



PA Game Commission | News

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Release # 59 - 99
Nov. 18, 1999
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GAME COMMISSION JOINS CENTRAL PA CONSERVANCY TO CELEBRATE PRESERVATION OF MILLER'S GAP

SILVER SPRING TOWNSHIP, Cumberland County – Representatives of the Pennsylvania Game Commission today joined the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and other supporters to celebrate the permanent protection of a 79-acre tract along the Blue Mountain. As part of the event, the Conservancy unveiled a sign welcoming hunters and the public to enjoy the beauty and bounty of the property along Miller's Gap Road.

"We are here today to celebrate the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy's willingness to step forward and purchase this property to preserve it for outdoor recreation and wildlife habitat," said Game Commission President Vernon K. Shaffer. "It is important that the Conservancy took a leadership role in saving this particular parcel for the native wildlife and future generations of hunters and outdoor enthusiasts."

Commission Executive Director Vern Ross noted that as property values continue to rise the Game Commission must rely more heavily on partnerships with sportsmen and conservation organizations in order to obtain more lands for hunting opportunities.

"The Game Commission would never have been able to afford to add this tract to our state game lands system," Ross said. "Without the partnership of the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy and the other project supporters, it is easy to imagine how this prime piece of property could have been lost to development.

"This property, among many other recent Commission acquisitions, is an unusual purchase in that it is adjacent to current state game lands and is within sight of four counties and a large, dense human population where open spaces are quickly being lost to

development.”

At the request of the Game Commission, the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy purchased this tract at the Witmer estate auction for \$175,500. The Game Commission will pay \$31,600 – which is equivalent to the maximum \$400 per acre the Commission may pay out of the Game Fund – to acquire the property from the Conservancy. The Conservancy is seeking to raise the remaining funds through tax-deductible donations.

Once the Conservancy raises the necessary funds, the property will be turned over to the Game Commission and will become part of State Game Lands No. 170, which currently consists of nearly 9,100 acres.

“The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy was founded to promote the conservation of our natural resources and to participate in developing programs for environmental improvement,” said Carol Witzeman, president of the Central Pennsylvania Conservancy, a non-profit conservation group. “The purchase of this property is in keeping with our mission and furthers our commitment to this region.

“This property lies on the summit of Blue Mountain and is part of the Kittatinny Ridge. It is a prime hiking area and is considered by the Pennsylvania Audubon Society to be an Important Bird Area critical to migratory and non-migratory birds.”

During the event, members of several prominent statewide and local conservation and sportsmen’s groups showed their support for the project by presenting checks totaling more than \$14,000. Of those attending, the Safari Club International’s Blue Mountain Chapter pledged \$5,000; the National Wild Turkey Federation’s Pennsylvania Chapter, \$4,000; the Keystone Trails Association, \$2,000; the Susquehanna Appalachian Trail Club, \$1,500; the Appalachian Audubon Society, \$1,000; and the Susquehanna River Waterfowlers Association and its Wetlands Trust affiliate, \$1,000.

Witzeman noted that an additional \$6,000 in private donations had been raised prior to today’s event.

Tax-deductible donations can be made to Central Pennsylvania Conservancy at P.O. Box 587, Harrisburg, PA 17108.

Other supporters of the project include: Sen. Harold F. Mowery Jr.; Reps. Pat Vance, Jerry Nailor, Al Masland and Allan Egolf; the state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR); the Perry and Cumberland county boards of commissioners; and the Rye and Silver Spring township boards of supervisors.

The Central Pennsylvania Conservancy is a non-profit organization that is active in preservation and conservation projects in Cumberland; Dauphin; Perry; Juniata; and Huntingdon counties. Earlier this year, the Conservancy had purchased and donated to the Game Commission the 669-acre tract known as "Thousand Steps" in Huntingdon County.

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