

## Community event seeks input for Musser Gap to Valleylands project



Penn State is partnering with the ClearWater Conservancy to conserve its Musser Gap property in Ferguson Township. The University aims to protect the water supply and plants and animals on the 365-acre tract while allowing passive use of the land by visitors.

*Image: Daniel Meehan*

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January 27, 2019

UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — The first community conversation focused on the Musser Gap to Valleylands (MG2V) project will take place from 6 to 8 p.m. on Jan. 31 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County at 780 Waupelani Dr. in State College.

The non-profit Clearwater Conservancy has partnered with Penn State to help facilitate public input. “ClearWater supports Penn State President Eric Barron’s vision to protect the water, promote biodiversity and maintain open space,” said Deb Nardone, ClearWater Conservancy’s executive director. “We hope the community will come out and engage in meaningful conversation on Jan. 31.”

Visitors to the public input session will have the chance to interact and brainstorm with Penn State students, who are studying the site and designing options for future land use. Students will be hosting a half dozen “breakout” stations focused on various topics related to the property, such as recreation, forestry, habitat, water resource protection, and agriculture and farming.

People planning to attend the event are asked to RSVP at <https://goo.gl/forms/kAlsylvw7l9f5fPoy1>. Visitors are encouraged to carpool, as parking may be limited at the church. Light refreshments will be provided.

Announced by Barron in December, the MG2V project is an effort to conserve land the University owns roughly between Whitehall Road and Rothrock State Forest at Musser Gap, in Ferguson Township just outside of the University Park campus.

The 365-acre property includes the Musser Greenway Trail and is bordered by Rothrock State Forest and the proposed Whitehall Road Regional Park.

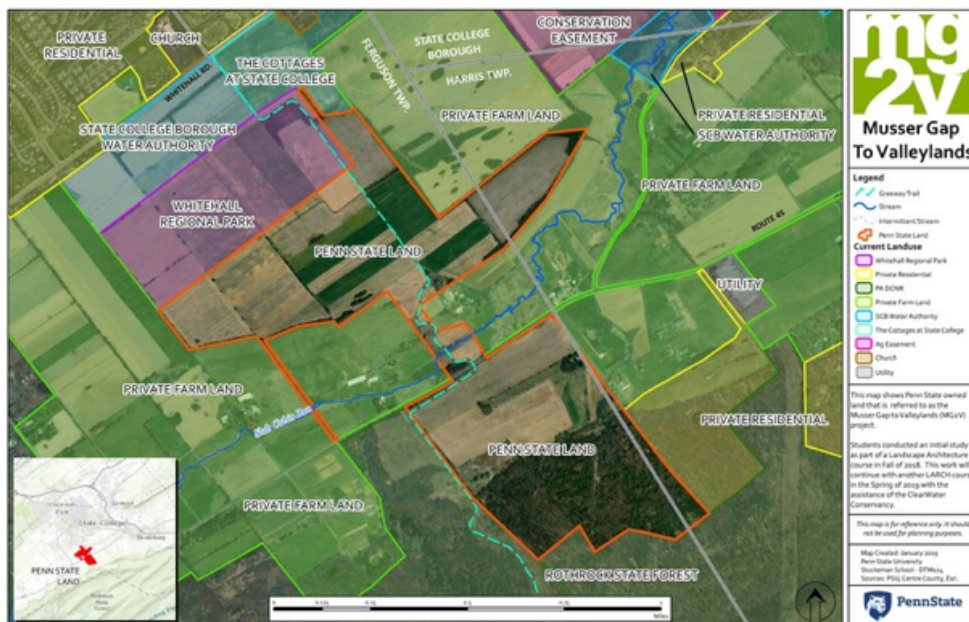


IMAGE: PENN STATE

As part of the work, the University partnered with ClearWater Conservancy, a non-profit organization focused on conserving and restoring the natural resources in central Pennsylvania. ClearWater is working with the community and seeking input from local residents on the project.

A student team, comprised of Penn State undergraduate and graduate students,

spent the fall 2018 semester carefully studying the property as part of an upper-level landscape architecture course.

A second class is continuing the work this semester, expanding on the project by seeking input from stakeholders both within and outside of the University. All of this information will be used by the students to develop a range of possibilities for the site's future.

A recent survey developed by the students and ClearWater sought input about the project, and is helping to inform the Jan. 31 event.

Eliza Pennypacker, professor and head of landscape architecture, said the students' plan is to use all of the information gathered this past fall, as well as feedback from stakeholders this spring, to generate preliminary ideas for possible future land use of the site that focuses on environmental and social benefits.

"Penn State landscape architecture is honored to help facilitate this important project," Pennypacker said. "Harnessing faculty expertise and student enthusiasm for environmental health and public benefit, engaging town and gown in meaningful conversations about a significant site — all of this poses a tremendous opportunity for us to have a positive impact in our community."

*Last Updated January 28, 2019*