

US Fish & Wildlife Service  
Second Public Meeting on the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge Draft Study  
Stroudsmoor Inn, Stroudsburg, PA  
November 20, 2008, 7 PM

**MEETING NOTES**

**MEETING OPENS**

**Kathi Bangert**, a volunteer for US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS), welcomes guests to the second public meeting on the draft feasibility study for creation of the Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge (NWR). Bangert thanks Andy Ford for his hospitality and the hospitality of his staff in having us here tonight. Bangert notes that she will be our facilitator for the evening, and is a volunteer for USFWS. She runs briefly through evening's agenda. She introduces some of the people we will be hearing from tonight:

- Walt Quist – Chief of Realty for NWRS
- Carl Melberg – Senior Planner NWRS
- Nels Johnson – Director of Conservation for The Nature Conservancy in PA

Melberg and Johnson will talk about the area's biological significance, why the area is under study, and what the study process has been and is.

Mike Horne will then talk about the potential impacts on property owners in the valley.

To make public comments and questions, Bangert notes that audience members should sign up on the board. But other ways to submit comments are through the comment form, or through index cards. She notes that USFWS is anxious to hear everyone's comments – anyone who wishes to be heard. All points of view are important.

**Walt Quist** – Chief of Realty NWRS Northeast Region

Quist welcomes everyone to the second public meeting. The Service is very excited by this proposal. The study team got together to take this from a concept to a proposal. Quist notes that they will be discussing the various aspects of the proposal and environmental assessment that was done. The presentations will cover some of the chapters and details of the assessment.

At last night's meeting at Christ Hamilton, USFWS listened to comments, questions and concerns from the public. Tonight is this audience's opportunity to get concerns raised and questions answered.

Quist notes that he will be able to handle acquisition questions. Mike Horne can talk about refuge management. Carl Melberg can answer questions about the process. Quist assures the listeners that USFWS can direct them to the right person to get their questions answered.

**Bangert** then introduces **Carl Melberg**, and restates his position as Senior Planner for the NWRS.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

Carl Melberg notes that the kick-off of this project was about a year ago. Now, we have a 400-page document of good, solid information about Cherry Valley and its resources. Copies of this document are available on CD, or USFWS can send a hard copy by mail.

Melberg acknowledges the members of study team who are in the room tonight.

He notes that Cherry Valley is in a unique geographic location, and describes this a bit. There are two other refuges in Pennsylvania.

Melberg talks about the structure of the study document, particularly Chapters 1-4. He will be talking about “Study Purpose and Planning Considerations.”

The project is a grassroots effort that started in the valley in 2000. Folks in the valley got together to make USFWS aware of the endangered species in the valley that need protection. This remained an on the ground effort for 5-6 years before FWS got involved. Congressman Kanjorski’s action is what got USFWS here and engaged.

USFWS was out here in March for the public scoping meetings – all of the comments and issues raised there are part of the study. The team is back here on schedule in the fall, when promised. Melberg notes that this is record speed for USFWS in getting this document prepared.

Melberg presents an outline of the process, in a flowchart format. He notes that later, he will go over the three proposed alternatives in the report.

Melberg introduces Nels Johnson and explains that The Nature Conservancy has been a primary partner in this process.

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**Nels Johnson**, Director of Conservation Programs, The Nature Conservancy in PA

Johnson notes that it was a little over a year ago that Melberg got in touch with him to talk about how The Nature Conservancy could be involved with the study. He says that his is the most rewarding experience he has ever had working with the federal government. The folks at USFWS are very dedicated public servants.

Johnson states that he will talk about what is in Cherry Valley – what makes it appropriate for a refuge. This is the “Affected Environment” chapter in the draft study. In the context of study we are looking at the physical environment, the biological environment and the socioeconomic environment.

Johnson states that he wants to leave the audience with images rather than acronyms. The physical environment is affected by the creation of mountains – the Kittatiny Ridge and the Blue Ridge. More recently, in geologic terms, the glacial epics came to an end; the Wisconsin glacier’s terminus reached to here in Cherry Valley. The underlying geology also includes a lot

of limestone, which is not common in other areas. This combination has created a diverse set of living circumstances for the species here.

The forest is strongly favored by forest interior birds (neotropical migrants like cerulean warblers). Many of these species are in steep decline because of the loss of breeding habitats here and overwintering habitats in Latin America. Johnson notes also the prevalence of limestone caves, with 5 species of bats, some of which are globally rare. Another species that can be found here is the bog turtle – which thrives in the unusual wetlands in Cherry Valley.

Also, there are important conservation resources in the valley. The human population has been here for 12,000 years at least, with European settlers arriving in the mid- to late 18<sup>th</sup> century. People and wildlife have continued to persist in this habitat for all that time. Currently there are about 9,000 residents, some of whose families have been here for generations and some who are new residents, but all are committed to seeing the resources of the valley persist, and are supportive of conservation.

Johnson shows a map of all the ecological systems in Cherry Valley, as well as all the land uses that currently exist. He notes that there are lots of opportunities for conservation of habitat, as well as conserving the culture of the area.

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**Carl Melberg** presents some information on the Proposed Action (Alternative B) and the other Alternatives.

The study presents three alternatives:

- A) No action – no FWS involvement at all;
- B) Diverse Habitats – up to 20,400 acres of FWS fee and easement acquisitions; and
- C) Wetlands and Ridge Forests – up to 14,100 acres of fee and easement acquisitions.

Melberg explains that the proposed action (alternative B) is the action the agency is promoting. All three are considered alternatives, however, and all three should be considered by the public.

Melberg shows maps and descriptions that explain the differences between Alternatives A, B and C. A – No refuge; no change in the amount of land preserved. Alternative B – Diverse Habitats – areas not included in the refuge include houses and improvements (when possible to exclude these). Acquisition of wetland and forest habitats and agricultural fields contributes to bird conservation regional plans. Alternative C – Wetland and Ridge Forests – this alternative does not include the northwest corner of the study area – the type of protection is the same as B, except less of it. Melberg shows the maps of B and C together so that people can see the difference between the alternatives.

Melberg shows a table outlining the habitat types and how many acres of each would be included in each alternative. 31,500 acres total were included in study act – about 2/3 of that area would fall within Alternative B.

Melberg then summarizes the “Environmental Effects” described in the study. These are effects on the physical environment, on species, birds, public use, land use, local economy, the soundscape. He goes over the anticipated effects on physical, biological and socioeconomic environment under the three alternatives.

Melberg then introduces Michael Horne, Watershed Biologist at Great Swamp National Refuge and a volunteer on the study team.

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**Michael Horne** describes his background, his current farm in the area, and growing up in central PA. He talks about some examples of federal projects that were mismanaged, like the 70,000 acre Delaware Water Gap national recreation area, and the similarities to Racetown Lake.

Horne notes that he has been talking with the residents of Cherry Valley over the past year and was warmly welcomed into residents’ homes. He says that the questions he received about the creation of the refuge mainly concerned public use and land use. He talks about the USFWS’s “Big 6” public uses. What about other public uses on refuge lands – will they be permitted? Horne notes that there are two questions that need to be asked to be consistent with USFWS’s wildlife-first mission: 1) is the use appropriate on this NWR? 2) is the use compatible with the purpose(s) of the NWR?

He reminds the audience that each refuge is different, with different habitats and species we are trying to protect and restore. Public uses may or may not be allowed based on this determination, but Horne emphasizes that public input is part of this consideration. He talks about some public uses permitted at nearby refuges. He directs the audience to read Appendix B in the draft study (Conceptual Management Plan).

With regard to land use changes and other issues, Horne notes that he wants to address these concerns here because they are important. He states that the phrase “I’ve got concerns about...” is way that most people lead into this topic.

On concerns about condemnation and eminent domain, Horne stresses that USFWS has a long standing policy of acquiring land only from willing sellers. He goes over the different types of options that are available. He emphasizes that USFWS uses professional appraisers to establish property value, and pays fair market value for land.

Horne says that he has also heard concerns about refuge impacts to future of agriculture in the valley. He said that he has some of same concerns as a farmer and farm-kid. He gives examples of conservation options for farmland, and examples of how farmers can help to maintain habitat.

On concerns expressed about changes in zoning, and possible additional constraints/regulations on property, Horne notes that neither of these concerns are founded. Zoning is a local/county government issue – so audience members need to get these concerns resolved with their townships. No additional regulations will be put into place over the ones currently in place due to the creation of a refuge.

Some residents expressed concern about hunting on refuge lands, hunting being ruined by new hunters, and unsafe conditions caused by hunting. Horne states that hunting is a priority public use and wildlife management tool, due to the presence of deer and negative impacts they can have on the environment we are trying to protect. He assures that USFWS works with the state and other partners, including landowners, to develop its hunting programs. Also, they limit the number of permits issued to agree with the amount of land available for hunting.

On concerns about fishing opportunities, public areas being trashed by unethical anglers, and about opportunities for stream habitat improvement, Horne notes that fishing is also a priority public use – USFWS would like to see fishing program established, and will work with partners and landowners to develop a program. Currently, fishing is limited by access. Horne says USFWS would encourage access only in areas owned or controlled by the refuge – not across private lands. Local anglers, landowners, etc. could help to improve habitat.

Horne notes that there have been some concerns about privacy, visitors wandering about, disturbance to sensitive areas, trespassing, and trail locations. Horne emphasizes that refuge lands are clearly posted. Trespassing and disturbance will be prevented by law enforcement presence and cooperation with conservation officers. Horne emphasizes the refuge’s wildlife-first mission that would protect sensitive habitats from disturbance by visitors, etc..

Finally, Horne says he has heard some concerns about the valley being “let go” to become scrubby and forested. He makes the point that the current physical environment is what makes the area special, and that the species require this type of habitat diversity to survive in the area. The USFWS will manage the refuge to sustain the current environment.

In conclusion, Horne notes that he will be available later to answer questions.

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**Bangert** thanks all presenters and says we are almost ready to go into the public comment period. She will ask Debra Schuler, President of Friends of Cherry Valley, to comment first. Bangert talks about the speed with which this process has occurred, which would not have happened without the support of local people, and especially not without FoCV.

**Debra Schuler** – Schuler is President of Friends of Cherry Valley. She and her husband live in a small farmhouse which was owned by his great-grandparents. They are the fourth generation in Cherry Valley. Debra is a Monroe County native and moved to the valley 16 years ago. FoCV is now a federally-designated nonprofit organization. One goal of the organization is to educate Cherry Valley landowners on conservation options available to them. The valley remains pristine despite lots of development in other areas. In order for the valley to remain this way, we must step forward to protect its ecosystems and the species that live here. Future generations will know what it is like to experience life as it is known to those who grew up here: life’s lessons being taught in the outdoors, as well as classroom lessons that will be taught in the outdoors. Schuler and FoCV are seeking full support of the refuge proposal, and she wants to walk away knowing that all concerns have been addressed. Schuler commends the expertise of USFWS, and thanks everyone for coming to the meeting.

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## **PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD**

Bangert reminds everyone of the rules for public comment period. She asks commenters to keep their comments to about 3 minutes. All comments are welcome and USFWS really wants to hear all comments and questions. Comment forms and index cards are also available.

- 1) **Heidi Secord** – Secord notes that she is “on the land here in Cherry Valley.” She has been farming here for the past two years, and leases land from Stroud Township. She has a CSA venture. She is so pleased about the potential NWR. The refuge will support the mission of Cherry Valley CSA. Secord sees a lot of collaboration with local organizations in terms of environmental education and interpretation, not only on her farm, but throughout the valley. She thinks there will be benefits to the whole community, as well as a benefit to her farm through the increase in beneficial insects. One concern she has is that agricultural land stays agricultural land. We will need as much land as possible for food production and food security. “If we don’t protect that land, we don’t eat,” she notes. Secord is in full support of USFWS and Alternative B.
- 2) **John Latini** – Latini is a Project Assistant and representative, speaking on behalf of Paul Kanjorski. Latini notes that he puts a lot of time into talking points for the Congressman, but this is the one project for which he does not need talking points. The congressman asked Latini to read a statement tonight. Kanjorski would like to thank USFWS for allowing everyone to submit comments on the proposed Alternative B. The economic crisis prevents Kanjorski from being here, and he apologizes for his absence. The statement continues to describe the valley’s habitats and species, and the developments threatening them. Efforts for a refuge have gained widespread support, and Kanjorski has rarely seen this. Kanjorski authorized the study act, as a result of which this study was conducted. He commends speed and diligence of USFWS in completing this study. He hopes that the assessment will be finalized in the near future. He will continue to work with USFWS and the community to make the creation of the refuge a reality.
- 3) **Fran Grant** – Grant is a member of FoCV. He lives at the west end of the valley by the lakes, and often takes his rowboat out on the lake. He works in Newark – he stumbled upon Cherry Valley and saw that this was the kind of life he wanted to live. People in the valley appreciate what they have, and know what they have. Our task is to ensure that this continues for future generations. Let’s do this, he encourages.
- 4) **Darryl Speicher** – Speicher is an employee of the Monroe County Conservation District, and is here to speak on their behalf. He notes that Craig [Todd] did not speak last night because he is shy. The MCCD Board of Directors unanimously support the creation of the refuge and he does not want to take their thunder away. He relates the Board’s unanimous support for the NWR establishment, and Alternative B. MCCD has long worked together with partners in the valley. Residents are one of the area’s greatest assets. All are to be congratulated on this effort. Alternative B ensures that the greatest amount of habitat will be protected, and will help the environmental education efforts being carried out by MCCD. USFWS has been a perfect fit in this area.

- 5) **Jackie Speicher** – Pocono Avian Research Center (PARC) has reviewed the study and supports Alternative B. They are impressed with the way the study was conducted. As an organization dedicated to supporting birds, PARC feels this alternative protects the most habitat and provides safe access for birders. They are looking forward to working with USFWS, and hopes this refuge will be created administratively.
- 6) **Elizabeth Cortright** – Cortright is a member of FoCV. She is a property owner and lives within the refuge. She is in favor of Alternative B, and would like to see multi-use trails in place because roads are no longer safe for horseback riding. She notes the amount of development, but also the ecological value of the area. We have a unique opportunity to protect the area by voting for Alternative B.
- 7) **Jim Rienhardt** – Before he reads official comments, Rienhardt notes that he has worked for the US Department of the Interior, and he is impressed by the speed and professionalism of the study USFWS has put together. Their professionalism is second to none. Rienhardt thanks Congressmen Kanjorski and Dent, local public officials, and most importantly, the folks who live in Cherry Valley themselves. Without them, the NWR study would not be here today. On behalf of the Pocono Environmental Education Center, Rienhardt reads the following comments: The PEEC supports USFWS’s proposed Alternative B within the Cherry Valley study and assessment. Alternative B clearly meets the three goals for establishing an NWR, and best meets the needs of rare and more common species of wildlife. PEEC has been an environmental education provider for over 36 years. It is imperative that this refuge is established for present and future generations. The refuge will create opportunities for research. The area’s nationally significant resources are second to none – and need to be acquired and managed immediately by USFWS. Copies of these statements have been sent to Congressmen Kanjorski and Dent.
- 8) **Jack Muehlhan** – Muehlhan notes that no one loves Cherry Valley more than his wife and himself. However, he differs on how to preserve Cherry Valley. He thinks we need to consider the other side of the coin. He notes the “three greatest lies in the world,” one of which is “I’m from the government; I’m here to help.” He says that he has great doubts about the federal government coming in here and controlling Cherry Valley. Part of the refuge goals is public use. He asks if anyone remembers Shawnee Valley – [*Pardees Beach? sp*]. He gives some other examples of federal control. He mentions a project on Bridge Street in Stroud Township to create low-income housing. The local people did not benefit – eligible people from NY moved in instead. Federal government involvement means you can no longer control it. He notes that USFWS tells us they will very seldom condemn land. Muehlhan relates a story about an owner of 100 acres over in Hickoryville – a local government agency said they wanted to buy it, but they could not agree on price. The owner was served with condemnation proceedings. Muehlhan notes that he is a member of FoCV. He states, “if we want to preserve Cherry Valley by putting spotlight on it – 75 miles from NYC – I don’t think that’s what we want to do. We love Cherry Valley and want to preserve it.”

- 9) **Dawn Gorham** – Gorham is representing the Pocono Heritage Land Trust. PHLT recognizes the importance of the unique habitats and diverse ecosystems in this area. The NWR has the full support of PHLT.
- 10) **Jill Thatcher** – Thatcher lives on 11 acres on lower Cherry Valley Road. She notes that she wants to speak this evening on behalf of her stepdaughter Stephanie, who now lives in Philadelphia. Thatcher talks about the happy memories of Stephanie growing up. Stephanie interned with The Nature Conservancy in Washington for a semester, and is now a biology / political science dual major, due to her experiences here in Cherry Valley. Thatcher wants other children to have the same kind of experience.
- 11) **Shawn Hu** – Hu is assistant professor at the Geology Department at East Stroudsburg University. He worked with Edie Stevens and another professor studying invasive plants in Cherry Valley and the Brodhead watershed. Hu feels option A is not an option. Option C does not make sense from a watershed perspective, because it does not protect the upstream headwaters. Option B makes the most sense. Hu shares that he just became a resident of Cherry Valley, too – he signed the contract this morning.
- 12) **Marie Springer** – President of Walkill and Shawmagunk Grasslands NWR, and member of friends groups. Eighteen years ago, Scott Angus did a study on the establishment of Walkill refuge. Springer can no longer go back to the town in Colorado where she grew up – it is now a megalopolis of McMansions. That is why she fights to preserve open space. She says it is extremely important to preserve this area – we all know the pressures of development. About USFWS, she emphasizes that they do not do eminent domain, do not do takings – whatever local or state agencies have done, USFWS does not do that. Springer is supportive of FoCV, and Congressman Kanjorski’s efforts.
- 13) **Pat Bixler** – Bixler notes that her husband and she are the fourth generation on her husband’s family’s farm. Their land is protected through agricultural easements. Bixler says she has read through the whole plan and has two questions: 1) of the 1,250 properties on the “wish list” – what percentage of property owners have been asked whether they would consider selling to USFWS?; and 2) \$63.4 million per year in property taxes will be lost – what percentage of this lost revenue can be expected from the federal government?

**Quist** responds that on #1, no property owners have been asked, but there is an assumption that land will become available, and USFWS would like to protect that land from development. Quist notes that he wanted to respond earlier to the gentleman [*Muehlhan*] who said he would not want a federal government presence here. Quist says he can only point to USFWS’s track record of past acquisitions. The policy of USFWS is to work with willing sellers. Only two out of thousands of acquisitions have been through condemnations.

**Bixler** says that she has not asked about condemnations. What if there are no willing sellers, she asks?

**Quist** responds that USFWS would then go somewhere else.

**Bixler** said she assumes USFWS would get The Nature Conservancy's land, the Blakeslee Farm. She continues with a question about wetland tax owners paying more to the township than USFWS.

**Quist** says with regard to question #2 – this is not the case. Quist discusses revenue sharing payments, which are funded from different federal sources, and paid to municipalities. Other things to consider are that there are less costs associated with lands that are part of open space – i.e., “the schoolbus doesn't stop at the refuge.”

**Bixler** notes that she asked a question last time: what if wetland landowner sells only a portion of land to USFWS, and another portion to development?

**Quist** responds that it is the property owner's right to make decisions about his or her own land.

**Bixler** states that she thinks that protection of Cherry Valley is good, but can be done in more local ways.

**Bangert** asks if further discussion of these questions can be postponed until immediately following the meeting in the interest of time. Commenter consents to this.

- 14) **Paul Allen** – Allen is a retired philosophy professor, who taught at East Stroudsburg University for 24 years. In the 1980s, he became interested in threat of nuclear war, and became involved with groups that were active against nuclear war. In late 80s, he became interested in what humans were doing to the environment. He realized we are heading to an “ecolocaust” – we are still heading in this direction; we are wiping out species at a great rate. He thinks we all realize this, but that we forget how fast and how desperate the situation is. We need to take strong action, like plan B, as well as phasing out fossil fuels to help control climate change and global warming. What we are proposing here is significant, and we need a lot more of these actions around the world to prevent the ecolocaust.
- 15) **Deb DiPasquale** – DiPasquale has been a local resident for a long time. She is here representing her family, mother, niece, son, wife, youngest daughter, self. We all love Cherry Valley. We don't need to talk about what is here; the experts have done that. DiPasquale's concern is regarding people's great concerns. This is a big move and seems risky to some. She notes that we all have our hearts in this place. DiPasquale notes that her daughter is getting married this weekend and the reception will be right here. She had her first grandchild in September, so there is a fourth generation of her family living right here. She notes the need to think about the future, and not be wrapped up in one's own life, right now. Now is the time to take the next step – not the time to be timid, but to take a bigger view. Look to the future for all the generations that will come, and will get to look out at that view [*pointing out the window*]. DiPasquale says she does not know how much time our dear Cherry Valley has left. Now is the time to “go or get off the pot.” She asks the audience to support Plan B.
- 16) **Theresa Merli** – Merli is the Vice Chairman of the Monroe County Board of Commissioners. The board very enthusiastically supports the recommendation of USFWS to

establish a refuge and to protect rare habitat. The board joins with The Nature Conservancy and Friends of Cherry Valley in support. Merli wants to add some comments to Suzanne McCool's from yesterday. They support the preferred alternative, establishing a refuge protecting over 20,000 acres potentially. USFWS would purchase land outright from willing owners, and would negotiate conservation easements from willing landowners only. Merli states that it is the board's understanding that the refuge can be established administratively without additional legislation, and they encourage USFWS to do this. The refuge is compatible with the Monroe County Natural Areas Inventory and with Monroe 2020, the county comprehensive plan. The Service will help the Monroe County community to realize its conservation vision well before 2020. Merli expresses support for what the county commissioners hope will be future Cherry Valley National Wildlife Refuge.

- 17) **Ed Cramer** – Cramer is a Stroud Township supervisor, and is also a resident who lives within what will hopefully be the refuge. He supports the refuge because it will increase property value and help protect residents from overdevelopment. Eight property owners in Stroud Township alone are waiting to conserve their property, but the township's funds from its bond referendum are depleted. Cramer notes that he would like to answer some of the concerns/thoughts expressed by other commenters. 1) Regarding doing conservation on the local level – Cramer has already said that we are out of funds. 2) Regarding Tocks Island Dam – the government came into the area for a different purpose. The project was defeated, and it was turned into National Park Service land instead of a dam. Ecologically, the dam was not feasible. We need to remember that National Park Service land is for recreation, whereas the NWR is a refuge. 3) Cramer says he will not debate where Pat Bixler got the \$63.4 million figure [*Bixler here interjects that is was from the study*], but something does not add up. Cramer said that he testified in Washington, D.C. back in 2005 to get this study started, and was told then that funding was a problem and that the refuge would not go forward. He thinks if anything will kill this, it is funding. Current US public debt – \$10.5 trillion. Bailout of mismanaged banks and financial institutions – \$700 billion. Cost per day for the war in Iraq – \$300 billion. Cost of creating Cherry Valley NWR for generations to come – priceless.
- 18) **Scott Angus** – Angus introduces himself as the “guy Marie [*Springer*] was talking about before.” Angus grew up in Walkill Refuge before it was a refuge. Now he lives in Mt. Bethel and is a charter member of the Friends of Walkill. The federal government is a scary thing – he can agree with the gentleman who commented earlier. But his parents still live in the refuge, and USFWS have been great neighbors. His father still fishes in same areas as before. His friends still hunt in same areas. He still goes back to do photography and he is the most affected because he has to get a permit to do those things. Angus supports plan B. 20 years ago he was in the same position when the refuge at Walkill was being established, and people were not happy about it at the time. Numerous local township politicians were opposed, but there are not many opposed now. The refuge has been a great neighbor, and the people at Great Swamp would say the same thing. As he mentioned earlier, he lives in Mt. Bethel and would say, too, that The Nature Conservancy are great neighbors.
- 19) **Pat Kennedy** – Kennedy lives down in the valley below Stroudmoor. She says she could not find anything in Cherry Valley, so she bought a 40-year-old ranch house and it is okay.

Kennedy is the President of the Brodhead Watershed Association. Unfortunately the association did not have a vote finalized. One thing we have not really talked about is the wildlife that would be protected, Kennedy notes. Before moving here, she never saw a bog turtle. Recently, she saw two bog turtles digging a hole to lay their eggs, and as you know it is unlikely they will make it (only 1 out of 10,000 survives). She would like her grandchildren to be able to see what she saw. She supports Plan B.

20) **Tina Drake** – Drake lives in Cherry Valley and is a township supervisor. She thanks everyone who has provided information. Personally, she thinks that the effects of the refuge will be positive and will enhance the local communities. Drake strongly supports plan B.

21) **Tim Schaeffer** – Schaeffer is with the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. The PFBC strongly supports option B. The PFBC has responsibility for fish, amphibians, and reptiles. Chris Urban with the PFBC has been part of study team. PFBC will be submitting its official comments in support before the deadline. Establishment of the refuge will offer more fishing and boating opportunities for Pennsylvanians.

After all comments have been made, **Bangert** proposes that **Melberg** explain the next steps in the process. She reminds the audience that representatives from the USFWS, the Congressman's office, and The Nature Conservancy will stay to answer questions.

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**Carl Melberg** discusses the next steps. Dec. 5 is the deadline for public comments. However, the public can send comments in after the deadline, too – USFWS will still accept them. Melberg encourages the audience to send him an e-mail or submit comments online. USFWS will look at each comment, evaluate it, and decide what changes need to be made to the draft document. If there are no or limited changes, it will be easier, but if there are more there will be more discussion within the team. Melberg states that when USFWS knows what the next action will be, a newsletter will be sent out, describing the next steps.

**MEETING ADJOURNS**