

Camp Archbald Statement

Ely Lake and Camp Archbald are two rare and special treasures in Brooklyn Township, Pennsylvania. They are now both in need your help. Please help us preserve Camp Archbald, which was placed under review by its regional Girl Scout Council in Harrisburg for potential closure and sale, and please help keep Ely Lake the pristine and unique place it has been for the last 16-17,000 years since its formation when glaciers receded during the last Ice Age.

Camp Archbald will turn 100 years old in 2020. Decisions have been made by corporate executives and accountants to cut back on outdoor resident camps, with officials claiming that girls have less need for the skills they learn at a woodland camping experience and more need for programs in disciplines such as cybersecurity.

Supporters of Camp Archbald (SOCA) is a 501(c) 3 nonprofit supporters group formed to save the camp and keep it open for at least another 100 years. This courageous group of scouts, leaders, alumnae, local residents, and fans has been hosting fundraisers, running camp sessions, and imploring the regional council, Girl Scouts Heart of PA (GSHPA) not to shut down, sell, or allow natural gas fracking on the camp property. SOCA's efforts have been featured on Scranton news stories and in several newspaper articles.

We have a powerful ally: Preservation Pennsylvania, the Commonwealth's only statewide, private, nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of historically and architecturally significant resources, has joined forces with SOCA to save Camp Archbald and Ely Lake. The property was placed on the 2019 Pennsylvania At Risk list, a valuable tool for those working locally to save places they care about. The list draws statewide attention to the plight of Pennsylvania's historic resources, promotes and supports local action to protect historic properties, and encourages funding and legislation that supports preservation activities. Preservation Pennsylvania provides additional services and support to At Risk properties such as letters of support for Keystone Grant fund applications.

In the words of Julia Chain, Program Director at Preservation PA, "At a time when parents worry about too much screen time, and medical experts recommend being outdoors to help reduce anxiety and depression, camping getaways are an old idea worth saving. We look forward to working with the local supporters and the regional council to try to determine a mutually-positive way forward."

Ely Lake is a "kettle" lake, formed by receding glaciers; the same type of lake as Thoreau's famous Walden Pond. Over the last 3 decades it has been studied by scientists and researchers from 20 universities and 13 private, nonprofit, or governmental institutions including the US Forest Service and NOAA. Its sediment layers have provided a valuable archive of Holocene earth history, and data from core samples have helped us learn about climate, forest, and fire history in the eastern United States.

Camp Archbald is the second oldest Girl Scout Camp in the nation, in operation since 1921. Campers in that era took the Northern Electric Trolley from Scranton to the stop a mile from camp and hiked or rode hay wagons the rest of the way. Several historic buildings on the property date from the 1920s, such as Schoonover Hall, built of stone from a quarry located on camp property.

Accessible only by dirt roads, the camp's 168 acres include woods, meadows, waterfront, cabins, historic buildings, and houseboats. 9,000 trees have been planted on the site since the first land purchase. Camp

Archbald is a place like no other - a time capsule of the 20th century American ideal of youth summer camps as places to be "physically and morally invigorated by fresh mountain air, simple food, daily swimming and group living." (quote from Leslie Paris, author of Children's Nature)

The Scranton Republican in 1922 praised Camp Archbald for giving girls "the advantage of pure, fresh water and every reasonable camp experience." Archbald is honored with many Scouting firsts such as: first Brownie encampment and first covered-wagon Gypsy Trip (both 1933), and the first "Mariner" units (floating houseboats) as quarters for overnight campers (1938). It was the site of elaborate season-end pageants attended by hundreds of spectators with baseball, tennis, water and track competitions.

Brooklyn Township and Susquehanna County residents and officials deserve to have a voice in what happens to this rare local treasure. There should be local, in-person town halls held before the camp is shut down or carved up so that gas well pads can be allowed on the property.

The regional council GSHPA seems to have forgotten the Girl Scouts' very own pledge "to inspire girls to develop a lasting commitment to the environment."

Please help spread awareness of the plight of Camp Archbald and Ely Lake. It's not about supporting or opposing fracking, it's about keeping this activity at a respectful distance from the lake and camp. Enough money is already being made by GSHPA from other, nearby wells.

As residents of Brooklyn Township, you can help urge GSHPA to recognize the benefits of preserving and conserving the rich and undisturbed ecology of the lake and the unique history of the camp for future generations.

Don't let corporate executives in Harrisburg make decisions that affect your Township's natural and historical treasures.

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Write letters or emails to Suzanne Moore, Acting CEO of GSHPA, 350 Hale Avenue, Harrisburg PA 17104, smoore@gshpa.org and call the GSHPA office at (717) 233-1656

Become a member of SOCA (Supporters of Camp Archbald): <https://supportersofcamparchbald.org/join-us/> and follow them on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/supportersofcamparchbald/?ref=bookmarks>

Participate in a SOCA fundraising event like the Kayak for Camp August 10th at Falls Boat Launch in Tunkhannock <https://www.facebook.com/events/2407037786037204/>

Contact Preservation PA and tell them you support efforts to preserve Camp Archbald: Julia Chain, Program Director, email jchain@preservationpa.org

Rent the camp for your church, civic or private family events! Increased usage is a measurable way to show GSHPA the camp is valuable not just to scouts but to local residents and businesses. Use this form: <https://supportersofcamparchbald.wordpress.com/contact/usage/>

For more information and any questions you may have: Eileen Head, Vice President
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