

Conserving natural resources since 1980
ClearWater Conservancy

*Everyone Working Together to Conserve Natural Beauty
and the Environment in the Heart of Pennsylvania*

February 16, 2007

ClearWater Conservancy's mission is to promote conservation and restoration of natural resources in central Pennsylvania. Consistent with this mission, we believe that transferring ownership of 1,200 acres of public property, located north of I-99 and currently managed by the State Correction Institute at Rockview, should not proceed until a master plan and corresponding management plan are created.

A planning process has been initiated for this important property with the *Spring Creek Valley Ecological Assessment* completed by the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy in January 2007. This assessment should now be followed by a master plan that includes the development of sustainable goals and objectives and specifies appropriate long-term future land use for the public lands that are to be transferred. This plan should be based on the findings and recommendations of the *Spring Creek Rivers Conservation Plan*, *Centre County Natural Heritage Inventory*, and the *Spring Creek Valley Ecological Assessment*, each of which were either entirely or partially funded by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

Once the master plan is completed, a corresponding management plan must be developed. The management plan will identify the necessary management and restoration techniques to actively protect the unique natural resources within and surrounding the Spring Creek Canyon. Equally important, the management plan must also identify potential future landowners that have the technical expertise and resources to protect the fragile habitats and rare species that are located on this property, the ability to manage public property, and the financial resources to fulfill this obligation. Only with these plans in place should legislation be enacted to transfer the Rockview property north of I-99.

ClearWater Conservancy believes management considerations must extend past the canyon walls in order for the Commonwealth and the community to protect the unique natural resources of the Spring Creek Canyon. We do not currently advocate any particular ownership of this property. However, we are firm in our belief that future landowners must have the technical and financial resources to manage the unique natural resources within and surrounding the Spring Creek Canyon as will be specified in the forthcoming management plan. Future owners of this property must respect the community's desire that these valuable natural resources will be protected for future generations.

The 1994 Spring Creek Corridor Study (the first phase of the Spring Creek Rivers Conservation Plan) calls for "the establishment of the Spring Creek Nature Reserve to protect the large contiguous areas of mature native forests, rare and endangered species and natural communities, dramatic 200-foot high limestone cliffs, historic resources, exceptional trout habitat, wonderful recreational opportunities, and the most beautiful scenic vistas of the twisting, forested canyon in all of Centre County". This is a conservation legacy that is worthy of our community and that we must support.

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