDI study in-depth, would have to be done. So I don't want people to think that it wouldn't be done.

OK, the next thing we have in the large dots is the existing trails, the big main ones now which are Mt Olivet and the Spring Lawn Trail. And the next piece is what we're calling regional trail connections.

If you remember months ago we looked at all regional connections. So these are all these purple connection points that go out to regional trails and that's important for us to remember. And then outside you'll see the Chester County trails in the pink at the top and the Fairhill trails in the purple at the bottom. So that is all about that connectedness that everybody has talked about throughout.

And then we have a little education center, maintenance and potential day use. So in this option, those are placed here and that is at the existing parking lot. There's a lot of talk around that whether you end with an education center and the maintenance center and the parking lot, I don't know. But we said we could put them here. And when we walked out there, we thought that we could probably hide maintenance.

So that seemed to come up as a good spot.

15 – What are you considering a day use area? You're just talking picnic tables?

33 – Picnic tables.

15 – You're not talking about a playground...

33 – No, just picnic tables. And clearly that's a big pink bubble. We have to draw it on a scale that you can see it. The other thing, and I think this goes to the parking question (name, #36) that you asked. All we're doing at this point is showing a bigger lot where we have a concentration of activity and then smaller lots. And we're thinking of these smaller lots, in this case, where people identified. This is a smaller lot potential. People identified something up here as a smaller lot potential. We know that we have an existing lot there. I think that's 10 cars right now. People identified this is a potential because some groups said, 'well, we're going to need something there because the other ones are really far away and we want people to be able to access'.

I actually we're missing one. We identified an area somewhere along Stricklersville and (name, #10) you were talking about that. We actually think that up further on the hill may be better given that stream. And the other thing we went back to do is we more clearly showed the underpasses, like the stars were confusing if people need to understand it's an underpass or not.

And you're right that that underpass is flooded now and it's flooded and sits within the stream corner. So that's both sensitive.

14 - So you have a parking lot up on Walker Rd. And then there's a trail connection to the east there. Is there a parking lot in there?

33- We don't have one there. I think that didn't come up for the groups. I think the groups identified here, if I remember correctly, that is a smaller area. I think people are concerned about proximity to houses, is that right?

15 - That road is extremely narrow. You can barely get 2 cars to pass on another. And it's very windy, so it's dangerous.

14 - Well, there still might be a little bit of a difference in opinion there.

33- OK, that's fair enough.

15 – Well, I mean Mt Olivet is not DCNR trail. It's a Franklin trail. So you have to be mindful of that as well.

33 - Sure.

9 – The problem there. The map is correct in depicting the turn. But the problem there is there's an old stone house that is like, just a couple of feet off the road. So you have a very difficult 90° turn with a lot of hedges. It's hard to see around there. And it's not a great spot to introduce more traffic.

33 - So we may have some differences there. But there's some good reasons why I thought concentrated...

14 - Well, there might be some interest that other connection shown. That one. Yeah.

15 - And it's in Franklin township and it's Franklin township's trail.

14 – Well, some of the other top parking lots are on other trails.

36 - So I was at those initial stakeholder meetings in July 2023. So parking was our concern because our Springlawn Trail lot is so small. And I believe at the time was expressed that they intended to build a separate lot along the same road. So that they wouldn't be overrunning small township parking.

33 - I do remember something like that coming up in those meetings, but that didn't come up in this route, but I'm not saying it wouldn't work.

36 - And certainly we would be curious about how that would work.

33 - So the other thing that this map expresses is these ideas for these multi length and multi different accessibility trails. So at this lot we're showing that one mile loop connecting to a three mile loop. And those are not absolutes. People like a one-mile loop because it's a medical mile and most people can walk it. So as I said, not absolute, but that's the thought behind it.

And we did try to look at where people said they had walked and what they liked. These trails are mostly existing. And (name, #30) mentioned some of this is like reductive, right? So getting rid of the trails that are in sensitive areas or are hard to maintain.

And you know, when you draw a trail on a map, we're pretty careful doing this to look at the grades, but clearly you go out and walk the trail, right? It doesn't naturally just come from this map.

The next thing that you'll see is there is some suggestion right or wrong about some potential reforestation and grassland enhancement. But we know there's a lot of work to be done and that was well expressed by everyone. So that was that's one block.

16 – So when you do that, and maybe it's the same as the PNDI issue with the buildings, but when you identify the trails and where they might be, obviously you would run a PNDI but I would hope you would also look at the existing environmental conditions for those species as well. Making sure, everywhere you put a parking lot in, having a trail, you're dividing habitat so monitoring that's not negatively impacting whatever species that are concerned.

33 – Of course. You know, I will say there's a first cut to this here. We know there's some sensitive habitat in this area. So you'll see nothing's going down in that area. There are trails there now, but that's where we're trying to begin to be reductive to get out of there in this process.

30 - Just one thing that I'd add. This concept also works if that property became in play, right, because you essentially would take the things that are right here and then they could be on that area. So like this site concept A works, if that comes available.

33 - I guess reflected with that is you could have a wonderful one mile short loop there, assuming it would be really accessible. If this facility was there it could be longer than a mile.

21 – Can we talk about where the bathrooms would be located?

33 – In this presentation, the bathrooms are located here. We don't have multiple bathrooms across the site.

16 – Nor do we need it. I don't believe- how big is this site that we're right in right now?

24 - 1400 acres

16 – And how many bathrooms do you have?

24 - We have one public restroom. And it's not enough.

33 - So I think you can talk more about that. Like you might say 'Oh well this is going to be maintenance with the bathroom and the parking lot and then this also needs a bathroom because we do want them across the site'...

30 - But we did draw this as a complex and I think what we would say is if additional restrooms are needed, that locating them with parking makes sense. And also this is something that can be done over time as you see the need potentially.

You don't have to build 16 restrooms at the very beginning just because you want to put them all over. You could build one or two and then see how that functions.

1 - That's very much many of our parks evolve regarding needed restrooms across the system. All of the use and visitation isn't happening all at once. Flip of a switch.

33 - I mean, that's why you do a master plan. So if you said, 'hey, this is an alternative location', what you want to be preventing in a master plan is something that makes you put it in just one location. You don't want that. You want to identify the places that make sense over the long term. So that's what we're talking about.

OK, second concept. The next concept really shows the parking in all the same places and the education center, maintenance, and day use. I know a number of people walked this and it was shown in further, but in our discussions I think everybody really wanted this closer to the road. So that's where that was shown.

And then we thought just a little bit differently, looking at some of the maps, about a three-mile trail loop and how that one mile trail might move. And also people really talked about this not having a good trail system. So we introduced some trails again, looking at topography, and just turning that concept out there that people really identify that as an opportunity.

So I think those are the differences, then we can talk comparisons.

30 - So some of the trail configurations and decisions are sort of interchangeable. In other words, if some trails on this map resonate with folks, they could actually appear on the 1st concept too.

33 - I think one of the things, and this was (name, #10) was talking about how you make the crossing here. We actually suggested it here just because of that wetlands situation. But if you were able to make this crossing and we looked. We think there are some safe crossing points there that would give you much better distance and visibility from cars. If you were able to do that, you probably could make it connect right up from Spring Lawn. We try to just suggest those sorts of synergies.

16 - It looks like there's some trails that cross over Stricklersville. Is that right?

33 - So this goes through under the culvert

16 - So in terms of the crossings, are you guys also incorporating your concept as far as like wildlife crossing? So for instance, when you just indicated to me that you're talking about, it's actually a culvert passing under - that would be a safe wildlife crossing. And then, of course, this whole area has some of these old fox hunting bridges, that the Duponts used over some of those and those would be safe while they're crossing.

Just wondering if that's entering into your thinking as well in terms of those connections for the trails? For instance, up here on Broad Run Rd. There's a trail crossing and it's just trail, road, trail. And I'm just wondering if we could be thinking about wildlife.

33 - Sure. And I think the beauty is right now having looked at these, I think that is the most open crossing you have now. So I would venture to say the less open ones, wildlife are already using. It would probably be expensive to dig a new underpass. But I think you can think about that selectively, right, to say, 'Oh, well, this is the crossing that we're making under and humans and animals use it, but maybe we're not opening those up to humans'. So I think that's a very good way to think about it and a really nice way to tell the story.

10 - I like that discussion actually, because the old cattle bridge, right, it's just up across from brother's riding. We haven't talked about that a lot. Originally that was talked about as maybe being a pedestrian crossing. Certainly the neighbors don't like that idea. But if you could, it wouldn't be hard to restore that to a wildlife crossing and maybe it has a use besides falling down.

I talked a lot about that culvert that exists just when the people know it was there. But I understand it could be better suited a little up the hill where the other one is. But cleaning that area up - right now it's a marsh and a dump pit and it's good for nothing. So to restore that to some kind of wetland wildlife crossing would also be better than what's there today.

15 - But if you restore that bridge, what stops people?

10 - Oh you'd have to have a fence or something.

15 - It skirts by property lines.

33 - That's the bridge, but yeah, it's not functioning now right, but it also is trash in it. You know what might be interesting again, we need to go out and look at this, because you can see we still have to cross a piece of the stream, so if we want a human crossing, we really have to get good sightlines. And we think there's somewhere in this one that we can do that.

8 - So well, (name, #5)'s not here, but we had a discussion. He had some interesting ideas around using some of the ag strategically to basically kind of move deer to one quadrant or another. And so you make one or two quadrants kind of more attractive because it still has a little bit of corn or something in it. And that would, one, it would allow you to concentrate hunting there. Less impact maybe on hikers, but also potentially less traffic issues.

33 – So we do have a comparison slide here. Site plan A is talking about the education center making this day use or some combination there in that zone. And we included the property that's not owned now in the zone to say that if you were able to obtain that, then you could look at your adaptive reuse. And then this three mile loop with that parking lot.

And then the western side looking at education, maintenance and day use and this isn't to say you couldn't also think, 'but we want education, but put it at this end', but maybe this is going to stay at that end, you could still make that decision. But even what I heard and felt like trying to minimize footprint, we're probably going to go together.

31 - A very, very coarse way. Just for general context, if you were to approximate the dashed line around Concept A, there is the potential for seven species of conservation concern that we would have to work through if that were to be the developed area. Very generally, we just kind of drew a very general Polygon. And in Concept B, if that dashed area were to be space for an educational facility or maintenance or whatever, in a very general way, there was the potential for one species that would have to be worked around.

That number could go up or come down when the actual review is done. But just a quick sneak peek type concept, that's the numbers.

15 - Are we concerned about the species in Plan A near where the buildings originally were? Like if we're staying close to where that farm was and where the parking lot is now?

31 – Given that this is very general and preliminary, you could run it literally over top of that existing structure and the same 7 species would come up.

30 - That doesn't mean it would be a deal breaker by any stretch.

15 - I understand that.

31 – There's a number of things that you would have to get into

15 - So between both of these site plans, we're back to not if we want an education center, but where the education center is going? Is that what I'm taking away from this?

33 - That's not what I said.

15 - Well, no, I just saying on the map, they're in both maps. Does that mean we're definitely looking and putting an education center somewhere or are we still fuzzy on that?

18 - I'm just fascinated that it's on there at all without an option to not have it since we have plans that weren't anywhere near this.

30 - Well, but I think what (name, #33) said is you could have it or not have it in these zones, but you still have something in those zones. You'd need maintenance, you'd need some parking. So whether you build an education center there or not, you still have restrooms. We still think those are the locations for the – this is the wrong term – but “concentrated development” Those zones make sense to us,

15 - But that doesn't mean all of that needs to actually be put in. That it could just be parking and a bathroom.

1 - I think it's still up for discussion. I think probably in multiple groups last time there was division on that idea and we've been, as you know, talking about the core requirements and what we need at the park. But again, in the Build A Park exercise, there was division on what exactly that looks like - the education center, the administrative needs, the maintenance needs to take care of this park.

33 - What we didn't hear was ‘we should have everything spread out all over’. So we tried to say, put it here or here. These are the places where people are comfortable having those pieces. And then tonight we heard someone ask, ‘well, but maybe we have other bathrooms that go on the parking lot’. That too is possible, but we have to get to that point.

16 - I do think though, at the last meeting there was less infrastructure that we all agreed on as a whole, and that maybe there was one or two outliers and (name, #12), I didn't know, I must have been out sleeping or something, I didn't realize that for your group, the crux of it was education. So I do apologize for that.

12 – It was a part of the discussion.

16 – Yeah, but I didn't think it was a facility. So that's where I must have messed up there.

12 - Part of the conversation was also how we educate in the least impactful fashion. It didn't have to be its own facility, it could have been tied to the other half of a visitor center or something.

16 – Well, maybe it was the visitor center then that was the big issue. But I don't agree. I don't believe a lot of people agree that's something that we wanted to consider definitely being there.

30 – On one of those slides I said there was divergence on that one. I don't know how else to say it, but I don't think...

16 – It wasn't overwhelming is what I'm trying to say.

30 - No, I think there were different opinions around education center and I think there were different opinions across the spectrum. At least, I didn't hear consensus either way.

1 - And where I think there was support for education facilities that we've called out as a core requirement for the park. They were in alignment with what (name, #12) was saying because, that was one of my takeaways, was minimize the impact of the infrastructure, combine facilities to the furthest extent possible, concentrate them instead of dispersing them. Those were some of my takeaways from the last meeting in our group. In our group, (name, #16), I don't think we got there.

16 - No, I didn't think you had a basic idea...

1 - I didn't have a vote. I was just sitting. *(laughter)*

16 - I said I disagreed.

8 - Are we seeing like a stream crossing or two? I don't think you mentioned them.

33 - You know, we didn't show the stream crossings on these maps. What we did, though, I think all the groups suggested something down in this area as a streaming crossing, and then a second one like somewhere up there, but we didn't show.

1 - The southern border crossing. That's a historic equestrian crossing the one that was shown, (name, #32)?

32 - Yes, that is historically used by a lot of the equestrian riders.

2 - So when you say stream crossing, you're implying horses and people or bicycles or humans in the water?

33 - No, I would not say that would be the best environmental methodology. We're using this as a stream ford right now, but probably environmentally that's not terrific. So I would say you're going to end with some sort of a bridge.

So when you look at crossings, you have to decide which ones are going to be big stepping stones and which ones need little tiny bridges. And that really talks to physical ability and challenge.

16 - I might be getting too into the weeds here, but when we talk about accessibility and trails, what were you thinking or have you yet thought how many trails would be fully accessible? You know, by that ADA standard?

33 - You mean like a 12-foot paved trail? *(laughter)*

16 - I mean, like if I'm in a wheelchair...

33 - I think you should think about it like, you have a mile loop, you probably want to make sure that that's something that everybody can use, right? It's got to be graded correctly. We're familiar with bike trails that are paved, but it doesn't have to be. It could be a cinder trail. Remember we did show, I don't have the slide, but we showed degrees of trails.

I think on the three miles, you want to really think carefully about your grading on that. Does that have to go all the way to a cinder trail? Maybe it does, maybe it doesn't. So I'm not trying to be wishy washy on it, but I think when you get out to the smaller trails, those are going to be your footpath trails. Maybe stepping over the logs and you know, doing whatever you do.



So I think if you really want an opportunity for lots of people, to think about being accessible.

16 – But none will be paved?

23 – Not paved would be my recommendation.

1 – We're looking at a lot of trail system projects across the entire system right now. And it's that goal for us, in the build out of a new trail system – be in a stacked loop trail system, progressive stacked loop trail system or any of the systems that we're building, including what we're looking at here, building in that fully accessible trail is a target on that design. It has to be.

16 - So is the outcome of this meeting to number one, identify what concept we like more or less, and then number two, to identify what infrastructure we all kind of can agree on? Just wondering.

31 - Definitely for us, we'd like feedback on the two concepts. I mean, there's not a huge set of differences, but that kind of feedback is helpful. As far as the overall structure of the committee and what happens in the next meeting, I'm not sure how that fits in, but I think we want to definitely feedback.

33 - We did try to distill the four group concepts into two that were legible so that you could discuss them.

1 – Just a clarifying question. Between A&B, the dispersed smaller parking lots, do we have a similar number?

33 - We didn't differ on that because everybody, with the exception of I think (name, #10) brought up that maybe there was some potential here. And I think we just missed drawing one somewhere here. I think everybody noted them in fairly the same places. Is that right?

I don't know when we're going to do a break or anything, but people can come up and have a look at them.

31 - They're pinned up on the wall. So maybe people can digest and then we can come back and talk about them.

33 - You can write off them too if you want.

9- Before we break. First of all, I want to say that I appreciate these new plans. I know it takes a lot of time to put something like this together and I appreciate the work you have done for this.

I do think it's important – two things - it's very difficult to get in the car and start driving if you don't know where you're going. And we had lengthy discussion last meeting about the idea of preserve designation, and it has been mentioned in the presentation here.

I have two questions. My first question - I'd be curious to know if there's been any discussion, (name, #1), on this at the Commonwealth level, because I think that does impact what plan would be adopted or maybe not adopted or a different direction entire. But that is the first question I have.

1- After our last task force meeting and the discussion on the preserve designation for the state park, I took that back, in addition to your two pager, (name, #9), and as well as the meeting minutes transcript around that conversation, and had a very lengthy conversation twice with Secretary Dunn and Deputy Secretary Norbeck on the topic. It's been taken into advisement by exec staff and we are not making a decision on that redesignation at this time.

And what I would say about the car driving metaphor is that whether it was designated a preserve or designated a state park as it is now, what we're talking about - the essential elements that need to be improved at the park - don't sort of diverge, whether it's a preserve or it's a state park, these core elements.

9- So my thoughts would be, I'm glad to hear that it wasn't a 'no', but I think it's something that I guess we'll continue to talk about.

1- It's an ongoing discussion. The best way I can put it is it's been taken into advisement by leadership, which includes me, and we've had those conversations. But as far as making that decision now to redesignate, that's not happening now.

9- The second question is, there was a news article a couple weeks ago about the three new state parks and you were quoted in it and the article specifically deals with overnight accommodations.

1- The Brian Whipkey article from USA Today?

9- Pardon me?

1- Brian Whipkey.

15 - Yes.

1- Hope he quoted me right.

9- So the direct quote he attributed to you: "We are going to continue to assess and study the overnight opportunities in the future". So that came as a surprise to me. I thought that issue had been put to bed. So it came as a surprise to me. And as we're evaluating site plans here that have been proposed, that's still a concept that's percolating in the back of the mind here. Then I feel like it would be valuable for this group.

15- I just want to say something. I'd like to agree. There was an awful lot of backlash to that article and to that quote in particular. Because it feels like - and the impression that everybody I spoke to and came to me stated - was that it's basically spitting in the face of all the work that the locals and this task force have done to put that to bed and to protect the park in the manner that we all agree it should be taken care of.

And yet, that's still being brought up in news articles in the public forum that you're still looking and potentially put camping here after everything that we've all been through. And there's a lot of anger behind that and a lot of continued mistrust and an awful lot of dissension as far as the community is concerned.

16 – (name, #1), depending on what transpires tonight and maybe the next meeting, if there was agreement on, 'OK, we're going to go with Concept A' and we can wrap our heads around what that infrastructure may look like. Would there be any thought to redesignating it then as a preserve after that? Because that would then make, I think, a lot of folks more comfortable that in the future there wouldn't be overnight accommodations because it is a preserve.

And so you, you know, you would have the trail system, you would have some infrastructure there. And you know how I feel about the Education Center or even having an office, you know, personally, but it's just a concept to think about, you know, designating it back into preserve status so that what is in the plan stays in the plan and doesn't make any bigger the plan.

That my concern. Because as you know, I've worked in parks for 13 years. I know how master planning works. And once you have an idea, you just wait until it's politically perfect to do it and then you do whatever you wanted to do. I've seen it happen many times.

So all I'm saying is if you put it back into preserve status, it might seal what the master plan will look like instead. That would truly be a win win.

1- I understand the desires and the intentionality behind that redesignation that (name, #9) led the conversation with last meeting related to overnight accommodations.

14 - Can we just hear the response to what happened? Was it a misquote?

1- So I don't know what was written, I didn't see the article, but I've been interviewed by Brian multiple times and he's a good reporter. He's a champion for conservation and parks and forests throughout the Commonwealth and he covers our endeavors regularly.

This interview was 45+ minutes and we went and walked through each of the parks. And we lead with Susquehanna Riverlands and the master plan that we completed for that park and presented to the public in July, and you have heard in previous meetings what that plan entailed.

And then I explained the work of the task force. I don't know if the work of the task force was mentioned, and that we're working through the master plan with this task force that is doing this important work and then he asked about the different accommodations and plans.

And I had definitively said, and I'm not sure if it's in the article, that the overnight accommodations will not be in the final concept of the master plan for the park. But we will continue to assess and evaluate, which is what I've said in this room here as well as in previous meetings, assess the needs of overnight accommodations. And that wouldn't be done in a vacuum; it wouldn't be done, (name, #16), as you noted.

Let's say 10 years from now, we make the decision to revisit. That would be studied and assessed and the community would be engaged as we move forward but again, that is not an element in this plan to move the design and engineering to bring the amenities on the park.

16 - Yeah, not this plan, but the next one. And that's where we're saying... just kill it here.

1 - I hear what you're saying.

15 - There's a lot of concern as well that this task force is 6 meetings. And at the end of November, essentially, this task force is done, right? The master plan is going to be what the master plan is going to be. Then whatever other plans come up in the future, where are you getting your community input from?

Is it going to be like, 'hey, can you guys all kind of meet again'? Are you going to reinstitute the task force? Or is it going to be another online survey or something of that nature where you're not going to get straight answers from the community because it's not just the community taking the survey. The survey can be taken by people in Hawaii, wherever. How is that going to be done without a community forum, basically?

23 - Let me take this. So today we had two other meetings at two other state parks with community leadership about items that both the community and DCNR would like to put forward. None of these decisions are made in a vacuum. Whenever we're going to do any type of development, we're meeting with local officials and they're speaking hopefully on behalf of their constituents, that's what we do consistently.

That's what we attempted to do at the beginning here. Some people chose to come to those meetings, some didn't. And you know, we're continuing to do that. (name, #30) and (name, #33) have taken input that was provided here that in some regards is vastly different than the original master plan showed, right?

So we're doing that. This is a longer drawn-out process, but I think we're doing that here. The end result, still to be determined. I think it's a negotiation too. Like some things I know folks in this room don't want, some things are essentially core to what we need to do, but this is vastly different than where we started. I think we can all agree to that.

15 - I understand, I think there's an awful lot of community concern and an awful lot of community distrust and having some sort of plan that you can say, 'yes, the task force is over, but we will continue to the next XY&Z plan with specific groups' would be helpful so that people can understand exactly where this is going when the master plan is over and when this task force is done.

1 - I think we have one more meeting on the schedule. I think we talked about in previous meetings bringing the draft master plan back to this task force, receive all of your input again, make sure that you know, any differences of opinion are duly noted and understood, that needs to be in the record.

It's not just November and then we're done. I think there's additional work that needs to be done beyond that, that scheduled meeting that we're going to talk about at the end of this meeting.

And (name, #23), thank you for bringing up the example today. Because we were in Upper Makefield Township in Bucks County the morning. And then we were in the southern part of that park and Washington crossing. But we were meeting with the leadership of Makefield Township on a

significant capital project. It's been years in the making with lots of concerned neighbors that are right on the border of this significant park improvement.

And we were meeting with leadership and going through with our engineering staff because we're at that phase of feasibility study and getting ready to move into design engineering. We were meeting with leadership and also teeing up that public meeting that will be for their constituency that needs to take place as we advance this project, which is out before we actually are turning dirt over.

A master plan is a master plan. You guys have heard what a master plan is by now. It's not design engineering. It's not that additional phase of that input and that engagement with not only the elected officials, but with the public that lives in that immediate area. That is part and parcel of how we move forward.

16 - To that point though. Every Township representative that was in your meetings to begin with was not supportive of this concept at all. And the resounding feeling from the 500-600 plus people at the meeting was 'no'; I think it was one person that supported it. So it's hard for me. You want to work with the townships and the local officials, but it, you know, it was overwhelming. We don't want this kind of thing. So it's kind of hard to swallow what you're saying, (name, #1), because so many people were saying, you know, 'thank you, but no thank you'.

14 - I'm glad that you're recording this because I do want to state this for the record. I think there's a lot of people who are sitting around the table right now who feel that we have dealt in good faith with you. And honestly, 10 minutes ago I was cheering you on saying 'good, this is the product of good, thorough discussion that took into consideration a lot of different perspectives. And I think we got to a pretty good answer'.

And I think those two concepts, there may be some slight disagreements about certain details, but I think that honestly, any of us could live with either of those. I mean, I can't speak for everybody. I'm just saying that I think there's a pretty good sense that you captured the inputs that received, and this is pretty close to something that would be palatable to the community. And you blew it.

It's like, 'OK, wow, what a relief'. I mean, we've got something that looks pretty good. And then on the other hand, wait a minute, we might just pull that away if you decide to. And I was ready to give up talking about a preserve and say, 'OK, we're going to trust you'. You know, trust you to work through this process. We kind of got pretty darn close to a good answer.

And now all of the sudden you're here and you know, we can't trust you because you might be changing your mind.

1- (name, #14) because of the future study and assessment of overnight?

14 - Yes. What does it take to make that point clear? Because I thought we did it in December. I thought we did it night after night after night of these meetings. I don't understand how that could possibly have missed you guys. What part did we not make it clear about? I mean, I thought we were crystal clear as a group. Again, I'm not trying to speak for everybody, but I think I've heard it pretty consistently from (name, #9), from (name, #16), (name, #15), from me.

I mean, I haven't heard, a whole lot of 'oh, but it would be OK if we changed our minds in a few years or, you know, a few months or who knows when and we decided to go back to overnight'. I mean, the whole thing just turned on its head, (name, #1).

I mean, I was all in a minute ago. Now you've got me, basically...

1- If I say that we're never going to assess it or study or look at it, which would involve again, engagement with the public, with representatives of the townships. I think I would be dishonest to say that. It may not be me, certainly won't be me, but because as I look at what we're talking about here and what this master plan will tee up, which is the design engineering, there won't be a campground in that mix.

But for me to say never and speak for future generations, both of the public that are using this park and for leadership in the Bureau that are above and beyond me. It's disingenuous.

14 – But I suspect that there's a lot of people sitting here and saying, well, then forget it. We want to go back to the preserve and forget about it because you just took all of our input from the past few nights and, you know, sitting here and now that was meaningless and forget about it. We'll take a preserve or nothing. What did you waste our time? Is that wrong?

1 – DCNR is appreciative of this, (name, #14), but we've been very clear about what we've been doing to get us to this point throughout the meetings that we've all attended and that you've provided input on.

16 - That's why I was saying, first of all, that's why I'm saying in 10 years from now, you're going to do exactly what Delaware did and build a trail in the most ecologically sensitive part of the state of Delaware, it's the same kind of concept of parks.

DCNR is a landowner and they are responsible for being a good steward of the properties that they own and maintain from now to forever. Which means 50 years from now, 100 years from now and these areas are going to be more and more looked upon for that type of activity of respite, of going there in nature. As more and more nature get developed, your position is critical to ensure that these areas remain as they are as much as possible. And recreation taking over all the time, where we can afford RV's and campgrounds, you have to have some places, and this is a perfect place to not have that of recreation to allow for free movement of people and animals in a much larger area than that because of Maryland and Delaware.

We could probably all get behind these concepts, as (name, #16) said, even though I'll be honest with you, I'm concerned about an Education Center for the plain and simple fact of you bring buses in and things change. Things change with traffic. And I don't mean road traffic, I mean human traffic. But regardless of that, I'm getting off topic.

It's that unknown. It's that unknown and always having to be - my cortisol levels - I can't take it. It's like always having to be ready, you know, for a fight. I don't want to, I don't want to fight.

If we can just get this; just put the preserved status on it so that we can go home and say job well done. I can go to sleep knowing that this property is going to pretty much look the way it looks right now in perpetuity.

1- So, you heard me say this before on the future assessment and study point that, and I think we said this probably in the one joint Township meeting as well, that while it will not be an element within the master plan to advance design engineering, we were going to call out future study and advisement within the master plan. If that was not in the master plan, that call out, is that, does that sort of not get your cortisol levels up?

And I understand the implications of preserve designation in this discussion.

15 – Or give us a letter that says for 50 years or 100 years or something, that no campground concept will be put on this property. Give us some sort of assurance so that we can calm down and so I can calm other people down and that we don't have to feel like we're fighting. So we've been fighting for a year and it sucks.

16 – And we still have to argue over the Education Center.

36 - So at the Township level. And I say this as the treasurer for Elk Township. We had serious concerns about the cost that we would incur if there was overnight accommodations. All the wear and tear on the roads. You're going to have fire and EMS calls, all of that just goes right to the residents. That's paid for with local income tax. That's not on the state or a visitor.

And we run on a tight budget. I mean, a quarter of my budget or more is fire and EMS. That's \$100,000 just for the contract. And the big piece of that is well, how many calls did you have last year? And for EMS we only had 90. So I don't know how many people you will have in this park at any given time, but I would imagine that it's impossible that it's not going to produce more calls, especially with the multi use. And I know that I guess you're going to allow fox hunting back in. I don't know how that works out with people on trails and whatnot, but the possibility of injuries and incidents and fires is going to be much higher. And we talked about taking things off the table.

At the time when this had come up, I had called some other townships where there were recently campground installations were not maybe immediate or something, but in the not so distant past and I said, 'how did this work for you?' And one Township told me that they didn't even know the campground was constructed until after they started noticing all the trailer traffic. They have people coming in and people going.

1 – You're not talking about a state park campground? You mean a private campground?

36 - It's the State Park. And the three townships that I did talk to at the time all give me the same general notion that 'we weren't included in any of the processes, just something that they did on the property' that they didn't think much of it.

Now, I know a lot of those more rural areas up around Pennsylvania, they don't have so many ordinances. They don't even have rules that they might be able to attempt to tell you that they think you would need to abide by or, you know, noise or fire, anything like that.

But I just got this impression of the Township level that DCNR comes in and they install what they

want and you sort of deal with it. So that creates all kinds of issues for us because just because we have someone come in and stay for a long time, sometimes those people linger around.

We've had issues in the past where people park RV's around the Township because they don't have somewhere to go, you know. And I know that London Britain, who was initially a stakeholder and isn't now, they just put out a letter last week outlining all those same concerns about how this will cost for the residents – wear and tear on the roads, traffic issues, accidents.

So while we do have some concerns about the infrastructure, the attention and the trails that that might bring, it's the overnight accommodations that are the serious concern. I can't speak for any board members from anywhere, but that is the big concern for Franklin, the big concern for Elk, and obviously the concern for London Britain since they put out a letter. It's a strain on the local residents and budgets.

1 - I don't know who you spoke with, but I'm scratching my head because we haven't built any new state park campgrounds for - nothing brand new at least; we have improved or expanded some existing state park campgrounds at certain parks, but not a new campground going in.

36 - I would have to go back to my notes

1- It's all right. I think we all understand at DCNR, the concerns and reservations associated with overnight accommodations. And that is why we took it out as an element within this master plan back in January. And I just want to remind everyone maybe, and that's last thing I'll say on this and we can move on, unless you guys want to continue to talk about it...

16 – (name, #13) has a question.

1 - I'm sorry, (name, #13), go ahead.

13 - Well, no, I want you to finish your thought, but I'd like to back up a little bit because in Concept B, you show the infrastructure located in Elk Township. And I don't remember any of the sketches that we drew having anything more than a parking lot and maybe a bathroom located in that location.

And I need, as a township representative, to report back to Elk Township about, you know, what this means, because I don't remember anything being said about an education center or a park office or maintenance building being located in that location on those previous sketches.

16 - Yeah, I'm thinking that was in ours, wasn't it? And we argued about the Education Center.

10 - We talked about it. Yeah. And beyond our group, I remember that being discussed because if you remember the one field trip, we hiked out off the road to look and at a spot.

16 - We pushed it to there.

10 - And while we were there we brought it up as a possible location.



16 - What I don't understand is the difference in the trails. But honestly, I keep wondering if all of this is for not and I keep going back to what (name, #14) said.

18 - If I can add, day one we sat around the table talking about what our goals were and what our reason for participating was. And I said from day one that without some kind of deed amendment to run with the land to protect it as a preserve, the rest of this is nonsense. It doesn't preserve the land, it doesn't protect it in perpetuity. It doesn't follow historically how this land has been managed. And I believe what the original intent of the owner was, the trustee.

So in my mind, as we've gone through this process, these are lovely ideas. But for me, even if one of these concepts is exactly what I would hope for, without that protection, to me it's a 'no' vote. This is, you know, there's no point. Because the state has made the decision. They want all their options open and the constituents here are told tough noogies. I just don't find that to be acceptable and I don't think it will be acceptable to the people that we are speaking on behalf of.

1- Back to the point that I posed, that I mentioned before as far as future study and assessment. If that was not an element in the master plan, was to sort of set the expectations for us to move to - as we're doing at Susquehanna Riverlands - with a completed master plan there for us to move to design engineering, right? That would occur after this master plan is finalized and approved.

And then we're going to be in design engineering and permitting for up to three years for some of the elements here. Because there's a lot to go through, right?

And then actual improvements in the construction of that would follow probably in, you know, year 4 for the final elements that will be in this plan. And what will not be in this plan is overnight accommodations and a campground.

16 - You know that, (name, #1), it's like we're saying the same things back and forth constantly. It's like you're not hearing what we're saying.

1 - I am hearing what you're saying and I understand the implications of preserve status. I understand the implications as it relates to overnight. But we're not talking about an overnight accommodation being an element in this plan right now.

16 – We are talking about it and then we don't ever want to talk about it. That's what we'll say.

10 - I don't want my daughter to have to have this fight; my granddaughter to have to have this fight. That's why we want a preserve. That's why we do our part now to preserve this right.

16 - And to get this done, (name, #1). One and done.

14 - That's why we're here. And if that's not what we're talking about, then we all just go back and declare war again. I mean, you're done.

15 - I'd really rather not do that.

16 - Yeah.

14 – We sat here in good faith thinking that we were having a discussion of what was going to happen with this property. Now it's all been taken off the table. And I think that's just very, very disappointing, at least for a lot of us. But we go back home, just go back to the constituents again. Just all bets are off now.

16 - Well, hopefully they won't have to do that.

1 - It's not a zero-sum game.

16 - Well, it kind of is. It is because you have to continue to be vigilant. And honestly, you know...

15 - I feel like it could be a win-win for everyone. You could stop fighting. I could stop fighting. All of our cortisol levels could go down if we just took that off the table in perpetuity.

And I get that you're saying that you don't know if in 50 years from now people are going to want camping. I hear you. But even if they did, this still wouldn't be an appropriate location.

You don't have open space like this in very many areas. And once you build on it, you can't go back. We're losing open space. We're not gaining it. There's only so much land left and we can't preserve and protect what we have now. Then what the hell are we sitting here doing?

1- Well, (name, #14) mentioned in your comments. This is all on the record and it needed to be captured certainly to include all of these thoughts and you know, everyone's great disappointment in the concept of study and assessment in the future and how that leaves things unsettled, were problematic. But I don't think it wipes out or eliminates all the good work that you guys have provided and where we've taken it to, here in October of 2024.

11 - And it does though, (name, #1), because what's happened is in us realizing that there's been certain level of misplaced trust, it's now eroding the relationship that we have spent the last year building with you and your team. And honestly, I'm sitting here a little shocked because it's the first I've heard of this article as well.

And the language that you've provided to us so far inferred that you were removing this as an option for the property into the future. And now we're trying to digest that actually, that wasn't what you were saying. And there was a nuance that was just subtle enough for us to think that you were taking it off the table, but actually that was never going to be an option.

And so you have to think about this from a relationship building perspective. You have undermined people's trust in this room, and it's creating a friction now. And so it's not like, just purely from a psychological perspective, you can't just tell people like, 'OK, well, sorry that I got misquoted or sorry they misunderstood, let's carry on'. There needs to be some work with people in this room now.

1- So I'll apologize for eroding that trust. It was in the context of again, the interview was in the

context of the specific work that this task force is doing and that camping won't be part of this task force work.

I understand the next steps that (name, #14) and (name, #16) and (name, #15) and (name, #18) have taken in that and the public, (name, #15) who have read that article and feeling like it's a, I'm trying to think, (name, #9) what the term that was thrown at me in the policy hearing was... bait and switch.

And that's not what I think my intentions were certainly in communicating that. I was communicating again, the work of the task force and what we initially stated regarding camping not being an amenity built into the master plan for design engineering, just as it's going to happen at Susquehanna Riverlands. So I apologize that that trust has been rattled in this.

Again, my intention was to not bind, or try not to bind, future leadership or the community for that matter, in this particular topic and they would be free to explore if it was a viable option in the future. It's not going to be my job to do that.

16 - Well, that's part of the issue. That's part of the issue because we all know that it's going to be a different set of people. And that's important because again, there was a level of trust that was established with you. You're basically what we think of as being the head of this whole operation.

And you know, like I said, it's going to be a few years for this whole engineering process and everything and you've got a few more gray hairs than I do and I'm close to retiring.

1- I'll be bald by the time I retire (laughs)

16 - So it's going to be new people. And they may not even be interested in walking down the road as far as we've walked before we were betrayed. But, in the meantime, I think that, you know, unfortunately, (name, #9) was right a couple meetings ago when he insisted on talking about preserving the land and asking you to go back and talk to the secretary about that. I appreciate the fact that you did that. But I think at least from my perspective, (name, #36) can correct me if I'm off base for the Township, but I think we want to talk preserve.

36 - Yeah. I mean, they're really fearful that in seven years there'll be a different discussion about camping. It'll be a separate plan, And then it's everything starts over after we thought, well, we compromised. This is what we ended up with assuming that was it.

16 – This is your way out - to put a preserve status on it after it's done. And then we know what happens in the future.

14 – It's preserve status or we're done.

16 - Then we know what happens and it stays that way. And then your maintenance plans will enhance the habitat that's there in the future. I mean, if you remember this all started because (name, #2) wanted to do some trail maintenance. Thanks, Scotty. (laughs) I'm just kidding.

But now we have a trail system potentially that would be amazing, and you guys got what you mostly wanted. And you know, hopefully it goes back to preserve status and we'll know it's going to be here in 20-30 years.

8 - I mean, I agree that preserve status and taking camping off the table forever would be simpler for everybody.

I did just want to address the betrayal idea because at least for me, I feel like what (name, #1) has been saying about camping to me, it seems like you've been consistent all the way along. I think you have been consistent. I understood that it wouldn't be in the master plan. Therefore there's going to be no camping for whatever it is 5, 10 years somewhere in that time frame.

We know that. And then, we would probably have to stay vigilant. We would have to stay vigilant because I feel like from the beginning, he said, you know, the master plan is it's now, but it's not forever. And so it could get floated again sometime in the future and we would potentially have to rally support and say, you know, if we feel the same way in 10 years that now we don't want it anymore. So I'm just saying at least for me, I feel like he has been consistent with that.

16 - But I keep coming back to- you want to work with the townships, then work with the townships. And we tell you this is what we want. This is what we don't want. And it's like falling on deaf ears. And I understand what you're saying, (name, #8).

And I do believe, (name, #1), you always have said "well for now, for now, for now". And you know, no camping.

1 - We have had that 'for now' conversation so many times, right? I thought it was consistent.

16 – Yes, we have. I get it. But that comment in the article was kind of different. All this conversation we were having and then it's like, yeah, but you know, we are going to be developing camping in the future, you know?

1 – That's not what it said, right?

15 - No, it says assessment and study,

9 - It says we are going to continue to assess and study the opportunities for overnight opportunities in the future.

16 - So what we would like to do is make sure that doesn't happen.

1 – I Understand. I do.

16 - I know you do, but I'm going to say it again, you don't want it in the plan, we don't want it in the future plan. We just want to make sure it never, ever happens. Ever.

10 - And we were encouraged by all the conversations at the last meeting about preserve and we are encouraged that you were going to take it back to Secretary Dunn and the rest of the decision

makers. And what I heard was, 'OK, stick to the side, they'll go away in five years and we'll do what we'll do'.

16 - Well, and that's what happened.

10 - So, you know, the worst case scenario that I thought was, you'd take it back to them and they say no, sorry. But it would still be off the table. Putting the preserve designation would really stamp our efforts and make the community happy.

1 - And I did unpack all of that. And I did it to the best of my ability. So, you know, to have those conversations with leadership, with Cindy Dunn and John Norbeck our deputy.

10 - And I appreciate you did that.

1- And it didn't come back, (name, #9), which is what I think you were maybe concerned about that, that I was going to show up at this meeting and say it's definitely not going to happen.

We're talking about it and we'll continue to talk about it and we'll continue to share in the future even beyond this work of the task force for the master plan that that conversation if we get to a decision on it.

12 -So I have a question for you. I'm going to assume for the moment that you would like to support this idea. What do we need to do to create enough political pressure for the rest of the government decision makers to get over the hump?

How far up the scale of chaos do we have to go to get there? Because I'm pretty sure this community will rise to whatever levels it needed to. And I've shared that before and unfortunately it was treated as if I was making a threat. It's not intended that way. Please don't want to interpret that way, but the depth everybody's feeling here, it's definitely that direction. But what do we have to do to get it labeled a preserve. Whatever it is, we're going to do it.

I mean that as a positive statement. Let's find a positive way to work together and get ourselves to that point because I don't agree with everything everybody said all the time, but I do tonight.

And I do not think that you have done a bait and switch, by the way. And I do agree with Kevin.

1 - Thank you.

12 – You have been consistent in that.

1- I have tried to be authentic with all of you in our conversations.

12 - And you said that up at the township meeting in Kemblesville. You made that same statement at the time, I remember. So you have been consistent, but we've been consistent in that we want to acknowledge that this is a very neat property because some folks with a lot of money bought a lot of farms, tore down a bunch of small farmsteads, and created a very unique property we think is worthy of preserving for a lot of reasons.

So I guess back to my original question, what do we need to do to get there? Because I don't think we're going to have peace in the valley until we find a way. Is that a fair statement?

15 - Yes.

12 - Anybody, if anybody feels different, say so. That's just, that's been my sense day one on this and it's still my sense. Personally, I would be fine with either plan A or B up here. I think it's great as long as it stops there.

So how can we get there? What's the path? Because we could sit here and do this all night. I think we need to move beyond that and say, all right, what? What are we going to really do? Do we need to have Cindy and John down here in a meeting? I think we should do that and then have a conversation, not so we can yell at them, we need to avoid that, that chaos of the January meeting.

But let's have a real discussion the next meeting, maybe? And if there's anybody else in that decision making group, bring them all down. Or better yet, we'll have a meeting up in Harrisburg. You know, what's that look like?

How do we, because we've been doing this dance for over a year now and keep coming back to the same place. So I'm trying to get us on a new path.

1- We haven't been talking about the redesignation and reclassification of the property as a preserve until the last meeting.

16 – That's not true. We've brought that up at every meeting.

1 – So (name, #9) has been consistent and to give you some credit, (name, #9), petitioning the Secretary and myself and sending us letters and expressing thoughts even after the task force meetings were started.

9 – I've sent four letters so far.

1 - I know, and they were certainly discussed and noted at the time, but not to the extent of the discussion that we had after the last meeting, which was again, the work of the task force and...

12 – Well it came up at the hearing too.

16 – It came up at one of the first meetings too, when we were going through the different corners and, you know, putting our little chips in. I mean, pretty much we were talking, if it wasn't overtly, it was certainly an undercurrent of it because we were always hopeful that it would, you know, even when you were showing us the legal language of the document and it said preserve right there at the top.

I mean, that's been an ongoing.

1 - It's certainly been a thread from the very beginning, because it goes back to our first meeting and setting expectations for the property. My point is, the work that went into your presentation, (name, #9), and then the discussion by the task force delving into that particular topic - redesignation of the State park as a preserve – sure, it was mentioned in the hearing, (name, #12), I know that.

12 – I know because I said it.

1 – I know, and there's been a few others who have followed up at that hearing... I don't want to say anything more about that hearing.

But the decision making again – I think (name, #35) asked it standing in for you (name, #11) in the last meeting. How does that happen, that redesignation, and I explained maybe imperfectly, that that decision is made - it doesn't require a statute, it doesn't require legislation - it's made at department level. It's within our enabling legislation to designate it a state Park, or a classification of a State Park, in this case a preserve, and it's the department head that has that authority. It's Secretary Dunn in certainly coordination and concurrence with the administration, with the Shapiro administration.

And you know, I think you're asking me (name, #12), if there's some kind of magical political bullet that that would make this transpire.

12 – Well, we either find a way to do that or next meeting doesn't have 500 people, it has 1000. And it changes the character of this. We should work hard to get there now. That would be a lose-lose.

I still trust you, I want to make that clear. Absolutely. So, how do we work together to get there? And I realize this is different than your other 120 something parks, that's been our argument all along.

1 - The other 123.

12 - And this is different. Right, 123. I think this is probably what the future of parks needs to look like because we have overbuilt everything else in the world and we need to have some solutions that are underbuilt where everything else is valued at a much higher level than what we humans want to trample on.

8 - So sort of a semi technical question I guess. So the discussion here I think predicated on the idea of that. Well, if we, if they say, OK, we'll change it back to a preserve, then you're kind of all relaxed because camping's off the table. My understanding is that that's actually not the law of it. It would be if (name, #9)'s bill passed, because that would say, OK, preserve included in the definition of preserve is no camping.

12 - That's correct. And this question came up in a friends meeting, at one of the first ones this fall. And the question was 'what is to prevent the state from showing up with a bulldozer here at the preserve'?

And the answer was nothing legally. It would just be us as the community being vigilant and that was my response to her. So that turned into a conversation of 'ok well what do we do as a friends group'? and the answer was just be active and engaged during the process. So I think that's it.

But (name, #1) and (name, #23) and the rest of your folks, I just want to compliment you - when we have been doing things for the last four years here at the White Clay. I've been lectured a few times and I remember one from Paula on trails, that the preserve is different and within your department, you were treating us at White Clay to a higher standard. And I appreciated it.

I took that as a compliment that we had accomplished our objective of being positioned differently in people's minds that we have branded ourselves effectively.

And what I've heard this community say is we want that view of the property to also apply to Big Elk.

16 - Let me jump in for a second as someone who has written conservation easements and done other types of conservation work. OK, there's nothing that would keep DCNR doing whatever they want to this preserve. It's fully within – (name, #1) has explained this in the past. There's no legislation to describe what a preserve is. There's no legal reasoning that they can't do whatever. They can say that they've decided that preserves involve townhouses and put up a townhouse development.

So the preserve status does and does not help us. It helps us to the extent that DCNR currently recognizes a preserve as being sort of a lower denomination than a regular park. But the only thing that will actually prevent DCNR from developing any piece of property, is a conservation easement. It's the only thing that will do it in perpetuity.

Even a piece of legislation that says 'this is how we would like to treat this piece of property', that can be changed, right? They can enact another one that changes that. So the conservation easement is the only actual answer that preserves that open space status in perpetuity. Don't have to argue about it again. Once that's done, it's done.

So, I mean, we could be arguing for that, right? We could be saying as a community we want you to donate it as a conservation easement.

11 – (name, #16) can I ask a question about that? Some conservation easements that I've been involved with have strict management restrictions.

16 – Depending on how you write it, you can have building envelopes and some other things, but the easement itself properly done is in perpetuity and then yes, it would include all the details.

11 - OK.

16 - But about an easement could say there will be no overnight accommodations, there will be no pavements or whatever, OK. So various things like that. So we could ask for that in that we could take the position that 'let's trust DCNR with a preserve status' and ask them to make it a preserve. Just saying that those are possibilities. I don't want other folks at the table here to think that a preserve would accomplish the same thing as a conservation easement, because it wouldn't.



14 - OK, no, you're correct about that. But I thought it would get us one step closer so that if (name, #9)'s bill ever does get passed, then he would have that locked up. I totally agree with conservation easement language, 100%.

I also think that it would show the community at large the position of DCNR on this property like that you're recognizing it as well, that you're trying to give an olive branch to the community as well.

I fully agree with what you're saying with regards to the legal side of it, that they could still develop it as they wish. What I was hoping is that there would be specific language in the master plan itself that would say this will be a preserve in perpetuity and that there would be no XY or Z associated with it.

16 - But again, they can have a new administration and a new talk that says, well, we've decided to change the concept. Just so you understand that, but in the meantime, that's still would be the preference of the people here because up to this point, you guys have managed the preserve, differently than everything else.

1 - I think we have a good track record. And not to argue about you know the gradation of bad, good, best. But I would say that in your comments, (name, #12), we've managed the preserve differently than our other 123 state parks. And that's by management directive, as we've discussed, that's by our management plan and our policy for how we've decided and it's done a good job, I would argue.

Just as we would argue that we've captured the management plans in our stewardship mission and our responsibilities that are on 123 state parks. We're the conservation agency of the Commonwealth. So I know you're just making a point, (name, #16), about townhouses, but that's not what we do.

12 – That's exactly the problem. And our community has voted both their feet and their voices about which they prefer. I think there's a lesson in that. And we need Cindy and John on board.

16 - OK, so I know you said that you had a conversation with them and that's not something that's of interest to the powers that be or else you could have come back with a different answer, of course.

So apparently that discussion wasn't successful from our standpoint. So the question is, what do they need to hear to be persuaded that the consensus from people here is something we should listen to.

1 - It is a continuing discussion and conversations tonight are certainly going to contribute to the next conversation with the Secretary and again with the record and with our transcript and with everyone's comments in play for those conversations to happen with the Secretary.

12 - I'm willing to be part of it (*several other participants echo the same sentiment*)

1 - OK.

15 – If we need to come to Harrisburg to have a meeting we can make that happen.

10 - I'm glad we're talking about this again because I hear you saying it's the first time that we've really talked about it. And to that level I agree. But the very first meeting when we put those little stickers on the board, the number one response of them all was preserve status. So that was the term set at the very first meeting.

And then we, at least I, respectfully sat back and watched the program. And I'm glad that finally at the meeting before we're like, 'let's talk about this'. We're running out of time. I'm glad we're talking about it again. I hope we can get there together and have a win-win. But let's stay on this track.

14 - Now, I have questions about the trails.

23 – We didn't break yet.

10 - Thank you, Jason.

(laughter)

36 – Forgive my ignorance. I assumed that the master plan had a lifespan and maybe that's variable depending on the park. Does it ever have a life span where it says 'this master plan will not be revisited for 20 years, 10 years, 15, whatever'?

1 - I think what (name, #8) was trying to explain, and he explained my intentions accurately about the master plan, is where it gets us is where it is getting us at Susquehanna Riverlands, where we move to design engineering based on the concepts that are agreed to in the plan, are finalized in the plan.

Many master plans, we went through this beginning, (name, #36) and I know you weren't privy to the earlier task force meetings, but it was in one of the early task force meetings that we talked about master plans and oftentimes many things in our state park master plans don't come to fruition. Funding isn't available, ultimately. We have certain goals and you know things that we want to do. But we ultimately can't get them accomplished for the resource.

And so I can look back at the master plans that I've been, you know, engaged with over the last 24 years and we haven't gone back and revisited them.

What you end up with in our system of state parks in Pennsylvania is a management plan for the facilities and the activities and the resources, natural and cultural in that park.

And that management plan is the sort of guidebook for park management, and it's reviewed every three years for every park in the system.

And it's everything to do with infrastructure as well as the resource work be it cultural and natural that occurs in the park. So the master plan is that original sort of - I misused the term 'blueprint' - but it's that generalization of what we want to advance for improvements and enhancements of the park.

But is it ever actually like revisited? It's not a living document. The living document is our park management plan, which is what we have had for White Clay Creek Preserve and our other 123 state parks.

36 - With all your experience, could you possibly guess when we might look at revisiting overnight accommodations here? Not something that you're held to with a date or time, but realistically, what would they be?

1 - Well, I'm hearing from everyone that they don't want to revisit. So my point was to not commit to when that revisit would be or necessarily need to be. And again, not within the blueprint of this master plan to advanced design engineering and improvements on this park, which is going to take several years to bring to fruition. 5 to 10.

I think (name, #8) you're probably in the ballpark when it comes to state park projects and planning, design, permitting and coming to a final product and improvement. That's a long time.

But again, you've heard us say this at DCNR. We're in the perpetuity business. We're managing this property for the long haul and improving it and stewarding it. It's our obligation.

2 - So I think his statement he just said will apply to state parks as well. I don't see that being different.

1 - You're right, (name, #2), it's the amenities and the types of recreational services provided and there's a spectrum, right? We've talked about that spectrum and we're not we're not revisiting it here tonight. You're looking at what we're talking about for Big Elk.

14 - But (name, #1) also understand, there are amenities there and there are recreational opportunities there. But as a land steward, there are also ecological systems that you are protecting and preserving that you should; that it will be so much more important 50 years from now.

We just want to make sure that that stays that way. Put it back in preserve status after this is done and then you go lobby for the bill to pass. I mean, that would be fantastic.

15 - Or you could put a conservation easement on it.

14 - Well, yes, but I don't know if that's going to happen.

15 - I know you don't want to bind the people to, you know, camping, but I feel like they're very comfortable being bound by preserve definition. So it's really just DCNR that needs to take that next step.

14 - In defense of (name, #1)...

1 - Thank you, (name, #14) *(laughter)*

14 - Well, I feel prudent because you know, what's the word you always use to describe the authority you have?

1 – Our mission and mandate.

14 - Yeah, your mission and mandate to protect the land also, not just for recreation.

8 - So, one of the things (name, #12) picked up on was even if it's a preserve, we have to stay vigilant. It seems like less so if a new law gets passed, but no matter what we still have to keep watch. So I'm wondering, can something in a master plan be a communication plan because I think, well, there's a lot of opinions out there. I think at least some of the fear is that they would sort of slip it in like before we knew about it, right?

And so, if there was something where, yeah, this stays in effect and, you know, we only meet once a year, once every six months or something, so that any kind of future change would hit the public. There would be a chance for the human cry to go up. And there would be sort of no way that they could kind of slip it in.

I mean, it doesn't mean we don't potentially have to rally the troops and have a fight again in 10 years, but it would mean that sort of nightmare scenario that (name, #36) talked about that they slip it in, you know, at midnight, you wake up and there's a campground or something like that.

14 - But (name, #8), we talked about maintaining this group beyond this master planning effort. And I remember (name, #1) saying, no way. (*laughter*)

1 – Our suggestion for everyone is to be involved with the Friends Group, which is that highest level of continuous interaction with volunteers that every state park in our system needs. A friends group always has been. Not only the volunteer work and the expertise that they bring to bear in our state parks, but it's also the voice of the visiting public in the community. Because typically those friends groups and those volunteers are part of the community. They're living right there in the park.

They're not travelling two or three hours to participate in a friends group meeting. They're the people that live in and around those parks. It's the highest form of partnership within state parks, but it's also that conscience to make sure that state parks as a professional organization are doing right by the community. Friends groups, and I can't say enough about them, I think I said it at the policy hearing in midsummer, and it's not that we don't sometimes have challenges with them, but they are our strong partners.

And it's not just the friends group and the sort of necessary interactions that are structured and built upon that relationship, but it's what we talked about earlier. As we move forward with any project work, we're engaged with the local elected officials and if necessary with the public that those elected officials represent.

14 - Again, I go back to if that was the case, we wouldn't be here because the local elected officials didn't want this.

1 - I think I said it at the beginning of this, our outreach and communication was not where it should have been at the start of this master planning process. Could we have done a better job? We certainly could have done a better job.

I think ultimately where we landed in January with the joint townships meeting and the decision to form a task force so that we can move through the master planning process with this expertise and commitment to the resource that all of you have given your time freely to partake of and inform us, it's been critical and important. So I think, (name, #14) we didn't do the best job. Obviously, we wouldn't be here if we would have done that job at the beginning.

14 - So you'll hear us now and then you'll take this message back to Cindy Dunn and say 'they want us to re-dedicate it as a nature preserve after the master planning is over' and let's see what she says there.

18 - I'd say before, because I don't have any interest in continuing to plan when we can't plan. So in my mind, we're at a bit of an impasse in that we need this answered and addressed before we can move forward.

14 - But we also then have to do right by (name, #9) and go to these meetings and try to get that bill passed. When are you going to get that on the agenda?

9 - So at this point, the legislature, there are no session days left of the session. There's - I don't know if anyone in this room is aware of this fact - there's going to be an election in two weeks.

1 - What's happening in two weeks, (name, #9)? *(laughter)*

9 - What happens in that election will be more determinative than anything. And then the legislature will reconvene back in January session and that legislation, and any other legislation, could certainly be on the table.

It's probably a conversation to have later. Not in this room at this moment, but I'm happy to have it.

1 - I just want to say something about what (name, #18) said. And I disagree (name, #18), we know what we're planning here. And whether it's designated a preserve or a state park, the elements that we're talking about, that we're working towards, again are the same elements as has been discussed in the past, that exist at White Clay Creek Preserve, no different.

And I think, the work that's gone into it isn't negated or stalled. I understand the desire to lay to rest overnight accommodations in the future. And that's a preserve designation discussion. And our agreed to management of what a preserve is versus what a state park is and what a state park could accommodate.

But where we've gone is with these elements that I - and I thank (architect firm name) and (name, #33) for bringing them to us is again, not divergent from either state park or preserve.

18 - Public perception, I think would be. And I think this is what the administration is aiming for, that we come out of this plan, we have a master plan. It doesn't have camping on it; it looks reasonable. The communities happy because it seems fair, right in line with what everybody wanted. Let me go back to sleep. And they trusted all of us to advocate for them and for the preservation of the land and the assumption would be that with this master plan that there is no overnight. But it won't be, so that's my problem. It will not be clear to the community.

You're going to have buy-in from this planning group and yet the ultimate question will still remain unanswered.

1 – I know I've said it and beat this to death, but it's not like the plan is done, pulled it up, check the box, sits on a shelf. The amount of engagement that's going to be required as we move towards design engineering from the elements that are captured in this plan are going to be significant. And even when we're talking about again, a small trail head parking lot and a restroom facility, all of that will require much and there'll be again, further engagement.

It's not like we're going to just duck out and we've done our plan and then we're going to slip in a campground in, you know, three years. It's just, it's not how it works. It's not how it's going to work. I understand the concerns. I understand the reservations.

15 - Is there any chance that Secretary Dunn and John Norbeck will come to the next meeting?

1 - I'm going to ask the question.

6 – If I could have a word. I know most of you, but to those I don't, I am (name, #6). I spent pretty much the last 40 of my years dealing with negotiation. I have to compliment you, because I ended up getting re-districted, and when that happened, I took up this area here. I had to educate myself. I live in Chester County but way over on that side.

But when I walked into that room, I saw a room full of very upset people and that basically let me know real quick what I got into. That being said, when you put this meeting together and you brought everybody in here, it's nice to see everybody working well together and moving forward. We've got two plans up here.

It seems as though the consensus was that either one of those plans may work, even though there are some elements that not everyone likes. But the majority could live with that plan. During negotiations from time to time you hit a road block. And it happened to be the aha moment when you read an article and you know you were quoted (name, #1) saying something about camping. My suggestion is let's not stop, let's keep moving this ball forward. We know that we have a position right here where I believe the constituents in this room need to have an answer, otherwise we're going to take a stand.

Sometimes taking a stand is not the right thing to do. At this time, I would highly suggest to keep moving forward. We know where we're at. We know where the issue is. I think you know (name, #1) has a job to do. But I really have to compliment you in how far you've come from that room to this one. My suggestion is to keep moving forward.

16 - So with that said, if we did do that, move forward, I just want to know what the difference is in the trail concepts there. Because with A, it seems like they kept most of the forest intact. And with B, it's like you divided it a lot with your trail. So I know, I'm moving forward. I just want that question answered.

33 – I can answer that question. The reason we have more trails on B is because they got suggested in our last group. People said that was an underutilized area of the site and someone suggested trails. Are you looking at this piece?

16 – No, it wasn't. It wasn't that one per SE. It was the other, the bigger one, only because I'm looking at the forest as a unit and even a trail can we have an impact on wildlife there. So it's like you're mucking through the forest there.

33 - A lot of those are existing trails.

16 – That doesn't mean it's good. I'm just wondering.

33 – We were deductive in that. But we can certainly take a closer look at trails. I can't answer all of that today. I will say to you in this, there are a lot, a lot, a lot of social trails in there.

We've tried to reduce the number of social trails, but that would take time because you know what you have to do, because you've worked on trails, you have to discourage people from going down them so the vegetation grows. So I think you're getting at something important to say, where we want to be selective where we want people to go right? And deductive. And so this is a first attempt at doing that. Whether it's completely right; I'm sure that will also change over time.

We've worked on parks where someone says 'actually we're going to have no trails in that half of it'. That isn't where I thought we ended last meeting because people said they liked the parking, so we have to connect the parking. But this big change, and we showed it very slightly differently, that's looking at the contours in a couple of different ways to say, well, we're staying pretty much on the high ground and we're not having a lot of variation.

In this one, we're dropping all the way down. So you could take a position to that. Do you want to just stay on the high ground?

2 – So the trails on these maps are kind of interchangeable trails. You could take bits from each of them, right?

33 – Exactly, thank you, (name, #2). And we can have another pass at that too. That's not meant to be final.

15 – Can we have like one minute to actually go over and look at the maps up close?

11 – So at this point, does it matter the extent of what you include in your plan from a permitting perspective? So for example, when I'm designing restoration plans for wetlands, we will often include more in the plans, for example, then we might actually implement because it allows us the

ability to respond to the environmental process So does it work in your favor to design these in different ways to make your permitting process more easy? Like could you speak a little bit of that?

31 - These are not going to be submitted for any development. So I think the answer to that question is no, but I think what it does do or can do is give flexibility moving forward if conditions change or as each trail is ground truthed and we learn more. So there's different options to pursue.

I mean, the other point I wanted to make this question was that some of those trails are not through existing forests, but they're actually through new areas of the forest.

33 – Which is sort of subtle on the plan. There's a light and a dark overlay. And again, the way we think about this when we put this together... This is a first pass at talking to people about restoration, right? So we started to look at this contiguous meadow piece. We started to look at where there wasn't forest close to the streams and forested waterways by way of Stroud, which is really important to water health. You could certainly look at that in a different way, but that's the way we began to look at this.

How are we making continuous forest pieces? How are we getting our waterways so that they're under canopy? Because we know that they function really well that way because that's how waterways evolved. So it's a work in process and I would say, we would like to end this process with the best idea of a path forward.

But then it depends on a PNDI, it depends on, you know, how much do you want to keep in agriculture. And then this suggests right now that all the ag is going to go to grasslands. I don't know that because we've talked about keeping some of the ag.

16 - I don't know if tonight you're going to have the decision obviously on concept A or B. I think the bigger issue is what is the next step with regards to making our point on preserve status.

1 – (name, #15) suggested we take a closer look so that we can again receive that feedback and get that next step forward to decide whether concept A or B or some combination of the two is the ideal.

12 - I propose we take the 10 minute break.

16 – Thanks, (name, #12). Would the issue be really where the infrastructure is or the trails?

23 - I think when you're up there looking at the maps, if you like in concept A, there's a one-mile accessible loop. Maybe you don't like the location, like there's environmental factors we haven't looked at yet. But yes, thumbs up to the one-mile accessible loop in this area

The three-mile loop, eh maybe that should be on the south side of Stricklersville. I'm not saying that, but I'm saying like, those are the comments we want, not exact placement, or maybe the comment is we don't want it on the Township trail. Maybe we do. That's the kind of stuff that they need. I don't think anyone was coming out of tonight saying we need A or B. I think we need to compile all those thoughts and then at the next meeting talk about what was decided and then maybe make some decisions on that. So that that would be my take.

When a contractor gives us two different plans, we give our pros and cons of each one and try and measure them into one.



10 - And I think that's been a great summary of what we discussed and I'm happy we'll take a quick break and discuss a little more. I think you've heard this before, but I would love to have that slide and sit in the comfort of my home and mark it up, sleep on it, mark it up again.

31 - That's totally fair especially given discussion of other issues.

-BREAK-

31 - Because we didn't have a ton of time with the options and to discuss, (name, #25) is going to e-mail the drawings to everyone. And you can respond to (name, #1) with any comments or questions, feedback, thoughts.

33 – You can draw on them, make sketches, scribbles, anything.

31 – And they will collate and share with us so that we can then factor that in or respond. Does that sound reasonable to everyone? Because it just seems like we need to wrap up shortly this evening.

So really anything, any kind of feedback, I mean, we're interested in your thoughts on the relative merits of the Eastern versus Western sites, but also really anything that you see, just like (name, #23) described earlier. We want your feedback so that in the end, the concept can be as strong as it can be.

1 – Those maps will go out tomorrow, so you'll have that and be able to respond.

15 – I have one more thing, and that's our Amish neighbors. All of that infrastructure backs up to their property, and they moved out here to get away from Lancaster and being a sideshow. And my concern is making sure that they still have privacy close to that.

1 - We discussed that the day when we did the field visit, right? That boundary line.

15 – Yes, that boundary line. They don't want to be a sideshow. That's why they came out here. They're trying to raise their kids quietly.

16 - But if it's just a parking lot and place it to go to the bathroom, it'd be much less invasive than...

15 - I agree, but I'm saying this plan here...

31 - And maybe that precise location, could shift or...

15 - Right, just away from their property lines.

31 - So yeah, share all of that by e-mail if you can.

15 - So there'll be an e-mail thread that we can just reply to?

31 – Yes. And the best way for us is whatever is easiest for you to do. So if it's bullet points in an e-mail, fine. If it's a scribble on a sketch scan, fine. We're happy to see all.

33 - You can draw on it and take a photo of it too.

16 - John, I need to go back. I mean, some of us wanted to leave after that meaningful conversation and some of us didn't. And I just think that the big issue, the big point still should go back to Mr. Norbeck is that, right?

1 – Yes, John Norbeck.

16 – Yes, John and Cindy Dunn about the bigger issue because that's all overshadowed, you know, these plans are overshadowed by that issue. So maybe have an invite for them to come next time.

10 - I ideally would love to invite them to the last meeting and talk about it. But if not, something a little more than just 'it's under discussion'. And I apologize as if I came across aggressive over that but like they blew it off. I just hear, 'yeah, it's under discussion', but what does that mean? Can we have a little more than that? What's the next step? Who's discussing it? You know, any kind of feedback we can get about what are your thoughts on this preserve concept?

16 - I mean, if they want to know what we think, we've been saying it all along. They should come talk to us.

1 - So I don't know the Secretary's schedule, and I don't have the date of the next task force meeting locked in. But so the option would be if there's availability for the Secretary...

16 - The great thing is (name, #1), if you don't have the date yet, let's make it when she can make it.

25 - November 19<sup>th</sup> is the scheduled date.

23 - So if that's not on the table and they're willing to meet because everybody - I assume the answer is yes, but I'm going to ask the question - on the record, would everyone be OK with switching the date then, even if it stretches things out a little bit?

15 - And location should be an option as well. If we need to go there we will.

23 - The number of people to organize a road trip to Harrisburg is far more difficult than us coming here. But to (name, #23)'s point, I don't think it probably will be the date that we've picked for the next task force meeting, knowing that I'm continuously scheduling with the secretary and our calendars are rather difficult throughout the next month.

23 - Yeah, I'm just projecting here, but it will probably not be until January because the holidays and schedules are usually cramped six weeks out.

1 - We'll try for December,.

23 - But I'm just trying to be open and honest. Like it may get pushed out a little bit further.

16 - So this all got started again by trail maintenance. When this goes through, does any money come to White Clay for trail maintenance? Because wouldn't that be a kick? You know, poor (name, #2) didn't get any money for trail maintenance and that's how this all got started. But what's that process?

1 – So there's investments being made, and that have been made, with funding that was simultaneous to us receiving the funding for Big Elk Creek that were dedicated to White Clay.

And we talked about that. It's everything from stabilization of the John Evans House to continued bridge work and trail work in the parks needed here. We're not forgetting about White Clay as we advance our necessary work at Big Elk.

16 – You don't even have to put that in the minutes, (name, #25). I was just curious.

1 - Everything's in the minutes, (name, #16). *(laughter)*

15 - If the meeting gets pushed, and Secretary Dnn wants to have a conversation before that, I'm happy to drive to Harrisburg.

1 – OK. I think we have a variety of options then.

2 - So (name, #8) wanted to share a few thoughts around some work he's doing. I'll turn the floor over to him and then we'll conclude the meeting.

8 - Yes, there's something that I wanted to give you a heads up about. From the perspective of the Water Shed Association, our primary goals, as you've mentioned, is the quality of this, the specialness of it. And really the land use decisions are going to be what drives that much more than this trail or this location of the trail or whatever.

So we're working on putting some thoughts together on what we suggest in terms of land management, ag, forest, meadow, that kind of thing. From the perspective of greatest biodiversity and greatest water quality. You know, basically the answer would be put it all in trees and do it yesterday.

But we understand it's more complicated than that. And so picking up on some ideas, OK, with the remaining ag, what do we do, where do we get the most educational benefit out of it? And maybe some of it would even be, how do you use that to help you with the deer issue? So kind of like what (name, #9) was circulating, something like a 2 pager last time.

If we can get it done and get it approved by the board, we would probably have a little document to share in the next meeting to get thoughts, opinions on it.

13 - It would also discuss some restoration opportunities and creation of wetlands or special areas for habitat, things like that, specific to the site.

16 - And this is a what?

13 - A land management plan

16 – What organization?

13 – The Elk Creek Watershed Association.

16 – Do you go in front of the townships at all to present that?

8 - I mean, we could, in this case, it's relevant to this park. So we're just bringing it up.

16 - Oh, it's just the land that the park owns.

8 - Yeah. I mean, obviously we've got a watershed management plan. It's really old, but it's the broader watershed. But these are just our thoughts around this property and where our priorities, I guess are with it.

16 - You should share that with (name, #14). So you're saying your organization is writing a management plan that you would share then with the state?

8 – It's not a management plan.

16 – It's not a management plan?

8 – It's sort of a, land use suggestions, that could be considered, for the master plan.

16 – And you're doing that outside of this organization? And then you're going to recommend that to the state.

2 – (name, #8) is the chair of the Elk Creek Watershed Association. So it's him and his board and they got together and...

8 - Yes, and we'll be presenting it for their consideration.

16 - What I'm saying is we're all talking about management of this land and there's a separate entity that's doing the same thing. So I'm confused, that's all.

12 – It's another resource for us to consider. It's another resource for us to consider; it's what we do at White Clay. We work very closely with the White Clay Watershed Association and some of us are board members of both.

33 - That would be pretty typical of master planning. You're trying to make alliances with friends groups so you can get a sample of their knowledge to help plan.

2- Any other questions for (name, #8) tonight? We've got about another hour presentation. Just kidding. Thank you all for your attention.