

**US Fish & Wildlife Service and The Nature Conservancy
Public Meetings on the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Feasibility Study
March 26 & 27, 2008**

Summary of Public Comments and Questions

On both evenings, the public comments and questions were, in general, very positive.

Expressions of support for the study / refuge came from:

- Area residents (see full notes)
- Appalachian Trails Association
- Brodhead Watershed Association
- Cherry Valley CSA
- Friends of Cherry Valley
- Lehigh Valley Audubon Association
- Lenape tribe
- Monroe County officials
- Monroe County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs
- Pocono Environmental Education Center
- Pocono Heritage Land Trust
- Pocono Home Builders Association
- Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau
- Shawnee on Delaware Preservation Society
- Stroud Township
- Stroudsmoor Country Inn

Summary of comments / concerns:

The NWR process / policies/ study area

- The Shawnee on Delaware Preservation Society would like to see their land included in the study area. This land includes Shawnee Creek and Moser's Knob, and also has bog turtles. (Tim Carbone)
- There is also interest in incorporating areas to the southeast (like Minsi Lake and Mount Bethel fens) into the study area (Adam Sabatine, Lehigh Valley Audubon Society).
- What does the line/boundary of the study area represent and how it was chosen?
- Does the FWS considers cultural resources when planning a refuge?
- Do long-range plans address already planned developments?
- How long does the process of creating a NWR usually take?
- How are NWRs funded?
- Does the FWS uses condemnation to acquire land for the refuge?
- What will prevent landowners from selling wetland to FWS and selling farmland to developers anyway?
- Does FWS lease land back to farmers?

Stewardship / management of the land

- It is important to educate new and existing landowners about preserving their property for generations to come. (Deb Schuler, Friends of Cherry Valley)

- The people living here have been those who want to live in close harmony with the land: farmers, birdwatchers, hunters, fishers, gardeners, rabbit and bee-keepers, etc. The Friends of Cherry Valley will continue to be good stewards, whether or not members sell land to the refuge. (Jill Thatcher)
- How will residents be assured the costs for maintenance of the refuge will continue to be paid? Also, a concern about the FWS budget was expressed.
- Under FWS management, will vistas disappear because farmland will be allowed to succeed?
- Is there a possibility of partnering with local government or conservation organizations to provide adequate staffing if this is a problem for FWS?

Access / Activities

- The study team has the support of the Monroe County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, and may get the support of the state federation as well (Jim Connor).
- The study team should publicize more that the refuge will be a multi-use area that people can use to hunt, fish, hike, cycle, etc. Publicizing this would help to build the grassroots effort and would yield greater involvement. (John Earlbeck)
- One resident expressed deep concerns about his hunting activities and the restrictions that will be placed on them by the establishment of a refuge. (P. Williams)
- What will public access to the refuge be like?
- How will FWS prevent trespass on private lands? What recourse is available for residents to prosecute trespassers?
- Will horseback riding is included as an acceptable use?

Habitat/conservation of species

- Preserving plants and animals is most important; we should not impact nature. (Al Turtle Fariole)
- There is a need for increased conservation of the area surrounding the Appalachian Trail, not just the right of way. (Karen Woodson)
- One resident recommends a full natural resource inventory of Cherry Valley. (Robert Heil, Jr.)
- The designation of Cherry Valley as a NWR supports each of the local conservation plans, and supports what hundreds of residents have said they want at other public meetings: preservation of open space. (Sharon Keane)
- How much of the valley is currently protected, and is the protection permanent?

Local Economic Affects

- How will the establishment of a refuge affect the economic situation of businesses in the valley and the livelihoods of people who depend on them? Examples include mining and resource extraction practiced by builders, etc. (Joseph Burns)

- Can the FWS ensure that the Stroudsmoor Country Inn, if within the refuge area, will not be at a competitive disadvantage, or expected to meet a higher bar, making it impossible to expand in the future? (Andy Fort)
- What will the changes/benefits be to current residents? How will the local tax base be affected? How will property values be affected?

Farming

- Keeping land in farms is important; when land is developed, “houses are the last crop it will ever grow.” (Ed Cramer)
- The changing attitudes of younger generations towards farming pose a threat to the habitat and way of life of Cherry Valley (Ed Cramer).
- Organic farming is important to the valley. People should not be using synthetic pesticides and herbicides which hinder presence of beneficial insects in the area, as well as birds and other animals. The valley could be growing a lot of food, not just food for animals, but also people. (Heidi Secord)

What makes the area attractive

- The main reasons the area is attractive to visitors, include “ease, authenticity, and refreshment,” built upon the preservation of the natural environment, coupled with sustainable development. (Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau)
- The area’s scenic views and habitat are important to retaining residents and attracting them to the area. There is a place for everything, and this [the refuge/preservation] is the best use of this land. (Peter Gallagher, Pocono Home Builders Association)

Education / research opportunities

- The refuge area has potential to be used as an “outdoor classroom/natural laboratory” where students can learn about the environment. (Pocono Environmental Education Center)
- The area is already being used for research/educational opportunities, which will no longer exist if the NWR is not created. (Sharon Keane)

Land Use / Zoning Regulations

- Will land use change for areas owned by NPS after the establishment of the refuge?
- Is Hamilton Twp. changing zoning regulations as a result of the refuge study?