

**Jim Marks**  
President  
Chester County Association of Township Officials  
P.O. Box 125  
Nottingham, PA 19362



December 14, 2024

Governor Josh Shapiro  
Office of the Governor  
508 Main Capitol Building  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn  
Department of Conservation and  
Natural Resources  
Rachel Carson State Office Building  
400 Market Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

**RE: Big Elk Creek State Park**

Dear Governor Shapiro and Secretary Dunn,

On behalf of the Chester County Association of Township Officials (CCATO), I am writing to express our full support for the Chester County Commissioners' letter dated December 10, 2024, regarding the future of Big Elk Creek State Park.

We strongly endorse the Commissioners' request to convert Big Elk Creek State Park into a Preserve. This designation will ensure the long-term protection of the land's natural beauty for current and future generations of Chester County residents and the broader community.

The Conservation Fund's original 2016 purchase of the 978 acres, now part of Big Elk Creek State Park, was based on the promise that this land would be preserved and serve low-intensity recreational purposes. In 2022, when former Governor Wolf announced its transition into a state park, it was with the understanding that its use would remain aligned with conservation principles. However, recent preliminary design concepts presented by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), including plans for a campground, raise significant concerns among our members and the community.

CCATO appreciates DCNR's inclusion of Chester County representatives in the Big Elk Creek Master Planning Task Force. However, it is imperative that the final decision honors the intent of the land transfer, the wishes of our community, and the conservation goals that originally guided this acquisition.

The nearly 2,000-acre undeveloped area is a rare and invaluable natural asset, especially in southeastern Pennsylvania, where open spaces are increasingly scarce. Transforming the state park into a Preserve will set a precedent for protecting undeveloped land and ensuring that it remains a low-intensity, recreational space that benefits the environment and our residents.

We urge your offices to prioritize preservation and listen to the voices of Chester County residents who cherish this unique landscape. CCATO stands ready to collaborate with DCNR and other stakeholders to ensure the land remains a conservation and natural beauty legacy.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim Marks". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jim Marks  
President  
Chester County Association of Township Officials  
[jimmarks3@ccato.org](mailto:jimmarks3@ccato.org)