

From: "Leonard Hess" <lnhess@lhtc.net>
Subject: PABIODIV: Fw: Great article on Prince Gallitzin resort
Sender: pabiodiv-request@webmail.upb.pitt.edu
Date: Sun, 11 Jan 2004 19:39:58 -0500 (EST)

X-MimeOLE: Produced By Microsoft MimeOLE V6.00.2800.1165

Apologies for cross-posting. This issue of creating private commercial resorts, golf courses, etc. in our state parks is important, and it is a violation of our State Parks 2000 Plan. If wetlands and wildlife are not safe from development and sprawl in our state parks, where will they be safe?

Len Hess, Conservation Chair
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----- Original Message -----

From: "Dave Bonta" <bontasaurus@yahoo.com>

Folks,

Bob Frye at the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review may be "just" an outdoors page reporter, but he knows how to do ACTUAL INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM! He followed up on a tip we gave him and tracked down Geoff Kirkland, author of the not-yet-complete feasibility study, for his views - check it out. He also includes the figure for how much this study will cost the taxpayers: \$50,000.

Please spread this story far and wide, to all appropriate lists. And check out Frye's article on the deer conference while you're visiting the TRib-Rev. website. This link will take you to their outdoors page: <http://www.pittsburghlive.com/x/tribune-review/sports/outdoors/>

Conservation groups outline opposition to resort idea
By Bob Frye, TRIBUNE-REVIEW OUTDOORS EDITOR
Sunday, January 11, 2004

Conservationists are lining up to oppose the idea of building a privately-owned resort in Prince Gallitzin State Park, even as the consultant hired by the state to study the issue sees potential in it.

Representatives of the Pennsylvania Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, state chapters of the Sierra Club, Trout Unlimited, and Audubon Society, and other organizations gathered in Johnstown Thursday to denounce any commercial development of Prince Gallitzin, a 6,249-acre park in northern Cambria County.

Charlie Hoyer, a board member of Pennsylvania Audubon, said that's not what state parks are supposed to be about. "The (state parks) mission states, 'the conservation of the natural, aesthetic, and historical values of the parks should be given first consideration,'" Hoyer said. "I don't see that happening here." There is no official resort proposal for Prince Gallitzin, nor is there a developer ready to take on the project.

The Cambria County Industrial Development Corp. did, however, commission a resort feasibility study that was completed last year. It examined the potential impacts of building a \$40 to \$50 million facility -- complete with a rustic lodge, conference center, 18-hole golf course, white sand beach and marina -- on 100 acres of private ground and 70 acres of park land that would be secured under a long-term lease. CCIDC executive director Ronald F. Budash has said the report indicates such a resort could provide 250 to 350 jobs.

The state Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, at the urging of Gov. Ed Rendell, is paying about \$50,000 for its own study to be done. It is meant to determine whether that kind of resort could make money.

Geoff Kirkland, managing director of the Charlotte, N.C., office of Horwath Horizon Hospitality Advisors, is handling that study. It is not done, and may not be definitive when it is, given that it's a preliminary effort, he said.

Still, based on things like the park's proximity to population centers, it appears a resort could boost the economy of Cambria County, Kirkland said.

"There are a large number of factors you have to look at, and when you do the balancing act, which is what this is all about, it all depends on how many of the factors involved are positive and how many of the factors are negative," Kirkland said. "Our opinion, at this point, is that this has some potential."

The conservationists who gathered Thursday aren't convinced, nor do they think that economics alone should decide the fate of the park.

Lester McNutt, of PA Trout, and Dave Bonta, of the Sierra Club, said any resort development would destroy a 30-acre wetland that supports wild brook, is classified as an "exceptional value" area by the state, and was rated as having "high value" in 10 different categories in the CCIDC's own study.

Richard Fleck, of the PFSC, said he worries development will spread to other parks if Prince Gallitzin gets a resort, given that DCNR is referring to this as a "pilot project." Such considerations should weigh heavily against any resort project, said Robert Wardrop, of the Cambria County Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs.

"We agree that there are many ways to approach the question of how to promote long-term economic health. But any solution that says people can only get ahead at the expense of nature can't possibly be right," Wardrop said. "And if wildlife isn't safe from the effects of development in our state parks, it isn't safe anywhere."

DCNR expects to have Horwath's study within the next few weeks, said spokeswoman Gretchen Leslie. If it appears as though a resort has potential, a public meeting on the issue will likely be scheduled.

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Check out our nifty Friends of Rothrock poster: <http://www.mccaughey.net/~sam/rothrock.html>
Provocations, minor insights, poor web design: a recipe for disaster.
<http://www.geocities.com/bontasaurus/index.html>

The Pennsylvania Biodiversity Listserve is intended to promote discussion of biodiversity issues in the state. It is moderated by the Pennsylvania Biodiversity Partnership (PBP) following guidelines posted at <http://www.pabiodiversity.org/listserve.html>. The opinions expressed in messages are those of the authors and NOT the PBP. To unsubscribe, send the message UNSUBSCRIBE PABIODIV to majordomo@webmail.upb.pitt.edu.