



February 9, 2018

**TO:** Tilden Township Supervisors  
Tilden Township Planning Commission  
Tilden Township Environmental Advisory Council

**FROM:** Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association  
Audubon Pennsylvania  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy, Mid-Atlantic Regional Office

**RE: Proposed warehouse facility and change in zoning**

Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, located north of Tilden Township in Kempton, Pennsylvania, is a world-renown wildlife sanctuary and ecotourism destination, hosting more than 75,000 visitors annually, many who overnight locally and support Tilden Township businesses each day. Audubon Pennsylvania and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy jointly oversee the Kittatinny Ridge Coalition, a group that works to conserve habitat for wildlife and recreational opportunities for people along the Blue Mountain/Kittatinny Ridge, a Global Important Bird Area (IBA) and critical migration corridor for thousands of eagles and hawks and other birds. The Mountain is also home to the Appalachian Trail, a National Scenic Trail that hosts 3 million hikers each year, many who also visit Tilden Township businesses. Visitors come to this region to enjoy its exceptional scenic beauty, to hunt and fish in the nearby state lands, or to recreate on the many trails.

Kittatinny Coalition Return on Environment studies show that natural system services, recreation, public health benefits, and open space benefits total approximately \$1 billion annually in Berks County. The annual value of forests alone is \$535 million annually. These natural resources raise revenue and save the township and its residents money by allowing nature to perform its functions. For example, forest cover helps to absorb rainwater and create habitat for wildlife. Vegetative and forested strips along rivers and streams help to slow flood waters, capture polluted stormwater runoff, and provide habitat for wildlife and shade and food for fish. Similarly, trees help to capture harmful air pollution that is especially harmful to asthma sufferers, seniors, and individuals with compromised immune systems. In the absence of these services, quality of life is potentially diminished and residents are asked to pick up the tab to artificially create the services.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed change to zoning to allow construction of a 1.2 million-square-foot industrial warehouse facility that will stand 55 feet tall and could host more than 400 trucks per day. Such a facility would negatively impact the area's wildlife as well as the rural character and scenic value of the area.

Pennsylvania currently loses 40 acres of valuable farmland per day, despite ambitious efforts to pursue farmland preservation statewide and farming's importance to the state economy. The losses occur little by little, township by township. The cumulative effect is that farm-associated wildlife and birds show some of the steepest declines of any wildlife group in the state. The American kestrel, northern harrier, barn owl, ring-necked pheasant, and eastern meadowlark are just some of the nesting birds that show widespread declines across our region.

The Kittatinny Ridge or Blue Mountain is one of the two most important migration corridors in eastern United States and hosts more than 120 species of migratory birds each year. This area of the Ridge is the largest block of protected forest habitat in southern Pennsylvania, providing important habitat to forest birds and mammals. Research conducted at Hawk Mountain shows that migrant birds use the Mountain corridor to rest and feed in rural areas up to three or more miles along base of the ridge, and rely upon the lowland habitat along the base of the Mountain. Conserving habitat for all wildlife while also conserving scenic beauty and rural character of areas along the base of the Mountain is important to township residents and to the many visitors who visit Hawk Mountain Sanctuary and Kittatinny Ridge trails, including the National Scenic Appalachian Trail, and Tilden Township businesses.

We also are concerned that if the Township changes its zoning, which will include improved roadways and access, it will open doors to other industrial development proposals. We only have to travel east to Fogelsville to see how one warehouse can lead to a sea of sprawl.

Since 1999, the township has welcomed a significant amount of commercial development into the township along Route 61, yet the residents west of this developed area still enjoy the rural nature of the township which attracted them to reside in Tilden Township in the first place. We hope the supervisors will recognize the importance of protecting these important values for its residents and area wildlife.

For these reasons, we encourage the Township Supervisors to not grant the zoning changes to allow for construction of the warehouse. Your reported consideration of noise issues in the project proposal suggests that you share our concerns for how this project may impact the region and the local community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sean Grace  
President  
Hawk Mountain Sanctuary



Greg Goldman  
Executive Director  
Audubon Pennsylvania



Karen L. Lutz  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Director  
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

cc: Gene Schappell, Supervisor, Chairman  
Fred Herman, Supervisor, Vice Chairman  
Richard DeLong, Supervisor  
Greg Haas, Township Engineer  
Dale Keener, Planning Commission, Chairperson  
Greg Koslowski, Planning Commission, Vice Chairperson  
Joshua Breslin, Planning Commission  
Christopher Forte, Planning Commission  
Sharon Enevoldson, Planning Commission  
Fred Herman, Environmental Advisory Council  
Gene Schappell, Environmental Advisory Council  
Pat Adams, Environmental Advisory Council