

Officials meet over sale of Spring Creek Canyon

By **Brendan McNally**
COLLEGIAN STAFF WRITER

A compromise is emerging on the sale of the Spring Creek Canyon property that may allow Penn State students to get out of the classroom and learn about wildlife conservation under real-world conditions.

Penn State and Pennsylvania Game Commission officials met with local legislators Kerry Benninghoff, R-Centre, and Mike Hanna, D-Clinton, to lay the groundwork for the sale of the 1,800 acres.

Penn State and the Game Commission have fought for ownership of the Benner Township property, which is prized for its scenic beauty and untouched natural resources. The land is currently owned by the state, but lawmakers are debating two bills determining who can buy the property.

Penn State hopes to use the land for agricultural research, while the Game Commission wants to develop woodlands for hunting.

No concrete deal was agreed upon in the meeting, but Benninghoff said the compromise could include provisions to allow Penn State students and faculty to work directly with the Game Commission to create educational opportunities.

"We're looking at opportunities where students, professors and the Game Commission can work in tandem to create a real-world experience outside of the classroom," he said.

In the meeting, all the parties agreed to hold a town hall-style event on the sale, which Benninghoff hopes will happen sometime in late January.

Last year, he introduced a bill that would provide for the sale of the property to the Game Commission, while Hanna introduced a bill that would sell the land to Penn State.

Jennifer Shuey, executive director of the ClearWater Conservancy, said that either Penn State or the Game Commission could own the property, as long as they follow guidelines that protect the land's ecology.

She wants any future owner to develop the property based on the Spring Creek Canyon Master Plan, created by representatives of dozens of organizations that have interest in the land.

"We want to make sure that all of the owners have a conservation easement on the property and are managing for the resources of the site," she said.

But some county residents have expressed concern about the possibility of Penn State receiving the land.



Collegian file photo

Signs from Rockview State Correctional Institution edge the proposed Spring Creek Canyon Nature Reserve near Fisherman's Paradise. Penn State and the Pennsylvania Game Commission are currently debating the ownership of the property.

Richard Shreve, of Bellefonte, is opposed to Penn State owning any portion. He's seen the university's rapid development of land surrounding the campus and is wor-

ried Spring Creek Canyon might also be developed under its ownership.

"I would like to see Penn State completely out of it," he said.

"Penn State does not have a reputation for doing the right thing for the county."

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