

January 24, 2008

The Honorable Babette Josephs, Chair
House State Government Committee
300 Main Capitol Building
P.O. Box 202181
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2182

Dear Representative Josephs,

This letter is written by a group of conservation, environmental and sportsmen's organizations that are deeply concerned about the future of some 1800 acres of state-owned lands located in Benner Township, Centre County and presently managed by the State Correctional Institution at Rockview. The area includes the Spring Creek Canyon, several miles of Spring Creek itself and the adjacent highlands. These lands have been identified in several studies, most recently in the state-funded "Spring Creek Valley Ecological Survey" prepared by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy, as environmentally unique and worthy of protection and preservation in perpetuity. The citizens of Pennsylvania are fortunate to own this large and ecologically important area that lies between the rapidly urbanizing State College and Bellefonte areas and that must be preserved for the benefit of future generations.

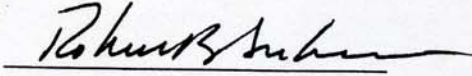
House Bill 1657, introduced by Representative Michael Hanna, would authorize the transfer of ownership of these lands to the Pennsylvania State University, Benner Township and the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. This bill is currently being considered by your Committee, and we understand that Rep. Hanna is advocating an early House vote. Each of the undersigned organizations is firmly opposed to this bill at this time, and we strongly urge you not to advance it.

We jointly believe that before any change in ownership of these lands is considered, a Master Plan for their future use, protection and management must be developed. The primary objectives of the Plan should be to protect and enhance the integrity of the ecosystem and to sustain the biodiversity of the Canyon. This requires large and contiguous areas of undeveloped land. Thus, an important focus of the Plan should be to prevent further loss of high quality habitat and to restore those areas that have been severely degraded. And, as the land is owned by all the citizens of Pennsylvania, the planning process must provide ample opportunity for public participation including input from professional biologists, conservationists and planners as well as the general public.

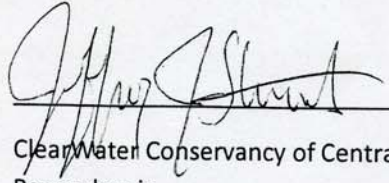
Only after this Plan has been developed and has achieved a substantial degree of public support, should future ownership of these lands be considered.

We appreciate your consideration of this request. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Bob Donaldson, Chair, Spring Creek Watershed Community Coordinating Committee at (814) 861-4293 or via email at rbdonald@comcast.net.


Sincerely,



Centre County Farmland Trust



Clear Water Conservancy of Central Pennsylvania



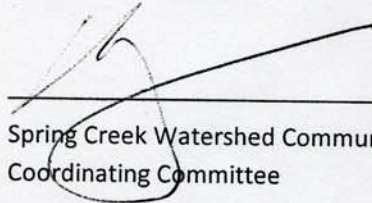
Pennsylvania Native Plant Society



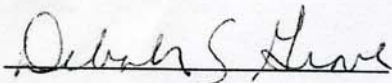
Spring Creek Chapter Trout Unlimited



Spring Creek Watershed Commission



Spring Creek Watershed Community Coordinating Committee



State College Bird Club