Q&A from June 1, 2024 DHW Master Plan Introduction Meeting

Project-Specific Ecological Questions

Erosion & Stormwater Management

Q: How does path restoration help fight erosion?

A: Trail restoration includes the use of methods such as sloping trails to allow water to flow off rather than channel along them. Restoration sometimes includes realignment of trails to run with contours (along the side of a slope) rather than against contours (straight up and down a slope). This helps retain trail integrity by reducing stormwater runoff and providing more stabilized trail surfaces.

Q: What is causing this erosion?

A: Trail erosion is multi-faceted, and can be caused by stormwater runoff, human use, insufficient design, vegetation loss (which increases runoff), and the general wear and changes to the surrounding environment that comes with age. The dynamic nature of the woods results in constant change, which affects trails over time.

Q: Could it be caused by the bicycles on the trail?

A: Human use, including bicycles, can contribute to trail erosion.

Q: Who does actual path restoration, as in [helping to] avoid erosion?

A: All projects, including trail restoration, will be evaluated by the DHW Committee as they emerge. The Committee will work with professionals, local organizations, and the Borough to implement project plans and will determine the team based on the level of expertise needed.

Invasive Species

Q: How will the invasive species issue be addressed?

A: Different plant species require varying methods and timeframes for effective management. Management will be done according to research-based methods recommended by PA Dept. of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, and Penn State Cooperative Extension, and with guidance from technical professionals. Depending on the species and extent of establishment, management may be implemented by professionals, volunteers, and/or Borough employees.

Q: Can goats eat the invasive species?

A: Goats are one method that can be used for invasive species management.

Q: Does this include the large vines extended to the tree canopy?

A: Invasive plant management includes the management of large, non-native vines that tend to smother native vegetation.

Ecological Restoration

Q: Would it be possible to use the wood chips from the trees that are managed in the borough to spread on the DHW trails?

A: This is dependent upon the availability of resources like machinery, labor, transportation, etc.

Q: What is being done to address tree loss?

A: Tree loss may be due to several reasons (often occurring simultaneously), including erosion, wildlife pressure, invasive plant inundation, and natural lifespan. Management methods addressing erosion, stormwater runoff (a cause of erosion), wildlife, and invasive plant pressure are recommended. Restoration methods include the planting of both canopy and understory trees in areas where the management has been implemented.

Operations/Non-Project Specific Questions

Q: Will there be better color-coding on the trails?

A: The color-coding of the trails is not currently an area of focus.

Q: Are there plans for an additional bike trail?

A: There are currently no plans for an additional bike trail.

Q: What are the updates with the timeline of the bridge to Penn Hills?

A: Timelines for improvements are dependent on available resources and will be developed on an ongoing basis.

Q: What is being done to make sure DHW is secure at night? Is the gate ever closed (cars parked at all hours)?

A: Oakmont Borough Police regularly patrol Dark Hollow Woods; however, they receive few calls regarding the area. Closing the gate is not warranted due to there being multiple access points into the woods, all of which can be entered on foot, and with a closed vehicular gate.

Q: Will there be more cycling and dog guidelines for the trails/how will dogs be controlled?

A: The current rules and regulations regarding the use of Dark Hollow Woods remain unchanged.

Q: How will DHW be demarcated from adjacent neighborhoods and properties (The Commons, Penn Hills Park, etc.)?

A: Existing trail signage will remain in place.

Q: Is this plan coordinated with adjacent communities?

A: The Master Plan is an initiative of Oakmont Borough and has been developed to maintain Dark Hollow Woods as a community asset. The Borough is solely responsible for this plan and its implementation.