



## **Big Elk Creek Master Planning Task Force Meeting #3 Transcript**

**Meeting Date:** July 1, 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 (represented by 4), 6, 7, 17

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### **Meeting Minutes:**

2- So thank you all for coming tonight. We've got a pretty full agenda, a couple of announcements. In the communications that came out by (name, #25), there was a link to a survey on resource management. I know you're all busy. But only eight of you replied.

So take that opportunity to provide feedback on those questions. And you say, "well I didn't like the questions" and I think one of the last questions was an open comment. So you can put your comments in there. Please do that because that's a big opportunity to collect your feedback.

There will be periodic surveys through this whole process. One of them was today. I know most of you were working. You could not make the field trip. Those who were there, thank you very much for taking time out of your schedule to make it. I thought those of you who took the time to interject into that group conversation we had out in the field today was excellent. Thank you for your comments, your thoughts, a lot of good insight from those who were present today.

So thanks again for providing your feedback to the team. There will be more opportunities for that in the future field visits as we move through the process. Anybody have any questions before we get started? I'm going to turn it over to (name, #1). He's going to get started on the agenda.

1- Thank you. Not on the agenda but I just wanted to take the opportunity talking with (name, #2) along with (name, #23) and (name, #24) and (name, #29). I realize that not everybody can participate in our pre-meeting field visits, you have working commitments or other commitments. They make it problematic for you to attend.

And so we try to do a good job recapping these field visits. First, the resource one, now the infrastructure one tonight-- but we also thought that it would still be beneficial for those that can't attend the field visits.

During the workweek when these meetings happen to be scheduled to actually have a weekend option that Rob will lead and summarize the breakout.

So for those that aren't able to attend, this would be an opportunity for you to see the things that we're discussing and deciding on. So I'll ask, is there any interest from task force members that haven't been able to be there because of personal commitments or professional commitments? Is there any interest in starting that?

AUDIENCE: Yes

1 - OK. We'll do that, and we'll get something on the schedule, provide an opportunity. And, again, it'll be a recap of the sites visited, the discussion topics that were captured in our field visit. And I have her business card because I don't want to get the important title wrong, but it's my pleasure to introduce (name, #34). She introduced herself already, Bureau of Forestry.

She's the division chief for the Conservation Science and Ecological Resources Division and has administrative jurisdiction of the Natural Heritage Program. With that, I'll turn it over to (name, #34). And this is a request that she be present to answer any questions and to gain some insight on the program as it relates to our work we do in state parks.

34 - I don't have any slides or anything to share with you.

1- Nor did we ask you to do that.

34- So just a pretty informal Q&A. I gleaned some questions from the different transcripts I went through. And just from what (name, #1) and (name, #31) had kind of told me like what people wanted to know more about the Heritage Program and maybe shed some light on some of the more obscure things about the Heritage Program because, I admit, sometimes the terminology can get a little bit confusing.

And even I have to go back and double check what does this mean and how do we use-- how do the things fall into line? So I have a couple things I'm just going to run through. Stop me if you have questions or something doesn't make sense. And I'll try to just address it now. And then throughout the evening, I'm going to stick around. So if you have questions, I'll be here to answer.

So as (name, #1) said, the National Heritage Program management comes out of my division in the Bureau of Forestry. It's a partnership between four agencies. So DCNR, which is the jurisdictional agency for plants in Pennsylvania. And we also do environmental review for natural communities, which are not jurisdictional. They're not listed as threatened or endangered.

But we do provide information through the PNDI process for that as well as geologic features and terrestrial invertebrates. Again, they're what we call orphan taxa. They're not listed. But they're still resources of concern that we provide information to the public.

And the reason that DCNR does that information for plants that were in the jurisdictional agency, we are implementing the Wild Resource Conservation Act. That's what gives us the authority for plants in Pennsylvania. And the reason that we're implementing the National Heritage Program is Act 18, which created DCNR. It gave DCNR the charge to go out and survey the Commonwealth for ecological features and put it in a form that is convenient for the public.

And so that format is the PA Conservation Explorer. And through the Conservation Explorer, you can access the environmental review function, which you all probably know as PNDI, the PA Natural Diversity Inventory. So there's all kinds of acronyms, I apologize for that.

But, yeah, this is the-- this is like a landing base. A lot of the information is on the website. It's dense. There's a lot of stuff in there. I understand. But if you do take the time to read through it, there is a ton of good information out.

So the PNHP partnership between DCNR, the PA Game Commission, which is a jurisdictional agency for birds and mammals. They list those species. The Fish and Boat Commission, which is the jurisdictional agency for fish, reptiles, amphibians, and anything aquatic. Fun fact, anything that lives in the water is considered a fish, whether it's a fish or not.

And then WPC, the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy are our contractors. They're like our boots on the ground. They get to wherever we can't get because we're a state agency-- the staff, they can go everywhere and survey the state. And they're also our data managers. And then the US Fish and Wildlife Service has dual responsibility for anything that is federal.

The mission of the PNHP is to provide scientific information, expertise, and assistance to support the conservation of biological diversity. And the intent of the program is so that all of these agencies can work together to make that happen so that things like this can happen and we can discuss the importance of the data.

OK, so I'm going to transition into the County Natural Heritage inventory reports, which is where some of the core polynomes that I think you all have been looking at-- like what that is and what it's not-- and talk a little bit more about the PNDI process.

So a County Natural Heritage inventory we often abbreviate it as CNHI. That presents the known outstanding features in the county. And if this were live, you could get to it from two ways. So every county has a Natural Heritage Inventory report.

Back in the day when not everything was so digital, counties would come to the Heritage program. And they would want an inventory. They would want a report of the interesting places in their county so that when they do land-use planning, they have that as a reference. And it will be updated every 10, 15 years. It's a little bit more of a static document. But it does get updated.

And it's the first step of land use. It's kind of like a blunt instrument. It doesn't have all the details. It doesn't have the little-- this species is not here, it's more of a broad brush approach. See, each County Natural Inventory provides maps of the best natural communities, which you can think of as habitats, and all the known locations of animals and plant species of concern in the county. But it doesn't pinpoint the exact locations of those species. It's just a representative zone that is important to the preservation of the site, which is often termed a habitat.

And then there's the potential impacts within the site's watershed and supporting habitat if that's applicable. And it's actually given to the county planning office as a planning tool. So they just keep it on file, pull it back out when some project is proposed, or they're looking to do something new. So you can find the entire Chester County Natural Inventory Report online, which is pretty big-- they sometimes can be binders like this thick, I kid you not. So it's nice that you can just pull out what you want these days.

So within a County Natural Inventory, you have county or natural heritage areas, which are those big mapped, broad brushed, important areas. So biologists delineate these. And it's included in the report. So in the definition of a county natural area, Natural Heritage Area. There's so many acronyms [? it ?] really does get complicated.

But it's an area containing one or more plant or animal species of concern at a state or federal level, exemplary natural communities, or exceptional native biological diversity. They can include both the immediate habitat and the supporting lands and the supporting elements that support these plants or animals. So what's interesting is that it can be something that's of importance in the county or in the region but not necessarily statewide. It doesn't have to be tied to a threatened or endangered species. So, again, that's a difference between a polygon of a known location of a species. Just trying to tease out the difference. So that was a Natural Heritage Area from the bigger thing. Within a Natural Heritage Area is a core habitat, which is an area representing critical habitat that cannot absorb significant levels of activity without substantial negative impacts to the elements of concern.

And I pull that directly out of the Chester County Natural Heritage Inventory. So if you wanted to, you could find this. The core habitats are visible in the PA Natural Heritage-- the Explorer. So if you were doing a PNDI, you could turn that layer on so you can see these things.

And actually you can do a free conservation planning report and get all of that information. You don't have to do an extra PNDI. You can just do this planning report. And it gives you all the information about the landscape planning data. S

11 - Can I ask you a question about that?

34 - Sure.

11 – So if I'm understanding what you're saying, you can do that without having to go through true environmental review process? What does that tell you compared to a PNDI?

34 - It's a report. It's just a printout that says, here's all the things that are known in that project area. It doesn't say you have a potential impact on an endangered species. It just says like, you know, it's in the Big Elk State Park or Natural Area.

11 - And then does that apply to this location? Is it required?

34 - Yes. That's the new way of providing the information. Remember, I said the old way was these big, giant binders.

11 - Yeah

34 - So the more updated way is you can get on there. County planners can get on there. Anybody can draw up a project. And then it pulls from all of the planning layers. And it puts it into a report, which can be quite long. Whatever layers you turn on, it'll give you a response for that. So watersheds or trout streams or other protected or easement-type lands, and that's free.

11 - And that's coming just from state records or, say, from wetlands?

34 - It's both. If it's something that we have a federal layer of, like MWI wetlands, that would be in there. You can also add your own data to the Conservation Explorer. But you won't get the species location. So we won't say-- it won't tell you, right here you have this species. It doesn't do that. That's the environment.

11 - OK. Thank you.

34 - Sure. Yes?

16 - Would somebody look at that or like a phase one environmental assessment desktop review?

34 - It would be a good thing to include. Yeah. I wouldn't go so far as to say like that would satisfy all of the requirements of a phase one. But I think it'd be--

16 - a good start.

34 - Yeah. And that's part of the intent. It can be used for that. Yeah. OK, cool. So that's core habitat. And the supporting landscape is even bigger than the core habitat. So it's area is directly connected to core habitats that maintain vital ecological processes and/or secondary habitat that may be able to withstand some lower level activity without substantial negative impacts to the elements of concern.

So you can think of the core habitat as a closer buffer where you want to maintain a low level of influence. And then maybe there's a couple of these things in an area together. And then surrounding that within the watershed is an area that could withstand even more impact. But you still don't want it to turn into wall to wall pavement. So it's like a tiered way of looking at the level of impacts in an area. Does that make sense?

16 - Mhm.

34 - A little bit of difference between core habitat and the PNDI data because they're very similar, but they are different. So the basic difference is that the core habitat areas are bigger. They're more generalized, and they're planning focused. So again, it's like the blunt instrument type of thing.

The PNDI element occurrences are known locations, known occurrences of species, so it's more targeted. We use something called conservation planning polygons. So there's very specific specifications set out for each species or taxa group that could be-- I'm just making this up. So I don't think that this means anything.

But it might be like, well, it's occupied habitat as long as it's 1 and 1/2 meters upstream but 5 meters downstream. So that's the way that the polygon would be mapped. So it's much more specific and targeted rather than that big of a change.

Core habitat areas are visible in our PNDI environmental review tool. So you can think of them as an umbrella polygon that would encompass more than one species, like PNDI hits. And it's important to notice that they're not considered hands off. So a core habitat polygon, even though the definition is something like it 'cannot absorb significant levels of activity without substantial negative impacts to the element of concern'-- but it doesn't mean that it's a big giant X, hands off, nothing can happen because, remember, these were produced originally for county planners.

County planners are going to plan. The county is going to change and grow. New roads are going to get put in. New libraries will be put in, whatever. So the intent is to provide enough information for people to be able to make an informed decision. But it's definitely not like a big X, hands off. OK, are you all familiar with the PNDI process, like how you would go through doing that? I can walk you through that. But if that's not pertinent, we can just--

16 - That's pertinent.

34 - It's pertinent. OK, so if we were going to do a PNDI project or a conservation plan and polygon, a conservation planning report, you'll go here. This is the Conservation Explorer. You could log in if you really do want to do a full PNDI full review for that jurisdictional agencies, there's a \$40 convenience charge to be able to do it all online. There's also a great option if that's not what you want to do, you can just send it via snail mail or email. So there's always a different option too.

16 - Don't you work with the other state agencies? So, I mean, DCNR would say, yeah, PNDI-- you would work with that, right? They wouldn't have to pay the \$40.

34 - Yeah, right. So, yes, there are exemptions. So like I work in the Bureau of Forestry. We have foresters. They do timber sales. They do PNDIs. But if there is something-- or if you're a government employee, and you're doing a PNDI because it's part of your government job, then it's an exempted activity. There's no charge for that.

There is a list-- if you went to the Conservation Explorer, there's a FAQ page and a resources page. I don't remember on which you would find it. But there is more explanation about the exemption, like what it entails, who gets it and who doesn't, who would qualify. I think that's how it says it.

So the general PNDI process is you go to the Conservation Explorer and log in. An applicant will draw the projects online. So you can upload your own shape files if you like. Or you can do the polygon tool. And this is probably version three I think we're up to.

And you can actually change your project's footprint. So if you realize, oh, I screwed that corner up-- it's really down here instead of up there-- you can pick up that corner and move it. And you can adjust the points to make it more correct. And you can do more than one actual polygon within a project footprint. So it's a lot smarter. So they also have to select a project type.

The project types have different-- I think it's called a matrix. So the project type has different rules associated with it. Each species has different rules associated with that. So the hit happens when you draw your project, and it's a particular project type, and there's a species in the area. And the matrix says that there's a potential impact, or they could ask for questions.

Maybe it's something that if you-- it'll ask a question, something like, are you clearing all the trees in this property? And if your answer is no, then that might clear your project and you're getting no impact. That's it. So the system analyzes the project footprint and the type of the species in the area. And it spits out a receipt and potential impacts and the agencies that the applicant should consult with.

So, again, that's just giving it back to the applicant. So there's no agency review at that point. That's just the first communication back to them. So if they don't want to move forward with it, they can just not do anything with it.

If they want to-- if they're getting a permit, something like that, then they would coordinate with the appropriate agencies. And, again, what's nice about this tool now is that you can upload all of that stuff within the platform. And when you click 'Finalized', upload all your maps and your shapefiles if you've got pictures, things like that, it goes directly to all four agencies. So you don't have to send the email. You don't have to put it in the mail. It's all automatic.

Again, that's what the \$40 convenience charge is for. If you prefer not to do that, then you can send it via snail mail. So then the applicant consults with agencies. And the agency will review it and determine if there is a potential impact or no impact. If there is no impact, we get a letter. And the letter would be for two years, and you're good to go. And I should mention that if they get a receipt back that says there's no impact, the receipts are also good for two years. Good to go. And there's one more point I wanted to make on that. Oh it'll come back to me.

16 - I have a question. So you had said that these are for large planning projects or for the surrounding area. And you said they do studies that are 10 to 15 years. So for specificity, the Big Elk Creek, it's been about 10 years. Do you know if it is on a list to be updated?

34 - That's a good question. I think right now there's a couple south central counties that are being worked on. I don't know about out here in the east. I can find that out.

16 - I would like to know that. And if you wanted a PNDI done for this project, I would hope that-- I mean, I just wonder how that would be impacted by the layers that currently exists if they're not up to date.

34 - OK. You've got a couple really good questions. So the Chester County-- the county inventory, I think it was from 2012 or 2013. So it's relative--

33 - (name, #34), you want that slide? I have a slide of that. Can we just advance? Can I do that here? You can do that.

34 - But it's relative to the--

33 - next, next, next. There, that's the Chester County.

16 - Does that say 2018?

AUDIENCE - 2015.

34 - 2015, OK. So this one is relatively recent. But, yeah, it's probably getting towards the age that we want to update it. Excellent point that I wanted to bring out from your question, the county natural inventory data is a little bit more static. What's in PNDI is much more up to date. And we just can't-- it's just too much data to try all the time to get the County inventory reports to be as live as PNDI. So let's say there was a scenario that a botanist went out, and they found some totally new species and the first one ever found in the state. And it's federally endangered. It's not going to show up in your county because that's more static. It will show up in PNDI.

So give us a couple months to get it in ours. You know data management does take time. But once that is loaded, you do your PNDI environment review, and you'll get—it'll respond, and you get a hit. You may



not get a hit depending on what project type you're doing. But it will use that data and give you the proper response. So that's why the PNDI stuff is different than county inventory reports. Similar, but it's--

16 - But in a situation like this, you would normally do a PNDI, right, I mean, as part of the planning side?

34 - Yes, parks have done a PNDI. There's been several that have come to my shop--

16 - For this project?

34 - For this project. So, again, that's how this system is supposed to work. So my realm is like a botanist, the data management, the heritage program writ large. And then parks in this case is like the applicant. They're doing projects. And they're coordinating with us.

There's been several field views and surveys and discussions on how to avoid sensitive areas. I think with the most recent ones we're hearing about on the buffer planting where-- some places where if a rare plant was noted, it's like, well, OK, don't plant a tree on top of the plant. Move it in a place that's more appropriate.

16 - So how did those folks train? The volunteers that did the tree planting, do you know?

34 - I wasn't at the tree planting, but I spoke to my supervisor, Matt Keefer, who was one of the-- let's see, what's his title? We have long titles in DCNR. So it's the Assistant Bureau Director for Stewardship and Conservation is his full title. That's his title. And he was there. And I think they went out and staked certain areas.

Correct me if I'm wrong. I think that's what he--

31 - That's accurate.

34 - OK, in order to keep some rare species more obscured, just people sometimes collect things. So they may not need to know it's x plant that is right here. But there's something here. Don't plant a tree there. Give it a buffer. So leave that space open because you want to preserve the species and preserve space.

16 - So you need them to go around and put those stakes in and then people would plant further away from them?

34 - Yes, there were maps created. GPS locations were used. I have three botanists on my staff as well as three environmental review staff that you see. So the three botanists are mainly working on state lands.] And then the three environmental reviews are statewide. So they do plant environmental reviews anywhere in the state. And so I think several-- I don't think all six of them, but I think four or five went out and put the stakes in, made sure that they were done. That's my understanding.

31 - The other thing that they added to that was Kelly, the botanist, coordinated with two of the leads on the planting program, both the non-profit alliance of the Chesapeake Bay lead and the contractor who was hired by ACB to give them an identification. So just in case they saw it, in this case, the plant that we were looking to avoid impacting the habitat for had a very distinguishable basal rosette. All the leaves grew in a unique pattern.

They were trained on that pattern. This is what you're looking for. So in case there was anything that didn't get the flagging that everyone who was putting trees in the ground got a-- two people got trained directly from the botanist. And all the other individuals who were planting got trained from those two people. Sort of train the trainer set up to make sure that they had that information.

16 - What time of year, though, for that planting? Not all of the species would have been recognizable. How do you know that we didn't plant over top of stuff that would have been impacted.

31 - The basal rosettes were visible.

16 - No, no. I don't mean that that's-- I understand, and I appreciate that. I mean, but there's other organisms that just weren't up?

34 - It wasn't an even spread – not all of the species could be anywhere at any one time. I think they homed in on the species that were going to be in that riparian area. And they were aware of them. Again, I wasn't at the planting but I think the organism would probably be not--

16 - Not in that area, where the planting is taking place?

34 – Yes, and, again, that's why Kelly-- he's excellent at that kind of stuff. And he would be able to figure it out like, OK, well, in this riparian area-- the type of habitat this is-- we should be looking out for this species and this species, this species. These other ones are going to be over there.

16 - Thanks.

11 - May I ask a question?

34 - Sure. yeah.

11 - I just wanted to check something you said. With the PNDI processing, DCNR would consult with themselves for the jurisdiction of plants. And then the Game Commission for mammals and aquatic animals like fishes and the US Fish and Wildlife Service as well. So when the PNDI is submitted the application sent out to all four of those agencies?

34 - Correct.

11 - And then for this particular property that we're talking about, what kind of hits did you all get for the plants and what were the potential impacts associated with them?

34 - I mean, there's been like five or six PNDI-- I quickly looked at it. But I'd have to go back and check.

11- But I think that would be interesting to see. That was a question I had early on was like, what is the environment assessment results. Because I think that is what the public was asking too, looking for understanding about what potential mitigation might be enacted as well as those concerns about endangered species both at the state level and federal level.

16 - Because right now all we have to go on is the core and supporting habitat maps that you're saying are broad strokes when we want to see the impact areas.

34 - So the species data is protected information. So if you were an applicant and you did a PNDI-- you see polygons. If it was a threatened or endangered species, it would say sensitive species. So you might not get a species name.

So there is an element of some data security and we haven't talked about it with parks folks. But I think that's probably why those kind of mappings-- that mapping hasn't been made available because it is somewhat sensitive.

16 - I think that that's critical when you're deciding where infrastructure is going to be located. I don't feel comfortable looking at anything unless I know it's not going to have a direct impact to a species. I don't even care about the species. I don't need to know the species -- you know it. I don't have to know it. I trust you. But I don't know-- I mean, that's a pretty basic tenet of planning.

34 - I also am maybe going to go out on a limb and say, the planning is still ongoing.

16 - Yes, I understand that. But don't you need that first, like at a base level?

34 - Well, sure. And I think I'm seeing that we're, on the DCNR side, we are privy to more information than I think you all are. And that's part of the issue.

16 - Yes.

15 - So there's no way to actually see a map? You don't have to see the names or anything like that. That way we just see the map, where--

30 - Isn't it all captured in this, though? Because this is broader, doesn't it capture all of the specifics? I'm asking that as an honest question.

34 - I mean, yes and no. I mean, this is a great first start. But this doesn't tell the whole story. When you start drilling down, you can get more nuance. And I think that's where we are with the plan. And, again, I'm not a park planner, so I'm coming from a forestry side.

And I'll tell you that stuff-- we look at it. We think, I'm going to do this. And then we get into planning. And we're like, OK, let's change our plan a little bit. So I think we're still in the let's look at all of the options right now kind of space.

33- I'm going to run through a bunch of planning maps that capture more than just core species – we'll look at steep slopes, buffers, things like that. So maybe when we go through that, we can then have more questions because you have to look at everything, like steep slopes, soil conditions. That's all part of the picture that I think you're trying to get to.

34 - And, I mean, maybe that's something that we could talk about and put together something really nice.

11 – The purpose of the Task Force is to provide constructive comments. I used to work for Piping Plovers. So I very much understand that sharing the specific locations is a problem.

1- Sorry, did you say the plovers?

11- Yes

1- OK.

11 – For example, if you look on the Explorer for the US Wildlife Service, a number of that species come up there, say a turtle, a couple turtle species. That information isn't specific. It doesn't say everything that is there and where it is, but basically organisms that we should be keeping in our minds. We're thinking about "is it appropriate to have a building here? Is it appropriate to be removing these trees", as an informational slide?

16 - I think it's critical. I mean, I don't know how you can go forward without it.

14 - Well, it seems like to the question that was just asked, well, are those specific PNDI sites absorbed within the core habitat site fully? Yeah, but the question is, what do you do about it, right? So you just said you're not going to x out that whole pink area, but you might x out the PNDI sites, right? So it matters.

34 - And it depends on the activity. I did PNDR reviews on private lands statewide for 7 and 1/2 years. And these were conversations that we would have all the time. It's a mining company, they want to mine. How are you going to get to a win-win solution? Or it's PennDot and they've got a road to build.

So I see where you're coming from. I understand. And, I mean, if additional mapping that has no names associated with it needs to be worked on or something like that, I'd be happy to help with it.

15 - If we look at your report, which I have printed out here, one of the things that you said at the very end for the recommended steps is to avoid building additional housing or infrastructure within the national heritage area in order to prevent fragmentation of the habitat and loss of species of concern. But we're talking about building that core habitat.

34 - And that's what I mean. All of the decisions haven't been made. I don't think that the plan is to put big, giant housing all over this property. That's not the plan. And what I am aware of is-- again, you know, I'm here trying to represent that of the heritage side.

So I'm not privy to all parks' decision-making processes. But from what my folks have been involved with has been very constructive. So deciding like, well, in this meadow area, this is where the rare plants are going to be-- so this wouldn't be the best location for the campground or office. Maybe that would be sited someplace else where there isn't that?

16 - And it is that kind of conversation that we're really looking to understand that you're having with the Natural Heritage Program. I mean, I'm happy that that's happened. But from a member of the task force and looking for transparency, (name, #1), from parks, it's-- I wanted to see that. I wanted to see these are core areas that we're going to stay out of. And because we've been working with the Natural Heritage folks, and these are the areas that they're saying are clear for us to do what we want in or not, depending on what the reality is-- So I'm grateful. And I thank you for inviting (name, #34) to the meeting because I want them at the table. And it sounds like, from what (name, #34) is saying, they have been at the table --

1- Yes, for the resource work.

16 - - Yeah, of course, why else would they be there?

1- Well, us, I mean-- anyway, regarding parks and PNDI, we do PNDI for every project.

16 - I wanted you to bring us in onto that meeting, share with us, OK, we've worked with them. These are the areas that we know are clear for us, but they're steep slopes there, thank you very much. So we're not going to do that there or something like that. But I've been knocking on this door for a while trying to find this out because as you look at the public information, it's all core or it's all supportive habitat.

1- We're doing to get into this tonight and take a look at all of it.

16 – Thank you.

1 - And certainly it's a good exercise.

16 - But you can understand where I'm coming from. What are all the things that you consider, and how do you avoid them?

1- Absolutely.

14 - Well, yeah, but we're also-- we're also looking participate-- I mean, so I think our understanding is that there's a plan. And it's not unlike what I would think of as land use or a developer. And you have to start with what areas are primarily sensitive that we need to treat in a special way, build or buffer around or help out or plant a tree right there or don't.

You have to start with some things that are critical in the beginning and then build a plan from there. OK, these are the places where we can work physically. These things are places where we can't. I think we're looking for knowledge of what that is or else the rest of the plan in the beginning. I guess from the perspective of somebody who hasn't been there it probably helps.

1 - I don't want to steal your thunder. But this is precisely what is happening and what you will receive tonight to talk about.

9 - Can I ask you a question?

34 - Sure.

9- And I apologize. I see you have a session. On there. You mentioned that you worked with a mining company on this?

34 - Oh, no, I don't work for them.

9- But you worked with a mining company?

34 - Yes.

9 - So the mining company, do they have mineral rights underneath the ground? Do they have the right to be there and access that?

34 - There's a lot of money we could use in the state. And I think there's different business models. A couple that I can think of, yep, they own the mineral rights.

9 - So they have a legal right to be there and so it might not be ideal, but that has to be accommodated.

34 – They still need a DEP permit and DEP has to be involved.

9 - And there's PennDot and a road with a right of way, it needs to be applied for. I don't think respectfully that's an apples-to-apples comparison with what we're looking at. We're not discussing a situation where somebody has existing mineral rights or an existing right of way or existing whatever.

Fortunately, that's not what we're talking about. Right, that wasn't an apples-to-apples comparison because there's no mandate for anything that's in the steps in the way of construction to occur here. There's no legal requirement for it. And there's not a mandate or basis from that perspective of someone to have here.

34 - Yes, but I think that's another point. In Pennsylvania, plants are the property of the landowner. And since DCNR is the landowner-- a lot of species that we are talking about is plants. There could be an argument made that way. But I know that parks doesn't see it that way. They want to do what's right for all of the stakeholders, including the rare plants and the wildlife habitats.

So I think that-- I really feel like the conservation planning information is being used in a proper way here. And I think as we get into more things, then I think you all will see some of the thought process that maybe has been baked into the process on our side.

20 - Isn't there a lawful charge as the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the law that created you to abide by the conservation ethics to really show how?

34 - Yes

11 - So does that mean you have jurisdiction over that decision making?

34 - So just to be clear, the jurisdictional authority resides at the agency level. So Parks is one bureau. Forestry is another bureau. The program is administered through forestry, but it is DCNR.

11 -: So what happens if there is a disagreement between the two?

34 - We just talk. We just talk it through.

[LAUGHTER]

34 - I call up (name, #31), and I'm like, what are you doing with this thing? She's like, this is what we're doing. Or she'll say, what is going on with this thing?

1 - It's obviously a conversation with DNCR and Bureau of Forestry. And then it's a conversation with Fish and Boat Commission or Game Commission for their jurisdiction, for the species that they're responsible for. So we're having those conversations continuously. And they will permit, or they will not permit, what we are intending or trying to do based upon, again, the jurisdiction.

16 - So I'll just ask a pointed question, are you having any disagreements right now?

34 - No.

16 - I mean, I'm just asking because I've been privy to those situations where they heard folks don't want something to happen. And parks says, go pound sand at least in not in this city. But I'm just saying that has happened.

1 - Well, I would say that regarding our enabling legislation and statutory authority we are responsible for it. But if we're being told that there is a problem with a project, whatever type of project that is-- could be a PNDI or something else-- we're not going to just brush that off.

20 - And not just that, I mean, we've done trails with Friends groups. We have to go through this process even to locate a trail. It's a trail, which seems pretty simple. But we have to go through PNDI. We have to go look at it. So it's--

1 - It's even rehabilitation of existing infrastructure that requires that overview and that review. And we're dealing with them all the time, projects all over the state. But the bulk of PNDI reviews would be what we're viewing today and what we're talking about tonight, regarding of amenities and improvements to the site.

34 - And the PNDI review process for these projects, I think, is still ongoing. So, I mean, nothing is a done deal, end of story, at this point.

16 - No, I know. There's still time to review.

1 - Yes. One of the field discussions today was, what's not improved upon now for visitor amenities, could receive the visitor amenities but would also improve the habitat. Potentially. You've got to go through all the reviews and permitting and design. We can get there. And see improvements in the habitat, even with new amenities.

16 - But clearly you also want to put in infrastructure there, it's not just resource work.

1 - It's not all habitat. That's why I said the bulk of the PNDI review will be related to infrastructure.

8 - So we got these big polygons. So we said, OK, we're thinking about relocating a park office there. And so you draw your polygon of whatever size. And then you're looking for hits there?

34 - Exactly. And it depends on the project type. So the little polygon that's a parking lot might have a different result than a little polygon that is some big building.

OK, anything else? All right, well, any questions arise, I'll be in the back.

33 - So you all asked great questions about planning maps. And I'm going to walk you through a few of them that have been done to-date.



Now, when we go to work on our exercise, we're all going to work on designing a park. You're going to get these maps. If you get them and you want more detail because you know something else, you should be doing that because that's all data for us. And we'll talk a little bit more about that later. I do have a list of how we gathered this data. It's everything from ESRI data to Garmin data to OpenStreetMap data. This is gathered through a lot of GIS systems to get where we are and everything that (name, #34) talked about.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 5)

So the first map I'm going to show you is rivers and streams. We all know there's the Big Elk Creek, which you have a lot of wonderful little tributaries that are running down to the Big Elk Creek. And so the big waterways are in blue. And then there are also 100-year floodplain boundaries that are associated with all of those. That's all super sensitive habitat, as we know.

8 - If there's not a floodplain around there, does that mean that it's just very steep, or..?

33 - Sometimes it's super steep. And, remember, sometimes it is raw data. So if you said, hey, we really want another stream crossing here-- or we want to improve the stream crossings that we have because they're a little bit trampled through, you could go in a little more closely. It's exactly the same as looking at the data that (name, #34) just talked about.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 6)

This is starting to apply 100-foot stream buffers, and that's required. You don't go and build within 100-feet of a stream. But as you know, you can look beyond that, depending upon the sensitivity of the resource. But that's a place to start, look at your 100-foot buffers.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 7)

The next map is a soils map. And I'm going to keep it simple. But if you want to come and read more soil types exactly, you can do that. What I'll say to you is darker soil types are usually wetter soils. Wetter soils, in general, tend to be more sensitive. It makes a lot of sense. Those dark, wet soils are in our stream corridors and are next to our waterways.

Lighter soils are generally better-drained soils. And that makes a lot of sense. If you look at the history of farming on this land, farmers 200, 300 years ago thought about all that. They had to think about that.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 8)

And this map just really translates that because people read maps in different ways, that is better draining soils.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 9)

The next map we just talked about before with core habitats, this gross overview -- so when we start to look at this-- when I think about it, I think, well, part of the reason that we see more core habitat is because you have shared core habitat across the way.

So when you're starting to-- we talked on the site today about wildlife corridors. And we start to talk about wildlife corridors, it's really important to think large scale. It's not just our tiny little connections. We don't all have museums of ecology. We're trying to create interconnected ecology.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 10)

And then we took a look at land power-- again, this is super simple. I'm not getting into exactly your meadow type or exactly your course type here. But I'm saying, OK, the dark green is generally forested. That's an Appalachian forest. You probably have some basics in there. I've seen them myself, but that's an Appalachian forest.

And then the bright yellow is grassland. We have some invasives. We also have excellent grassland, good habitat for birds, appropriate, and associated with grasslands across the way. And then, of course, the green is cropland. This has been farmed for a long time.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 11)

Farming is important to your heritage, but it also is tough on the land. So if we start to think-- and people have mentioned today about ecological trajectory-- you might be starting to think about how do you improve habitat connections and how do you want to set your site on course for better ecology over the years? And we can't step back 400 years ago. All we can do is together make the best trajectory forward. So that's--

11 - I have a question.

33 - Sure, of course.

11 - I love maps, maps are my jam, and I just had a question.

33 - Oh good.

11 - I just wanted to know the scale because I'm noticing, for example, there's no reference to emergent wetlands. You just have deciduous forest, grass, and woodland.

33 - Because this is a pretty gross map. Sorry, I don't remember the scale here. You are going to get a copy of this map and our little maps. This map right here is pretty good. It's at 400.

11 - I'm sorry. I mean, like the scale to which the classification is reduced.

33 - That's a good question. This really was produced by looking at your aerial. We just did an aerial overlay and then magnitized for this. So it won't be-- it's not precise. It's a gross overlay.

11 – OK, thank you.

33 - Sorry, I went right to scale. So I'm always telling my staff "put the scale on the map!"

[LAUGHTER]

33 - I do have the scale. So this is a thought. This isn't an absolute because we're in a planning process, and everything's conceptual. But it's a way to start to think about what you might do in the future. So you would say in that existing woodland, we want to manage it somehow.

How we're managing it hasn't been determined yet. But it's an Appalachian oak forest. We have a feeder over browse. Maybe we're going to talk about deer control. And maybe we're looking for replanting as the forest is failing. I don't know yet. But that's the idea. We're going to manage. And then you could say, well, listen, we want things more contiguous. And we have a lot of chunks out because this was farmed land and grassland. Maybe you would think about making the forest more contiguous.

And then maybe you would think that you wanted to restore more grassland and make sure you really had those bird habitats. And when you do your mapping, you could start to draw a that like, what do we want it to become over time? (name, #1) talked about it. (Name, #1) talked about it because that's really important. What do we want it to become over time? And there are those things that we want to retain about it today.

And then there is a thought that if you were to-- if you were to put more resources on the land like small buildings, then what are they going to sit in? They don't have to sit in lawns, like we used to do in park systems. They could sit in a habitat. So how are we converting? What's that impact? And if you're going to phase out farmland, then are you going to go to forest? Are you going to go to more grassland? So these are all questions. So that's an asterisk to show you that you should think of that.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 12)

And then this is the steep slope map with the red parts being the very steepest, the yellow being less steep and then the army green being the least steep. And that kind of makes sense when you look at that combination of farms. They weren't going down into the gullies. Didn't make any sense to them. It's good land, but not to farm.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 13)

And then this map takes that and translates it by saying, well, these are all really gentle slopes. And then we overlay on this, what are your really great viewsheds? Great viewsheds are very important and it makes sense that you would have good viewsheds in the areas that are open farmland and the areas that are existing meadow. And those are important if you want to preserve the look and feel of your place. You want to understand the viewsheds from inside and from outside. So when you go into your park, it feels like this beautiful, natural place.

16 - I have a question.

33 - Sure.

16 - So that's one that looks like a slug.

33 - Which one? They all look like a slug.

[LAUGHTER]

16 - No, no, no on the left side. Left middle.

33 – Oh the slug with the crown?

16 - Yes, yes, exactly what I thought. And then the other slug right above it. So why would you just have one slug? Why are you just saying, hey, we might stop at this first slug? Or are you going to go to the next one?

33 - So this jumped out because this is the high endpoint. When you get low on the site, you get a little different vantage because you can see into the Big Elk Creek. So that's still the why. But could you say, well, there's a great one from there too? Yeah, sure. But that's what we're trying to highlight some of those viewsheds, same over here.

11 – So the hash marks are all viewsheds?

33 - Just great viewsheds.

14 - And so from those edges of the slug where their crowns are, they're looking out over something, and that's why they're showing those arrows. So it's a high site, a high location, where if you look out, you actually have a good vantage.

33 - It's really interpreting steep slopes to show you flattish slopes. And so it's not to say that if you went into that riverine gully you'd have a great viewshed, it's just showing where they might be.

16 - I'm fully aware. I'm just saying, my concern is the revelation here is that long one going close to Big Elk Creek is just going to have a bigger impact to the resources around it to get there.

33 - Sure, certainly if you said you were going to drive all the way down to there-- but this isn't meant to suggest that you're going to drive or build infrastructure into these, it's just meant to suggest these are great places to see things whether you're walking or not.

So I'm not being prescriptive in my analysis. But I guess we would think of it this way. If you think of this as a great viewshed, you probably wouldn't put a building smack dab there because if you stood at the top of that, you'd look at it. Or today, we came and we saw a way to work around that.

15 - Did you at least take into consideration the PNDI reports?

30 - This all gets put together. And then it can be submitted for a PNDI report.

33 - We're walking through this-- we're trying to map out what the idea is. We used to do this old-fashioned back when the dinosaurs roamed, with mylar overlays. This is building to those mylar overlays so I can identify the places where you can have a parking lot, where you can have an education center, or where you definitely don't want one. So that's the idea. None of this should be taken as 'this map is giving you the result'. These are all part of a compilation-- which I'm going to show you a compilation. And, again, you're going to get all these, and you'll have an opportunity to draw on those and make your map.

14 -The geographic information systems people, they always think of maps in terms of the layers. So they'll take a data set, which represents the layer. And then they'll take a layer, layer, layer, layer, layer. And when you do that-- when you look down on all those layers from the top, you see some areas that are clearly too sensitive for anything, and you'll see other areas like, well, it's not as sensitive. You see it doesn't have any markers or need a PNDI and you think 'OK, that's a pretty good candidate for something'.

33- Yes, you take that overall layer and say we can now think about what works best.

1 - The Queen Slug. Approximately, is that where those bales were located on that high ground?

33 - The bales were a little bit further upward.

1 - OK.

33 - We were standing there.

16 - Looking at the big slugs--

33 - I can't wait to get back to my staff with the slug talk. OK, excellent.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 14)

OK, so then this map is the site infrastructure. This is everything from the yellow dash there, the Spring Lawn Trail, to existing trails, whether they are-- I may not have every one available on social trails. And all of those were mapped. And we also use some heat mapping.

And you can see the little teeny, the existing parking lots here and here. And then we call current public access. There's actually an access up there and public access there today. And then we have something-- Someone today talked about what happens outside the site as far as trails. So we have the Chester County Trails in yellow and then, of course, the Fair Hill trails.

And that's really important as you're sharing this network with your neighborhoods because the conservation could be, if you said, hey, we really need a better way to get across Big Elk, you'd be partnering because not everybody should be building a bridge. So that's the thought. And, again, if there's a trail that we don't have, just mark it and give it to us on your map.

And then the points of interest, that's everything from ruins to—well, it's mostly ruins. And today I think we've heard some talk about some ruins that maybe we don't know about.

12 - Yeah, there's some missing from your map.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 15)

33 - So when you do your maps, we have some stickers for you. And then, this is our take. It's a design team on potential suitable sites, for things like education and parking. And you'll see it does start to correspond to better drained, flatter areas.

But some of it may be-- someone asked today, well, when you initially thought about this, why didn't you think over here? We felt like it was greater watershed impacts. You do your math. You might say that doesn't matter. But that is a planning exercise to arrive at places that will give you the least impact and a thought to when we have interventions, what's our ecological trajectory?

16 - The green and the yellow, can I safely assume that your PNDI information is not encumbered by those blobs?

33 - Yes, I will say here as this is farm and active farming, that is part of the reason for that. This side, the other reason that we did the first exercise we ended is because that is mostly in grassland. So I feel like that-- I know it's dicey. So if you're going to comment on all of that-- if you feel like-- I mean, I'm not saying it's all great grassland. But I'm saying a farmer farming every year and rotating crops is a lot more disruptive than a grassland that's not great. You're still going to get more habitat in that. So that's how

we're thinking. Now, could you say-- and that's why I wanted to talk about ecological trajectory. If you stop farming, and that became habitat-- better quality habitat, could you see things return? Sure. But did I answer that?

16 - Yeah. I mean, knowing how parks operate, once you put something there in that block in the center, then they're going to say, oh, wouldn't it be nice if we could 10 years from now, 5 years from now, whatever-- and then you're going to extend even further and then even further so that when we open the door a little bit, ultimately, potentially, no offence (name, #1) you could still be building down to the creek. And so then the initial impact we feel like we're going to have ultimately will be much later. So that's my only concern of that there as I look at it.

33 - Sure, so you might say-- from your perspective, you might say, look, we should go here because that's going to have a pretty minimal impact on us being closer to the street. But then we're also going to have a neighbor impact. So those are the pluses and minuses. And I hear you on one always worries. But hopefully we're all trying not to build right up to the edge of Big Elk Creek.

2 - But let me come back to that, a reference to something (name, #20) said earlier just as an example. Now, the process of assessment on impact to the resource is an ongoing thing. So just this last year, we replaced an existing foot bridge here with the exact same footprint bridge. And before we could do that we had to do a complete assessment in that area before we put that new bridge back in and sit right back on the same footprint.

So I hear what you're saying that a scope creep can occur. But that's not something that's distributable that somebody can just ease on down toward the creek because every time something else comes up for implementation or improvement to the property, a complete review is done again.

16 - I understand that the (name, #2) but the whole reason we're here is because you wanted to build trails. And then now we're looking at a \$12-whatever-million project. So it's not scope creep so much as, wow, look at all these people coming. Now we have to build more because, we want revenue. And there's no animosity here. It's just reality is all I'm speaking of. So, again, I'm familiar enough with these projects to know that this happens. And that would be a concern.

15 – And what kind of guarantees do we have that it's not going to be 5, 10 years down the road? You've already got some infrastructure in there. Now we need to expand that infrastructure. Campgrounds are back on the table. All this stuff happens, how do we prevent that? How do we make sure that we're maintaining the natural corridor that visitors are obviously looking to utilize.

20 - Just out of curiosity, can you give me some examples of state parks where you have seen this happen?--

16 – Well I work in Delaware, so no.

18 - Well, I think this whole process is an example. It was maintained as a preserve, and now we're all here.

4 - No, it's a state park. It's not an example because nothing's been built.

16 - But I'm not to argue, though. I really am not coming from this from an antagonistic perspective. I'm just being realistic that once you open that door, things do happen. And there is, as you say, sometimes (name, #1)- there's a mandate for this, or there's pressure for that, or I'm getting pressure from the governor or whatever. I'm just being realistic that these things--

20 - I think in parks, though, there's a lot of pressure where they've been-- DCNR has been working very hard to protect the asset, not expand into the asset but protect the asset. I'm sorry. That's why there is a system to doing things.

3 - I think we can go the other way too. I don't know what's going to happen 50 or 100 years from now if people in this community are saying, hey, we want our resources there. There's groups that are coming down and don't have access. And I think we're all trying to agree that if it's driven by the community and the community asks for it--

15 - No.

3 - And right now you're saying no community doesn't not want these--

15 - That's right.

3 - And that's why we're all listening.

20 - Right. But it's a state park. It's not a community park.

16 - We understand that. However--

20 - There's is a variety of state parks --

15 - You're talking about diversity, what about diversity of the state parks? They don't all have to be cookie cutter and the same, right?

You need your parking lot and a bathroom. I get that, no argument. But do they need all these buildings and things of that nature to-- I just don't see-- you've got buildings here. And I know we're talking about it's a 15-minute drive, the road is rough out from here, all of those issues.

I still don't see the reason that we need the visitor center, education center, all of this infrastructure on this particular property. We already have stuff here that's not being utilized and honestly has a lot, like \$2 million worth of work that needs to be done here just to update it.



16 - And then there's backlog.

1 - Regarding the overarching concerns, things like project creep, from a project 10 years from now pushing back from that first slug round into the second slug round. Well, we did have-- we don't have an endless pot. And I think what we're trying to do, again, is just craft the master plan that really gives us the blueprint for how this park will function, be accessible, and maintain and improve the natural resources and the cultural resources in the park.

So, to (name, #20's) point, we have been on the other side of this, where there's pressures to put things or add things to our lands. And then I'll just say that the resource always is in the forefront of the decision making regarding those incompatible proposals and uses. So I understand that there's a trust issue here and concern about project creep. But in reality, I think again we're always going to put the resource in the forefront as we advance the improvements on this park.

16 – (name, #1), have you thought of-- and it's interesting. You just said you're usually on the other side because you're getting pressure to do things that either you don't have the resources or whatever to do it. But clearly, if you could tell from the meeting that took place in November you had 500 people that didn't want anything to happen and one or two people that spoke in support for it, what I'm wondering is, what about the diversity of experience for different parks?

So what if you had minimal infrastructure and still budget it and did the work for improving the resources but not the-- and in the trails-- but not the infrastructure for education facility or for maybe-- I don't want to say park office but maybe park office.

But I guess what I'm trying to say is providing a different type of experience for the person, because what this community is looking for-- it is not looking for the infrastructure. It is looking for maintaining the resources as they are or improving them. I think if that's what the area is trying to pressure you to do, it's ironic that you're on that other side saying, no, no, no, we want these-- don't you want these facilities? Do you see my perspective?

10 - I couldn't agree more. I mean, I'm glad that the state is usually on the other side protecting from overdevelopment. Here we are with this amazing, unique, wonderful resource that we all want to protect and preserve forever. And it's going the other direction. It's like you have an opportunity to take advantage of this resource with minimal impact. That's all we really are here to discuss.

9 -: And that was what DCNR themselves said. That this is going to be not like a typical day-use, overnight destination park. Those were DCNR's own words.. And I kind of see the direction we're going in here or at least the second part. The question I would like to ask is this. I feel like we are looking at a little bit of a false choice.

Do you want the visitor center here or over here? Do you want, whatever it is, the parking lot to be here? Or do you want it to be over here? But that's not the question. The first question is, do we want to have a visitor center? Do we want to have parking? That we have not-- I don't understand why that has not been addressed first.

We can't decide if you want to go to Avalon or Wild Wood on vacation until you decide we're going to go on vacation. And this committee hasn't had that conversation. It's just been, well, this is what-- something's going to happen here. I don't think we can move forward until we've addressed that underlying issue. DCNR proposed the facilities' development plan that saw significant public pushback.

I don't know how many meetings DCNR's had over the years where hundreds of people showed up twice. This committee was established in large part in response to that public pushback. That's why we are here in an advisory capacity. I think we need to take a step back before we talk about, do we want a visitor center here or here? Or do we want this or this here. We need to have a more fundamental conversation that (name, #10) was alluding to about do you want to get back to what DCNR said at the very beginning.

This is going to be-- it's not going to be a traditional state park. This is going to be-- not for day-use, overnight, all the stuff that DCNR themselves said that happens to very closely mirror the existing White Clay Creek Preserve, which this property was part of for years. So I put that out there. I think this committee should have that conversation.

8 -: I guess, everything we've heard today to me sounds exactly like what is already here. I haven't heard them suggest anything here that seems to me different at all from what we on this side.

16 - Is this the nature center, or is it-- it's an education center, or is it a park office or is it all--

29 - Park office is there.

16 - Park offices there, and this is the education center?

23 - This is an historic building that was retrofitted for a meeting space.

16 - For a meeting space? So there's no education center for this park?

23 - That's correct.

12 - We've had EIT environmental people for 20 years when we write educational programs out of this building. With school programs and other things and community programs and the Friends Group. As a Friends Group, we would open this building on Sundays. So we had an educational program from day one.

16 - and school buses coming.

12 - I don't think-- yeah, we've had school buses. Yeah. I don't know how she did it. I think she picked a sunny day down by the creek.

11 - We would just like to support something that (name, #9) said, which is this discomfort that I'm experiencing of feeling like I have a choice but at the same time, as you presented your maps, you have some thinking, well, we don't want to pick where that thing should go because we don't want that thing to be there.

So it's an unusual experience. You'll have confirmation as to what the park is going to look like but then essentially be given the LEGO blocks as to what that has to look like. So I'm wondering in your mapping exercise if there is an option of saying, or not put something--

33 - Yes, you can not put something.

1 - You do not have to put something, but if you don't, we are going to request an explanation as to why. Because that is important as well. And certainly, we want that feedback. I will say that the very first meeting we went over what it means to be a state park and what the Bureau does for state parks. And a state park takes care of its natural and cultural resources, it stewards the activity.

But it also has, again, a core criteria and components, that go into park planning. And certainly the incompatible uses project proposals -- oftentimes pressure -- that push to begin to build something, do something, in the state park is-- we're saying no because of primarily resource considerations, natural resource considerations-- be they historical, natural, or the like.

But certainly the choices, we're not trying to box you in. If you feel that way, you can choose not to put something on the map. But you have to tell us why. But, again, we wanted to get out in that very first meeting what constitutes a state park regarding our mission and our mandate and our authority.

33 - We should finish up. I'm almost done.

(REFERENCING SLIDE 16)

21 - Yeah, I just had one small question--

33 - Sure.

21 - that was kind of going back a little bit about restoration efforts, like with those that you touched on to convert farmland to perhaps restore forests. Do you expect there to be more species that pop up ideally, like more places, than what's covered by the PNDI?

33 – That's the goal. And people are pretty sophisticated of where we are in their understanding, at least you seem like you are anyway, with habitat restoration. This is not something that happens overnight. You have to roll habitat restoration out slowly and carefully. But if you build it, they will come. And then habitat restoration isn't-- I don't know, 20 years ago I thought it was a lot more pure than it is. And some of us who work with companies in this area for a while doing basic retrofits, like my company, not DCNR, we really have to help them because they have a finite resource for management. So they convert a basin in partnership with the township. And then they look for the worst invasives to remove because they can't make it perfect.

So that is always an ongoing conversation-- I think that's an ongoing conversation within DCNR because we didn't face the same ecological pressures even 50, 60 years ago that we have now. But I think having a group like this can have input and help those Friends groups because it's going to take more than DCNR.

So that's just my habitat speech. And I always go to-- I have a friend who lived in north central park when they were doing habitat work. They did that in 40 by 40 foot sections and rolled it out. And that was partially because they happened to have neighbors who didn't want to have stuff like that. They also had a lot of illicit activities, which it turns out are much difficult in deep grass. Anyway --

16 – (name, #1) I have one more question for you. So earlier today you were saying that there was a hiring of staff to teach and because there was that hiring of staff to teach, you had to have a facility for them to teach. And I really think that you put the cart before the horse because you hired staff without having any facilities for them to actually use – no park office or whatever in that part of the park.

And if we come back-- and I don't know if we will-- but if we come back and say-- maybe two or three groups come back and say, look, we really don't want an education facility here, what's the reality of that actually coming to fruition if you've already hired people? And you said, we hire these people-- but now we need these facilities. So what's the reality of that being a recommendation from us that you would really consider seriously because you already indicated you're in that constraint since you've hired those staff?

1 - The education staff are going to educate through environmental education on the resource; education of the resource. And our environmental educators, again, it's not just general public programming, it's school groups. It's the full gamut spectrum of our environmental education efforts.

One of the things we've covered today is what is possible for delivery of that service, that public service, of outdoor education. And, again, within Pennsylvania state parks, there's the best that we can provide to provide that service. And some of it involves infrastructure – be it outdoor teaching stations or a multipurpose room where they can provide that instruction, that education without being exposed to the elements. Year round.

Does every park have the Taj Mahal? I hate to use that term. No, but we have a spectrum of facilities that provide that service up to and including the 40,000 square foot Tom Ridge Environmental Center or the Hickory Run visitor center that's close to 13,000 square feet with an interpreter bay and space inside. That's not what we're talking about here. And we're going to see some examples of that coming up.

23 – Maybe.

[LAUGHTER]

1 - But, again, it's a matter of grade. And (name, #9) you asked the question and this is what we're doing here later tonight, is having a conversation on those amenities. Based upon what state parks needs to serve their core standards.

And it was noted, we're not sitting in a tent in an undeveloped preserve in white clay creek. There's infrastructure that supports our mission. And that's what we're talking about for Big Elk Creek.

15 - But it's here, why do you need it 5 miles away?

16 - Well, I'm just wondering if we could use it here. You already have a facility.

1 - It's certainly a good question, and we can provide that input. And (name, #23) will talk about state park operations and what's needed. And note that in state park complexes across the state, complex meaning they are a unit of two, three or more parks. We just don't position the delivery of services in one facility in that state park complex. They are positioned in each of those parks by that service directly at that park.

Now, we talked about fuel tanks today. And there are certainly shared services within the state park complex at that granular level. But when it comes to the basic core standards of state parks, we're not saying that you can just simply plop that out of one state park and stick it in the adjacent or adjoining state park complex. That makes sense. They still provide that service the way our visitors need it. Did that answer your question?

16 - You said we need amenities in every single state park. They all have to be the same. That's how I took that. There'll be an education center. There'll be a parking lot. There'll be a visitor center. They'll be a method.

1 - They don't all have to be the same. They have to be able to provide a standard of service.

16 - I would have liked it if you could have considered this particular property to be a little bit different than all the other state parks.

1 - We're very much considering like what (name, #9) is, as passive recreation. Environmental education is in the mix. Trails are our vehicle to access the resource, public safety, administrative quarters. These are the things we're going to go into. But, again, if you don't like them, please provide that in the facilitated exercise if we can get to it. Sorry, I'll stop now.

23 - All right, well, I was going to try and talk about the facility program components and the site visit and intertwine them since half of you were on the site—which I appreciate that. So the three basic types of facilities that we're talking about for consideration are restrooms, which I'll use the term CXT or precast toilet, this auxiliary pole building, which we refer to as maintenance, and education and administrative space, which you all refer to as the visitor center or park office.

You don't need to read this now. It'll be in the meeting minutes. This is comparable of what White Clay Creek, Delaware, our preserve, Fair Hill and Big Elk have, just shows the amenities and some of the unique aspects of it, just for comparables. Through three meetings and site visits, I've heard 'we should be more like x park or more like x, y park'. And some have said 'we shouldn't be anything like any of the other parks'. There is a comparable of what's on the ground today. That's all there is that needs to be said about that.

So maybe we don't need to talk about bathrooms too much. I thought we beat that one a little bit earlier today. So when we're talking bathrooms in state parks, we're talking anywhere from flush toilets to, like what (name, #1) mentioned up at Presque Isle, to basic CXT to the right. This is a precast toilet. It's a pit toilet, no utilities running to it. It's serving a trailhead. And that's all it's doing. It's minimal impact. As you can see there, it's blended with the resource. And that's probably a good example of design consideration to look at for all of our infrastructure. I'm going to quickly browse through these. And I apologize if you were with us earlier because you're going to have to hear it again.

But the design considerations we look at-- and they're in no specific order-- is connect visitors to the natural surroundings. Take advantage of natural surroundings. Use of natural materials with the natural appearance to not detract from the overall character of the area. Limit disturbance of existing trees forests and habitats. Focus on energy efficiency, resource conservation, and indoor environmental quality. Utilize natural daylighting combined with lighting controls, LEED-certified facilities, ADA requirements from parking space to feature and then individual non-specific restrooms to accommodate family, cis or gender neutral users, dark side lighting compliant, utilities that minimize and are underground, and permeable parking areas and then educate, educate, educate and that can be everything from a waterless urinal to a rain garden.

Now that's probably not the nicest material on the pit toilet, that's an older one. But that's something we looked at where we can site today. And if you go to the next slide-- I'm not suggesting we site a bathroom here.

But this is an example of one of a number of places on the property where a bathroom and parking area could be utilized for a trailhead, which would have very limited impacts to neighbors and to the visitors.

And this is right off the Stricklersville parking lot, the gravel lot we have, with the port-a-john. We walked up here and went behind this fence row. And, (name, #10), you're one of the taller folks that were there. Did you see any buildings from that location?

10 - No, it was a secluded area.

23 - Yeah, so we're maybe 200 yards off the main Stricklersville Road; we could nestle a two-stall pit toilet and a parking area trailhead and not be seen by the public. Now, some good comments came out of that. One was, we hate that. What kind of materials would we use? How do we protect-- if we were to put the parking lot there, which I don't think we would be-- but how would we protect the lights coming out at night to protect the homeowners there from the light pollution? All stuff that are design considerations that we look at when we put these facilities in.

The questions asked about utilities, a pit toilet can be put in without utilities. I guess, again, a lot less impact-- and it's actually better for maintenance staff and for users. A pit toilet that wasn't winterized could be open year round and then not have to worry about that maintenance issue.

Parking lot can be gated berms can be planted along Stricklersville Road to minimize the impact of light pollution coming out and certainly would not put a permanent parking lot right across the street from residence. Just like a residence doesn't want to be seeing all that traffic, we don't want our visitors to experience that too. We want them to experience the natural setting.

So getting out of state park and seeing what awesome view is out this way looking down into Maryland, that's what we want our visitors to see. And I'm sure anybody who's local, this is what you want to see, maybe not this. But you want to see the fence row and no impairments to that. So that was a conversation.

That's one of the infrastructure items that you have the ability to place on the map-- I think from what I've heard earlier, for those of you that were part of the visit, I think the understanding was, yeah, maybe we do we have a bathroom over there that wasn't a port-a-john. But I'd ask you all to speak up, say yay or nay to that because maybe I'll cross one thing off tonight. Do we agree on anything? Do we need to have a bathroom at Big Elk Creek?

16 – Will you locate it there?

23 - No, no, no, no, just in general.

12 - Yes.

10 - I'll say yes, parking lot and bathrooms. Other than that, nothing. But, yeah, I think to just provide this resource that is safe, we need parking lots and bathrooms.

15 – We don't need more than one.

20 – You only want one bathroom for 1800 acres? If people don't have a bathroom, they will make a bathroom.

18 - I understand that. But, I mean, how many bathrooms are on the White Clay Creek, Pennsylvania side?

23 - Right here?

18 - Yeah.

23 - There's two and one, so three.

14 – Fair Hill has only port-a-potties here and there, except for the visitor center, which is a reused building. And that's 5,700 acres.

16 - Is there a public outcry?

23 - Your group will be able to put or not put a comfort facility or multiple comfort facilities. Does anyone have any more questions on bathrooms? That's our most essential infrastructure item.

11 – I have a question.

23 - Sure.

11 - Do you have a sense-- I know, obviously, not really getting visitation records yet.

23 - Sure.

11 - Do you have a pretty clear sense of visitation load?

23 - I mean, engineers will take a look at that based on-- normally when we have a park, we have an entrance point with traffic counters or we can use comparables. I think for what we're looking at, this would be a 1 or 2 hole comfort station facility, probably a pit toilet.

Just based on what I'm hearing today-- I'm not the engineer. Just based on comparisons, this would be-- we talked about if we were going to have a trailhead, maybe we have one major trailhead and then a couple spur spots. If this is spur lots-- if this was a major trail, this is where the restroom would be. If it was only one then it would be to support that function. And you can get data based on use of the park today.



11 – Right. You want to just ask the question, like should they be working with current visitation numbers or what do you anticipate in the future—

23 - So the other thing that goes into the bathrooms is what other activities are there besides hiking, biking, or trail use. Where are those activities? So if we look at the map, the Stricklersville lot, this sort of piece-- we looked at the location to the west, where the office and campground was initially conceptually planned for. That's more central for people utilizing all of the parking lots.

So if you want to try the central model or putting two on the perimeter, I don't know. That's obviously for you.

1 - Again, we don't have the plan yet – but we aren't talking about siting and placement of a very active park and recreational area. Think of a swimming beach or a swimming pool. I'm trying to think of another example.

23 - Marina.

1 - Marina operation or even-- probably our highest density use is in these many day use areas that have that recreational amenity. If you've been in the Carbon County-- Beltsville's sort of the poster child for high-dense use because of that waterfront and because of its geographic location, travel routes. It's a great meeting place for people to come and swim and picnic and be with their family members. There isn't a feature in this park that will promote that type of visitation.

Again, the trail's that are the primary focal points as access to resources.

23 - If you look at the picture on the left, that's at Ricketts Glen. That's on top of the falls trail. That's one of the most heavily-used parking areas.

That's a 2-hole. Now, the one on the bottom is similar to what's at the bottom of the falls trail. This isn't it, but it's similar to what we have in the bottom of the falls trail. So while you think there's only two spots, that has more capacity building than you think.

1 – Just for everyone's information, at Ricketts Glen when these were cited or on our trail system in the federally designated national natural landmark. The resources in this park are phenomenal and very important. And we take care of them the very best that we can.

But, again, the necessary amenities help us take care of that resource.

23 – So this is at Ricketts Glen and this is on top and this has utilities. See the water right there? And then this is-- I'm not sure where that's at off the top of my head. Similar to the bottom, there's no utilities. All right, does anyone else have any questions on restroom facilities?

AUDIENCE: NO

[LAUGHTER]

23 - All right, so, maintenance area. We talked a little bit about this today-- who was at our maintenance area this afternoon? Pretty stellar, huh? It's been utilized for many years for one salaried employee and on good years, two wage employees. So it was never built to support the needs of a larger state park mass.

If you look around this sort of structure-- so we're not going to be able to do anything other than add another building there. None of our equipment is protected from the weather. One thing that we've talked about in the conceptual plan is having a maintenance area, two or three bay, not a huge maintenance compound with office space and all that, just two or three bays to keep things out of the weather over at the Big Elk.

The question came up, well, we have that here. We have some covered space here. I would think any kind of toilet paper or anything you have to keep in the office because the mice and some other issues because it is an open barn. Also, to get a piece of equipment from here over to there is about 25 minutes, maybe longer, depending on where you're at.

Now, it's 5.9 miles from here to the surface of the parking lot. But, remember, we have the Martin track. We have other areas through the northern part of the park. So if we're going to be trailering equipment back and forth and then we don't have a place for weather storage and whatnot, that takes up time--

14 - Wait, are you saying you already have to trailer it to certain places?

23 - If we're going to do any mowing or any trail maintenance, everything comes from here. Staff start from here, and they have to go over there. Now, that's true if they're going to start right at the trailhead. If you're embedded in the resource further in, you can be spending an hour of your day just waiting to get out to the location. And then you have to bring everything back at the end of the day because you're not going to leave equipment out in the elements to be vandalized or whatever. Again--

14 - Sorry, my question was--

23 - Sure.

14 - I thought you said that even over there, there's other parts of this, of the park where you have the trailer.

23 - You may, depending on where you're going--

14 - So you're trailering.

23: You may. You may. Eventually based on potential thoughts on trail network, you should be able to get to everything without coming through. But I've heard a lot about these roads are bad and there's already too much traffic on it. We're encouraging people to come over here to get information when there's an access point that limits how many folks actually go into the heart of Big Elk in this area.

14 - That's the Queen's slug.

23 - And the Queen slug area, that saves time, puts us in a better spot. It also prevents people from having to drive all the way over here to the information. Again, not a requirement, just an efficiency and just addressing some concerns that we've heard. Again, just like everything else, blending in with the landscape could be a one or two or three bay. Sorry, that's our maintenance area-- so if we weren't here today, that's what you missed.

14 - That's the current facility?

23 - That's our one.

33 - It's fossil fuel use too, right--

23 - Sure.

33 - il you're driving. I mean, so there's a lot of ways to think about resource that you should consider as you do your mapping.

18 - Quick question.

23 - Yes.

18 - Please. How many maintenance facilities do you have in some of your larger parks?

23 - How many maintenance facilities in some of our larger parks? Well, I would say a lot of our maintenance facilities are much bigger. They accommodate a breakroom, restrooms, carpentry shop, auto mechanics shop. A lot of parks do everything in-house. We don't have the ability to do any of that there. Dry storage, just a place to park, an office for your maintenance supervisor so they can do all the procurement, payroll, all that stuff, locker room, didn't say that.

So a maintenance shop is usually designed for the number of staff that we have. So, again, not knowing the number of maintenance staff, square footage of space is generally what we have. I didn't put a picture of a big maintenance complex in here because that's not what -- again, knowing the bare minimum is what we're looking for, two to three bays without the locker room and everything else that we would typically put in a state park maintenance area.

1 – Depending on the size and the needs of the park, we may have more than one maintenance facility. And some of that is the maintenance demands within that park will dictate the maintenance area-- you always have the maintenance headquarters, as Jason discussed. And they can be rather large because there are lots of needs in that park.

23 – For example, Prince Gallitzin. That's a fairly large park. They have their maintenance compound, but there was a distance. On the other side, where the campground is, they have a maintenance area. Locust Lake/Tuscarora, which is not too far from here. They have their maintenance headquarters at Tuscarora State Park, similar distance from park to park. They have a separate maintenance compound as a satellite maintenance compound. So they're not shuttling back and forth.

The condition of roadways between here and there, very similar to Tuscarora and Locust Lake. Closest to here, we have French Creek and Marsh Creek. They both have their own maintenance areas. And if we want to get technical, within this complex, Ridley Creek and White Clay Creek.

14 - I was not on the field trip obviously, today. And there's a reason for that. That's why these meetings are scheduled for now because some people couldn't come during the day. So you're saying that this maintenance is at Big Elk Creek right now.

23 - No, this is right here on the spot at White Clay. There's nothing actually on Big Elk-- It's right up the road, about a mile to the right--

14 - I love the barn--

AUDIENCE: I love the barn too.

14 - I just love the fact that it's just a good old-fashioned barn and it fits right in with everything else. It's all already here.

10 - I understand the mileage and the trailering and the fuel consumption, all of that. But any of the comments about mice or about the old barn, that's solved with the money that's already been approved, I would think. So that doesn't fix the other arguments. And there's validity that those about the road. But certainly, I love the idea of the barn. That looks like it's always been that way.

23 - And I think some of you that were there, the footprint limits any kind of expansion there. There wouldn't be an expansion to that building but an addition because of the lease premises right adjacent to it. So those are the things to keep in mind. If you don't want a maintenance facility, you have the ability to not put that sticker on but just throwing everything out there to make that picture.

And then the fun one everybody wants to talk about, education administrative space-- so, again, same design considerations for everything we've talked about. I'm going to show you three different types of

education and administrative space that we have in state parks. There's no template cookie cutter. These are three types. The first one is visitor contact, park administrative functions, public comfort station, and staff support.

So for those of you that feel like having the impact of having multiple restroom areas or having multiple buildings, maybe you cut out the off site comfort station and include it in that. All of our offices have public comfort facilities, flush facilities, that are open even when the park office isn't. This is our smallest. This is at Poe Valley State Park. This is a park that has two offices within that three-park complex.

This doesn't have an educational component. That's held at another building within the complex. So this is the bare bones. We have a place for our law enforcement officer. Again, I've heard a lot about emergency response time, our manager and, say, for our maintenance employee—again, comfort facilities and a contact point for information about the park.

This is our most common type of state park, at least currently. This is the Keystone State park, which is currently in design, but it's similar to a number of other parks. This houses park administrative functions, public comfort facilities, staff support, ranger function, provisions for education programming and activity purposes, and trailhead access parking.

So (name, #12) mentioned that we used to possibly have a bus here, and host programs from here. But you can't put two buses in this building. (Name, #12) said on a sunny day, we could go to the stream. Well, schools don't have the ability to plan for a sunny day anymore. We have to get on a schedule and plan out months in advance. So these kids are coming to the state park whether there's a torrential downpour, whether it's 100 degrees and humidity like it was over the weekend, or if it's like today.

Or if we wanted to teach a workshop for teachers in the area so they can take what they learn here back in the classroom, we need to have the technology and the space and the ability to do that. We don't have that here. We also don't have ADA into this building, which I think you all see. And to make any of that, would mean some major modifications. Any questions about any of that?

18 - What is at Tuscarora?

23 - What is at Tuscarora? Something similar to this. So Tuscarora is basically an elongated version of this. It has an education center similar to this on the side, the administrative stuff on this side. And then they have a basement, which is partial office, partial storage. And that's-- Go ahead.

18 - No, I was just going to ask - anything at Lucust Lake?

23 - Locust Lake has a contact station.

18 - Which consists of?

23 – A small auxillary office. It's a contact point for visitors coming in the park. There is an indoor space for that.

18 - Roughly the square footage of that?

23 – Of the contact station?

1 - It's less than Poe because it's primarily a campground park at Locust Lake. So it serves the contact functions for that very popular and busy campground.

23 - And then in the absence of that, there's also a camp store there that serves a secondary contact point.

So this is the granddaddy of them all. And, again, no one's proposing this but trying to show the progression of a options at state parks.

1 - Granddaddy of the single story.

23 - The granddaddy of a single story. Everything that we talked about, we're adding on every time. Big change here, and, again, I don't know that anyone's asking for this but just providing information, provisions for education programming for 100 people and an award-winning exhibit and visitor center. Again, no one's pushing for that but just trying to show you that there is progression, small, to massive. So today, we looked at this area where we can see the slug--

33 - I'll never forget the slugs.

23 - Yeah, so we looked at all the bubbles. And, again, it's very important to know-- we never got to the PNDI point of things. We had a preliminary master planning review. That was the November meeting. It was very conceptual. It was to get feedback. We got feedback. That feedback would then go to try and get a permanent location cited if such a building was going to move forward and then start the PNDI process. So you didn't even get to the point where (name, #34) had talked about in some of this because we weren't there in the process yet. So what we're going to do today is you're going to have the opportunity to pick locations. And then I think some follow up may be that we're going to take a look at PNDI hits for those areas.

But we took a look up here because it was in an area that fit the criteria based on the mapping. Just looking at the analytics of things, this area would fit. And we got up on top there. And I think you saw three buildings, three different property owners pretty far in the distance. I can't estimate how far but obviously outside of the park. But we were looking to the Northeast, I would think.

Obviously, we didn't have a roof tape to see how high the roof line would be. But I think it's pretty fair to say we had ourselves knuckled down in the valley enough that we wouldn't be able to see that roof line from Stricklersville Road.

14 – Wait where are we? We're looking at Stricklersville as the purple.

23 - Yeah, right in Stricklersville-- right here is the park boundary. This is hay bales. So right here, we took--

14 - This is a road-- that's like an access road we don't really use.

23 - This is a farm road here. Now, we took this to get to site. This isn't what we would propose as a road if we were going to put a building here. It's just to take a look at where our building could go. I know we're not doing the campground now. But this is where the campground was. That all fit into that slug. We were looking down over that slug.

So we took a look at what the impact was. And then the question also came out, well, could you put this office down here, which would be in the lower end of the slug? And that's a fundamental question for all of you because there's impacts. This has less of an aesthetic impact but more of a resource impact because you have to do a driveway up to that point. Now, again, it's ag fields so that impacts a lot less than other places. But we can also put an office right here if we're going to put an office and lessen the impact.

16 – (name, #23)?

23 - Yes?

16 – Where is. It kind of goes higher up and then down like a valley, and then higher up and then a valley as you're going down to that red dot. So potentially, you can have what you're looking for, which is in between—

23 – Here?

16 - No, no, no closer to come down, come down, come down right there, around there. So would have your-- you would have your building-- you can't see it from the road. But I guess you're looking for-- maybe on the second story of that, you could see that.

23 - Well, I'm not sure what I'm looking for. But, I mean, that's a good point. And, again, what I try to do during the site visit-- I'm sorry you have to hear this again. When that conceptual map came out, it was 2D. You couldn't see elevations or anything. We went up here, and this was low impact as far as aesthetics, correct? Anybody want to argue with me on that? This is low impact as far as aesthetics?

10 – Why are you looking at me?

[LAUGHTER]

23 – No no, sorry.

10 - It was low impact for aesthetics.

23 - Low impact for aesthetics, and I think (name, #12) mentioned-- maybe not the best way right now, but there's five trails that end up right there. So if you were to put a park office or education administrative space, you could have that be your trailhead. Maybe that is it for the park. And maybe that is your only impact. Maybe there is no other restroom. Maybe there's nothing else.

But stuff could be put up here if we felt that it was important. And, obviously, we have to the PNDI search. But without doing that, on paper, this checks a lot of boxes is all I'm saying. I'm not saying that it's foolproof because we have to get to that point. We haven't yet. Conceptual, preliminary, that's where we're looking. Is there a place on this park to site this facility if it's needed?

14 - What I'm not hearing, though, is about utilities. Are there any pipes there, any electricity service to that spot?

23 - good question. We talked about that.

14 - Well, I guess you could say we talked about that because this is the one that's being recorded. This is the one we're getting official input. And I don't think there was any recording of what happened earlier today, is that correct?

16 - No. It wasn't.

23 - Well, I asked the group if I missed something else-- I think I'm hitting on most of the points-- please chime in. I'll repeat them the best I can. This location does not have any utilities. What utilities means for state parks is utilities are all underground. So the overhead lines you see here--

14 - Underground doesn't mean no impact, (name, #23).

23 - No, I agree. It would follow the line of the road. So we want to try and minimize that. Water would be a well because there is no public water or sewer here and sewer because we're only talking about one facility. If we're talking about one facility, it would be a sand mound, on-site treatment.

16 - And we would not be going along that road that you're talking about to get back there.

23 - That's correct.



16 - It would be going elsewhere.

23 - We would do something else. We will not butt up against our neighbor, again, not the right thing to do, plus setback requirements. I don't know how the road would meander in there-- again, that can be figured out. And, again, that road may meander because of the species of concern if there is even anything in there.

So also something that would have to be considered. Also, we're not going to have the road, I would think, from right out here across from our neighbor. That contradicts what I've been saying. We want to try and make things better for the visitor or our neighbor. We don't want the headlights hitting them.

14 - Well, again, I think my concern about the conversation that we're having right now is that this says this is a good place potentially for visitors, where what I'm concerned about goes back to what (name, #9) said earlier because some of us have said in the survey and in other places is that we're saying x marks the spot, but we haven't actually laid out all of the considerations. And building infrastructure is a consideration. Regardless of whether there's infrastructure that's underground, you still got digging.

You've still got soil, soil erosion, and sedimentation concern. We've got disruption to habitat that's there. I know everybody's downgrading the quality of habitat in an agricultural setting. And I don't disagree that from the ecological standpoint there are times when we would definitely prefer that there was native habitat. But agricultural habitat isn't completely without some value.

And so just to say, well, let's just pick it up and just throw some-- that's nothing. It isn't nothing. So I just think that, again, we need to back up the conversation and say, OK-- we talked a little bit about PDNI sites and places where there's sensitivities. This is the flip side of that. This is where, OK, disruption would be here. What would disruption look like, and how do we minimize the negative impacts of disruption? And that's part of the conversation.

23 - Yes. So X doesn't mark the spot. X marks a potential spot. I could put a bunch of circles there. We talked about the circle right here. And there are folks in this room that are concerned about the aesthetics being the top priority. Up here, there's folks in this room that feel that the resource is top priority. Just around this table here, we have conflicting interests on what's more important.

14 - I'm not disagreeing with what you're saying. What I'm trying to say that I don't think the hearing is that the first thing I think we need to do is get everything out on the table, including-- OK, if you build something, here are what the negative impacts could be for that.

And then you take all of those things and the judge them and say, OK, do we want to do this? Do we want to put it-- in recognition of the needs that we think need to be served here, yeah it might be worth it to do some disruption, but let's minimize it. Let's do that. I'm just saying that before we get to the point where we potentially stop, I think we need to actually address and catalog all those good and bad points of development or not development. So that's all.

21 - I just had a small question. So water is on-site, sewer is on-site is the standard now. Is the standard for electricity to be on site? Like with solar panels?

23 - So all of our infrastructure, would we have to do an assessment for solar. Looking at the view south, I think solar is a good candidate. So there's potential that we could be off the grid. Again, having that option, that would be dependent on sites chosen and where that site is. We'll come out and do an assessment if solar is something we would look at. That's a good question.

15 - Does that mean solar just on the roof or solar panels in the field?

23 - It depends. Now, the amount of electric that Big Elk would need, even if three buildings were put on there because it's pretty small-- I'm not an engineer. Those big fields that you see, that's to take an entire park that has multiple facilities down to net zero. I think for—(name, #1), correct me if I'm wrong-- something like this, if we move forward with anything here, it would be a smaller array--

1 – It would be a smaller array. We can do double duty without going into the resource. In recent installations we've been doing solar canopy parking, so over the parking area. And it's been very well received. Plus in the summertime, it's shading the visitor's vehicle.

I'm not an engineer either, but just from recent projects, I think we could avoid siting any on the ground and probably go with over parking, canopy roof.

8 – (name, #1) I have to go back to toilets, because a number of people mentioned porta-potties.

What are the tradeoffs? I think Fair Hill, there's multiple parking lots. I can picture four or five parking lots, with a porta-potty there. I think that's what Delaware does too- the whole small parking lot, with a porta-potty.

We've got a couple different quadrants here and multiple places for people to park. You can't really walk very well from one to the other. But, I mean, is a little porta-potty an option? What are the tradeoffs? It seems like there's some people that don't like what is there. But is that just because it's not shielded, or is there a tradeoff?

23 - Yeah, I mean, it's a couple things. A porta-potty is only as good as the people that are servicing them. And sometimes that can be a problem. If it's our facility, we have the staff - we get in there and we clean it. We do have a number of places where we get to the point where we start to hit capacity, or we have some more of those ancillary lots. We put porta-potties in.

We have a comfort facility at the main trailhead. But other areas will have a porta-potty. Think of a family with little kids. Again, consideration, or an elderly person, consideration. And you can get an ADA pit toilet or a port-a-potty. It's still a port-a-potty. So having that option to have that better service for the family, the

elderly, anybody who needs it, then you could have those Port-a-johns as needed and they could be placed at other places.

I mean, we have a Porta-a-john over at Stricklersville now. Delaware Canal is a good example. Nockamixon State Park is a good example, Marsh Creek too, where we have our main bathroom areas and our base parking lots. And then in the summer, things get too busy so we put Port-a-johns next to it for some of those other outside lots. It's a cost thing too.

16 – (name, #23)?

23 - Yeah?

16 - Before we decide if we want to have a toilet over there at where the port-a-potty is at on Stricklersville, do you know what the demand is for that or the use is for that. Is it used a lot? Because if it's not used a lot, that would impact my decision.

23 - Yeah, I think you would know quickly if it wasn't there how much it would be used.

16 - Well, I guess what I'm saying is you could easily know depending on how many times you have to dump it.

23 - It's a weekly cleaning.

14 - Well, we keep saying stuff like that or keep asking questions like that. I mean, but we also know if you build it, they will come. Right now, it's really pretty low.

16 - And that's what I'm trying to understand.

14 - You go to the place, and we don't see that many people there.

16 - That's what I was trying to understand. Really, what is the demand?

10 - And I think it's worth noting because it came up during the visit today. So to repeat it, it is our proximity to Fair Hill and the differences between the state of Maryland and the state of Pennsylvania. So I know for a fact that lot, if we build it, a lot of the mountain bikers who pay to park at Fair Hill, everybody will start coming to the free lot and start using that, same with horses. That was another conversation that came up today.

And that's where we learned Fair Hill doesn't want us to have horse trailer park because they've got the facilities for that, and they count on that revenue. And if we build it in Pennsylvania, yes, they will come because it's free because the state cannot charge. We learned that today. So I wanted to repeat that.

16 - Thank you. That's really what I'm trying to understand is what is-- again, go back to the same argument. What is the demand? I have not heard any demand for facilities. I've not heard any demand from the community for infrastructure. And so I'm trying to understand, how can we identify what we should be putting where if we don't feel that there's any kind of demand to begin with? I'm really struggling with that.

20 - So what's the annual visitation here, (name, #24), do you know off the top of your head?

16 - That would be helpful, though, I think, because then you have a base level of demand.

1 - The trail infrastructure will be the main recreation feature here. And it is our most prolific recreational activity across the state. And what you have right now are historically mostly equestrian trails; trails that started in Fair Hill and came across. I know that (name, #2) and the Friends Group talked about the trail system and the drivers related to that.

But, again, we know that we have to have a really great trail system in this park, ultimately. And that's going to drive visitation. But that in and of itself, that great trail system that gives you that immersive experience in the resource isn't the high demand or recreational infrastructure that condenses people into one use area of the park. So--

16 - What do you mean by that? But I'm trying to understand--

1 - The day use area that I talked about earlier—where we have a developed waterfront beach, concessionaire opportunities, a big marina opportunity where we're bringing-- and it's based upon engineering and design and parking spaces, how many people were servicing in that--

16 - In that one area, so we're all spread out in the trail system.

1 - You're spread out in the trail system. You could have the sort of administrative building that could have educational facilities associated with it. But we know anecdotally through experience that that's not going to drive. It's not going to be above that passive recreation that we're talking about.

16 - So why don't we just be realistic about it? And maybe if we just do a little Round Robin and see what that interest level is in the folks that are here-- but if you're saying that the main focus is the trail systems, our focus should then be, what do we need to ensure that trail system is maintained and no more? So I guess that's where I'm coming from. If it is being used for that purpose--

1 - That recreational amenity within our core standards of a Pennsylvania State Park.

16 - Right, when you say core standards of a Pennsylvania State Park, I know you mean visitor center and all the space and-- well, of course, I'm not against toilets, but I guess what I'm saying is it goes with

all those other things. And what we're trying to say is this is a place for trails. And this is a place for great trails and for that immersive experience as you--

1 - All of our parks are places for great trails.

16 - I'm not putting any other park down. I'm just talking about this area.

1 - It is the most accessible and prolific piece of recreational infrastructure in our system are our trails, whether it's a water trail or a land trail.

16 - OK, so that would be the limit here, is what I am suggesting. You're still providing your park experience. You're going to have parking. You're going to have a toilet or two. But you don't need all those other pieces of infrastructure to still ensure that this area is used the way it has historically been used, with no one beating down your wall to say you must have more, you must have more. And that's not what I'm hearing. I'm not hearing even base use for this area yet. And that should be-- that should be information you should have.

23 - It's hard to get base use, though. And you probably agree because we have two gravel lots. And we don't have an official developed trail system. We have a township road-- two township roads. We have a series of trails that aren't developed or official necessarily.

The parking and the bathroom go with the trail use. I mean, I think we agree with that. The trail is what sets the tone for everything else. To have a trail, you need to have a parking lot. If you're going to have a parking lot, you're going to have an issue if you don't have a bathroom, in the simplest terms. We can probably argue and discuss and talk about everything else after that.

But it's going to be hard for you to make an argument that if we have trails here that are open to the public that connect Fair Hill, that connect Township Parks, to connect other areas, that we're not going to have a restroom for that most basic service for our visitor.

15 - So why can't we start with 'we're building a trail system here with a parking lot, with the bathroom' and then see what happens?

23 - Perfect.

15 - Wait to build the visitor center or the education center or anything like that.

23 - No, that's a good point. But you don't put a parking lot, and a bathroom in that area if that would be better used for something else in the future. That's part of the master planning, not saying the visitor center and environmental education area goes right in line with that first port-a-john or parking lot or bathroom. But you need to have a plan of where things could go. It's like the trail system.

It would probably be phases. This is the core that we're going to focus on. This is phase two, phase three. Part of master planning, part of why we didn't just go up here and throw things down was to look at the continuum of what could be here, not will be here, but could be here. And if you just look at one piece, this is how you get pigeonholed in the future before planning is because we're not worried about something else until it's time to worry about something else. And then it's too late.

16 - So you might see it as pigeonholing, (name, #23). We see it as that is the plan. And talk about mission creep, or talk about plan creep, that's it. So if the goal is parking lots, bathrooms, trail system, and that's what you get when you come in this part of Chester County, that's it.

[LAUGHTER]

Then that's that. That's the plan. And that's the plan now, and that's the plan 10 years from now. And that's the plan--

10 - That's my master plan.

[LAUGHS]

14 - And the reason that's important-- that's really important. The reason that's important is you've got-- I'm sorry. You've got people in this room who have a boatload of experience as bureaucrats. And we all frickin know what happens when a bureaucrat see a map. This is what's going to go here. This is what's going to go back. It's going to happen.

23 – How many of you have been bureaucrats in State Parks though?

14 - In state parks? It doesn't matter – a bureaucrat is a bureaucrat.

23 - We have a lot of master plans that were from the '70s where things didn't come to fruition because of one reason or the other.

14 - Because these guys wouldn't give you the funding to do it because it was the wrong idea. But what we're saying is when you put the plan together and the plan says, we're going to have A, B, C, and D. Then there's a likelihood that somebody is going to come along and go, but we were supposed to put A, B, C, and D there. Let's do that this year. Let's make sure we put it in the budget.

And what we're saying is we don't want to put A, B, C, and D there because we don't see a need for all those things yet. What we're all talking about is everybody's good with the trails. Everybody's understanding that there has to be a bathroom for the 85th time.

Everybody understands those things. What we're saying is we're not sure that there needs to be a visitor center. Yes, we see areas through the good work that these folks did with PNDI mapping and so forth that there are places where it shouldn't be done. We know that and that can go on the master plan.

16 - Yes, definitely.

14 - OK, but it doesn't have necessarily hold the possibility of doing something else that no one's really saying there's a compelling need to accommodate that. Do you see what I'm saying?

19 - I'd just like to back up and go to one thousand feet. One of the things I feel like I'm hearing a lot of is 'we' and 'we're'-- there's never been a definition of like who 'we' are. There's a lot of—assumptions about, I mean, I've read articles and have read some of your names and I'm like, oh, I've already met you and you.

But I do think there's some assumptions undergirding a lot of the usage of words. And I say this as someone who's done that. I'm not saying I don't have a stake. But I think my positionality is different. I don't think you're-- I haven't been in Chester County a long time.

And I care about all of the issues. And I hear all of the concerns, and I care about them. So this statement is not to minimize any of them. But it's to say there is an unspoken tension between public and private. But private is veiled as our community.

There are people in this room who have been caretaking and utilizing and using and appreciating what was a preserve and then became a state park and then became a conglomerative space. And, again, this is not dismissing that. But the province of a state park is the public.

And Chester County, from what I understand, and watching our time here, is one of the fastest growing counties in the state, projected to grow 25% in the next 20 to 30 years. And as a state park with a responsibility-- it's a public good. It's a common good. And so it's not semi-private. It's not semi-public.

It's in this community, but it's not the province of this community. It's something that, again, I've said before. I mean, I just met (name) a few weeks ago. I'm like, looking at his website. And I'm like, I need my students here. I need them to be able to come here. I would like for there to be, again, space and amenities that they can utilize.

And some of the things that I see here I think have the potentiality of opening up an area that in my understanding, given the relative secluded nature of it-- and again, I haven't lived in Pennsylvania a long time, the Commonwealth a long time, is a lesser known place, which is great. And then also, as people Post-COVID have been utilizing the state parks more.

Growing up in the great state of Oklahoma, I'm envisioning all of the state parks that I've visited and all the trailheads and all the ways that even in my home state—my aunt has been trying to get into Beaver

Bend State Park for Thanksgiving and Christmas forever. We can't seem to do it. I mean, there are ways to protect places when there are campgrounds – I'm not saying there will be campgrounds here, right?

So I'm thinking of ways that-- I mean, and I understand this argument around demand. It's not all about demand, right? And we can't always perceive what that would be. So I think a lot about she's not hearing, why aren't they here? And these are questions we can examine as we consider potentialities of what is becoming a more diverse county in and of itself and what is projected to become a larger and thankfully an uptick in people wanting to utilize spaces like this.

So I think the question before us is how do we, provide honor to caretaking role. The concern that you have for this space, which I don't hear as merely a concern for your backyard only-- but how do we lower barriers to entry, which might mean ramping up some of the facilities if we want to call them facilities or making the space more accessible? And I feel like all of those things can be done. But I think we have to come together around this notion of what's the common good because it's a state park.

16 - You can bring your students there right now.

19 - I know that.

16 - There's nothing that's barring you.

19 - I know that. That's not what I'm saying. No, no, no. But it's an issue.

16 - I understand that.

19 - You talk a lot today. I'm not talking to you.

16 – No I know I do.

19 - And that is not-- I like the things that you're saying, but I want to be heard. I want to say—

16 – You have been heard.

19 - I'm getting to -- But you interrupted me. I mean, I'm listening. And I'm honoring everything you said. I'm not trying to be dramatic right now. I'm trying to be conciliatory. I think these spaces are very important. And coming from a group that historically has felt afraid to step on these hills-- I'm was making a joke the first day I came.

16 - We didn't take it that way.

19 - Well, as a black woman who came up and saw an armed dude outside the door--



16 - Well, we all felt that.

19 - Well, I did too. But my body feels it in a different way than yours does. I'm not dismissing you. I'm not. I'm not trying to dismiss you. I'm just trying to say-- I'm trying to figure out how we get to a point where we can all say we are trying to think about the common good. And I'm also thinking about my students. And I'm also thinking of ways we can work together and get to a point where we can be like-- But I am thinking about what would the common good look like? What would it look like?

16 - All right, (name, #19), what do you plan-- Tell me, I don't think there's a public private situation here. I think that's--

19 – I'm saying that I think some of the language--

16 - I get that, but--

19 - talked about, demand. And it sounds a lot like 'this is space that should be protected from outside use'.

16 - No--

19 - I'm not saying that's how I think but I'm saying that's how it can come across.

16 - OK, you have to understand that we-- I represent Franklin township, so I represent the citizens that live in Franklin Township. That's the role that I play right here, right now. So when I speak, they've given me the honor to speak for them. And I'm sure the other townships-- well, I'm not sure you all feel the same way, but I think you do -- that this land has been protected by a landowner for a very long time and then given to the state and maybe--

9 – No, not given. He made \$32 Million.

16 - Sorry, sorry, sorry. Didn't mean to say that. But regardless, what has been purchased by the state, thinking it was going to be protected, the resources on this property protected, I'm not sure I understand what you need to see in amenities or in infrastructure for you to feel safe.

19 - I think a visitor center with educational space with bathrooms that-- I just used that bathroom - and use the cover for the ladies. And then I was afraid I was getting stuck up. I mean, and I'm not trying to be funny.

These are quite rudimentary. And, again, when we're talking about increasing access to people who had historically-- we make jokes within the Black community about like, 'I don't camp' but they do. Black people don't ski. Ha-ha. Well, one of my sisters skis. I've never been skiing.

But some of it is, how do we get enough of us to-- I could bring maybe 20 of us to this educational space. But if there was a visitor center that could accommodate 100 students, I could bring a couple of classes. And so I'm just using that as an example of sometimes having something that approximates a space that serves as a welcoming clearinghouse.

I got lost on the way here today. So I accidentally took up one of those smaller roads where I think people with less traveled-- I took that part of the road. And, again, I think that-- I mean, I'll bring it back to the fact of GPS. There's like three different ways to get here on GPS. So part of it is I ended up at one of the trailheads instead of here.

And so getting lost in a very white area of Chester County as a Black woman is kind of scary. It is. But if there's a clear visitor center where I can park and visit and know that I am allowed to go to this, a space that is for the public, this feels very secluded.

And it does feel-- again, not to use this as a polarizing thing, but it feels less public. It feels more hidden more, kept away secluded. And so if there was a space that was closer to a major road or something like that that served as the visitor center or a welcoming space, the people could get information and then go out.

Those things make a difference. They've made a difference to me and my sisters, like camping in Oklahoma and going out on our own in Arkansas, finding trails and things like that. It makes a difference to have a place where there's a ranger or a 911 phone to access, those kinds of things count.

16 - So it sounds like the goals around the table are different.

19 - That's why I was asking-- I said, there's a 'we'. And I was asking an honest question. I don't know who the 'we' are. I know the different communities we all come from. And so my question was—an honest one. I don't know what (name, #14) means when she says 'we'. I don't know.

But it could be-- I mean, maybe this is why we're doing the mapping thing to see where we stand? Are there different kinds of groups here? And this is the part where I'm saying, maybe if we can look at the mapping and come to a place where we can say, oh, well, we can split the difference here like the far left field, the red dot. It could be here. And I think we said, well, maybe it could be here instead. It could just not be. Or maybe it could just not be if it's not happening.

1 - Yeah, but we were talking about time considerations and the work to gather input related to the mapping exercises. We might be out of time for tonight. And this has been an important conversation.

23 – (name, #30) and I talked. We think that that gets frontloaded in the next meeting because everybody wanted to hear from (name, #34) and dig out that tonight and maybe her participate in the future.

1 – So here's the question - should we, can we, hand out the maps and trust that you all bring it to the next meeting?

23 - There's not enough for everybody. It's per group.

30 - But, (name, #1), we could share materials by email in advance so that people have a chance to look at them in advance if that makes sense.

10 - I think it would be more constructive to have a little more time.

30 - We could certainly do that. We can figure that out.

1 - Absolutely. I was thinking of talking to (name, #23) about this, the meeting agenda tonight. This is a big topic, so I appreciate everyone's input tonight, thoughts. And we'll transmit the maps electronically in preparation for our next meeting.

5 - A question-- I may have missed this in the earlier meeting, but is there a projected make up of users of this park?

1 - Again, I think we have a sense of the visitor use that we can predict, but that may prove to be anecdotal. And I just sort of fall back on my original core standards projections. And we want to provide welcoming, safe, accessible experiences for everyone. And that's what we're trying to get at through the work that this task force is doing to determine how we can do that for Big Elk Creek.

So I was listening—regarding the three bays for maintenance and a small visitor center that could be the primary visiting point or not. And I think that's what we are. But, again, this is important to hear all of that.

5 - I'm sorry. Can I ask you a question?

But I think you raised some really, really good points (speaking to #19). But as I've shared with (name, #4) and (name, #3) when we first talked about this-- and also being a resident in the area, I mean, having moved here from Center City, Philadelphia eight years ago and now being a resident of Cochranville, I think it's extremely important. And I share this with our game commission board, particularly regarding our dealings across the state. It's critical to understand and prioritize the residents that are in the immediate area or where people are coming and going into this park.

You mentioned Beltsville, you mentioned Marsh Creek, I think a lot of us know a lot of those parks are heavily used because of it's heavy access in terms of highways and roads to get there, that has to be taken into consideration. I'm glad (name, #10) mentioned about the Fair Hill element. I think that's something that has to be taken in strong consideration.

These parks are bordering. And Maryland has a different structure. And so whatever we put in place is going to be a draw. I mean, this is a public park. It's not public to just Pennsylvania residents. It's public to whoever can get here. And so what we've all seen also coming through COVID and the overuse, I mean, we've wanted more. It's almost like be careful what you wish for.

We've wanted more people to be in our public spaces. But I think we all realize we have to manage that, and I think we're at the doorstep now that we weren't with a lot of parks many years ago. So what we're planning for five years and circumstances that could change, that could increase use. I don't think we're going to see a lot of decreased use outside of access issues and be affected by other events and so forth.

But I just want to reiterate that I think it's important that we be mindful of the fact that this park is amongst residential and agricultural. Whatever we plan, I think, has to take that into consideration. The welcoming I totally understand. As a person of color, I've been dealing with this my entire life. And I mentioned this to the Secretary when I first started talking about this. The unwelcome element, I think we're all cognizant of that. I think we just need to understand where this situated with other factors.

23 – (name, #18), I think you're next.

18 - I think you covered it in maybe earlier meetings. But just to refresh my memory, (name, #1), the mandate to have the education center-- the infrastructure at each state park location. That comes from where again?

1 – I say the word mandate often, and that's in association with Act 18. The mission of Pennsylvania State Parks. In that mission statement is environment education. But, again, how we provide that to each state park is different. And there's a spectrum, a continuum if you will, of environmental education, interpretation services in each of those parks.

18 – But it's Act 18 that you're saying...

1 - It is our statutory authority, which includes improving our state park lands as well.

11 - I just wanted to say thank you to (name, #19) because I realize that you are representing; you have a heavy weight in representing people who aren't able and thank you for doing that because it takes quite a lot of bravery to say that when you feel like you're not being heard. There's other people who are not in the room. There's no tribal lands in the room, which I do find disappointing. And I think that is an assumed 'we' amongst all of us that we're on the same page about everything. And I think you bring up a good point in that we're all getting the individual experience, knowledge, and life experiences. And we need to make sure we listen to each other as well beyond the communities we live in. So I just wanted to say thank you for offering that.

16 – What do you teach, (name, #19)?

19 - Political science. I like to say this would be a great study, like seriously-- and I think some of us agree for different reasons about certain things.

1 - Your question?

2 - I know we had lots of discussion about facilities, but I would be remiss if I didn't put information out here in front of you regarding the volunteers. Jason described what some of the needs and reasons were behind that poor maintenance building. And if I don't say something about my volunteers for the Friends Group here, I'd feel bad about that because we have quite a team here in the preserve. And we also do some work over at Big Elk already. But the volunteer staff that we have here (name, #24) and (name, #29) can attest - they make this preserve.

We have a lot of equipment, a lot of handheld, a lot of power equipment. And we talked about trailers and wooden bridges and things like that. There's a lot of maintenance that goes into that that's done by volunteers. And sometimes you walk down these trails, and you look around about how beautiful the place is, but you're not getting eaten up by the thorns and all of that cutting you up. And that's because the volunteers keep the trails clean, cut back. So I'm not trying to convince you one way or another about the maintenance building. I just want to put that out there because it does serve a purpose other than just the DCNR big equipment needs and whatnot.

14 - Could you work on a trail over there because I've been trying--

2 - Yeah, we'll go out tomorrow.

[LAUGHTER]

15 - I mean, it's less of an issue if it fits with the aesthetics of the area.

There used to be a barn on that property. Where the parking lot is used to be a farmhouse and a barn. Nobody can argue if a farmhouse and a barn went right back where their farm was and then use that as toilets behind the barn. Well, some people would argue, yes.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

15 - See, that's what was there. That was what you looked at. You pulled in, or you drove by, and there was a farmhouse and a barn.

15 - Right. So it was there until what, maybe a decade ago when they tore down? Wasn't that long ago. So a farmhouse and a barn, why are we worried about putting a huge visitor center up, or a visitor center at all, in an area where there's never been anything? Why don't we focus on where there were things and where we can compromise?

So if the farm is right there and people are used to-- I mean, I've lived here for 38 years. I was always used to seeing it. When it was gone, it was jarring. All of a sudden, holy cow, where's the farmhouse, guys? Right. I don't think anybody or very few people would argue the point if a farmhouse and a barn-- that gives you your maintenance shed. That gives you your visitor center and an education center.

It gives you your bathrooms. It's all in one unit, and it's in one small area close to the road where things have already been.

16 - We just have to do a PNDI.

18 - And I would add that I think people would be more amenable to putting something where something was already, provided that we get some kind of guarantee that that's the extent of development on the land, and that it's protected in the future.

AUDIENCE: Yes.

1 - So you're only talking location, but there's certain design stuff that--

15 – You can make it brown, yellow color--

23 - I mean, so one of the first things I said-- match the aesthetic of the park--

15 – Exactly.

23 - the theme of the park. We have other buildings that don't look the brown and yellow. Mt. Pisgah is a farm-oriented agricultural state park. Buildings take on that personality. So maybe that was bad for me to show our typical state park buildings. But we have other facilities.

The office for this complex at Ridley Creek is a mansion. We didn't knock the building down to put in a park office. It was an adaptive reuse of a building that had the capacity to use that. So we should bring it up. This is some great stuff that nobody brought to the table during the stakeholder meetings or anything else that would have been good. And certainly it's good moving forward, that that's the possibility. But I do think that maybe some people would not agree with the location. And that's the problem. That's the story, right?

15 - And you're right. I do. But I'm saying, I think people would be more amenable--

23 - Sure.

15 - if the space has previously been built on. OK, that land has previously had house and barn on it, versus going into a field that has traditionally been agriculture, where nothing has existed for 100 years

that we're used to being very wide open space with no building, no water, no infrastructure of any kind. When you can house all of that in an area that's already traditionally had-- Like I said up until maybe 10 years ago that was there 100 years, maybe more. There's a farmhouse and a barn. I mean, your maintenance shed could be a barn. It's just a nicer barn than the one that's from the 1800s that's kind of falling down.

1 - This is great input related to the exercise that we're hoping to gather --

15 - And that site was literally right behind the existing parking lot. And the sign on Stricklersville. The house was right there.

16 - I thought it was right here.

15 - It pretty much is like right at the edge of that-- right in that area is the barn and the farm.

16 -- And you wouldn't have to go down 200 yards.

15 -- No

16 - You just put the facility right behind.

1 - And, the most - we talked about this earlier today. The neighbors that are directly across the street and the challenges and problems that they have with even looking at an outhouse. But, you're--

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

15 - It might make it easier for them to be amenable to something that they have already looked at.

16 - Maybe you shift it down just a little bit.

15 - Or shift it out, whatever. But it's not something that they haven't looked at before. It's not like their house has only been built in the past 10 years. They've been there for a while. They know the house was there.

14 - The reason that we're talking about being able to accommodate the needs, I think, to accommodate the needs that you guys have expressed in terms of needing some type of facilities to host equipment and people.

What we're talking about is a way that we think would address the concerns and present other possibilities. And maybe it's a nice way to meet most everyone's needs, which I don't know— (to name, #19) does that sounds like something from your perspective that would be acceptable to, it would be close to the road. I mean, I'm sure that's --

19 - To me, this is it. You're the local holders of the community knowledge and the memory. This is your life-- your life and your land is your memories of place. So for you to say I think this is a spot where I could consider, I think that's what I was hoping.

When I say, how can we think about the collective, where you all feel like your community is not being overwhelmed, which is not what I hear them saying, but where people feel like there's a bunch of stuff that I can come-- and the people who live here want to welcome us. I know that's great.

But, yeah, I mean, to me it sounds like-- and I don't know, again, I'm like the newest person, but I hear a real good intent behind everyone, including the ecological, conservation focused ones and also the real needs of a local community. That feels like something was important.

But yes. And I feel that in my heart. I do. So as an outsider, it feels like something just happened.

23 - So since this is still my session--

[LAUGHTER]

1 - I just want to acknowledge that something happened here. I think I heard something, and I want to make sure I heard it correctly, you want something familiar, something that feels like it's a part of the landscape--

15 - It feels like home.

16 - But we also have to make sure that it doesn't creep.

15 - Right, that's a definite.

23 - And a PNDI.

16 - And a PNDI. That's a given.

15 - And honestly it doesn't have to be right there. You can tuck it behind the trees so it's not affecting people when they're pulling in. And you're not affecting the neighbors if it's tucked behind the trees a little bit there. It keeps it out of the way. You're not shining headlights into someone's home that way.

We need to do it and orient it so that it fits into the landscape and still lets us feel like it's home.

16 - But when I say not creep, I mean, the mission of those added buildings is ultimately going to be for what purpose?

15 - So I still need to clearly define that is the extent of it, yes.



16 - At the same point, what is it? That's all.

4 - Well, I just think we need to focus first on the master plan. I feel like we keep getting ahead of like, 'what's going to happen here, what's going to happen here?' And I understand there's a lack of trust. And (name, #16) said something-- and I think that's where a lot of the frustration is coming from, at least for myself, that DCNR put the cart before the horse here.

And we're going to build things and then put together the programs. And (name, #1) saying we want to create a master plan, this that, but we don't trust that if there's going to be creep down the road. 'But I think we just really-- what we can do today is focus on our first master plan that we're all working.

16 - To agree on a goal would be beneficial. I agree.

4 - We can't control what's going to happen. I'm sure you're going to be-- and everyone is going to be very vigilant on it. But I can't control what's going to happen 5, 10 years down the road today.

14 - Well, I suggested that the plan doesn't have to be just a flat plan—it can also say that the intent is, probably 10 years, not to creep.

16 - I've seen some things happen where they just literally wait, wait, wait. And then when the time is right, they throw it out. And you pass it all along. We're doing it, and it was detrimental. And so that's what I'm trying not to see that.

1 - So my first experience is personal experience in master planning specifically-- and an excellent example is the first park that I served, which was Nescopeck State Park. And I was an assistant manager at the time. And we were developing an environmental education center because there was pressure on the national resource. And there was a master plan. And the core elements that were necessary went in. But the things that were also in that master plan that were called out, ultimately did not come to fruition.

I guess that's my attempt to alleviate concerns about the creep. We have finite budgets. We do our best to bring the best of the amenities and services to the state park visitors in partnership with our friends groups because we can't do it alone.

We need them to help us out and ultimately build us up. But in my experience with master plans for state parks, we run out of money. We run out of steam. And then we have to pull back from the initial promises and hopefully achieve the core things that we can provide that service.

16 - You have to agree on the goal. You have to agree on the ultimate goal of this area before anything can be written in the master plan.

18 - What's the master plan for White Clay Creek?

1 - That's all wrapped up in the story and the history and the original Dupont transfers.

18 - You do or do not?

1 - I do, yeah--

18 - Or can it be--

12 – That thing is like 20 years old. And it's never been touched.

[LAUGHTER]

4 - We talked about that when we started revamping that.

1 - Yes, the National Park Service grant that the Friends Group solicited, they bring you in and start with the establishment of the foundation document, which we have.

18 - I'm thinking that master plan might be a good one to mimic. The condition should be pretty similar.

12 - What we're doing here, this exercise in its entirety, is introduce questions about what's important to us, what's our value system as long as we summarize some of the conversation. And I thought that was very productive, not because we agreed but because we did not. And we started to work through that. So thank you for letting it run, that's what we needed to do.

So I do not think we copy White Clay, I think we developed our own. I think that it's ours. The community and the agencies involved, I think that would be much more valuable. And it's one that we can defend, and it's one that we can turn into 100 year plan.

16 – What did you want to say (name, #11).

11 - I wanted to acknowledge that (name, #21) has been sitting here with her hand up for like 15 minutes.

[LAUGHTER]

21 - I don't want to bring a doom and gloom future perspective into this, but arguably climate change is going to do more to this environment than anything else that a building would do.

18 - Where'd you gather to support that claim?

21 - I don't want to get into the realities of climate change right now. But being the reality that we're living-- in the next 10 years, we are arguably the leading source of that climate change.

18 – And you think what is causing this climate change?

21 - Fossil fuel emissions? I don't want to get into a philosophical debate about climate change right now, but just the realities of the future are changing. The environment is changing very drastically. There are a lot of more things that I think should be of concern for protecting the entire state park rather than-- every consideration should be going into how we build there. But the whole of the environment actually is going to impact all the resources there more than two buildings.

15 - Yeah, but I'm not arguing that--

21 - I know.

15 - I'm just saying, those two buildings may not impact the environment as much as climate change, but they are impacting not just the environment but the aesthetics—

16 - and use.

15 - --and use. And history of that park and the people that live around it. So you have to take all of that into consideration. You can't just tunnel vision. It's not affecting the environment because--

21 - I know. But I don't think this is... There's evidently a very long thought process that's going into every decision that is made-- And I think we're getting pretty bogged down right now. I agree. It's a good thing that we've had conversations in that points are being made and people are expressing opinions. It just seems a little bit like we're getting very bogged down in a disturbing future.

14 - But are you saying that-- Are you saying that-- are you thinking that the plan needs to be considering what impact climate change will have and what the park might look like in maybe 10 years because of those things?

21 - No, not necessarily, but I'm just saying we're putting a lot of weight on these things. Obviously, they are very weighty. But there's a lot of things out of our control that are also going to impact the beautiful space and the community and everything.

15 - I think we need some thoughtful consideration. It can't just be DCNR did all this work and we're just going to sign on the x and done. We need the discourse. We need the discussion. We need the community input because ultimately, your state park isn't just serving the entire state of Pennsylvania. It is, but it's also serving the community that it lives in. And you have to be a good steward of the land and a good neighbor.

And if these things aren't taken into consideration, you're not being a good neighbor. And that's a problem because you don't want constant animosity. I don't want people pounding on my door, calling my phone at

all hours of the day and emailing me constantly for the next 50 years because the crap that is happening in the park.

And that's what's happening right now because there's not enough transparency. And there's not enough goodwill built with the community of DCNR being a good neighbor to stop that. So we need to focus on that stuff as well when we go forward with plans for buildings and things of that nature.

21 - Absolutely.

16 - But I understand, and really, honestly, in the future when the climate is worse, we're going to want to be where it's cooler, we're going to want to be near the streams and in the forest. So I really don't think the plan-- I don't know how you want to adapt the plan to that.

21 - I don't want to minimize that the state park is very important. The space is important. But in the long-term scale of things, some of these decisions aren't going to necessarily have as big of an impact.

16 - OK. We'll agree to disagree--

21 - Just in the scale of the mission creep, as you were saying, in the 100-year scale, none of us are going to be around 100 years.

16 - It'll be 10, the creep will--

21 - In the timeline that it's taken us to what? Plant a couple of trees. It's been --

15 - A couple? It was 74,000. Let's be honest. That's not a couple. That's an awful lot of trees.

13 - That's good.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

1 - I'll just wrap up with the climate comments too because I just want to address some of your concerns. DCNR as the stewards of our public natural resources, we were one of the first agencies to advance this. We have an adaptation mitigation policy that gives us a plan.

And whatever we're doing in our parks, whether it's our natural resource work or we're making improvements to the amenities, the trail system or bridges, all of those things are taking climate into consideration it has to be, or we're not doing our job. We don't want to build bridges that are only going to get blown out because they don't have enough capacity. All of these things are part and parcel of what we need to do as we're advancing this work for Big Elk Creek.

23 - ...So...

[LAUGHTER]

16 - You still here, (name, #23)?

[LAUGHTER]

23 - So I want to leave on a positive note. I think we've got pretty close to that here at the end. And what I think maybe, Todd, we can do for the next meeting is to take a look at, moving forward, the plan for tonight to do the exercise. But I think part of that could be facilitating some goals in addition to the mapping. I think that's what I'm hearing because I know not everybody's going to be on board with the new idea, which is another idea.

But we're starting to have at least, a larger number of people agree on those core values that we talked about that we should have. But I think we can build on that in the next meeting. But I don't think you go any further tonight because it is time for our first break finally.

And it's very well after our 9:00 end time. And you've already spent a lot of time today, and that's asking a lot of you.

1 - I just want to thank you for this conversation. Certainly heard some things that were surprising; things that we needed to hear. That will launch us into next exercise at our next meeting.

15 - Yeah, the more transparency, the happier people are going to be.

11 – Do you think you can get us the maps before the next meeting?

23 - I think what we can do is-- go ahead

30 - I was going to say let's try to talk and figure out a way to share them. I mean, I think in some ways they shouldn't be shared beyond this group.

10 - We can respect that.

16 – Yeah, you can expect that.

30 - Is that reasonable?

23 - I mean, I think that would be fair. Let's figure out how to get this out. But we ask that you keep it internal. But there is the information for our next meeting and our deadlines for our next one. Meeting #4 topic is accessibility. That's going to change, obviously. But the dates and times have not changed.

16 - Can I just ask one thing when you hand the maps out? I would like (name, #34) to stay 'yup, we checked the PNDI on this' because we're not allowed to see where the PNDI areas are. No offense, (name, #1), but I want to know that she gave her stamp of approval.

30 - I was going to say this earlier. I don't know if we can even do that because we don't have a project. Every point on the project has to be identified.

CASEY TRINKAUS: Until that happens I don't--

23 - That's what I was saying - we never even got to that step. That was the whole point of the preliminary master plan to take a look at areas for us to do the deeper dive.

16 - Once we do that, then we can go back.

14 - It seems as though the process is that there's a project. And then the project is processed.

16 - Yes.

23 - Correct.

14 - And you can't do that until you have a project. And then you start the PDNI process. Right?

23 - It's too early in the preliminary planning. We're way too early.

[Interposing voices] [LAUGHTER]

2 - Thank you all for coming tonight. Thank you for taking the time to answer the survey questions that (name, #25) sent out. And look for another email on the weekend field visits that (name, #25) will be sending.