

Appendix B

Key Person Interview Summary

The following contains a summary findings of major points gleaned from the interviews of this Planning Process. This summary reflects feedback from 36 interviewees although the contract called for 15. Interviews were confidential in nature with a goal of obtaining open, honest and direct information about the Site, the project, opportunities and concerns from a variety of Individuals and organizations. Those interviewed represented the general citizenry; elected and appointed officials; municipalities; conservation organizations; education; research; recreation; trails; outdoor recreationists; tourism; economic development; government agencies at the state, regional, county and municipal levels; planners; conservancies; businesses; non-profit organizations. The planning team was engaged with citizen comment throughout the process including responding to e-mail and telephone inquiries and input.

1. **Study Schedule** - Concern about the length of time available for the project study. Interviewees expressed concern that there was not enough time in the schedule to address the project requirements in a meaningful manner.
2. **Study Focus** – Questions about the true purpose of the project were raised. Concern was evident that people in the community felt that the study was an exercise in order to give Penn State ownership of the property instead of a true master plan that would provide an authentic assessment and recommendations for the conservation and responsible public use of this Site.
3. **Property Ownership** – Although the determination of the property ownership was a study goal that many interviewees desired, the master plan and management purpose was not to determine ownership.
4. **Research** –Interviewees expressed concern that not enough information was known about various aspects to the site. People were concerned that key information would not be available in order to develop a master site plan and a management plan.
5. **Reforestation/Grasslands** – There were diverse opinions about the Site regarding reforestation and promulgation of the Site for grasslands and grassland habitat. Some interviewed favored reforestation. Others expressed concern about the practicality of reforestation. Still others advocated grasslands for the Site.
6. **Conservation First** - There is consensus that the conservation of natural resources is the primary purpose of this project. Everything else is secondary. Some interviewed state that the creek and water conservation are the most important factor while others say that the conservation of resources that are threatened and endangered is equally important and perhaps getting a secondary priority in the planning process. Other recreational uses could be included as long as they are appropriate and don't impact the conservation of the resources negatively.
7. **Science Based** - It is essential that science drive the study and decision-making process. Public opinion cannot be the deciding factor – the site is too

important to bow to public opinion alone. The presentation of research findings about specific aspects, site locations, and resources is crucial. The Planning Team needs to convey what is important, why it is important, what the threats are to the identified components and potential strategies to protect the resources. The argument of re-forestation is not appearing as an issue. The focus instead is how to improve the conservation of what is there. The sense of “leave it alone” does not align with the science of conserving the sight resources – e.g. invasive species – you can’t leave the invasives alone.

8. **Agriculture** - Various perspectives on agriculture emerged. This included conservation for agriculture, potential negative impacts on the creek from agricultural practices and definitions of agriculture and what would be allowed on the site. People pointed out the agricultural preservation efforts underway in Centre County that involve the use of millions of dollars in funding to preserve the agricultural lands of Centre County.
9. **Recreation** – While the conservation of the Site is key, interviewees expressed concern that public access for recreation would not be given appropriate attention and focus in the plan.
10. **Pristine Nature of the Site** – People recognize that the site is not pristine. They do however recognize that the site is special. Some have called their experiences there almost spiritual. There is consensus to avoid using the term pristine to describe the site although many believe the press does seem to like using that word to describe Spring Creek Canyon. Interviewees advised that the Planning Team should make the point in reports that the site is not pristine but it is special and that resources are threatened and endangered.
11. **Skepticism** - Even with the conservation easement, many are skeptical of what will happen five, ten or fifteen years or longer to the site. Those skeptical of PSU expressed this sentiment toward administration and NOT faculty. Many interviewed would like to see more faculty involved.
12. **Balanced Perspective** – The history of Penn State University regarding previous conservation efforts emerged in interviews. Projects such as Mount Nittany and the environmental center among other previous investments were raised to balance sentiment that the university is not conservation oriented.
13. **Financing and Organizational Capacity** – Where is the money going to come from to manage and operate this site? Benner Township is a small municipality with limited resources. The conservancies are strapped. If the idea of this site becoming a major research center for conservation, then grants and research funding should be available. There is some sentiment that a state agency should manage the site as well as recognition that the state does not want to be responsible for managing the site because of its expense.

14. **Security** – People raised the issue of security. Organizations interviewed revealed that there is no one organization that provides on site security now. This is of concern to many people.
15. **Information** – Committee members and the public want Ed as much information about the project and Site as possible. Anything the planning g team could do to get information out would be helpful and useful.