

Online survey seeks public opinion on Musser Gap property's future



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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UNIVERSITY PARK, Pa. — Penn State and ClearWater Conservancy are seeking input from the campus and local community as part of the University's effort to conserve land it owns, roughly between Whitehall Road and Rothrock State Forest at Musser Gap, in Ferguson Township near the University Park campus.

The online survey released today (Jan. 7), is available at <https://goo.gl/forms/EVj8RVnXT4bhAAQf1>. The survey asks respondents about concerns, recreational opportunities and possible amenities. The survey will close on Jan. 17.

“We’re very happy to be working with ClearWater to engage our local and campus community as we consider the passive use options for Musser Gap while protecting the overall environment, including the water supply,” said David Gray, senior vice

president for finance and business at Penn State.

Deb Nardone, executive director at ClearWater Conservancy, said, “This survey is the first step in shaping the priorities for the 365 acres of the Musser Gap to Valleylands, or MG2V, site. It’s very important for the community to engage in this process to help shape the future of the MG2V site for generations to come.”

Nardone said information collected from the survey will help to drive the conversation at the first community forum, set for 6 to 8 p.m. on Jan. 31 at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County at 780 Waupelani Dr. in State College.

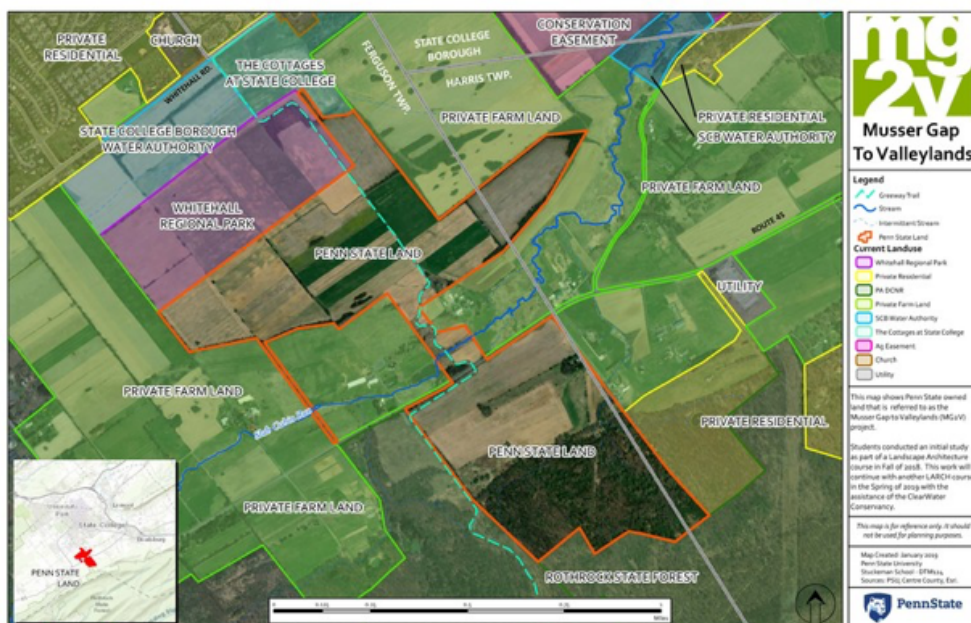


IMAGE: PENN STATE

Penn State President Eric Barron announced the University’s vision for the MG2V site on Dec. 11. “Our vision for this area is to not only help protect the local water supply, plant and animal species, but also make it a place people can enjoy nature, learn about the environment and be inspired,” he said in a release.

The University has partnered with ClearWater Conservancy, a non-profit organization that aims to conserve and restore the natural resources in central Pennsylvania, which is working with the community and seeking input from local residents.

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

This past fall, a student team comprised of Penn State undergraduate and graduate students, spent the semester carefully studying the property as part of an upper-level landscape architecture course. Led by faculty experts, the students developed a profile of the site's existing conditions, including the land's biophysical, geological, hydrological, ecological, agricultural and historic characteristics.

Eliza Pennypacker, professor and head of landscape architecture, said the work will continue with another class this spring. The group will expand on the project understanding by working with ClearWater Conservancy to gain input from stakeholders both within and outside of the University.

"The survey information and the meeting results will help provide a foundational understanding of community values, interests and concerns to help inform the students' idea generation," Pennypacker said.

Using data gathered by the fall class and feedback from stakeholders this spring, the student team will generate preliminary ideas for possible future land use of the site that focus on environmental and social benefits.

A downloadable PDF version of the map may be accessed at: https://www.psu.edu/ur/newsdocuments/MG2V_map.PDF.

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