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Division of Parks & Recreation
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To: Mrs. Lynn W. Williams, Chair, and Members of the Open Space Council

From: Lorraine M. Fleming

Date: May 1, 2006

RE: Public Hearing on State Resource Area Maps

I thank the Open Space Council for holding this hearing, and I appreciate the opportunity to enter written testimony into the hearing record.

I commend highly the work that the staff of the Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC) has done in meticulously preparing on a parcel-by-parcel basis the proposed State Resource Area maps. They are state-of-the-art and an innovation in Delaware. This proposed revision while some years overdue makes up for the delay in its quality and accuracy. These maps primarily represent the natural resource and recreation lands component of the Green Infrastructure maps created in 2002-2003. I have followed closely the Livable Delaware Green Infrastructure process of definition, mapping, and now protection implementation from its inception.

I am particularly pleased that the maps wholly encompass the proposed expansion of the designated Natural Areas expressly to include rare and uncommon species locations identified by the Natural Heritage Program, the best remaining examples of Delaware's natural communities, and geological and archaeological sites. Most importantly there is emphasis on the connectivity that is vital to long-term viability of ecological systems. In that regard, I recommend your consideration of adding to the current draft maps some additional lands in the Blackbird-Millington corridor and in the Ellendale-Redden-Nanticoke corridor, about 30,000 acres total. This will better connect habitats for an exceptionally large number of rare plants and animals that occur in these two relatively undeveloped areas. However, since most of the 30,000 acres is cropland there should be close coordination between the Open Space Council and the Agricultural Lands Preservation Foundation in all future public sector efforts to protect these lands.

I strongly endorse the maps as presented, but hope that you will make the additions suggested above before forwarding an affirmative recommendation to DNREC Secretary Hughes. Prompt adoption of the maps will result in critical information being available to the three counties' comprehensive planning processes in a timely manner and in advancing the goals of the Land Protection Act.