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Spring Creek Canyon opens to public

Kristin Stoller Oct 3, 2011

After six years, the Spring Creek Canyon has finally opened to the public in what State Rep. Kerry Benninghoff, R-Centre, called a living example of how democracy works.

"If I were to die tomorrow, I would look back with fondness on this project," Benninghoff said.

"This project symbolizes what we can do for future generations."

The Spring Creek Canyon -- an area that includes a creek, walking trails and a bridge -- was dedicated in a ceremony at 2 p.m. Friday, led by the Spring Creek Canyon Cooperative Management Coalition.

The ceremony unveiled signs and an informational kiosk that greeted visitors to more than

1,800 acres jointly managed by

the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission, the state Department of Corrections, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Penn State and Benner

Township.

The land was previously part of the Department of Corrections' Rockview State Correctional Institution.

Attendees were led over a bridge and into a clearing, where a tent and chairs were assembled. There, the ceremony began with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Color Guard.

In attendance were Benninghoff and State Rep. Mike Hanna, D-Clinton, who, along with state Senator Jake Corman, R-Centre, co-sponsored House Bill 1890, which authorized the Department of General Services to convey the Spring Creek Canyon area to the current managers.

It was signed into law, as Act 55, on July 9, 2010.

Though Benninghoff said there was much debate over what to do with and who should own the property, he was pleased with the community's involvement.

Hanna agreed, and said he thought the ceremony was the beginning of the end, as trails and other recreational areas still needed to be built.

"It's a great honor to be here today and see the journey begin," Hanna said.

"I believe [the Spring Creek Canyon] creates tremendous educational and recreational opportunities."

Dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences Bruce McPheron also spoke at the event, and said part of the university's role is to serve the citizens of the commonwealth.

McPheron said Penn State would play an active role

in the management of the property and was thankful for the

partnerships the university achieved with the variety of organizations.

Penn State will oversee the agricultural research and management area; Benner Township will manage a portion of the land designated as a recreational area; the Game Commission will manage a portion of the land as a terrestrial and aquatic wildlife resource management area; and the Fish and Boat Commission will manage the controlled limited access area and hatchery.

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