

I was disappointed to learn through a conversation with Elena Stewart, DNREC Land Preservation Specialist, that:

1. Nominations to State Resource Areas from state residents are not welcome. DNREC staff will decide which properties are entered into the computer model and map.

If that is true, I understand why the Standards and Criteria are too technical to be within the abilities of even Delaware residents with graduate degrees in non-environmental fields.

I have participated in far too many state advisory councils whose members' ideas are disregarded as window dressing. Staff believe that they know best and do not incorporate public concepts in the final product. I find this another reason that, as the News Journal headline says, "Delaware gets 'F' in ethics: Investigation ranks state 48th in accountability, transparency."

2. The Open Space Council has no intension of designating the lands adjacent to the First State National Historic Park as worthy of consideration as a Delaware resource area worth saving. Ms. Stewart said the Route 202 corridor is not ecologically important, and nor is agricultural land.

To prove these ideas wrong, I submit to the public record my best effort to nominate an open space. I believe DNREC should expand rather than contract it's outreach to the public, particularly recreational users and neighbors of open space. I believe the public as well as professionals can contribute good ideas for the betterment of our state.

**Why the Properties Adjacent to the First State National Historic Park in Northern New Castle County Meet the Open Space Council's Standards and Criteria for State Resource Areas.**

Just west of route 202 on the Pennsylvania/ Delaware border lies a hidden gem in the midst of big box retail stores and urban sprawl. This area is

known by locals as "The Valley", but formally as Beaver Valley. Beaver Valley consists of woodland and farmland treasured for its all-too-rare beauty, historic and ecologic significance, and offers an incredible recreational wonderland adjacent to increasingly densely populated Pennsylvania townships and Delaware hundreds.

Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, William Bancroft, a wealthy Wilmington philanthropist, saw how the city was spreading beyond its borders and formed a plan to protect as much of the surrounding countryside as he could for future generations. He wanted in his own words, "to gather up the rough land along the Brandywine Creek above Rockland and hold it for future Wilmington, a Wilmington of hundreds of thousands of people." Wanting his work to continue after him, Bancroft formed Woodlawn Company (later Woodlawn Trust), an incorporated entity charged in part with the task of protecting the lands he had secured.

Over time Woodlawn acquired 5,800 acres, and still owns about 375 acres. Hy-Point Farm also owns private open space adjoining the First State National Park in Delaware. We want this land considered for protection by public institutions - federal, state and/or local -- in perpetuity as open space. As a member of the general public, not as a qualified botanist or biologist, I address the Open Space Council Standards and Criteria for protecting this remaining private open space.

1. Property that contains endangered, threatened, or ecologically significant species, Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) as defined in the Delaware Wildlife Action Plan, or natural ecosystems;  
<http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/dwap/Pages/default.aspx>

The adjoining open is approximately about 30% forest, including buffers, filters and fencerows. The remaining 65% is agricultural plus 5% leased to New Castle County as a playing field.

- a. Uplands. Natural Unforested Uplands. Early Successional; and/or
  - b. Uplands. Natural Forested Uplands. Piedmont Oak Forest, Basic Mesic Forest, or Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest; and/or
  - c. Uplands. Modified Uplands. Piedmont Modified/Successional Forests; and/or
  - d. Uplands. Agricultural. Row Crops, Hay, Pasture, Buffers/Filter Strips, Fallow, Turf and/or Planted Warm Season Grasses; and/or
  - e. Wetlands. Open Non-tidal Wetlands. Piedmont Seepage Meadow (intersection of Ramsey Run and Thompsons Bridge Road); and/or
  - f. Wetlands. Piedmont Seepage Swamp (same location); and/or
  - g. Aquatic. Piedmont Headwaters and Creeks (Beaver Creek, Hurricane Run, Rocky Run).
2. Property with a significant potential to support endangered, threatened, or ecologically significant species, SGCN, or natural systems;

The open wetlands provide favorable habitat for one of the world's ten most endangered species, the bog turtle.

A known population of northern long-eared bat lives within three (3) miles of the southwest corner of Route 202 and Beaver Valley Road. The exact location is not published but it is likely to include the open space adjoining the National Park.

Sensitive taxa in Beaver Creek are Mayflies, Stoneflies and Caddisflies.

A rare grass grows behind the Woodlawn maintenance shed.

Gentians and sporanthes have grown near the shopping center retention ponds.

Trilliums are suspected, but not confirmed.

Mature, rare interior forest identified by the Natural Heritage

Inventory of Delaware County, Pennsylvania (June 2011) in adjacent Concord Township extends into northern Delaware on the remaining open space adjacent to the National Park. Since 18 rare or endangered species were identified in Concord Township by the Beaver Valley Conservancy ecologist, some are likely present on remaining open space in Delaware. To confirm this, Beaver Valley Conservancy has offered to provide its ecologist to study the open space in the State of Delaware.

3. Property that is important because of its historical or cultural value or its proximity to an historically significant area;

Historical and cultural sites are important to a state's history and recreational economy. Protecting and buffering these sites by open space conversion is an effective method to ensure their preservation. Forest cover around these sites can maintain and enhance their aesthetic value and provide other economic and environmental benefits such as wildlife habitat and riparian buffers.

George Washington's Continental Army camped near Beaver Valley. Located less than two (2) miles from the famous Brandywine Battlefield, the Delaware County Planning Commission said that the area has "high potential" for archaeological resources given that it has remained undeveloped since before Penn's grant in 1683. In addition, there are intact historic structures, some of which date to the early 19th century, and the remains of many historic structures.

To be specific, five (5) houses exist on the open space adjoining the National Park:

1. Twin Pines farm house, 5700 Concord Pike. DeIDOT included this house in a cultural resources survey of Route 202 which determined that this farm house is NHR eligible, and therefore has Section 106 protection.
2. Hicklen House, 502 Beaver Valley Road, is on the National Register. It is a frame house, dating to 1725, along with a standing barn and numerous outbuildings.

3. Kellum dairy farm, 411 Beaver Valley Road. House 1802-1820, standing barn and two out-buildings.
4. Amor Talley two-and-a-half story stone and stucco house with a carriage house and barn ruins, 50 Ramsey Road. The house has a date stone of 1797 and initials AT for Amor Talley. The current tenants believe that this date stone is actually on a newer addition to the house, and that the original modest stone section is older.
5. Frame farm house, 53 Ramsey Road. Original middle section is supported by logs with bark removed. Date given to this house by New Castle County may be mid-1770s. This property also contains a stone barn foundation.

Before the Valley was settled by Europeans, it was traversed by Lenni Lenape, traveling by means of a still undiscovered path from their summer camp at the "Big Bend" of the Brandywine River to Naaman's Creek - pausing at Beaver Valley Cave to seek rest and shelter, to store produce and supplies.

In the late 17th and 18th centuries, the Valley's lands were taken up by Europeans, many Quaker, many coming with William Penn in pursuit of their personal peaceable kingdoms. William Hicklin, William Hicklin Jr., Joseph Robinson and Thomas Wilson were Quakers. Thomas McKim, since he was buried at Old Swedes Church, may have been Swedish Lutheran. Thomas Smith Sr. was a lapsed Quaker who spent time gaming in taverns, despite the intervention of Quaker friends.



The lands were cleared, surveyed, and domesticated into the dispersed family farms that characterized settlement patterns in the region. These farms were "mixed" farms - producing a variety of products (especially grain) for home use, and export to Colonial America's largest city, Philadelphia, and from there to Europe and the West Indies. Conestoga Wagons rumbled by on the "great road" (today Route 202), on the way to mills and ports, including those in the new town of Wilmington, stopping for rest and refreshment at the taverns that stood at each intersection of Beaver Valley and the Great Road - The Nine Ton in Pennsylvania and Perry Tavern in Delaware.

During these years, the Valley even played a role in one of the darker moments of the American Revolution, as British troops raided it for supplies - riding off, according to family history, with Robert Green's best mare, as

he continued to plow.

As the 18th century waned, agriculture began to change. Butter replaced grain as the most important commercial product, transforming and elevating the economic place of rural women, particularly Quaker women. Later in the century, the production of milk products for urban markets replaced butter as the Valley's most valuable agricultural product. According to Joan M. Jensen, author of Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women 1750-1850, the Quaker belief that all people were created equal in God's eyes allowed exceptional independence for these women who traditionally performed dairy tasks, found kaolin in nearby quarries and fashioned it into milk jugs, transported dairy products on the nearby Great Road and Delaware River, allowing their work to reach the Caribbean and Europe.

A stray reference to Beaver Valley in 1694 refers to the lands bordering Beaver Creek as "mill lands," and surveyors laying out Beaver Valley Road in 1712 passed by "the mill that Chandler is building". Until well into the 19th century, Beaver Creek and its tributaries supported small mills - generally managed by their owners and from one to three workers that produced a range of products, from lumber, to tin, to flax, to paper. By the third quarter of the 19th century the Valley had become a thriving community of several hundred people organized around two schools, the mills, and the characteristic family farms of 40 to 120 acres.

The land wasn't good enough, the farms weren't big enough, and the power supplied by Beaver Creek wasn't strong enough for this economy and society to survive the economic and technological changes of the last half of the 19th and the first years of the 20th. One by one, the mills closed, the last (then an axe handle factory) about 1940.

But, much of the evidence of these worlds we have lost is still there: partly, in the stone and frame houses, barns, spring houses, and cart sheds that dot the landscape; partly, in the stone walls that now wander through woodlands quietly memorializing ancient property boundaries and fields; and partly in the abundant archaeological evidence of early occupation and land use that is scattered across the landscape, waiting to be documented and interpreted. On those that would be developed, these archaeological resources will be destroyed along with many standing historical buildings.

In April of 2013 under the Antiquities Act of 1906 about half of the Valley's lands were designated a National Monument. In supporting that designation, the United States Department of the Interior identified several factors as justification for the elevation of the Valley's lands to the same legal status as Mount Vernon and the Statute of Liberty:

- the importance of the evidence of early Quaker settlement patterns that it contains;
- its geological and ecological significance; and
- the role of its lands as an emblem of 20th century conservation, and prescient, intelligent land planning.

The adjoining open space is identical in all material respects to those lands that were included in the National Monument. If the latter are worth saving, so are the former.

My factual resources are two Valley residents, amateur historian Pamela Cawood Rizzo and professional historian H. John Michel, Jr..

4. Property that includes or enhances important wildlife habitat or migration corridors, as well as potential wildlife habitat or migration corridors;

As cities engulf the country-side around them, conservationists are increasingly aware of the importance of "**large landscapes**" in providing a stabilizing anchor, a context for our national existence and culture, and contributing to our collective mental and physical health. Beaver Valley is among the last large landscapes in northern Delaware with potential for public access.

Beaver Valley is adjacent to nearly 5000 acres of permanently protected public lands and privately owned lands with conservation easements. In Delaware, Delaware Nature Society (2,061 acres), Brandywine Conservancy (287 acres), and DNREC (236 acres) hold the majority of the conservation easements. In Pennsylvania, the Brandywine Conservancy and Natural Lands Trust hold now and are gaining more conservation easements on land to the headwaters of the Brandywine.

In short, while Beaver Valley currently supports a diversity of wildlife and

native flora, it cannot afford to shrink - even along an urban corridor such as Route 202. Likewise, while the Valley benefits exponentially from its contiguity with relatively large expanses of other protected lands, even its partial destruction will adversely affect all of those other lands.

5. Property with forest resources that are significant;

Landscapes of ecological and social importance sometimes referred to as "green infrastructure" by virtue of the crucial ecosystem services they provide for human communities and wildlife. Because forests are the most beneficial land cover for watershed services, if these landscapes are not forested, they should be **priority areas for reforestation and conservation wherever possible**. Beaver Valley is such a landscape.

The Piedmont Basin includes the northernmost portions of the state. This area comprises approximately 32,000 acres, of which 10,000 acres lie within the critical forest area of the Piedmont physiographic province. These forests are the most extensive mature piedmont forests. Almost 50 percent of the forests here are permanently protected through public lands or conservation easements.

Forests are most valued because of the suite of ecological services they provide human communities - by protecting the quality and quantity of our drinking water; improving air quality; combating global warming; and reducing the pollution, erosion, and flood events related to storm water runoff.

The Piedmont Basin has Delaware's only mature Piedmont forests and thus deserves special attention. The area contains relatively few large forested blocks and most of them are already permanently protected, so effort will focus on connecting and buffering these blocks and attempting to control the high occurrence of invasive species, primarily plants that are found within this highly urbanized and fragmented area.

While all forests are valuable to water quality, some forests are more valuable than others. These locations combine habitat value with significant value to people providing essential watershed services such as flood control,

storm water management, base flow, carbon sinks, and water quality treatment.

Source: Delaware Forest Resource Assessment. Delaware Forest Service. Delaware Department of Agriculture.

6. Property with wetlands, flood plains, or other lands necessary for the protection of water resources;

The headwaters of Beaver Creek, Ramsey Run, Rocky Run and Hurricane Run are in the remaining open space adjoining the National Park. Since these streams become drinking water for Wilmington and its northern suburbs, Beaver Valley is a critical part of the Brandywine and Delaware River watersheds. Increasing the size of forested riparian buffers is the best way to improve water quality. Allowing more urban development is the worst way to provide clean drinking water.

7. Property that contains significant or unique ecosystems, natural features, or geological features;

This land buffers the First State National Historic Park from the adverse impact of strip malls, heavy traffic and suburban development. This buffer function is unique and significant, and can be enhanced with reforestation. More details on this topic are contained in the answer to question 8.

Favorable habitat for one of the world's ten most endangered species, the bog turtle, is found on this property.

Colonial farm boundaries and fence rows are still obvious in the landscape.

Beaver Valley has been farmed for three centuries. Large parts of it are still farmed. We believe it constitutes prime farmland.

8. Property which is an inholding or contiguous to or nearby lands already preserved by federal, state, local, or other conservation agencies;

The remaining open space contiguous to the First State National Historical Park is as important to preserve Quaker settlement patterns as the land in the Park. The area we seek to preserve has numerous historic houses and farms and remnants thereof that have been left relatively untouched and the land undisturbed. The artifacts left are still there, waiting to be discovered. The properties include an extraordinary range of potentially significant resources: the landscape, the mill foundations and dams, the archeological sites, field boundaries, property boundaries, houses, barns, other agricultural outbuildings, and traces of historic roadways and cart paths.

9. Property that will provide public outdoor recreation;

The remaining open space adjacent to the First State National Historical Park provides passive open space accessible to the public for recreational activities. Thousands of people walk, hike, bike, ride horses, run, bird-watch, test outdoor gear, study nature and hunt deer (one day annually). More organized individuals volunteer for surveys and studies to protect to land and Brandywine Creek; and for service projects such as trail maintenance, bridge building, tree planting, and vegetation management.

If the goal is to excite people about nature, this land is and hopefully will continue be a great resource for anyone interested in discovering the outdoors, their natural environment and the outdoor community.

Russell Smith, the first superintendent of the then First State National Monument said the land within the Park is loved to death. As the population of northern Delaware and southeastern Pennsylvania increases, shifting appropriate activities (bicycle, equestrian, running) to the adjoining acreage can reduce user pressure on the First State National Historical Park.

This representation shows in red only the trails within Woodlawn's remaining ±375 acres, not all of the connecting trails on conserved and private land, Brandywine Creek State Park, or the First State National Historic Park.



10. Property that will allow natural systems or plants and animals to accommodate or adapt to climate change or other large-scale changes in ecosystem processes;

Managed meadows and forests can accommodate new nesting birds and native plants from more southerly climes. If open space is not managed, invasive plants, and perhaps animals, will establish and take over.

As climate change reduces Delaware's population on the Atlantic and Delaware River shorelines, possibly displacing that population north and west, Wilmington's water supply may need to serve more people. It therefore becomes even more important to protect the Brandywine Creek watershed. *All streams on this property drain downhill into the Brandywine, Wilmington's main water supply.* Destruction of the forest and grading of the land would result in significant runoff and destroy the ecosystem for

species on the property.

11. Property that would otherwise further or satisfy any of the purposes of the Act

Air quality is important for all life - plant and animal. Forests can improve air quality by removing particulates and other pollutants. While all three counties exceeded ozone standards in 2007 (the most recent year for which I could find data), New Castle County had more violations than the other two counties. New Castle County failed to meet PM2.5 standards during every year from 2001 through 2007.

Because forests are the most beneficial land cover for air quality, watershed services, ecological and historical buffering, and since this section of Beaver Valley is only 30% forested, this acreage should be a **high priority area for reforestation and conservation.**

Beaver Valley Conservancy Trails Committee  
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