

Shuttered Stroud Township golf club becomes ForEvergreen

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From Evergreen to ForEvergreen, a formerly shuttered Stroud Township golf course and its clubhouse are being transformed into a nature preserve and office space for two Pocono conservation groups.

Earlier this month, Stroud Township supervisors approved a 25-year renewable lease granting the nonprofit Brodhead Watershed Association and nonprofit Pocono Heritage Land Trust use of the former golf club building on Cherry Valley Lane in Analomink.

The former clubhouse will serve as a permanent base for both organizations' offices, storage, displays, educational events and meetings.

The lease is the latest step in the development of a public-private stewardship to turn the former Evergreen Golf Club into ForEvergreen Nature Preserve.

Stroud Township purchased the former golf course for \$234,500 last year.

The 42-acre parcel is being paid for by a taxpayer-funded open space reserve.

The "open space earned income tax fund" was started in 2002 after it was approved by township voters.

A 25-year renewable lease means as long as the watershed association and land trust perform their agreed upon duties, they can come back to Stroud Township officials when the lease is up and it will automatically be renewed for another 25 years, said Patricia Kennedy, a board member with the watershed association.

The two groups don't have a set amount of rent to pay. Instead, they will be responsible for caring for and maintaining the building, which will continue to be owned by Stroud Township.

Different missions, similar goals

The watershed and land trust groups are raising money to either rehabilitate or replace the building, Kennedy said. They will also pay for electricity and utilities at the building.

The East Stroudsburg architecture firm Schoonover & Vanderhoof is assessing the condition of the building and will soon make recommendations about renovation or replacement options.

The Brodhead Watershed Association had spent about 20 years in a small office space in Mount Pocono. About five years ago, it moved into a basement office owned by Paradise Township Supervisor Michael Flood.

The clubhouse would provide 2,000 square feet of space, Kennedy said.

The land trust has been located in a tiny office space on Sarah Street in Stroudsburg for a number of years, Kennedy said.

The two nonprofit groups have different missions, yet similar goals.

The Brodhead Watershed Association is a nonprofit environmental organization dedicated to protecting and improving water resources and the environment in the Brodhead and Cherry Creek Watershed.

The Pocono Heritage Land Trust is a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting and preserving open space.

In addition to support from the township and others, the two groups have been able to secure several grants for the preserve and club house projects.

Money from grants

Last year, the preserve was awarded a \$25,000 grant by internationally known conservationist Dan Lufkin, on behalf of the Peter Jay Sharp Foundation. The grant requires a dollar-for-dollar match.

In April, the Pennsylvania Environmental Council awarded the watershed authority a \$5,000 Pocono Forest and Waters Conservation Landscape Mini-Grant.

The local chapter of Trout Unlimited has secured a National Trout Unlimited "Embrace a Stream" grant to help identify and protect wild trout in Monroe County.

In addition to the grants, Scott Miller, a local CPA and president of the Pocono Heritage Land Trust, is heading up the capital campaign for the project.

Golf gone

The former golf course turned nature preserve is bound by the Brodhead Creek and has an entrance off Cherry Lane Road.

It is open on a limited basis for passive uses, such as walking and running on the trails, and catch and release fishing in the creek.

The golf course was purchased by Charles Poalillo, president of Penn Hills Enterprises, in December 1971 to serve the former Penn Hills Resort and the general public.

Poalillo operated the course until 2010, and it remained closed until 2013, when it was purchased by the township. During that time, the property became too overgrown for golfing and will not be used as a golf course again.

RIVER RAMBLE

The Brodhead Watershed Authority will host the annual river ramble from 1 to 4 p.m., Sunday, Aug. 10, at the ForEvergreen Nature Preserve in Analomink.

There will be family-friendly activities, including nature walks, eagle nest viewing, kayaking demonstrations and guided bicycle rides (participants must supply their own bicycles).

Refreshments will be served from 4 to 5 p.m. in the old Evergreen Golf Course Club house.

The suggested donation for the event is \$10 for members or \$15 for nonmembers with a \$2 discount for preregistration. Children under 12 get in free.

For more information on the day's activities, visit the BWA website at brodheadwatershed.org or call 570-839-1120.