

Crosswicks/Doctors Creek Regional Greenway Planning Group
Doctors Creek to Assunpink Creek Trail Feasibility Study
Public Meeting
September 5, 2006
Allentown First Aid Squad Building
Waker Avenue, Allentown

Summary of Public Comments

There were over 50 people in attendance at the meeting (see attached list). Suzanne Forbes asked how people had heard of the meeting. The breakout as shown of the hands raised was as follows:

Newspaper – 5

Mail – 10

Municipal Newsletter/Website – 1

Following the Power Point Presentation an opportunity was given for the public to comment and provide input into the planning process.

Alison Baker, Plumsted Township, asked what type of surface the trail would be. It was noted that the study is conceptual and that it would depend on the type of use with bikes, strollers and handicapped people requiring a paved surface. Other types of surfaces that are less impervious would be adequate for the uses such as horse trails, hiking trails, etc. Clark Gilman, Hamilton Twp, noted that NJDEP takes a dim view of paved trails. Paul Emery, Plumsted Twp., asked Ms. Baker what type of trail she would like to see. Ms Baker replied that it would be best to keep the trail in its natural state as much as possible but yet have it be wheelchair/handicapped accessible. Walter Helfrecht, UF Twp., noted that boardwalks are a possibility.

Alma Turk, 675 Allentown Road, state that she owns both sides of Doctors Creek and that she would not like to see a trail through there.

Patrick Hasse, teaches environmental policy at Stockton State College, asked what incentives/compensation exists for landowners. He suggested that we describe the advantages and benefits of providing trail access.

Marc Covitz, Upper Freehold Twp., noted that the Greenway Group works with open space trust groups such as the D&R Greenway Land Trust.

Steve Alexak, 20 Heritage Drive, Allentown asked what kind of response has the Group received from the municipalities working the Greenway Plan into their Master Plan. Betsy Poinsett noted that there are several municipalities that are in the process of adopting the Greenway Plan into their Master Plan.

Clark Gilman, Hamilton Twp., noted that their Environmental Commission has been interested in acquisition due to natural features such as steep slopes, wetlands, etc. Greg Westfall noted that the Allentown Environmental Commission is currently working with a private property owner on the donation of land on steep slopes adjoining Doctors Creek.

Walter Helfrecht, Upper Freehold Twp., noted that Upper Freehold will be having an October 12th Planning Board workshop to look at updates to the Master Plan. Mike Hunninghake, Bordentown City, noted that the Group is advocating the adoption of ordinances for steep slopes, stream buffers, etc.

Richard O-...ski, Upper Freehold, asked who is going to maintain the trails. He noted that in Heritage Park in Allentown Borough young boys brook cross beams making it inaccessible for the handicapped.

Marc Covitz noted that the Public Works people normally do the maintenance in municipal parks.

Frances Saky, Hamilton Twp., asked how many of the representatives in the Greenway Group actually own property along Doctors Creek and would they be willing to provide trail access. She would not be interested in having the trail across her property. Betsy Poinsett, Chairperson, Allentown Boro, noted that she owns property on Allentown Lake which is a part of the Doctors Creek stream corridor.

Corky Danch, who owns the Mill in Allentown and a farm in Hamilton, both along Doctors Creek, noted that he has had to clean a trail along Doctors Creek in Heritage Park. He says that there is often too much garbage to be picked up in one trip. Allentown Borough does not maintain it. He asked "why would I want a bunch of people walking on my property." "Now we're opening pristine areas – need to be careful." He noted that children catching fish leave them in the street for cars to run over.

Alison Baker noted that trails are often maintained by volunteers and groups.

Melissa Nelson, 104 Red Valley Road, Upper Freehold Twp., asked who should could have come and maintain the creek on their property. There are beaver and brush issues. Greg Westfall noted that occasionally County Mosquito Commissions will come out and clear debris which might be causing mosquito breeding. Mike Hunninghake promised to get back with more information.

Marc Covitz (addressing Corky Danch) noted that his remarks had referred to Heritage Park. Corky noted that he has seen fisherman lines and Styrofoam. Marc noted that he has navigated the trail system in Assunpink. He disagreed with Corky Danch and noted that the litter problem is only a problem at the

access points of the trail system. Litter is more of a problem at access points to trails which could be made less of a problem with properly placed receptacles.

Patrick Hasse noted that there is a need to assure landowners what level of maintenance could occur with a trail system. Betsy Poinsett stated that any sighting of littering, etc. should be reported to the local municipal clerk who could notify appropriate authorities including NJDEP.

Paul Kraska, Washington Township, asked why additional trails should be built when the trails we already have aren't always maintained. He cited the Tantum Park trail system as an example of this.

Sharon Steffen, Walnford in Upper Freehold Township, asked how does the Greenway Plan contribute to land preservation. Greg Westfall noted that the objective of providing public access for trails is only one objective of the Plan. Natural features' protection for surface water quality protection is another. Natural features can include steep slopes, stream buffers, etc. NJDEP does not regulate these features. This is commonly done by local municipal ordinances.

Bonnie Tillery, Hamilton Township, noted that she often walks along the D&R Canal and rarely sees trash. She stated that studies show that people who hike trails are very concerned that they not be trashed.

Mike Hunninghake, Bordentown City, stated the more people who use trails, the better the self-policing takes place.

Clark Gilman, Hamilton Township, stated that he is an avid fisherman and that he fishes 2-3 days a week and that he picks up litter and puts it in his cooler and takes it away from his fishing location. He noted that he remembers Assunpink Lake and kids on trail bikes who were damaging the dam and spillway and that parents need to be responsible for their children. He stated that today the concept of catch and release (of fish) is commonly accepted.

Jeannette Williams, Galloping Brook, Upper Freehold, reported on a trip to Stowe, Vt. Where she hiked a 5 ½ mile trail which was accessible to bikers, moms with strollers and had sculptures along its route with a stream that she kayaked. She said that the trail was very clean.

Clark Gilman reported on a State-built trail (rail-to-trail) between Lake Hopatcong and Sussex County. He felt that there are great possibilities for people to enjoy scenic vistas, connect with the local water resources, etc. Most people don't have the opportunities to enjoy these things. A trail systems affords average people to access these.

Marc Covitz stated that not an ounce of garbage is to be found in the heavily used Clayton Park. He mentioned the Henry Hudson Trail of 8 miles from Leonardo to ___?___.

Frances Saky of Hamilton Township asked if anyone in the trail system creation own land along the Doctors Creek. Betsy Poinsett stated that she owned land along Allentown Lake which is in the Doctors Creek stream corridor.

Leslie Ratcliff of Lakeview Drive, Allentown, stated that she loves hiking and would love to donate the land if she owned land along the Doctors Creek. She noted that "if I never hike on a trail that you've planned, thank you for all you do."

Jennifer Oliver, Main Street, Allentown, who likes to hike but found the public sidewalks difficult to walk on in Allentown due to their state of disrepair.

Rich O-...sky, Upper Freehold, question on liability for property owners who have trails on their land. Marc Covitz mentioned that liability should not an issue if the trail location has been transferred by fee simple sale, conservation easement, etc.