

JOHN A. LAWRENCE
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
13TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

HARRISBURG OFFICE
P.O. BOX 202013
HARRISBURG, PA 17120
(717) 260-6117

JENNERVILLE OFFICE
1 COMMERCE BLVD., SUITE 200
WEST GROVE, PA 19390
(610) 869-1602

Secretary Cindy Dunn
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17105

John Hallas
Director of Pennsylvania State Parks
Rachel Carson State Office Building
400 Market Street
Harrisburg, PA 17105

January 16, 2024

Dear Secretary Dunn and Director Hallas –

Thank you for attending the January 10, 2024 Town Hall meeting organized by Franklin and Elk Townships at Avon Grove Charter School in Kemblesville. An estimated 600 people attended this meeting, with nearly every speaker sharing serious concerns about DCNR's proposals for Big Elk Creek State Park.

DCNR committed to at least three initiatives at the Town Hall:

- Suspend the current Big Elk Creek project timeline to gather additional feedback and address concerns.
- Establish an advisory group with membership from the local community.
- Partner with the advisory group to develop a new plan, a new project timeline, and a new planning process for the conservation and management of Big Elk Creek State Park.

A week after these commitments were announced at the Town Hall meeting, I have heard nothing from DCNR about actually implementing them. This is very discouraging, and calls into question DCNR's commitment to listen to community stakeholders. My office has received a number of inquiries from highly qualified individuals who are looking to serve on the advisory group. So far, I have had to tell them – I've heard nothing from DCNR.

Separately, earlier today I sent Governor Shapiro a letter asking him to take immediate action to redesignate Big Elk Creek State Park as part of the White Clay Creek Preserve. As was repeatedly stated at the Town Hall meeting, everyone involved in the acquisition of the Strawbridge parcels (including DCNR) was working towards the expansion of the White Clay Creek Preserve, and connecting the Preserve with Fair Hill Natural Resources Area in Maryland.

As I am sure you could see at the Town Hall meeting, this is an issue that has broad support in the community. The energized stakeholders are not going away. As I mentioned in my letter to you dated November 7, 2023 – a great deal of controversy, angst, and turmoil can be avoided if DCNR simply announces that they have heard the will of the community, and will revert to maintaining the Strawbridge parcels as a Preserve.

I look forward to your response on these critical issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John Lawrence'.

John Lawrence
State Representative
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania