



Big Elk Creek Master Planning Task Force TEAMS Call with Secretary Dunn Transcript

Meeting Date: January 15, 2025

Meeting Time: 5:00 – 6:00 PM

Meeting Location: Virtual, Microsoft TEAMS

**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:** 14 (represented by 37), 17 (represented by 36)
- DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn – 38

Meeting Minutes:

1 – Welcome to the Big Elk Creek State Park Task Force meeting with Secretary Dunn and Deputy Secretary John Norbeck for the purpose of communicating your thoughts and ideas on the proposal for preserve designation.

Like previous task force gatherings, this virtual TEAMS meeting is being recorded and by participating you are agreeing to the recording.

I'm now going to conduct a roll call of task force members. I know we have some alternates as well here.

(All Task Force members present with the exceptions noted above).

And just a little recap on our purpose regarding being here tonight. In a previous task force meeting, (name, #9) presented a proposal for redesignating Big Elk Creek State Park as Big Elk Creek Preserve in discussions on that proposal with the task force, there was no opposition from task force members on that redesignation that was noted.

It was communicated back to the Task force that their proposal for redesignation was taken under advisement by DCNR and our leadership. In the last meeting, meeting #5, a request was made to meet with the Secretary, which brings us to today's meeting and its purpose, which is being conducted out in front of Task Force Meeting #6, which is scheduled for next Tuesday, January 21st.

So again, that's the purpose of the meeting here today. It's now my pleasure to introduce Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn for initial remarks.

38 - Hello, everybody. DCNR is committed to finalizing the work of the master plan for Big Elk Creek State Park. And this is made possible by the important work of this task force and the commitment all of you have put into it, and collaboration with the Bureau of State Parks staff, whom I'm very, very proud of, for their public service.

I want to thank everyone of you for your continued time, effort and partnership over the course of this last year and in the five working meetings of the task force, as well as the field visits. Your love for this

place shines through. Your caring, your knowledge have been extraordinarily helpful. The work you're accomplishing and producing a plan for the park fully considers important natural and ecological values of Big Elk Creek State Park.

The planning process with the task force has paid particular attention to context sensitive ideas with the necessary improvements and enhancements that will provide for safe and welcoming public access and recreational use in environmental education and interpretive opportunities.

As we've learned and discussed in the task force, it's important to minimize the footprint on the park for any improvements while meeting the core requirements to the park public services. And that's really been the focus of a lot of the task force work as I understand it. It has been reported to me regularly by (name, #1) and (name, #23).

A lot of recent local comments we have received continue to emphasize concerns over a State Park campground. And as (name, #1) has previously stated at this meeting, the park master plan does not include a campground. The plan's improvements for Big Elk are really elements that are very similar to what you have over at White Clay. You've got the stuff on the ground right now like trails, safe parking for trailhead access, public restrooms, indoor and outdoor education space and a park office and a small maintenance office. The same amenities are to be in this master plan or very similar.

The preserve designation request made by (name, #9) and members of the task force has been taken under advisement here in our office. (Name, #1) and (name, #23) have met a couple times with (name, #39) and myself.

And the discussion was conveyed back to you at the last meeting. And our decision is that we will not do a renaming at this time. We'll continue to use Big Elk Creek State Park as a working title for the entirety of the State Park property until we reach a point where both the natural and cultural resources identified might justify a name change or a change in designation.

In addition to the ongoing natural resource planning and improvement work at Big Elk, starting in 2025, our professional staff will be undertaking an extensive cultural heritage planning for the park so we better understand and ultimately interpret the important resources that the stories contain in this significant landscape.

I don't have to tell you how significant this landscape is, right on the Mason Dixon line, lands of Lenni Lenape, freedom seekers, abolitionist movement, important history in the DuPont family, the cultural side of this, we've really just scratched the surface.

And again, I want to thank all of you for your hard work and the dedication that you have provided in this endeavor to complete the necessary plan for Big Elk Creek State Park. And (name, #1) back to you.

1 - Thanks, (name, #38). Now it's time for task force comments and questions and I'll just quickly read and recap the information that was put out on the agenda so we're all in alignment.

We ask that each task force member wishing to speak hold the floor for no more than two minutes.

This will allow everyone the opportunity to provide comments or ask questions and afford the appropriate time for responses. Each task force member will be limited to one 2 minute period until all those wishing to speak have had a turn. Then if there's time left, and we have a 40-minute block of

time for this comment and Q&A, the floor will be open for additional comments and questions from task force members who have already spoken.

Now there's a lot of us on the call. So I'm going to ask, and I think (name, #15) already gets it, I'm going to ask that those that have a comment or questions raise their hands and in TEAMS, it'll show up in the order in which you raise your hand. And then I'll call and recognize you for your comment or questions. With that, (name, #15), you're first.

15 - Thank you. I just wanted to talk quickly about the letter writing campaign that I know (name, #38) you've been receiving and so has Governor Shapiro. These letters are coming from many townships in the area. They're still coming weekly at this point, but notably we also have letters from the Oxford Regional Planning Committee, the Chester County Association for Township officials, and the Chester County Commissioners. These letters are being responded to slowly, which is understandable.

However, one of the letters here I just want to read a section of is a response to London Britain Township. In it, (name, #38) state's "Big Elk Creek was chosen as the state as the site for a state park because of the landscapes significant natural and cultural resources. In 2025, our subject matter experts will begin the important work of identifying and understanding these resources and it would be inappropriate to rename or redesignate the park before that process is complete".

The question I have is why was that work not done before it was redesignated as a State Park? It was already part of a preserve. That work should have been done before it was turned into a State Park. And these letters from all of these official government groups are asking for this park to be put back into the preserve status that it was originally intended to be.

38 - We took Big Elk into the system and managed it with the leadership up at Ridley and White Clay, but started to really appreciate and understand the value of it as we got on the land and we realized the cultural stories. Our State Park staff had some initial conversations with National Park Service historical folks to talk about the cultural history of this landscape. And so that became part of our discussion with leadership.

As to what happens in what order. I really can't give you a good answer for that. As we get closer and closer to this landscape, we understand this cultural story is really important too. This task force, many of you have asked for redesignation. Some of the redesignations that have actual meaning in terms of management regimes include natural areas.

To understand that you really have to do a deep dive on the plant kingdom and the plants present and the natural habitats there. You know, we're just beginning to dive into the natural resource side of it. We've gotten a lot of knowledge from all of you on that as well, but the historical side, the cultural side, we're not always the expert.

We work with the Pennsylvania Historic Museum Commission to ask if there is something notable for designation and in a major historical way? Mason Dixon line is pretty special. Not all the Mason Dixon line is in public ownership. So that side of it, we just have begun to scratch the surface, and we're answering the questions as best we can from the letters coming in based on where we are in time.

15 - I just want to follow up that while I know you've reiterated many times the camping is not part of the master plan. Part of the problem right now is that news articles come out like the one that came out at the beginning of October that states while camping has not been considered at the park in the master plan, it is not being ruled out. "We are going to continue to assess and study the opportunities for overnight opportunities in the future."

38 - Yeah, I'd say that that's true. We're in the forever business at DCNR and one thing as a Secretary in this seat for this period of time, one thing I've really learned is that things change. You don't want to pin down the managers of a site forever if information becomes available and such. So yeah, I'm loathe to pin down future managers on a question like that.

But what we've agreed to, and that's based on input from all of you, is that it won't be part of this master plan.

15 – We would be okay with being pinned down.

1 - Understood. Thank you.

38 - Is that how you would say it, (name, #1)? That's just my point of view on it.

1 – Yes. And we discussed those comments in a previous task force meeting regarding, you know, certainty versus uncertainty. (Name, #16) you're next.

16 - I have to say that this is a bit of a disingenuous attempt to fulfill our request for a meeting with Secretary Dunn. We did ask to meet in person around a table. Providing 2 minutes per attendee does not really cultivate a meaningful dialogue. That said though, I just want to know, I'm just going to put it out there. What will it take for DCNR to re-establish the preserve status?

Reincorporate Big Elk into the White Clay Creek Preserve, manage Big Elk as you manage White Clay Creek Preserve. Limit activities to passive only and recognize the conservation values of the land that DCNR called wilderness. All these things I mentioned here, DCNR said it was, your goal, for this land acquisition. So I ask what will it take to do what you said you would do when you wanted this land?

38 - I would say we're doing it. I think the highest level of protection land can have as a State Park and in doing so, the studying and focus on the natural resources and the restoration of the affected resources that have been diminished by farming and invasive species attain the highest level of natural resource management.

And the activities in this master plan that we've talked about are very much mirrored and what you have over at White Clay. The preserve term, you know, doesn't really change the amenities there. So I'd say you're getting the values that we promised in the state park.

16 - I would disagree, (name, #38), as you just had indicated, in the future, the plan will change. You don't want to pin anyone down. You're looking to build infrastructure. So I'm going to let somebody else talk next. But I'm just telling you now that the way you manage this land or plan to manage it now and into the future will be different than the way White Clay is managed currently. And I did manage the natural areas program in Delaware for 13 years. So I'm a little bit familiar with this situation.

1 – (Name, #13).

13 - Thank you. Task Force members have recommended acquiring the Strawbridge Augustin Lane parcel as a site for the park office. This site is the most logical and appropriate location for the park

office. It's centrally located and has existing driveway access, buildings, power supply and infrastructure.

As an existing structure, it has historic significance within the park boundaries and should be included as an integral facility in the park. The use of this site for a park office would reduce the need for earth disturbance and construction activities elsewhere on the property. Has this recommendation been pursued, and if not, why?

38 - Well, I can't answer the question of whether our staff in the ground have pursued it, I'll turn to (name, #1) in a second. And when we purchased the other properties from Mr. Strawbridge through the Conservation Fund that was not made available to us for purchase at the time. I don't know if there's been any outreach to Mr. Strawbridge at this point. You raised some good points there. But I'm aware of any conversations about that.

13 - If it would be helpful, I think task force members could approach him also with the benefits of the acquisition.

1 - I'll add (name, #13) and for all the task force members, that was certainly on our options for localizing amenities and access. We drew a circle around that location, which included, and I think several of you noted this not only our own property, but that Strawbridge inholding, but we have not advanced that acquisition yet.

16 - In reality, (name, #13), he's not very happy with what's going on. I seriously doubt that they would consider giving more land to the state or selling more land to the state.

1 - We won't know until we ask though. And I will say that it is an acquisition goal, but getting there is the challenge.

13 - I believe that task force members could facilitate the approach to Mr. Strawbridge, if there was...

16 - I don't know how you have the integrity to do that when the rest of the land is in such a situation that you're fighting to protect. I just don't know integrity wise...

13 - I believe that Mr. Strawbridge is happy with the efforts of the task force and that he would understand the position of the task force members and we might be able to have an inroad there.

16 - Well I respectfully disagree.

1 - Thank you for that recommendation. And again, it's an acquisition priority. It's certainly within the area that we want to improve and enhance for public access.

13 - Thank you. (Name, #9).

9 - Thank you (name, #1) and thank you, (name, #38) for being on the call. Appreciate it. This was news to me that the redesignation from a preserve to a park was based off conversations with National Park Service folks with regard to cultural impact of the ground or things that happened there? Could you elaborate a little on that?

38 – No, not that early. After we had designated the State Park, and (name, #1) can help me with the timeline, our planning staff had conversations with National Park Service historians about the history of that area and the focus was on Lenni Lenape history. And of course, the Mason Dixon line's right there. We knew its significance there, but it's like a tip of the iceberg in the cultural stories that could be told on that land.

9 - But it seems to me, and I say it respectfully. I realize it's off the table until it's back on the table, but the entire presentation in November of 2023 at Lincoln University proposing a campground, the RV park, the whole thing, I mean that's about as far away from Lenni Lenape cultural impact as I can imagine.

38 - So the understanding of the 'where' exactly is significant. Like what pathways they may have used, any encampments. Freedom seekers, we know they followed stream beds. Did they use Big Elk? We assume they probably did. There's a lot to be learned about that.

1 - I'll just add on the work that the National Park Service was providing and recommending, that was related to the foundation document and the master planning that was done out in front of the park designation and we added on Big Elk Creek to White Clay Creek in that work because we were trying to get the most out of our planning dollars, so to speak, and capitalize off of it.

A lot of that information, the preliminary research that was done, was then pulled out of the foundation document because Big Elk Creek was going through its own planning exercise. And as (name, #38) noted, the story is much larger.

And to that point, in 2025, we'll be conducting a detailed cultural heritage plan, which is meant to bring all of those important cultural stories and history associated with the property forward.

9 - Very respectfully. Those are all valid things but they have nothing to do with the reason we're on this call tonight. I say that very respectfully. OK, I don't understand then the answer that (name, #15) was given about why this was changed originally from a preserve to a park was that there was some cultural impacts that the National Park Service pointed out.

1 - No, it's not accurate.

38 - That's not accurate.

9 - I want to know why the preserve, why the status was changed from a preserve to a park to begin with. I want to know that. I've never gotten an answer to that question and I, (name, #38), would appreciate your perspective on it.

38 - It was essentially always a park. It was brought into our system and we put it under the management of state parks, essentially under Ridley Creek State Park, where White Clay Preserve is under Ridley as well.

9 – Respectfully, (name, #38), it was not.

38 - So we put it under that, and we had to give it a name because we had to put it on a boundary. I think (name, #1) has gone through this with everybody about...

9 – (name, #38), very respectfully, very respectfully. These properties were acquired over a period of 15 years. And every one of them was part of the White Clay Creek Preserve. They were on the same map. It was the same thing with the Big Elk section of the White Clay Creek Preserve. Part of this parcel we're talking about. Part of what is now Big Elk Creek State Park, was part of the preserve for 12 years. So it was not part of anything other than the White Clay Creek Preserve.

And one of the reasons that I think there has been such a vociferous and, frankly unified from many perspectives response, from the local community is that everything that DCNR said for 15 years and alluded to in the only entry I've been able to find regarding this property in the Pennsylvania Bulletin, is that it will be added to the White Clay Creek Preserve and maintained as part of it in that same manner.

And I cannot understand, I have never, including now, been provided with any justification to justify that change. And I would be very interested in what it was.

1 - I know you want to hear the secretary speak, but I'll state, and I believe it's something that I've stated in our task force meetings when you brought this particular question forward. Is that because it was such an extended acquisition process with multiple phases and we were adding that acreage for administrative and operational purposes, it became a designated section of White Clay Creek Preserve because of again, proximity and operational necessity.

We hit a critical mass certainly with the final Strawbridge 3 acquisition. And even though we added some additional acreage beyond that with the Martin tract. But it was at that point in time, at the end of the Wolf Administration, with that critical mass of acreage gained and the resources to actually improve and manage that facility that the redesignation came into place as a State Park.

9 - I understand that, but I'm still looking for an answer to the question. I feel like it's a clearly laid out question and (name, #38), respectfully, I would appreciate your views on it.

38 - It was a management decision. We acquire land in the State Park system, and you've got to put it in a map and put it under a management unit. Someone's going to go over and check it, do the maintenance, patrol it. We put it under the management of White Clay Creek Preserve, which also is under Ridley. White Clay is under Ridley. We could have called the whole thing Ridley, for that matter.

But it is a practical management way of adding it to the state parks. And then we reached critical mass and it can be its own park now. So therefore, we went with a generic, all three of the parks actually that we brought in, we went with sort of generic names until we got planning processes going. And so, the generic place name, is Big Elk Creek. And for all we know, maybe that's the thing that'll stick.

But we tossed around Harriet Tubman, but we really hadn't done the research to know, did Harriet Tubman in fact use that those creeks and through ways? You know, we looked at other possibilities.

So we decided on Big Elk Creek for working names, Susquehanna Riverlands for a working name. So that's where we are.

9 - So (name, #38) respectfully, and I'm not intimately familiar with the ins and the outs of the

Susquehanna Riverlands, but I think to suggest that... This just strikes me as a gobbledygook to the highest degree. The property is within walking distance of the White Clay Creek Preserve.

Everyone for 15 years, myself, the senator, every elected official that was a part of this and the private foundations that provided the vast majority of the money to purchase the property were all told the same thing, that it was going to be part of the White Clay Creek Preserve. The goal was to unify or to connect the White Clay Creek Preserve Park in Delaware and Fairhill in Maryland. That was a huge part of this. But I don't want to argue with you, but I respectfully disagree. I don't think anyone would have called the whole thing Ridley, but I respectfully disagree.

38 – No, I agree.

9 - My last question I'll make since I'm sure I've gone more than my 2 minutes. I find it very troubling, you suggested that by redesignating Big Elk Creek as a preserve, it would pin down DCNR, which some might suggest is a good thing. But in your view, does that designation pin down DCNR at the White Clay Creek Preserve?

38 - That's a good question. It doesn't in fact, and it does not. However, it might be used that way because the word preserve means different things to different people. In fact, our designation of natural area is much stronger than the word preserve. If there's a piece of Big Elk that meets the criteria for natural area, that is a much stronger protective designation than the word preserve.

The word preserve is a term of art in the case of this name. We want the designation and the name to be well grounded. And I understand, respecting your position, you're coming from a point of caring and protecting this place. But the stewardship of DCNR and our state parks is a great place to be. Most people consider a State Park like a very high level of protection for the long term for a piece of property.

Going off the current situation to a long-term situation where land is in demand for climate refugees or other problems that might be faced by our nation, a State Park is like the most protected place on the landscape of Pennsylvania you can be. Because people care about it and you folks care so deeply about it. But being a State Park, there'll be more people care about it. More people learn about it and feel what you feel about this incredible landscape. The more eyes that are open to how special this is, the more protected and socially protected.

But the State Park designation is a strong designation. If there's a political move to say, move to take land out of a State Park and build a condo, let's just say, that has to go before the legislature. So a State Park designation is like rock solid.

And anytime someone messes with a State Park or takes something away, people understand it to be their birthright as something they own or something they care about. So I wish I could comfort you on our intent with it. And fast forward in the future where I hope everyone will be happy with the context sensitive approach we're taking. But there is no better, safer place to be than a State Park.

9 - Respectfully, I could not disagree more strongly. No one was proposing, building a condominium on any State Park. It was DCNR that proposed a development plan for this property. And the State Park designation, certainly it's very strong, no one's disputing the state law. There are state parks in Pennsylvania that have ski slopes in them, that have hotels in them. And so the State Park designation alone is not sufficient in this instance, as evidenced by DCNR's own actions in November of 2023 and

prior. And the idea that by redesignating as a preserve would somehow pin DCNR down when apparently it doesn't, by your own admission, pin you down in White Clay Creek Preserve. I find that that allegation very difficult to swallow, honestly.

1 – Thank you, (name, #9). (name, #37)?

37 - Hi there, (name, #38). Listen, here's the issue. If you want to solve the whole thing, just say no camping. See, here's the problem. Even before you became Secretary. In 2005 and when I got into the Senate in 2006, DCNR had committed themselves to making this a preserve. Let me just read you something so that you know that I'm telling the truth and why it's so frustrating to me and so many others in this county.

In July 2018, once the Strawbridge purchase had been completed, Drew Gilchrist, who was, by the way, a wonderful employee of DCNR, hope he's still there, said this property in its entirety will be transferred to the Commonwealth as an addition to the White Clay Creek Preserve. Gil also said of this, as you know and (name, #1) mentioned, there were three phases to this purchase.

After the first phase was done, he said the following in 2009, he said it is to be known as the Elk Creek section along the Maryland, Pennsylvania border. The White Clay Preserve is currently 2136 acres. The addition makes it a total of 3118 acres. So all of us in this county assumed that's what it was to be a preserve. And a preserve has a very distinct meaning within Chester County. Listen, in 1992 when I was commissioner, we established the best open space program in this nation.

1/3 of this county is saved as land in perpetuity. But we have preserves, we have active park grounds and we have county parks, all kinds of things. Now, when we create a preserve in Chester County, we mean that it will never be changed. There will never ever be camping. And this notion of DCNR waiting for X numbers of years until it makes this decision is contrary to the whole meeting.

So we assume rightfully or wrongfully, we assumed before you became Secretary and when you became Secretary that by preserve you meant that there would not be things like hunting or active impact. Now one more thing. When you came to see me for your confirmation hearings twice during the Wolf administration, I asked you this distinct question.

I described what it meant to be a preserve in the Chester County sense. You assured me that the policy of DCNR that we had been dealing with since I came to the Senate, that you would, that you would make sure that it was a preserve. I, of course, I believed you and of course I voted for you.

You also wrote me a letter soon thereafter in 2019, in which you said to me that that we want to thank you, (name, #37), for your dedication and your commitment to the preserve. So let me just put this all in a question. Chester County gave \$8 million to this preserve. The reason Drew Gilcrest called me and the reason the Conservation Fund called me is you were short of money and you wanted me to go to the commissioners to ask them for the money.

I did it. And in the process we, when I went, when John Lawrence went, we assumed by the very definition of a preserve that we assumed you understood what Chester County meant because of people before you in DCNR understood this and you were there when we were negotiating to get more money.

We did it. And so the question is this, that you wrote the promise, you changed the name. You're saying to us, it's difficult. You know what's in a name? Well, there's a lot in a name. We didn't change it. And from 2005 until 2022, at the very end of Governor Wolf's administration, you and DCNR and the county and all the legislators...

In fact, I wrote this in my newsletters, in my departing newsletter. I wrote that we finally got the money.

1 – (name, #37), do you have a question?

37 - This history has to be told. This is the problem, (name, #1). And this is the problem, Madam Secretary, you don't want to deal with the true history. This county gave \$8 million so that it would be a preserve. You don't want to have it be a preserve. You don't want to change names, then give the county back its \$8 million. We are outraged and dismayed by what has occurred.

We feel we've been duped, and that's not too strong of a term by DCNR breaking its promises that it started in 2005 and goes back actually to 1984 when the Chester County delegation put in and accepted the money from the DuPont and created a bilateral Commission, which you arbitrarily broke despite the legislation.

And in 2000 when Joe Pitch and a young senator from Delaware named Joe Biden got this. It was jubilation in the county when we got that in 2000, in addition, jubilation because it was the beginning of a strong climate change movement in this county because we thought it preserved what was necessary for climate change. And so I thank you for your patience, (name, #1) and Madam Secretary and one, just one. And this is what I'm trying to get an answer to. I feel like I've been betrayed. The citizens feel like it's a bait and switch deal. What's going on here?

38 - State Park preserves the land. It's not being developed. It's not a highway. It's not a nuclear plant. It's preserved for the citizens of Pennsylvania. And to be honest, there's an undertone and a worry I have that the word preserve is being used to repel people from visiting the public lands that Chester County and the citizens from Downingtown has a right to go walk there.

To walk there, they need a trail. State money went in with significant amount of state money went into Chester County overall. And to this property, citizens of Pennsylvania, if you live in Erie, you have the right to walk there. You pay for it. You're an Erie citizen, you paid for that. To walk there, you need a trailhead. It'd be nice to learn something. So there's a visitor center and office, keep people safe, there's an office with a Ranger in it.

So to meet the citizen investment there and to show people the wonderful place that the county and the state have invested in it to preserve it and save it forever requires this minimal master plan and approach to a 'light on the land' development that opens people's eyes to this place because, as you pointed out so aptly, everyone's invested in it, it to preserve it. It's not being developed. It's not going under the housing development that you see all around.

It's saved from development and people will have the opportunity to learn about it, to see what they own. You know, the people from all over Chester County should be able to walk on it and see it and learn about it.

37 - We must have a misdefinition. People in our county walk on the Lenfest preserve. They have, they're even sometimes events on the Lenfest preserve. They walk on the Kirkwood preserve in Willardstown. They walk on the Peacedale Preserve, which is a little down the street. The whole matter can be, if you would say tonight that because of this history, there will be no camping on this preserve, will you say that? Then, then we all can work together and it could be solved.

38 - No, I'm sorry, I will not say that because I'm not going to commit to it. We're in the forever business. I'm saying that this master plan won't have a campground, including the master plan that your work advises, will not have it. But no, I'm not going to say that.

37 - Explain to me Madam Secretary, why you just purchased the Honey Brook track to William Penn Forest in Honey Brook Township and that track had been an old center where RVs and everything else came. And you're now saying we're going to clean it up and we're only going to allow primitive camping. So are you willing to say that you only allow primitive camping here?

You said that in terms of this track that you just spent a great deal of money on it Madam Secretary. If you would be willing to say that since we have camping already at the 700 acre Hibernia Park with a beautiful lake they would use and would you be willing to do a joint thing with the county through the concept of agility?

1 - (name, #37) we have to get to others that are asking questions.

37 - Thank you, (name, #1), thank you. I know your job is to protect the Secretary and I appreciate my job. My job is to get to this very meeting. She can answer the question. She simply, I know her to be a person of excellence and capability.

38 - OK, thanks, (name, #37). The Honey Brook, the other property you're talking about. I'm not as familiar with. I just want to make sure all the task force members get their 2 minutes.

37 - I'm simply trying to help you understand why people are so angry. And we can't solve this until we deal with this question. And just the word no camping will solve it all.

1 - Thank you, (name, #8)?

8 - Thanks. I'll try to shorten up what I was going to say. So, you know, my main focus on the task force has been on the land use within the park. Land use decisions are, more than anything, what's going to have the biggest impact on, you know, water quality, biodiversity, herbicide use, the quality of the hiking that I and others can do there. It's going to take a long time to improve that habitat. It's work I'm excited to be a part of.

I'm happy with the progress that's already been made. Couldn't be more happy with what's already been done along those lines. And since that work can happen, whether it's a park or preserve, really a preserve designation has not been my primary focus. I know it's been a lot of other people's focus.

It really hasn't been mine. It felt more like a 'nice to have' rather than a 'must have'.

But my thinking on that is kind of evolving just from the passion that you hear because you know, rightly or wrongly, you're hearing this animosity out there. And my concern is that is getting in the way or will get in the way of, just the good work that we can collectively do, getting volunteers out and the things that need to happen to work on that.

So it's a little different perspective, but really I hope that the designation to a preserve would go a long way toward calming that. And really primarily for that reason, it is why I would encourage you to think hard about it.

1 - Thank you, (name, #8).

38 - Yes, and I appreciate the approach. I think walking the walk together as the task force has done, actually physically and in creating this master plan will go a long way. And as things evolve, as people see the trails, as people hear the stories, understand the cultural stories, I think we're all positioned better for what's the appropriate name of the whole place or specific areas, specific natural areas, if they exist.

Thanks for acknowledging the restoration need. I'll just say this. I'm a biologist. You know, you drive down the roads nearby, you see the beautiful fields, looks nice. But you get close and there's a lot of, you know, orchard grass, a lot of invasives. There's a lot of biological work and restoration work that needs to be done. A lot of watershed protection work. One thing really special in my mind is the direct connection of Big Elk Creek to the Chesapeake Bay without a dam.

So much of Pennsylvania's watershed in the Susquehanna has cut off from the Bay and to have a State Park, that's adjacent to a Maryland State park that has direct connection to Chesapeake Bay. When we were there doing a tree planting, some of us went down to the Creek and a lamprey from the Bay came up in the Big Elk Creek. This is a phenomenal area in terms of biodiversity.

When we look at our PNDI, when we look at the Natural Heritage program and do a search, there's definitely rare and endangered plants, different places that need to be protected, that need to be enhanced, that we need to restore some of the habitat.

So I honestly think the nomenclature issue will fade a little in its importance and that trust is built as we look to see where we end up with a master plan and eventual development from that master plan of trails in the visitor center. So I hear what you're saying. I agree the easy path would be to say, yes, it's a preserve. It would definitely be the easy path, right? That'd be the easy button for me. But I don't think it's the right thing to do. I honestly don't think it's the right thing to do. That word can be weaponized to deter people from seeing it. And that's one of my issues with that word. State parks, by their own law, protect the land. Thanks, (name, #8).

1 – (name, #12) you're up.

12 - Thank you (name, #38), thank you for joining us tonight. Appreciate it. We would certainly much prefer a face to face meeting, but I'm glad we're starting to have this conversation here. You brought up several really good important points and I want to bring my perspective to them as well. Preserves our heavily visited, White Clay is heavily visited. I think we have 30 some miles of trails. (name, #24) could probably give us a firmer number. We have 11 parking lots that hold 100 or 150 cars. So preserve has not been used as a tool to stop people, but it has been used as an idea for how to have a

low impact use. So the biodiversity you described, I have experienced those things, haven't seen lamprey, but I've shared some of my other stories at previous meetings about some of the phenomenal wildlife that we have down there. And that, that is special. I don't see that in other places.

I think a couple points here, both you yourself and (name, #1) keep bringing up the forever business and I think we have very different definitions of that. What I hear, that interpretation or the place I go in the future, is one that's in alignment with all these various comments that we're having here that would not keep the door open for future development, whether it's a campground or something else. So we're, we're not on the same page with that.

I think us as a community versus what I hear you saying. And I think because of that, you just a few minutes ago use the word trust. And a center of my remarks here right now, this community feels in a very visceral sense that trust has been broken. And that's the core of everything. The idea of using preserve was certainly one that I have floated publicly as a way to regain trust, to make a statement that the forever business means we're forever going to protect it. That we really are going to make sure this biodiversity is here, that we're always going to have high level of access to it, but not in such a way that we kill it.

We're not going to love it to death by having a ridiculous number of folks there, but certainly access and yes, when everybody from all over the state to come and visit. So I think that trust is the core and and where we see that, you know, this community is surprisingly highly educated. You get 10 people together and you find out there's 40 graduate degrees in the group. And I don't sense or feel that the community is doing this out of sense of NIMBY, right, The old, 'not in my backyard' sense. I think it's the opposite. And this is where I come down.

I've travelled the world, I've backpacked in five continents and I come home to this special place here that we have in the Big Elk and the White Clay. And I want us to retain it. I want us to keep it and I want us to, yes, I'm going to use the preserve word, I want us to preserve it. I want us to give it that extra status that would come from that. And I think the challenge we have, those of us that are on this task force is we're serving as a buffer right now between this committee and you guys. And I think the folks that come to our meetings and hear this. And I'm going to share with you, we're getting pressed really hard by this community. And it really comes down to that trust component. And so I guess my question to you is, how do we get trust back How do we agree on the definition of forever business? And what that is?

Because what we as a community have, and I'll clue myself in this category, is that it would never include a campground or what I'll call intensive development or things like that, but it would certainly include a high level of access for lots of hiking. We can certainly add another 20 miles of trails down there in various places and have fantastic things for people to see and share. And I think that eagle's nest would still be in place. I had a fantastic experience with a mother American Mink and her 2 little babies back in the summer. I think we would still have all those if we did that.

So my question for you is, how do we do that? This community's angry. We saw that our, we had our friends meeting just Monday. Somebody came who we've never met. I still don't know who it is. And she was angry, came to the meeting and was a bit disruptive. And we're just trying to, you know, do a normal friends meeting and she wanted to know who could she talk to on the task force. So we're doing a lot of this buffering and I think even the task force members can't get trust. I think we're in for a long, long fight. And I don't want that. I don't want to see that.

And just for reference point, DuPont was going to flood this thousand some acres here that became White Clay and they bought the land. And if I remember correctly around 1966, it was in the mid to

late 1960s, and they finally gave up the fight in 1984, you know, and I'd prefer that we not have an 18 year fight over this. So let's agree on what forever is. I think, I'll be honest, I think it's disingenuous for you guys to say, well, it's not in this master plan, you know, campgrounds are not in for now. But I'm not going to tie the hands of my successor. I'm not going to do things forever. Well, for the forever business. I think that's what we should be doing. And my ask of you, is not that you view that this community backed you down or felt this was a 0 sum game.

Quite the opposite when you look at having a preserve here in this special opportunity, whether you look at politically, ecologically, culturally, open space perspective, community perspective, I always land at the same place. The preserve is absolutely the best description of that and therefore we seek that label.

So my question is how do we build trust and how do we come together with, with a common definition of forever business because we're not on the same page. And we're getting a lot of heat and I think you need to understand that. And I've proposed and shared some private comments with (name, #23) here that I think this would make a big difference. And it's not just being politically expedient, but rather doing the right thing. And, and I'm struggling to understand why you guys don't want to do what I perceive to be the right thing.

1 - Thanks, (name, #12).

38 - I just want to address 2 things. One, yes, I understand the heat issue of stepping forward and being on this task force. I appreciate that. And I understand how the people in your community might be pressuring you. And I thank you for stepping up and really bringing the voice of the community to focus with us on a master planning process. That's really, really helpful.

And in terms of building trust, I think that comes with time when you actually see what it is on the ground. And I just also want to say this part, I hope, I hope you trust (name, #24). I hope you trust the staff on the ground. The decisions about the preserve name is mine. So don't reflect any lack of trust with the staff on the ground. They're with you. They care about the place like you do.

I just think the trust comes when you see what it is that we are doing here. It's about the trails. It's a place to use them and it's a place to park your car. When people see it, the trust will slowly come. That's what they were talking about all along. I don't know how to answer a camping question because...

12 - I have to be honest, I disagree. I don't think it's going to come until you and your staff are willing to make a firm statement about its forever status. I think if you're not willing to do that, then I don't think you're going to get the trust. And I'm talking about an institutional level. I felt compelled to speak up our last meeting to (name, #1) and others that yes, I trust all of you individually. I trust you, (name, #1). It's all you guys - I do absolutely. I've been working with many of you for a long, long time.

That not what I mean when I'm talking about trust. I'm talking about at an institutional level here, because I'm pretty convinced that you guys have been probably stung enough by the last meeting. I'm still traumatized from a year ago at that meeting. I don't know about you, but I don't want to have another one. You know, if we did it would make that one look like a little pleasant tea party because the pressure still building. And I think you need to know and understand that and until we find a way to work together and truly, truly mitigate, that's not going to change. And I think we need to understand that.

38 - I understand that...

12 - My feeling is designated preserve does nothing that changes legal status, right. You've already pointed out correctly, but it does change perceptions, and I think it does a little bit tie your hands from, I'll call it a political standpoint. And, and I think that's where we should be frankly, on that.

38 - I want to say one thing. I want to make sure we get to the other three people whose hands are up but just one thing really quickly. What it means to be in the forever business means people like me need to realize that someday there'll be someone else in my seat. This park will be there forever.

That means there'll be a time when none of us are around and making the right decision for that place for the long run. We are guided by the Constitution of Pennsylvania that speaks for the Pennsylvania of today and in the future. So the obligation, there's people that are not in the picture right now that we're speaking for that won't know any of us. So that's when I say forever business, I mean like the forever business. I don't mean just all of us and I lament the loss of trust. I just don't want it to reflect on our staff on the ground because...

12 - No, it doesn't. Nobody, I've never seen that. I've never seen that. And that's not what I mean. That's not my intent. I think this group kind of has the same mindset that the community had with DuPont that, you know, it's your thing about think globally and act locally. And this is our local push.

And frankly, communities put a stake in the ground and whether you like it or not, you're going to have to deal with it.

38 - No, I understand. I understand...

12 - We're not going to go away. We're going to be here. So I guess my final question is one that came up earlier. What do we have to do to get there? Because we're not there, right? The trust is not there. We have very different differences of opinion about what forever means. If it's your call, I would make a strong recommendation, just my personal recommendation. I think you should designate as a preserve. All the plans that have been discussed from a standpoint of what that master plan look like. I would say the task force is basically all in the same kind of area. Do we all 100% agree? The community is not going anywhere. And I don't think any of us are going to sign off on it until we can deal with this quote forever trust business, right? Put those two together until we can do that.

And I think the highest level that we can deal with that is in the designation of preserve. And you've heard lots of good reasons and arguments that come around that support that. I can't find a single argument against it actually that stands up under pressure and push.

37 - So thanks, (name, #12). And I actually heard from (name, #9) and Harrisburg frequently, too, so appreciate that. You've been heard.

1 - We're going to take two more questions. And that'll be everyone that hasn't asked any questions yet. And I know there's some repeats, but we're way over on time here. So I'm going to go (name, #3) next.

3 - Thank you, (name, #3). (name, #38), thanks so much for being with us tonight and the whole DCNR team. I want to say, you know, my focus, similar to (name, #8)'s has been about the land use and I think everybody else feels the same way. And then what it's called is another thing. But ultimately, whether it's a preserve, a State Park, a State Park preserve that (name, #5) and I thought might have a nice ring to it. The point is that this task force, we started out with no task force. So in addition to land

use, one of my number one goals was this public process, right? And I think the public process has been great. And whoever said the 40, you know, masters and doctoral degrees and so on, I mean, we've got really a group of experts and very caring people here.

So what we have done from the beginning of the conversation at that November meeting, (name, #12), I think you said, we're looking at RV's and this and that, and people are like what? And now look where we are after the conversations that we've had in the task force, we basically have reduced the footprint significantly of the amenities. And the amenities that the task force has sort of put on the table are very similar to the White Clay Creek Preserve, which I think everybody, including me, and you all know a lot more than I do about this place, these places, but it seemed to me that it should be like the White Clay Creek Preserve, right?

And in the beginning of the conversation, I had what I think is a misconception. And I would like to clarify this. I thought that a preserve like the White Clay Creek Preserve, and this is a state preserve, this is not a county preserve or a Land Trust preserve. This is different, right? This is a state preserve that's actually part of Ridley Creek State Park, and it's the only preserve in Pennsylvania, right? That's state owned in our State Park system?

1 - Yes, (name, #3), right.

3 - So what I have learned, and I would like you to confirm or clarify, is that whether the White Clay Creek Preserve has existed as it is for 40 years, approximately with the amenities as they are, in the trails and so on. The passive recreation that I think all of us are envisioning for Big Elk Creek.

However, my understanding is that whether it's called a State Park or a preserve, that should DCNR and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in the next generation, a future generation say, you know, let's look at the White Clay Creek Preserve. This preserve needs primitive camping or this preserve needs some kind of tent camping that could be added. Because it is designated as a preserve or called a preserve does not preclude there from being additional amenities that are not there now and probably will never be there. Is that correct?

38 - I'm looking at (name, #1) because I don't know the underlying deed.

1 - So yes, it would be a management change decision by the Bureau of State Parks, but that will be guided and precipitated by again demand and public sentiment, local input. Any change in use or additional use would be guided by that in the future.

38 - t's like a term. The word preserve is a term of art in our system, the word natural area is a true designation. The word wild Area is a designation. National historic site is a historical designation with which I know very little about. So there real legal designations and there's terms of art. Preserve is a term of art. It's not in our vernacular for designation. It's not part of our system.

1 - Management by policy, to add to (name, #38)'s comments, management by policy and management by plan versus management by statute and law. And as (name, #38) noted, we have special designations such as natural areas that have a statutory requirement both in the resources they're protecting and what can and cannot be done in those areas within state parks.

And I know you guys have received that sort of briefing from me in previous task force meetings and, I understand... (talking)... go ahead.

38 - The confusion caused by calling it White Clay for a while, I get that. I mean, we've heard that from the first meeting.

3 - So if the Big Elk Creek section of White Clay, which is now being called the State Park for our purposes, if it were redesignated as a preserve, my understanding is that the footprint and the amenities that this task force has identified as appropriate for the Big Elk Creek area would be similar to the White Clay Creek Preserve, and would be part of the master plan. This is the plan for now, but that even if it were designated as a preserve, a future generation 20 years from now, could decide something different. We don't know where we're going to be 20 years from now.

But let's say there were a change and perhaps we'll use camping because that's what has been of such concern, and through the management process, the community input process and so on, even if it were called a preserve, does that preclude that preserve from adding camping?

38 - No, it does not.

3 - So (name, #12), you said preserve is an idea, and to me also it's more bucolic. I mean State Park, I think of more activity, preserve I think of less activity, which may or may not be true in this particular case because this task force has said we want small footprint, similar amenities to White Clay Creek Preserve. Whatever we call it, the land use is going to be very similar to what we see at the White Clay Creek Preserve. And even if we called it a preserve, other than the idea of it, the actual management function and potential for adding amenities is no different than it was if it was called a State Park.

38 - You're correct. And that's why the document that you are working on, this master plan, is very important and very real because that guides what actually happens on the ground. The master plan that you're working on is more important in that sense than the name. So you're correct.

The the work that you're doing is actually the thing that's guiding what will actually happen. It's real and this task force has made a huge impact. When I get frustrated here in the office from time to time, it's because you've done the work that that really counts. This master plan is so important, and yet this word, this preserve word is the thing that's blocking trust.

And I'm not saying it's right or wrong. I'm starting to really appreciate the history around that word and how deep that runs. So I get that and I get why it's confusing. I think it's important.

3 - I'm sorry, I don't want to interrupt you.

38 - No, go ahead, (name, #3).

3 - But I do think it's important. There is the sense of the word preserve and the actual management functioning of it. And I think it's really important, was important for me to understand, that we can call Big Elk Creek a preserve or a State Park. And it going to end up with the same amenities of this master plan and the same possibility that the next generation could say now 'it's time to add, you know, an amphitheater' or 'now it's time to add camping', no matter what it is called. I think that's important.

Everybody's known White Clay for 40 years. Maybe there's a benefit to having a State Park Preserve, even though it's sort of redundant, it still is part of the culture.

16 – (name, #3) I'm sorry, but hearing the word preserve and someone saying that it's a weaponized term, preserve or no preserve, it doesn't matter. It's the management of the property, low intensity activities. And that's what we meant by preserve. It's hard for me to sit here and not say anything because I think you're using the word preserve in an incorrect manner. It's 'do we look at the conservation values of the property or the recreational values'? And if it's recreation, can they be low intensity like you said they would be? And that does not include a park office. It does not include an education facility. It includes trails and a bathroom.

1 - We need to move to the to the next person in line, which is (name, #11) I've blown the timing and scheduling of comments completely out of the water. And I apologize for that. I've done a terrible job at time keeping, but we'll go through (name, #11). I don't believe you've asked a question or made a comment yet before. So I'm sorry, (name, #11), go ahead.

11 - I just want to start by saying thank you, (name, #38), for being with us here this evening. As others have expressed, it would have been lovely to be in person. I think you get a very different feel from meeting together, but still appreciate your time this evening. I just wanted to make a comment and ask a pretty simple question and actually thank you to (name, #3) and to (name, #14) for setting me up for this question.

You know, as an ecological professional, I'm acutely aware of the responsibility to protect land and species through necessity for precautionary approach, to land modification and to our restoration actions. And as a scientist, I'm always looking for definitions and with the understanding that words have power. So my question is pretty simple (name, #38), I'm just wondering what is your definition of preserve in the context of this question?

38 - So I would say thank you for that. There's the informal definition I would use myself when I'm talking about other places. And then there's the 'baked in policy and law' definition in state parks and as we've said we don't have an official designation using the word preserve in our system, we use natural areas within state parks or within forest or wild areas.

And I think the wild areas are all in state forests because they're bigger to designate the boundaries of an area that are ecologically very significant. And we don't know yet, for instance, in Big Elk or maybe in potentially White Clay, is there an area that has got the wild plant community and/or the biodiversity that would that would qualify for a natural area designation? That has legal definition in our system and in our management.

The word preserve, when I think it, does paint a picture informally to everybody, you know, someplace with very minimal development. But you can preserve anything. You can preserve a historical site. You can preserve an industrial site like they've so cleverly done in Bethlehem. Like you go to that site, you see, you understand what Bethlehem looked like and still looks like because it preserved what was there. It's historical, it's cultural, it's natural, but it's a term.

It's not when I say it doesn't have management meaning. It doesn't mean anything to me or any of us because it's not legally baked into our policy and language. It's not the term we use. We use natural area.

11 - So if I'm understanding correctly, and I apologize, I've been up since pretty early today. Essentially, there's no formal or legal definition of the preserve within the Commonwealth. So then how would you define State Park in relation to management practices at this site?

38 - State parks are the key spots in Pennsylvania's landscape that that have special geologic natural

features that we feel that the Commonwealth citizens should all own because they're special and unique and to us certainly Big Elk meets that. We've invested over dozens of years in Chester County and the landscapes there beautiful. We've been partners to the county and received support from the legislature.

That Mason Dixon line and the stories that can come out of that land, and we see this as a very special place of statewide significance that should be saved for perpetuity and interpreted so people can understand as part of Pennsylvania's legacy as part of, the Commonwealth's history that we all share.

And it is specifically greatly loved locally as we've really learned from all of you but it's also statewide significance.

1 - And I would just summarize and add to (name, #38)'s comments that all of you have heard probably many times throughout the course of our 5 task force meetings, for the purposes of healthful outdoor recreation, environmental education and interpretation. And that the natural and the cultural attributes of the park are given first consideration so that we're stewarding them not only for our present generation, but for future generations. Back to (name, #12)'s comment of the forever business,

38 - Correct. (name, #1) filled out that definition very nicely for me.

1 - (name, #19)

19 - Yes, I was rather silent in the last meeting. I think what I would like to go on record as saying is I believe that other very important issues that are of significance to the broader community have been circumvented by the focus on preserve versus park status.

And I would like to go on record as saying one of those issues is access and equity. In fact, that's a topic that was tabled during the meeting that we were supposed to address it. And I just want to add from the perspective of the constituency that I am supporting, in addition to other people in this area, that these are very important considerations that I think are being given short shrift.

And I think it does go to the conversation around educational facilities, bathrooms and other things that make a park more inviting to certain demographics that live in our area and that also are coming from across the country and the world descending on this state in 2026.

And so I'm speaking in specific about Lincoln University and various demographics of color for whom visiting these sites would be facilitated by having some of those things that signify something about inclusion. And so I just wanted to add that and I don't need a response.

38 - Thank you. We couldn't agree more. We done a deep dive and starting with the Wolf Administration and this current administration to focus on diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. And we know we have a long way to go as an agency, but our parks and forests belong to 13 million Pennsylvanians and we don't see people equally represented there. And so what we're trying to learn is what does it take to make a public space safe and welcoming to all? And it takes, you know, a safe trailhead, a bathroom, a visitor center. We could go in and learn something and learn.

You got 2 toddlers along. How long is this trail? And, you know, this one's allergic to bees. Are there going to be bees there? You know, you've got to have a place that people can learn the key stuff

because really, for the future of the environment in Pennsylvania, all Pennsylvanians have got to have a stake in conservation. And that's really the heart of state parks. If we're trying to create the most inclusive, welcoming place in our system. Because someone who's not currently taking advantage of public land, they're probably not going to start up in Pennsylvania Wilds or a forest. They're going to start at a State Park and learn and grow in their interest from there. So I couldn't agree more with your comment.

19 - And I would add differently abled as well. Like increasing trail access would go a long way towards people of various ages and abilities, not just racial and ethnicity.

38 - Absolutely. I know if you've ever pushed someone around on a wheelchair, it's tough. Just really people of all age groups and people of all abilities. Grandparents taking young kids, everyone. So when you want to teach them something, it's really when you look at inclusivity, it's just the full definition. So no, I really appreciate that comment and I couldn't agree more.

15 - I just want to point out that just because people locally would like to see it return to a preserve does not mean we're trying to keep people out. And I find it mildly offensive that you guys said that we're weaponizing the word. It's not a way to keep people out. It's a way to protect the land so that everyone can enjoy what we've seen for so many years, trails and low impact recreation and no overnight accommodations.

Because if you're in the forever business, we're not going to have open space like that forever. So bringing in more infrastructure, once you do that, you can't go back. And we're not trying to keep people out at all. So I'd like that wording to stop personally.

38 - Well, I'm using it only in this room and it's not about the people in this room, but at one of the bigger public meetings. So I definitely got a flavor of that. Not from anyone in this task force.

15 - I understand that, but community wide, and I've been listening to everyone in this community a lot. They're not trying to keep people out for the most part. Yes, there are the outliers, I'm not going to deny that. But for the most part, this community is extremely inclusive. We want people to come and enjoy the land, but we want them to enjoy it the way that it's meant to be. Open and wild with low impact recreation. Not a bunch of buildings put on it.

We have no problem with parking lots and trail heads and bathrooms. And you want to put kiosks for education? That's wonderful. We're not trying to stop any of that. We're not trying to stop people from coming. We're just trying to protect the land. And if the word preserve doesn't technically mean anything to you legally, it would mean a whole lot to the community. So why can't we just do that?

38 - No, I understand. All of you made clear your interest in the word preserve. I'd say a good vision for the park though, and the education that can come out of it is you folks care deeply about this place, this this corner of Chester County and northern Delaware and Maryland. Using a park that has educational amenities to really build a culture of conservation in the whole area, to work with the private landowners, to have them naturalize their spaces and grow native plants.

Then some of the speakers at the one meeting spoke to that idea like (name, #9) has said there are people in that area who really care deeply or maybe (name, #3) said it, those who know so much use the park to expand on conservation and expand the ethic of conservation throughout the region. Because the ecosystem level, this isn't big enough. It's not big enough by itself. You really need a landscape level conservation vision that includes the private land owners too. It includes a three state area.

So I think having this special place galvanized that in a way, the White Clay, with all the trails and all the interest has gone into that has done the same thing. But this has a potential of even more. So I really, really appreciate that. I understand there's areas where we differ.

I understand your angst about the word, and I appreciate and I understand, as a task force member, when you've chosen to sit at the table and you've got people at the grocery store and the gas station asking you, I understand the position that put puts all you in.

But I think the real thing on the ground that you've had a tremendous influence on, as (name, #3) said, is that master plan. That's the thing that has teeth. That's the thing that gets done. That's the thing that really matters and you've affected that profoundly. And I think you should feel proud about that. We've learned from you, we've adjusted, and we've come a long way. And I hope that's something you can feel proud about.

15 - I appreciate that. But I do also need to say, you know, you want to get land owners involved and do all of this. We need to build that trust back and the best way right now to build that trust and to get people to stop calling me and knocking on my door is just to change the wording. It may not mean anything long term and I get that, but it's going to calm things down now.

16 - Or make it a natural area or that that would be fantastic.

38 - Well, our staff will look at look at the specifics within the area, and if you know of a good stand of wildflowers, please tell us.

1 - I was going to say, us further exploring the incredible natural resources and really getting the detailed information that we have regarding all of the ecological assets of Big Elk Creek are in the offing. And we're certainly going to do that. It's important work and it's meaningful to not only our mission, but to all of you to see the land there and its richness stewarded the right way and improved.

16 - (name, #38), we meant to say natural area all along. We just screwed up the word. We didn't mean preserve. We meant the natural area.

38 - Well, let's all get out there and look underground, see what we've got on the ground there in terms of the biodiversity. I know (name, #31) and her team will know when it pops up on the PNDI. There are certain areas that are still natural and there's certain areas that are highly impacted by orchard grass and agriculture invasives and some areas that have some good native biodiversity.

16 - The concept is the same and it is long term preservation, low impact, long term preservation. That's what we're looking for here, not buildings.

1 - All right. I really want to acknowledge everyone joining tonight and we really appreciate everyone's input and comments and participation tonight. Really beneficial important to hear all of the task force members on this continuing topic that needed to be brought forth to the secretary. And I'm glad that we could all have this time and hear all of your input, the good, the bad, the things that we need to consider. So that's greatly appreciated.

And I look forward to seeing you all next week at White Clay Creek for our in person meeting,

Tuesday, January 21st at 6:00 PM, which would be for Task force meeting #6 again, a working task force meeting to continue the master plan work. And with that, we'll conclude the meeting.