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**Contacts:**

Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper, Delaware Riverkeeper Network, 215-801-3043

Ken Hemphill, Save Marple Greenspace, 484-843-1009

Michael D. Fiorentino, Esq., 610-566-2166

Jaelyn Rhoads, Darby Creek Valley Association, 267-221-5274

Jack Byerly, Clean Air Council, 215-567-4004 x109

**Marple Township BOC Unanimously Votes 7-0 to Deny Sproul Developers Plans to Build on Old Growth Forest/Don Guanella Woods**

*Board of Commissioners Call on their Duty Under the Pennsylvania Environmental Rights Amendment and Constitution*

**Marple, PA** - Marple Township Board of Commissioners (BOC) voted 7-0 Monday night to reject a proposed residential development plan by Sproul Developers that would have clear-cut 89 acres of forest. The Don Guanella forest has long been identified by the county planning department as a prime preservation target, but it was threatened by the development plan. The BOC joined an earlier decision by Marple Township's Planning Commission that voted (4-2) to deny recommending Sproul Road Developers Plan.

Board member Michael Molinaro laid out multiple harms and constitutional obligations addressing the Board Monday night in his motion to reject Sproul Developers Plans. You can watch the decision and discussion here: <https://youtu.be/ol-UWbbM73U>

The Don Guanella woods is a 178-acre forest that has provided many environmental and recreational benefits to Delaware County for years, but has been threatened by various development schemes over the years by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, despite pleas by the community to save the forest. This is not the end of the fight, as the developer will likely appeal to Common Pleas Court. However, conservationists and the Whetstone Coalition are hoping Marple Township's unanimous vote is one step closer to getting this unique habitat and forested headwater stream area protected for Delaware County residents in perpetuity. The Whetstone Coalition plans to file to intervene in any appeal.

“The Township demonstrated real leadership in our region and state when it rejected the Don Guanella woods development project in order to ensure the Commissioners honored their constitutional obligation under Article 1 Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution (Pennsylvania's Green Amendment) to protect the environmental rights of their constituents. With communities being ravaged by climate change, flooding, and other environmental threats, protecting the people's right to clean air, pure water, and a healthy environment should be top priority for all officials. The Don Guanella woods are beloved by the local community, providing them with the environmental, health, and recreational benefits we all deserve. This was the right decision by the Commissioners,” said **Maya van Rossum, the Delaware Riverkeeper and leader of the Delaware Riverkeeper Network.**

The **communications coordinator for Save Marple Greenspace, Ken Hemphill**, said that Marple's residents should be very proud of their township commissioners. “They did what so few township

officials have the courage to do by unanimously rejecting a residential development threatening their constituents' environment and quality of life. We know this fight is not over, but Marple's Commissioners just took a huge step to protect Marple's natural environment for all the people including generations yet to come."

"We made the case that this proposed development did not comply with the zoning ordinance nor with the Environmental Rights Amendment of the PA Constitution," said **Michael D. Fiorentino, Attorney for Save Marple Greenspace, Crum Creek Neighbors, Darby Creek Valley Association** throughout the Planning Commission and Board of Commissioners proceedings on the development plan. "The Marple Commissioners took seriously their trustee duties to protect the natural resources on this land--an impressive display of municipal courage and foresight."

"The Darby Creek Watershed was saved from more pollution and stormwater flooding by Marple Commissioners' opposition to the development plan. If we ever have a chance of improving our water quality, it will require protecting every last inch of open space left in the watershed. Thanks to the Commissioners for bringing us a step closer," said **Jaclyn Rhoads, President of Darby Creek Valley Association**.

"We all are cheering! And we are going to express our thanks and appreciation to all the members of the Marple Township Board of Commissioners (especially Mr. Molinaro!) for their sense of community and 'courage under fire'," said **Joe Inverso, Crum Creek Neighbors**.

Decisions like the one made by Marple's BOC have regional impacts too. "Eastwick is down in Philly near the Heinz Refuge at the bottom of the watershed. The residents of Eastwick have long endured flooding of the Darby and Cobbs Creeks – most recently during Tropical Storm Isaias where entire neighborhoods were forced out of their homes. The Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition has been working for over 6 years in our community to ensure environmentally and socially sustainable development so it is great to know that there are some towns further up in the watershed that are making similar decisions," said **Earl Wilson, President for Eastwick Friends and Neighbors Coalition**.

"I was very proud of our board of commissioners last night. They showed a great sense of community by not backing down to a developer that wants to destroy the last remaining forest in Delaware county. I look at this decision as one small baby step forward to saving this great forest for all the people of Delaware county to enjoy and use as a fantastic recreational site in the near future. Thank you to all the board of commissioners for all you've done for us," said **Charles Protesto, President, Save Marple Greenspace**.

"We commend the Marple Board of Commissioners for rejecting the development plan and protecting this irreplaceable forest and the pristine Whetstone Run. Protecting the Don Guanella woods is a win for Marple Township and a win for the Darby Creek watershed," said **Joseph Otis Minott, Executive Director and Chief Counsel of Clean Air Council**.

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