



*2023 Letter-writing Campaign to raise awareness of shortcomings of
the Governor Dick Park Forest Management Plan*

Lebanon County Commissioners
Michael Kuhn, Jo Ellen Litz, Robert Phillips
Room 207, Municipal Building
400 South 8th Street
Lebanon, PA 17042-6794

Dear Commissioners,

I want to reach out to you prior to the fall 2023 election to let you know I am unhappy with the use of deer fencing around large, logged areas in the Clarence Schock Park at Governor Dick.

Fences need regular inspections, repairs, and cleaning to remain effective. If the fences are damaged or compromised, they may not provide adequate protection, defeating their purpose. Because it is hard to clear deer from large areas before the fences are closed, they are often trapped within the fences. The forester who wrote the current plan said that there were three deer trapped within the fencing of the latest cut and that these animals were responsible for eating the majority of the seedlings planted. Large area fencing also prevents the movement of additional wildlife, affecting their natural movement patterns, foraging areas, and access to water sources.

Erecting sturdy fencing around smaller vulnerable areas helps prevent deer from accessing these areas without completely disrupting normal migration patterns within the forest. Currently, the cost of fencing is subsidized by the USDA, but that grant is tied to logging. Fencing smaller areas would require less material, so would cost less. In addition, reuse of fencing materials in these smaller areas would further bring down the cost.

One alternative to the fencing currently being used is hunting, a traditional method used to control deer numbers. It is noteworthy that a previous limited hunt was sanctioned within the park. A professional hunt (not the general public) would be no more of a break with the donation covenant than the use of prohibited heavy machinery during large-scale logging and would disturb far less of the forest ecosystem itself.

Implementing better practices that promote biodiversity – reforestation, maintaining proper vegetation diversity, managing predator populations, and preserving natural habitats and the natural balance of ecosystems – can indirectly help manage deer populations. Raising awareness about the challenges associated with overabundant deer populations and engaging the community in discussions about potential solutions can also be helpful.

You as commissioners have the power to make a positive change. I urge you to engage an independent authority who considers the forest in its entirety rather than as timber alone, and thus can propose more sustainable ways of managing this park.

Sincerely,
