



**Newport Township OHV Recreational Park Feasibility Study
Public Meeting #2
When: Wednesday, August 4, 2020, from 5:00-7:30PM
Location: Luzerne Co. Community College – Nanticoke, PA
Follow Up Answers to Questions Presented (Q&A)**

The following questions and comments were submitted after the second public meeting for the Newport Township OHV Feasibility Study on paper form provided to attendees. For clarity, these questions have been arranged into categories, with responses immediately following. This study is a general look at the 11,400 acres that make up the overall project study area in order to understand the landscape, opportunities, challenges, and concerns. Nothing is set in stone at this time. Responses are provided based on our knowledge as planning professionals and our personal experience as OHV enthusiasts. Answers may be adjusted as the study progresses and additional information/feedback is gathered from research and stakeholders.

CONCERNS REGARDING TRESPASSING

Question: Identify methods to preclude riders from trespassing on adjacent property.

Response: Based upon the examples set by similar projects, the success of a potential adventure recreation area depends heavily upon the behavior of guests. The majority of users (hikers, rock climbers, mountain bicyclists, ATV riders, etc.) are hard-working, tax-paying, law-abiding citizens who too often have no feasible means of enjoying their preferred mode of outdoor recreation. They will follow rules and respect private lands in the interest of preserving the privilege of access to a local, well-organized, legal, and family-friendly trail system where their equipment is secure and they can enjoy time being active outdoors. Furthermore, creating a designated recreation/riding/activity creates a structured environment with rules, patrols, surveillance, and prosecution of those who disregard expectations. To this end, numerous measures to deter intentional OR unintentional trespassing can be applied. These may include:

- Highly-visible, well-established access points with clear signage, also indicating registration requirements;
- User control system (e.g., identifiable armband, sticker, pass, or membership brand);
- Barricades (e.g., fences, telephone pole barriers, gates, boulder rows)
- Trail routing away from the park perimeter;
- Signage (especially indicating boundaries such as private property/prohibited areas);
- Surveillance video cameras and/or security lighting;
- Reward system for reporting illicit behavior, illegal dumping, littering, vandalism, etc.;
- Patrols by staff rangers and/or random patrol by local police.

Unfortunately, none of these measures are guaranteed to prevent trespassing by individuals who deliberately seek to do harm, damage, or engage in other illicit activities. However, they do provide ways to identify and prosecute the few users ("2%'ers") who fail to follow established boundaries/rules.

POTENTIAL ADVENTURE PARK PLANS

Questions/Comments:

- Universal pass for people who abut this park? I wouldn't like to trailer my quad [to an access lot]. I want to access from my property.
- Will residents receive a discount and/or other incentives for access to the park?
- Generations of local citizens have enjoyed hunting, camping, trail use (including hiking, mountain biking, trail running and ATV riding for free). What will the local community expect going forward and will access be denied once a developer buys the land? What activities will continue to be permitted on this land?

Response: Currently, anyone that is walking, riding, hiking, rock climbing, hunting, etc. where these activities are not authorized is trespassing. Yet this longstanding activity in the study area signals a real need for recreation here. This is among the reasons EC and other landowners believe a designated, well-managed, and patrolled recreational area would be a community and regional asset. It would establish boundaries and attend to liability concerns. It would also place responsibility for continued use of the property on visitors' own behavior. If the rules are ignored, the privilege of recreating in the area may be lost.

The fee structure for an adventure area will depend on whoever owns and/or develops the recreational area, and any associated organization. In truth, it is possible that if the property were sold to a private entity, public use could be prohibited permanently. Regardless, based on preliminary data from the feasibility study, reasonable fees for users (e.g., day pass, insurance) are generally supported. Fees that respondents found acceptable are in line with those at other facilities (e.g., paintball fields, skate parks, motocross). Additionally, park management could consider the following options in regard to discounts:

- Reduced fee for local users (of all types) based on residency (e.g., Luzerne County or a defined NEPA region). Immediately local residents (e.g., Glen Lyon, Nanticoke, Mocanaqua) may receive a further discounted rate;
- Consideration of local club memberships, with reduced rates in exchange for park/event assistance (e.g., organizations that do trail cleanups or volunteer at events);
- Consideration of trail/event work by individuals, which may be performed in exchange for a reduction of fees (i.e., "comp time");
- Local businesses could sponsor special rates for patrons to help offset fees. This could be especially effective for dealerships, repair shops, gas stations, etc.;
- Depending on the park's organizational structure, donations are another possibility, used to support local, youth, or new riders.
- On the flip side, users from outside the area would be expected to pay a higher rate.

Additional factors that might affect the user rate could include the type of activity an individual will participate in (e.g., driver vs. passenger; riding vs. climbing or mountain biking). Use of park amenities would need to be considered. Services like parking, flush toilets, signage, security, and garbage disposal all require funding. If these are used by all recreationists at the park, a nominal user fee would make sense.

Similarly, access to the park from residences would need to be evaluated not only by the park management, but also the municipality. The desire for easy access is understandable. However, for every individual who wants to enter the facility from his/her property, there likely

would be a neighbor who does not want OHV riding nearby.

A final note: One must remember that a significant portion of the study area is owned by PA DCNR. Use of state forest lands by the public for outdoor recreation is encouraged by PA DCNR, except where conservation/management regulations are in place or conflicting land uses occur. Activities (e.g., hiking) located solely within the state forest (e.g., Mocanaqua Loop Trail) likely would not fall under the park fee-structure.

Questions:

- Have any entities expressed an interest in operating the proposed facility?
- When will an actual owner/operator of the proposed site be identified?

Response: As noted during the meeting, EC has received numerous inquiries about the project. Leasing portions of property has been of particular interest for outdoor recreation events (e.g., paintball, trails races). What happens will depend partly on the results of the feasibility study, as it will document zoning and insurance requirements, and describe the pros and cons of potential ownership models and management/ maintenance protocols. At this time, no entity has been identified.

Question: What percentage would you ascribe to this proposed facility becoming a reality?

Response: As was seen in EC's first ATV study, which identified two areas for potential parks (i.e., Newport Township, Avondale Hill), there has always been interest; however, no one has taken the next step of delineating a plan.

We hope this feasibility study provides the additional groundwork required to advance this vision. LAIRD's extensive, first-hand knowledge of recreation and OHV facilities confirms Newport Township has the site features needed for an outdoor destination already. What their expertise has added are the technical "musts" any operation needs to consider: zoning and permitting, liability, infrastructure, etc. They have also been able to confirm and clarify user wants and needs; as well as analyze requirements needed to manage environmental impacts. Now, there is a much clearer picture of what starting an adventure area would entail.

Additionally, unlike 15 years ago, there has been incredible growth in outdoor recreation generally and motorized recreation particularly. With this popularity has come many well-established models of successful parks and programs. We believe this, paired with the very positive, context-specific details in the feasibility report, boosts the chances of the project becoming a reality. The caveat is that implementation will be a matter of public will and the cooperation of all parties.

Question: Will there be priority hiring of Newport Township residents for employment with an ATV park?

Response: Similar to the inquiries from outside parties interested in operating a park, other individuals have expressed interest in being employed by such a facility. It would make sense to give preference to locals, who understand not only the landscape, but also the community, its assets, and area concerns. That said, staffing decisions ultimately would depend on an applicant's qualifications for a given job and would be at the discretion of the property owner.

Question: What is the proposed project's time frame for implementation?

Response: After elements like zoning and insurance are addressed, a possible development timeline could include:

Next Step Goals

Years 1-2: Identify an appropriate Owner/Manager to own, operate, and maintain the functions of a public park and define its organizational structure.

- Prepare a Master Plan and Business Plan outlining services and facilities;
- Determine appropriate insurances, access controls, fee structure, and on-site management staff;
- Establish registration and pass system for users and law enforcement needs/strategy;
- Map, prepare, and mark access point and initial trails;
- Create formal parking lot; provide portable toilets;
- Identify future projects and costs to determine and seek funding (e.g., grants, donations, fundraisers, in-kind services, volunteers).

Short to Mid-Term Goals

Years 2-3: Establish a defined trail system (expand, consolidate, and/or close off certain trails)

- Hire part-time and full-time staff to collect fees/allot passes, and to maintain trails and facilities (e.g., parking lot, trailheads).
- Build stormwater management controls (i.e., part of buildings/impervious surface approvals).
- Establish a Volunteer Corps Program to allow local residents and enthusiasts to assist in maintaining the site and facilities.

Longer-Term Goals (note, these are examples only; timeline would also depend on user demand.)

Years 3-5: Plan, design, and construct built features, facilities, and further delineate and organize/ expand additional trails. Could include amenities like:

- Flush toilets, access gates/barriers, maintenance building, parts/service shop
- OHV training area for children/new riders
- Lease areas for events such as paintball, archery, trail running, etc.
- Additional staff, equipment, and facilities (e.g., pavilions)

Years 5-10:

- Pro Shop and/or on-site service center
- Rental outfitter for OHVs and other activities (e.g., paintball, rock climbing)
- Pond or swimming pool
- Playground
- Other components typical of a Master Plan (Landscape, Dog Park, etc.)

Question: Can you estimate economic benefits to existing and prospective local businesses?

Response: What you're referring to is called an input-output (I-O) analysis and will be included as part of the final report. To prepare the analysis, the Institute inputs a variety of economic and demographic statistics into a specialized modeling program, which then calculates how a specific economic activity can impact the larger economy. This includes job retention/creation and increases in local expenditures. For a similar example, AOAA completed a feasibility study in 2011, which included an I-O analysis. The authors estimated that for every 1,000 visitors at an adventure area annually, 4.4 jobs would be created, with almost \$80,000 in wages. It would

also contribute approximately \$125,000 to the gross regional economy. The full AOAA report is available at <https://www.americantrails.org/files/pdf/AOAA-Master-Plan-2011.pdf>.

Question: What is the estimated tax revenue the municipality can expect to receive?

Response: Potential tax revenue would depend on a number of variables, as well as what assumptions are made about those variables. Of greatest impact would be the organizational structure of the park, i.e., whether it is for-profit, nonprofit, or some sort of public/private partnership. For the sake of discussion, let's consider the following scenario:

The amount of real estate (R/E) tax associated with each acre EC owns in Newport Township is approximately \$26.75. If EC contributes 2,500 acres to the project, the amount of R/E tax added to the tax rolls would be about \$67,000. If improvements are made to the parcels, the amount of tax generated would be increased proportionately by the improvements put in place. Let's assume the park covered 6,000 acres (i.e., not including PA DCNR property), the amount of tax revenue could be over \$160,000 per year. Whatever the total, the R/E taxes would be split among the county, the municipality, and the school district.

Taxes generated from earned income would be minimal, as the local tax rate is only 1%. For example, if the total of workers' salaries was \$100,000, then the earned income tax returned to the municipalities would be \$1,000. Sales tax would have no impact on local tax revenues, since it is collected and remitted to the state. What this discussion does not account for is the indirect impact local businesses could expect from having a facility like an adventure park nearby. That impact could be significant. The input-output analysis described in the previous question tries to calculate those benefits.

REGULATION, SAFETY, & EMERGENCY ACCESS _____

Questions/Comments:

- Question about buffer zones: How far from our homes that abut this park?
- Newport Township Ordinance No. 3, as of July 6th, 2020, was specifically designed to protect the residents of Newport Township (preserving health, safety, welfare, and comfort of citizens) with the following:

Recognizing that certain noise levels are intolerable and affect the quality of life of its citizens and desirous to prohibit the same, a continuous noise lasting for more than 3 seconds without stopping and at a greater level than 55 decibels from 10:00pm-7:00am within Newport Township as well as continuous noise higher than 65 decibels during any other hours of the day [shall be unlawful].

Loud activities (large group competitions with spectators, musical concerts, OHV, truck, buggy) noise is a medical and environmental issue. Most OHVs operate and are between 85-100 decibels (85 decibels is the threshold for close range permanent hearing damage as set by OSHA). Given the noise output of just one OHV, riders would be violating the Newport Township Ordinance set forth given the proposed locations of trails as well as contemplated/projected access points that are located next to and within distances that would exceed the decibel limits set forth in the ordinance and with continuous disruption that exceeds the timetable set forth (3 seconds) as well. With that in mind;

How will the mapping and selection of trails used for the park be determined based on the residential property lines and the noise ordinance and decibel level

requirement?

At what distance from ALL properties within and surrounding the town of Glen Lyon will the determination of trails, access points be established given the noise constraints determined by the Newport Township Ordinance?

What noise remediation steps will be taken and buffer line determined and at what distance so as to prohibit the violation of the noise ordinance?

Determining feasibility of this project should factor in the scope and magnitude of this project based on the distance at which the park will be built from residential properties. The suggested "2 ft. wall as a sound barrier" suggested by Mr. Laird does nothing to prevent the travel of sound and the concerns of noise pollution based on the topography of Glen Lyon and the rudimentary facts on how sound in fact travels. A two-foot-high wall does not serve as a sound barrier. What is the real solution? Feasibility should calculate the cost to effectively buffer noise along with determination of the distances established for all trails and access points in order to prevent noise ordinance violations of Newport Township. What will that distance be and who will enforce this? Compound this concern by hundreds, and over time, thousands of OHVs traversing this region at any given time and the collective noise disruption a park of this size can create for the residents of Newport Township, particularly Glen Lyon, needs to be accounted for in evaluating/determining feasibility.

Response: To begin, the reference to the 2' wall as a noise barrier is incorrect. Rather, during the first public meeting Mr. Laird mentioned a telephone pole fence as a physical barrier, preventing riders from trespassing on private property. This approach is promoted by the US Department of Agriculture Forest Service for recreation management.

In regard to the ordinance cited, hours of its enforcement are from 10:00pm – 7:00am. Based on other OHV areas surveyed during the feasibility study, park operation falls outside these time (e.g., AOAA is open from 9:00am – 6:00pm). Anyone operating a motorized vehicle outside set hours in the park would 1.) be trespassing; and 2.) potentially violating the ordinance, depending on the time; and thus, subject to fines/prosecution. Residents also should consider that current zoning for much of the area (i.e, Mining), could allow for activities that would produce as much if not more noise, dust, and traffic than an adventure park. Private use could also reduce or remove public access altogether.

However, we recognize the intent of the question is about noise more generally. Likely, there is no solution that will universally satisfy everyone. Again, an objective of this feasibility study is to demarcate activities, events, trails and attractions that would ideal for inclusion, as well as areas to avoid. It is understandable noise mitigation needs to be a priority. The concerns raised by residents of Glen Lyon (and others) will be included in the final report.

If park development does move forward, we would expect noise controls would be implemented. For instance:

- The location of facilities and/or trails would consider nearby residences may involve setbacks, with the minimum distance conforming to local zoning and decibel regulations;
- Trail location/design also would take natural topographic buffers into account, such as changes in elevation (e.g., hills, valleys);
- Fences, vegetative buffers, and/or physical access controls may be used between homes and access points, trails, and other use areas;
- Signage would mark specific areas for reduced speeds including "SLOW", "NO DUST", and "QUIET" zones. These would need to be enforced;

- OHVs would need to meet current state and DCNR decibel ratings, which are currently enforceable. This also could include requiring machines to have a stock exhaust system or an aftermarket system producing decibel levels equal to or less than that of a given limit; and/or passing a sound test to ride in the park. At a minimum, spark arrestors should be required.

Questions/Comments:

- We are concerned about traffic and hazardous materials.
- Access points within the town and use of and access to municipal roads would/should be prohibited based on the noise ordinance that protects the citizens of Newport Township as well. What is the full proposal factoring in boundaries and protection of residences based on the township ordinance?
- Municipal roads within the town of Glen Lyon are already congested with residential parking on road ways as coal towns scarcely designed properties with garages and off-road parking space. Municipal roads do not accommodate two-way traffic because of this. OHV traffic will not only compound this problem but also, given properties are located within a few feet of the roadway, will again violate the noise ordinance of the town given the proximity of the ATV and their decibel levels and residences. How would municipal road access address all of these concerns and comply with ordinances if approved? Do you really think residents will be okay with ongoing, continuous OHV traffic around their homes on a daily basis? And not negatively impact the quality of life of citizens directly impacted by this park design?

Response: To begin, even if a public adventure park concept does not advance, current illegal/nuisance activity – including trespass, noise, and dust – will continue. In that case, it will still require patrol and enforcement by someone, whether property owners, local police, or DCNR and the PA Game Commission.

No formal planning has yet occurred to designate trail locations or routes. All maps presented are conceptual, and any routes indicated are already existent. Hundreds of miles of trails currently exist on the subject study area properties. Most of these were created through decades of mining and commercial land use operations; others were created (and often are maintained) by local users. Formal design planning will establish what trails best serve BOTH park users and residents and which ones may be relocated or closed.

At the start – unless coordinated with the township – travel on municipal roads would be disallowed, subject to fines/loss of registration as it is today. Road travel by OHVs to access local businesses (e.g., restaurants, shops, service and fuel resources) would have to be approved by local ordinance and thus would occur only if the community sees this connection as a benefit. Were to happen, OHVs would be required to follow the rules of the road, including obeying speed limits, stops signs, and any other restrictions that may be necessary.

As conceived on the early concept map, parking and access points to a proposed park would be outside the limits of Glen Lyon. To an extent, traffic into the town would be limited by what's available. If there are no destinations (e.g., fuel, restaurants, lodging), then vehicles would not enter. And again, unless specifically allowed by the municipality, anyone travelling with OHVs in-town – or more significantly on private property – and/or outside hours specified in the noise ordinance is breaking the law.

Question: Where does liability begin and end? A privately-owned OHV park that incorporates access into towns also opens up major concerns for residences regarding regulations, accountability and protection from: damage to property, trespassing, unlawful parking and

occupation of land/property, traffic, noise, crime and pollution to the community. How will the community be protected and who is responsible for regulating riders once they are “off-property” from the OHV Park, and now in town?

Response: In relation to security, park management would be responsible for patrols. We would expect local police to assist only when required (e.g., apprehending and/or prosecuting individuals who break park regulations). Eventually, as site management, staff, and/or rangers are hired, the need for local police enforcement will decline. Overall, we believe that a recreational area will alleviate the demands currently on local law enforcement – there will be organized management and surveillance of the site and activities in place. Any damages outside park boundaries would be handled as they are today, like any other trespassing claim.

Questions/Comments:

- Newport Township/Glen Lyon does not have an ambulance, off-road rescue and a consistently under-resourced law enforcement office, making regulating and emergency response challenging. What steps would be taken to address these concerns and at what cost? Furthermore, given the constraints of these services, how is the community impacted by an already strained regulating and emergency response system? Who is the priority when services or assistance is required in more than one place at the same time?
- Describe safety features inherent in proposed site and outline emergency services.

Response: As with law enforcement, we believe that a well-planned park – with rules, policies, and organized trails – will limit the need for emergency services. Access points will be included in the park design, and developed trails may actually increase responders’ ability to reach isolated areas. One consideration is for the final park design to include a helicopter pad in case life flight or emergency access be required - several extreme sports facilities have integrated this feature into their program. Similarly, a partnership will need to be established with the local emergency response teams/ambulance companies for coordinated access, and GPS location technologies. Emergency/medical calls would likely be prioritized by current guidelines already in place. All of these items would be incorporated in a formal safety and emergency plan for the park. Again, local police and emergency responders should be involved in its development. The plan would include park policies and rules, emergency procedures, safety training requirements for staff and volunteers, and risk management.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Questions/Comments:

- The installation of an ATV park among other proposed projects for this area will present with unavoidable, negative degradation of both the environment (air, soil, water) as well as significantly impact and displace wildlife in their natural habitats in an already fragile, still recovering region. What environmental protections and boundaries will be set forth in this project and will any of these concerns be set with the terms of sale or lease of land and protection to a developer? Who will regulate, monitor and enforce the maintenance of the ATV Park and the environment and community it will impact?
- We are concerned about traffic and hazardous materials.
- Diesel fumes protection?
- How will you process your wastewater?

- How will you protect US? We fear for the people in the local area who are at a greater risk for chronic illness and cancer?

Response: An outdoor adventure area would be subject to all environmental and safety regulations set by federal, state, and local entities like any other business, both in development and operation, meaning required evaluations will be done, controls put in place and maintained, and required permits/reporting kept up to date. Likely agencies involved would be OSHA, PADEP, PADCNr, among others. In relation to specific concerns raised above:

- Trails are already existent and unregulated riding is taking place. Our belief is that by having set, well-marked trails, protection of environmentally-sensitive areas will actually be improved. We also believe that park operators would monitor and re-evaluate trail use and conditions to determine whether additional measures (e.g., speed zones, temporary closures, special restrictions) were required to mitigate any evident issues (e.g., erosion, habitat conflicts). Trails can be re-located if warranted over time, as is done in many natural areas.
- Generally, we would not anticipate hazardous materials on-site, although potential improvements (e.g., welcome center, toilets) may require the use of fuel and or paints, glues, etc. The contractor would be required to prepare a spill prevention/control plan with response, notification, and documentation requirements. Similarly, during operation of the facility, appropriate mitigation measures for spills would as would be delineated in an Operations and Procedure manual, adhering to all applicable laws. Park staff would be trained on these procedures and would be responsible for enforcement.
- Although most OHVs run on gasoline, some do use diesel. Regardless, no matter the type OHV manufacturers are increasingly concerned with reducing emissions. Technology is allowing for vehicles that virtually eliminate carbon fuel emissions, engine lubricants, and/or the heat common to most internal combustion engines. And – depending on the electric generation source – batteries are becoming more durable, lighter, and efficient. This is most evident in the E-Bike and dirt bike industry, with models setting new standards for performance and sustainability.
- Wastewater disposal would depend on services available on-site. Early on, there may simply be portable lavatories, which would be emptied on a regular basis. As amenities develop, park facilities would be hooked up to the municipal system. Generally, park users would be subject to commonsense rules and regulations for outdoor activity, including proper disposal (or carrying out) of all garbage/waste. Protection of streams would be of high importance.

Questions:

- Has an environmental impact study been accomplished?
- Will a PNDI occur prior to any sale of land and/or development for this proposed project?

Response: As part of the grant application process, EC was required to complete a PA Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) environmental review. This tool provides a map of environmentally sensitive areas, as well as list of any plant/animal species of concern. The next step, should planning move forward, would be to work with PA DEP, PA DCNR, the PA Game Commission, the PA Fish & Boat Commission, and any other government agencies on steps required to safeguard these areas from development. In other words, protections would be built into trail and park design.

Question: Will protection of the hibernaculum, one of the most important hibernation sites for endangered bat species in the world, and the environmental stipulations set forth to protect these bat species, including noise protection be a priority and adhered to within the scope of this project? Will the Pennsylvania Game Commission and DCNR be involved in the planning and proposal process along with monitoring of wildlife habitats?

Response: Specific to the bat hibernaculum, the site on which it exists in on property owned by the PA Game Commission and is not part of the properties we are evaluating for an outdoor adventure area. As noted above, a PNDI was required for the initial grant application. Future grant applications or development will require an updated PNDI. The eventual owner and their professional design team would be responsible for more detailed evaluations of environmental concerns, how those intersect with potential trails, and what wildlife/ecological protections need to be employed. Possible mitigation measures might include rerouting existent trails, increased buffers, fencing, seasonal restrictions, regular monitoring, signage and education, etc. These steps/safeguards would be developed in conjunction with regulating agencies, as described in the previous question.

Question: Will any timbering of any areas for the proposed project occur or can this be restricted and or prohibited?

Response: We cannot state no timbering would be done; it would be up to the owner/developer of the land and his/her plans. However, from information discussed during the steering committee and public meetings, a robust trail system is already existent; "development" would be more about routing and safety. Areas for registration and parking would likely be placed in areas already suitable for development, with road and utility access.

ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OHV RIDING

Question: Deer hunting? Two weeks closed for the season?

Response: Currently, some EC Lands in the study area are open for hunting through the PA Game Commission's Hunter Access Program during respective seasons. If a park were to be developed, hunting access would be determined by park management. There are ways hunting could be accommodated. For instance, during rifle season, AOAA shuts down; only hunting is allowed on its property. Outside of rifle season, they allow walk-ins for hunting during specified hours (e.g., before the park opens).

Questions/Comments:

- Would a trail system that focuses on outdoor recreational activity that links mountain bike trails from the Penobscot Ridge Mountain Bike Trail down through the Mocanaqua Loop Trail to The Library be considered as another option? Including if the ATV park is not developed along this proposed acreage or is determined to be unfeasible? Any consideration of other non-motorized activity that also attracts outdoor enthusiasts?
- Can a heritage trail be developed using the pre-existing trail that parallels all of Newport St. of Glen Lyon; the former electric Loki trail bed that served the Glen Lyon coal breaker, potentially extending through the tunnel and the former sites of the coal industry down to the Mocanaqua Loop Trail? This walking trail could be for hiking and mountain biking, allowing the citizens of the town and region to have access to the woods bordering the town along with preservation of the town's historical coal-mining heritage. The trail can also be

maintained by local non-profit groups and organizations. Remnants of the old rail bed remain on the trail today and retain historical value and significance including for educational purposes in the future.

Response: Absolutely! As discussed during the meeting, the concept for the park has shifted to include more than just OHVs. As we've heard, so many people use these lands for hiking, mountain biking, climbing, and other outdoor activities. Newport Township's landscape is an amazing asset, and we want to ensure all sorts of people can continue to enjoy it. Truly, hearing these opinions is why public input is so important to the planning process.

Furthermore, incorporating historical elements could be a crucial element of creating a successful destination area. Heritage tourism is growing, and this type of development can not only preserve important aspects of local history, but also create an authentic sense of place that cannot be duplicated – it originates from and is tied to the area. What is essential is that the local community takes the lead. No one knows the area better, nor can highlight or advocate for its uniqueness more effectively. Should such an initiative be pursued, economic benefits could follow. Also significant is the potential to increase appreciation of the region's history, both for visitors and residents alike.

MISCELLANEOUS

Questions/Comments:

- Have enough residents in Ridgeview been informed of any of these plans?
- Would EC be willing to meet with Newport Township-based nonprofits and groups that serve the community to continue the discussion on these community-based priorities prior to finalizing any plan based on the ATV feasibility study and community feedback?

Response: EC and the project team have made a good faith effort to keep the community informed about the study. This began with the announcement of the grant award in December 2020, and several feature articles in the local newspapers thereafter. Additionally, we have invited local representatives to serve on the steering committee, interviewed residents and community leaders about their thoughts on the project (including nonprofit groups mentioned), and have run public ads about meetings in the newspaper. We have also encouraged people to email, call, or even write our office with any questions or comments, and have responded accordingly. We will continue to accept any and all comments about the project and are happy to continue these discussions as they arise.

Question: Is there any consideration by EC or other landowners to develop a land trust that would prohibit private development on reclaimed land and focus on conservation and preservation of the land surrounding this area of Newport Township/Glen Lyon rather than sale to a private developer?

Response: Over the past 6+ years, EC has transferred nearly 5,000 acres in the area into the state forest system. That land is now owned and regulated by PA DCNR, meaning it will be conserved in perpetuity. An additional 1,400-acre tract – now part of the feasibility study – is also in process of being transferred. Based on EC's 2019 Land Use Study for its property in Newport Township, conservation and recreation was the most suitable use of much of the 2,500 acres EC still owns. An outdoor adventure area meets the dual aims of EC's mission by producing environmental *and* economic revitalization through a recreation initiative. And again,

the area in question is already 1.) overrun with motorized trails; and 2.) prone to trespassing. We believe there can be a compromise between heavy development and a conservation easement with restricted access. We cannot speak for other landowners regarding their future plans.

Question: How many people attended the meeting?

Response: There were 85 attendees in-person at LCCC, not including EC staff and the LAIRD project team. Another 28 individuals viewed the livestream meeting on Zoom.