



ORPC *Oxford Region Planning Committee*

Chair: Albert Jezyk, Jr. Vice-Chair: Charles Fleischmann Treasurer: Robert Ketcham

December 13, 2024

Honorable Josh Shapiro
Governor of Pennsylvania
501 North 3rd Street
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

Honorable Cindy Dunn, Secretary
Pennsylvania DCNR
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17105

RE: Big Elk Creek State Park

Dear Governor Shapiro and Secretary Dunn:

At its December 5, 2024 meeting, the Oxford Region Planning Committee (ORPC) authorized a letter urging you to convert Big Elk Creek State Park into the preserve status that characterized this property long before DCNR's acquisition of the property – a status consistent with the principles governing White Clay Creek Preserve (under which it had been purchased and managed), consistent with our Comprehensive Plan and consistent with the expectations of the residents of our Region.

In 2012, Oxford Borough and five surrounding municipalities (East Nottingham, Elk, Lower Oxford, Upper Oxford and West Nottingham Townships) adopted a Multi-Municipal Comprehensive Plan and created ORPC to encourage information sharing and facilitate the goals and objectives of the Plan, which include both natural resource protection and the promotion of recreational uses consistent with the administrative capabilities of our municipalities.

In 2016, the Conservation Fund purchased 978 acres of land eventually designated the Big Elk Creek section of the White Clay Creek Preserve, managed for low-intensity recreational day use activities throughout the year. Six years later, then-Governor Tom Wolf announced that this property, plus several hundred additional acres, would become the Big Elk Creek State Park. In late 2023, DCNR shared preliminary design ideas for the new state park, envisioning an intensity of use far above the history of the property and inconsistent with the infrastructure and managerial capabilities of our rural region.

Both Elk Township and Franklin Township, the municipalities containing the Park, are on record opposing publicly circulated plans to develop campgrounds, impervious roadways, RV facilities, and other buildings and facilities associated with overnight stays on the site.

This nearly 2,000-acre undeveloped area is unique in the high-density southeastern corner of the Commonwealth. White Clay Creek Preserve can, and should, serve as a model for retaining land as open space. Reverting Big Elk Creek State Park into a preserve will benefit the citizens of our Region, Chester County and the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,


Al Jezyk, Jr., Chair
Oxford Region Planning Committee