

Back to the future or forward to the past?

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Over the last 25 years, the White Township supervisors have solicited three proposals to timber White's Woods Nature Center (David Beale, 1995; David Babyak, 2007-08; Mike Lawer, 2020). On all three occasions, the taxpayers have spoken: Leave WWNC in its natural state, for the intended purposes (recreation, conservation and historic preservation) stipulated by Project 70, which purchased the land for the citizens of Pennsylvania and not just White Township.

Although the most recent proposal is still under review by the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, which has jurisdiction over Project 70 lands, the supervisors appear to recognize that criticisms of Lawer's proposal by multiple well respected, credentialed professionals in conservation, stormwater management, forestry and ecology are valid.

How do we know this? At the Dec. 2, 2020, township meeting, Supervisor George Lenz distributed the Beale plan (yes, from 1995) for review. This may make sense to him, since Mr. Lenz observed at a previous meeting that they should have gotten the money out of White's Woods in 1995. But a plan that was rejected in 1995 doesn't make sense in 2020 either.

What have we learned? The primary goal is not stewardship, it's timbering. While the justification for the proposals has changed, the intention has not: Remove some trees — maybe a

lot — and make money. If you don't believe that, then what's the purpose of resurrecting a 25-year-old proposal?

Over these same 25 years, Friends of White's Woods has worked diligently to save WWNC. We've hired consultants to assess the nature center, conducted consumer surveys, compiled petitions opposing timbering, sponsored presentations for the supervisors, educated the public about park management. Additionally, our members have conducted maintenance projects, from clearing trails to building stairs to removing invasive plants and more.

In summary, FWW is eager to participate in the future of WWNC. We've learned about science-based strategies to manage our park and projects to provide revenue for their implementation. We encourage the supervisors to work with us to move on to 2021, not backward to 1995!

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