

**REDESIGNATING BIG ELK CREEK STATE PARK AS BIG ELK CREEK PRESERVE
AND
MANAGING BIG ELK CREEK AS A PRESERVE IN COORDINATION WITH WCCP**

Summary: Redesignating and managing Big Elk Creek as a preserve honors DCNR's longstanding commitments to the community and other stakeholders, and provides clear direction and assurance for Big Elk Creek both now and in the future.

DCNR's ORIGINAL POSITION ON BIG ELK CREEK WAS CLEARLY COMMUNICATED AND UNIVERSALLY UNDERSTOOD

- DCNR's sole entry to the Pennsylvania Bulletin on this property (January 19, 2019) states that the property "will provide passive recreation such as hiking, hunting, and wildlife watching...no recreational facilities are proposed to be developed at this time."
- These sentiments were affirmed in press reports and public statements by various DCNR officials prior to and immediately after acquisition of the Big Elk properties.
- These sentiments were affirmed publicly and privately to elected officials prior to and immediately after the acquisition of the Big Elk properties.
- These sentiments were affirmed to various stakeholders involved in the acquisition of the property, including the prior landowner.
- These sentiments were affirmed to the federal government.
- These sentiments were in keeping with the traditional management of the adjacent White Clay Creek Preserve.

DCNR's REVISED PLANS FOR BIG ELK CREEK STATE PARK REFLECT NEW STATEWIDE DCNR PRIORITIES, NOT SITE-SPECIFIC COMMITMENTS

- DCNR is dealing with serious capacity issues for activities and services offered at certain state parks around the state, with some parks reaching maximum capacity and lacking personnel to deal with existing facilities.
- DCNR has publicly stated in multiple recent public forums that they are looking to expand capacity for the types of activities proposed in the Master Plan for Susquehanna Riverlands and Big Elk Creek.
- DCNR (at the behest of Governor Wolf) removed Big Elk Creek from the White Clay Creek Preserve and unilaterally redesignated the property as a state park, paving the way for revised alternate and additional uses at the property.

DCNR'S PROPOSED ALTERNATE AND ADDITIONAL USES FOR BIG ELK CREEK ARE NOT IN KEEPING WITH DCNR'S PUBLICLY STATED COMMITMENTS PRIOR TO AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER ACQUISITION OF THE PROPERTY.

- DCNR proposed significant development of Big Elk Creek is outside the scope of that contemplated in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and the prior public statements of DCNR.
- The recently proposed Master Plan released for Susquehanna Riverlands contains similarities and in some cases identical proposals to those presented by DCNR in November 2023 for Big Elk. (Great gathering, etc.) This indicates DCNR changed their view of Big Elk Creek away from the site-specific prior commitment outlined in the Pennsylvania Bulletin and towards that of the cookie-cutter approach seen in other state parks.
- These alternate and additional uses (RV hookups, rental cabins, visitor's center) are not inherently incompatible with a state park. However, they are inherently incompatible with this state park/preserve in keeping with the commitments made prior and subsequent to the acquisition of the property.

REDESIGNATION OF BIG ELK CREEK STATE PARK AS BIG ELK CREEK STATE PRESERVE

- DCNR has long recognized White Clay Creek Preserve as a unique asset, recognizing the status as a 'preserve' is separate and distinct from other state park assets.
- Redesignating Big Elk as a preserve proclaims Big Elk Creek is not open to the full gamut of possibilities associated with a state park, but instead should be managed in keeping with the practices of White Clay Creek Preserve.
- Redesignating Big Elk as a preserve will reassure the general public that DCNR is committed to managing the property as originally outlined both to the community and in the sole Pennsylvania Bulletin entry for this property.

MANAGING BIG ELK CREEK AS A PRESERVE IN COORDINATION WITH WHITE CLAY CREEK PRESERVE

- A coordinated plan for WCCP and what is now BECSP was initially instituted by DCNR when both properties were part of the White Clay Creek Preserve.
- White Clay Creek Preserve is less than 5 miles from Big Elk Creek.
- DCNR currently manages both properties from the facilities maintained at WCCP.
- Duplicative facilities and services are a waste of DCNR resources and taxpayer money.
- Coordinated management of both properties in keeping with the traditional management of WCCP is in keeping with commitments made by DCNR and public expectations before and after the acquisition of the property