



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DCNR Sets Public Meeting to Discuss New William Penn State Forest Tract

Elverson, PA – The addition of a 400-acre tract, formerly part of the Wernersville State Hospital grounds, to the William Penn State Forest District will be reviewed at a public meeting, beginning at 7 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 27, at the South Heidelberg Township Building, the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources announced today.

The session is being hosted by DCNR's Bureau of Forestry in conjunction with the office of state Rep. Jim Cox, Sinking Springs. The township building is located at 555 A Mountain Home Road, Sinking Springs, South Heidelberg Township, Berks County.

Originally watershed acreage for Wernersville State Hospital, the land formerly known as the George W. Wertz tract was transferred to DCNR from the state Department of Human Services. Wertz was the original owner of a farm and saw/grist mill where the hospital campus was built in 1891. Wernersville was selected over 31 other sites in 19 different counties for the then-new state hospital.

Forestry officials say the land is marked by diverse cover, including dry oak, tulip poplar and a mix of northern hardwoods, as well as two small agriculture areas which eventually will grow into early successional habitat. The tract is bisected by Hospital Creek, known to harbor native trout.

"Future Bureau of Forestry plans for the site include protecting ash trees in the Hospital Creek corridor from the emerald ash borer, as well as treating surviving hemlock trees from the hemlock wooly adelgid," said Rick Hartlieb, assistant district forester with the William Penn State Forest District. "The remainder of the 400 acres will be open to the public for hunting, hiking and other passive recreation. There are old woods trails, but not a developed trail system yet."

Details on William Penn and Pennsylvania's other 19 districts can be found at www.dcnr.state.pa.us (select "Forestry" and then "Find a Forest.")

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