

BIG ELK CREEK STATE PARK

TASK FORCE

Meeting 1
Task Force Overview

March 28, 2024



www.dcnr.pa.gov

Task Force Purpose Statement

- The purpose of the Big Elk Creek Master Planning Task Force is to provide structured and diverse representation, comment and feedback to DCNR for the creation of the Big Elk Creek State Park Master Plan.
- In meeting this purpose, the Task Force will serve as liaisons for the local and statewide public stakeholders of Pennsylvania's state parks and provide information on the planning of this new state park to help DCNR and the Bureau of State Park's missions in serving its constituents, both present and future.

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Meeting Structure

- **Ground rules**
- **Meeting Minutes:** Task Force meetings are being recorded for the purposes of the meeting minutes. Meeting minutes will be approved by John and Scotty and will be available on the Big Elk Creek State Park website within 10 business days.

DCNR Mission & Vision

DCNR Mission Statement

“DCNR’s mission is to conserve and sustain Pennsylvania’s natural resources for present and future generations’ use and enjoyment.”

www.dcnr.pa.gov



DCNR Vision Statement

“As Pennsylvania’s leader and chief advocate for conservation and outdoor recreation, DCNR will inspire citizens to:

- *Value their natural resources*
- *Engage in conservation practices*
- *Experience the outdoors*

To conserve and maintain Pennsylvania’s public natural resources for the benefit of all people, including generations yet to come, we will take intentional action to ensure DCNR lands are accessible to all, provide inclusive and equitable programs and services, and recruit and retain a diverse workforce.”

www.dcnr.pa.gov



State Parks Mission Statement

“The primary mission of Pennsylvania state parks is to provide opportunities for enjoying healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for environmental education.

In meeting these purposes, the conservation of the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of parks should be given first consideration.

Stewardship responsibilities should be carried out in a way that protects the natural outdoor experience for the enjoyment of current and future generations.”

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Statutory Authority

Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution

The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people.

Conservation & Natural Resources Act (Act 18) of 1995

Pennsylvania's public natural resources are to be conserved and maintained for the use and benefit of all its citizens as guaranteed by section 27 of Article I of the Constitution of Pennsylvania.

As DCNR's enabling statute, it states that the primary mission of DCNR will be to serve as advocate for our state parks, forests, rivers, trails, greenways, and community recreation and heritage conservation programs to provide more focused management of the commonwealth's recreation and natural and river environments.

Acting as trustee of these rights and natural resources guides our work every day.

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Big Elk Creek State Park Background

Year Range	Accomplishment or Future Goal
2010 - 2020	Acquisition of parcels from George Strawbridge; managing without additional funding for staff, operations or amenities
2022	Governor Wolf holds state park dedication. Provided necessary funding and staffing resources for public use and stewardship
2023 - 2024	Master Planning Process with a prioritization of initial improvements and enhancements

What is a State Park Master Plan

- A state park Master Plan is a high-level conceptual plan for the park. The Master Plan uses ecological and cultural studies to outline what types of improvements, amenities and resource management projects are either necessary or feasible for the park that would be beneficial to both the mission and mandate of DCNR and the 38 million annual visitors to state parks.
- A Master Plan does not include specific recreational activities, and assessment of options will not be completed in the scope and timeframe of this process. It simply outlines where recreational activities could occur with resource-sensitive considerations to minimize impact to the surrounding landscape.
- Implementation is phased and based on resource and amenity needs as well as available funding.

Big Elk Creek Master Planning Process

Process Step	Timeframe
Initial Site Visit	March 2023
Information Gathering / Inventory / Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Survey Launched• Stakeholder Meetings	March – June 2023
Preliminary Park Amenities Concept Development <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public Survey Closed	June - October 2023
Public Meeting	November 6, 2023
Task Force	March 2024 – December 2024
Park Amenities Revisions & Final Plan Development	TBD
Public Meeting	TBD
Final Master Plan	TBD

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

1. Resource Management

DCNR is charged with protecting, conserving, and maintaining the ecological and cultural resources located on state park lands. This includes aquatic and terrestrial resources and their native ecosystems as well as the cultural resources found within a park. Big Elk Creek State Park must have active resource management initiatives to protect the existing native species and ecosystems present at the park, as well as valuable cultural resources, and enhance them for generations to come.

Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

1. Resource Management Examples

- Forest Restoration
 - Including tree and understory plantings, herbaceous meadow maintenance, and consideration for further field-to-meadow conversions
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- Stream Health Assessment and Restoration Work
- Habitat Improvement Projects to support native species
- Management and Preservation of Cultural and Historical Resources

Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

2. Accessibility

DCNR must commit to serving all Pennsylvanians during implementation of the Big Elk Creek State Park master planning process. This includes assessing all options for increased and appropriate accessibility to this new park and the planned improvements for the amenities there. Big Elk Creek State Park will be committed to being open, welcoming, and inclusive for everyone to enjoy. Safe public access is a principle need.

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

2. Accessibility Examples

- Park and Trail Accessibility
 - Signage (Park, Parking Lot, Road, Trail)
 - Parking Lots
 - Map Kiosks
- Recreational and Educational Accessibility
 - Trails
 - Facilities
 - Outdoor Educational Programming

Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

3. Park Services, Visitor Satisfaction, and Safety

DCNR must provide safe and comfortable services to park visitors coming to Big Elk Creek State Park from across the Commonwealth and beyond. Facilities need to adequately address the needs and abilities of all park visitors to ensure an enjoyable, educational, and lasting experience in the state park, and provide DCNR staff the ability to provide these services. What a visitor experiences at Big Elk Creek State Park will be in line with the Bureau's Mission and execution across our State Park System.

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

3. Park Services, Visitor Satisfaction and Safety Examples

- Parking for various group sizes
- Pedestrian Walkways
- Restrooms
- State Park Visitor Center/Park Office CRO
- Other Administrative Facilities

Slide 18

- CR0** passing along a comment from Scotty: do we emphasize "Educational Classroom" or something similar here to really push the idea of an adequate interpretive space for BIEL?
Campion, Robert, 2024-03-22T13:58:51.658
- ZJO 0** We need to define what a visitor center/park office is
Zimmerman, Jason, 2024-03-22T18:57:55.171
- ZJO 1** Public restrooms, public contact point, indoor classroom and interpretive space
Zimmerman, Jason, 2024-03-22T18:59:27.253

Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

4. Recreation and Environmental Education

The Bureau's mission for all state parks is to provide healthful outdoor recreation and serve as outdoor classrooms for present and future generations, with first consideration to the natural, scenic, aesthetic, and historical values of the park. To fully accomplish this goal, the objective is to provide both indoor and outdoor education spaces.

Core Standard "Areas of Focus"

4. Recreational and Environmental Education

- Educational and Interpretive Programming
- Trails (hiking, biking, equestrian)
- Hunting
- Fishing
- Wildlife Viewing
- Stargazing
- Day Use and Picnic Areas
- Open Space

www.dcnr.pa.gov



Exercise

- Based off the 4 Core Standard Areas for Big Elk Creek State Park, **please place stickers on your top three topics that you would like to spend time discussing during these Task Force meetings.**
- Natural Resource Management will be the focus of Meeting #2.
- We will use the topic areas selected to structure the agendas of Meetings #3, #4 and #5.

Next Steps/Next Meeting Agenda

- Meeting #2 will focus on on-going resource work and issues around the park. Pre-meeting field trip to showcase the efforts and issues
- Details on pre-meeting site visit will be forthcoming
- Next meeting agenda items – please email to John, Scotty & Big Elk Creek State Park by May 1