

To The Archdiocese of Philadelphia,

We reach out to ask that you change course and join with the community in seeking to protect the forest and creek on the Don Guanella school property.

*"Is it not enough for you to feed on the green pastures?
Must you also trample them with your feet?
"Is it not enough for you to drink the pure water?
Must you also muddy it with your feet?" - Ezekiel 34:1*

There is a duty, recognized by religious leaders across the world, on all people to honor and protect nature – for nature’s sake and people’s sake. And so it was with great sorrow that we learned of The Archdiocese’ plans to advance a project that would cut the forests on the Don Guanella property and undertake a massive development will have devastating effects on our community.

It was an even greater shock to learn that The Archdiocese was opposing a petition under consideration by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) to provide needed protections to one of our community’s last remaining high quality streams, a Whetstone Run tributary that runs through the Don Guanella lands. The action opposed by The Archdiocese is a petition filed by the Darby Creek Valley Association (DCVA) and supported by our partnership of organizations, that would reclassify a tributary of Whetstone Run from “warm water fishery” to “high quality stream,” thereby providing additional needed protections. This redesignation won’t stop development of the Don Guanella property – although we hope the Archdiocese will – but it would simply require any development advance in a way that best protects the stream using buffers and best stormwater practices.

When writing the PADEP to oppose this petition for protection, The Archdiocese used uncalled for language and accusations seeking to denigrate the Darby Creek Valley Association, one of our most treasured assets. While the Archdiocese has chosen to single out DCVA for attack, the effort to protect one of the last remaining forests and healthy streams in our community is an effort joined by the Whetstone Coalition, the Delaware Riverkeeper Network, Crum Creek Neighbors, and Save Marple Greenspace, all of which are community organizations equally engaged, concerned and involved.

"Pollution of air and water threaten more and more the delicate balance of the biosphere on which present and future generations depend and makes us realize that we all share a common ecological environment." – Pope John Paul II

Delaware County is a wonderful community in which to live. But it has its challenges. Delaware County is the second most densely developed and populated county in Pennsylvania. With this development has come high traffic congestion, high taxes, increased flooding, and the pollution of our air, water and bodies. Our kids have missed out on the joy of running through a healthy woods or splashing in an unpolluted stream.

The forest and creek on the Don Guanella project is one of the last remaining natural jewels for our kids and families to enjoy.

We write this open letter to urge The Archdiocese to change course, to find another way to serve your profit goals and instead to join with the community to protect our natural resources, community, and future generations.

*“The exploitation of the planet has already exceeded acceptable limits....
The earth’s resources are [] being plundered because of short-sighted
approaches to the economy, commerce and production.
These situations have caused sister earth, along with all the abandoned of
our world, to cry out, pleading that we take another course. Never have we
so hurt and mistreated our common home as we have in the last two
hundred years. Yet we are called to be instruments of God our Father, so that
our planet might be what he desired when he created it and correspond with
his plan for peace, beauty and fullness.” – Pope Francis*

We write you now, with open hearts and minds, to please join us in supporting increased protections for the Whetstone Run tributary and to protect the last stand of significant forest in our community – for the benefit of present and future generations, and all of God’s creatures.

Signed,
*Whetstone Coalition
Crum Creek Neighbors, Darby Creek Valley Association, Delaware Riverkeeper
Network,
Save Marple Greenspace*