



# Friends of White's Woods, Inc.

P.O. Box 1271  
Indiana, PA 15701

September 28, 2022

White Township Supervisors  
Indian Springs Road  
Indiana, PA 15701

Dear White Township Supervisors Lenz, Gallo, Gemmell, Gillette, and McCauley:

Listed below are a number of questions and concerns regarding the deer hunting plan in White's Woods.

- I. No specific dates for a hunting plan were made available to citizens **at any time** before signs were posted on September 21<sup>st</sup>. In other words, at no time were citizens permitted to view the final deer hunting plan:
  - a. The Township staff member in charge of the hunting plan reported to the media on September 12<sup>th</sup> that **he was unsure of the dates when hunting would take place or how long it would last.**
  - b. On September 15 (less than two weeks ago), Supervisor Gillette told the Stewardship Committee that the dates "are not cut in stone. We haven't decided yet."
  - c. Mr. Shaffer also said to the media on September 12<sup>th</sup> that he wasn't sure that any final plan had been posted for review. (Citizens can confirm that it is very, very difficult to find. Only the draft plan is prominently posted.)
    - Isn't it usual for citizens to be allowed to view a Township plan prior to its implementation, particularly since it is significantly different from the draft?
    - Wouldn't adequate information promote safety?
- II. Mr. Shaffer also stated that "there is no plan in the program" for any safety protection for hikers, yet concerns about safety have been expressed by hundreds of citizens, particularly park users. Surely, the Township isn't trying to evict regular park users from White's Woods?
  - What plans do you have in place to support regular park users and make sure, as DCNR underscored, that **plans should not interfere with the recreational use, such as hiking and walking,** of the site?
- III. The Township has acknowledged that the deer hunting plan should be predicated on data, but the plan was implemented in the absence of data.
  - How can you proceed with a plan in the absence of data?
  - What good does it do? How do you know if the plan is worthwhile?

IV. On the Township's website, it is noted that the **White Township Stewardship Committee** will be working with deer management as part of their work for an integrated stewardship plan in White's Woods.

- How have the Township Supervisors and staff worked with the Stewardship Committee regarding this deer management plan?
- On September 15, 2022, the Stewardship Committee requested all the data that was collected on which the Township's Deer Management Plan is based. Has that data been shared with the Stewardship Committee?

V. Mr. Shaffer informed the public on September 12, 2022, that the deer management plan was based on the feedback that was collected by the Township.

In her August 23, 2021, feedback to the Township, **Jeannine Fleegle, PA Game Commission Wildlife Biologist**, cautioned that the goals of the plan should NOT be determined by the number of deer killed – and she pointed the Township staff toward a Pennsylvania Game Commission posted document, Guide to Community Deer Management (attached).

- How does your final plan reflect this Game Commission biologist's concerns?
- How closely have you worked with the document that she cited?

In his September 8, 2021 feedback to the Township, **Tom Ford, DCNR Director of Recreation and Conservation**, noted (as did Ms. Fleegle) that the plan you have is really about hunters and not about forest management and invited the Township to develop a draft focused on land stewardship and share that with DCNR.

- How does your final plan reflect the feedback provided to the Township by Tom Ford, DCNR Director of Recreation and Conservation?

In response to the Township's request for feedback, numerous citizens commented, as DCNR did in 2021, that any management activity ought to be predicated on data and directed by goals and objectives that are driven by public input.

- How does your plan reflect the public input that underscored the need for a deer management plan to be part of an integrated stewardship plan?
- How do your plan objectives reflect public input?

Friends of White's Woods members, anticipating park users shock at the signs posted by the Township last Wednesday, stood at the 12<sup>th</sup> Street Entrance for three and one-half hours on Saturday, September 24<sup>th</sup>. We talked to over 50 people who were entering the woods. Most were completely surprised by the posted hunting. As with all other data collected, over half said that they were too frightened to go on a walk or take their kids into a park while hunting is ongoing.

Surely the Township can do better.

Sincerely,

Board of Directors,  
Friends of White's Woods