

Commissioner Shawn LaTourette

401 East State Street

Trenton, NJ 08625-0420

March 7, 2022

RE: Support for Friends of NJSOC to become the permanent Managers of the New Jersey School of Conservation.

Commissioner LaTourette:

The New Jersey State Council of Trout Unlimited, like all of Trout Unlimited, focuses on protecting, reconnecting, restoring and sustaining our coldwater resources. As a conservation organization we also believe in protecting natural assets by collaborating with Partners beyond streams and rivers. We believe in working with those who seek to educate citizens of the communities in which we work, and fish on the ability to make a difference in what we will leave for future generations. The Friends of the New Jersey School of Conservation is such a group.

When the NJ State Council of TU learned of the dilemma facing the NJSOC we knew that we needed to offer our support to help ensure its protection. Those of us who knew of the NJSOC felt duty bound to reconnect with it and support it. And, those of us who learned of its history and its work in environmental education, citizen science and outdoor opportunities felt committed to supporting the efforts of the Friends to manage it and bring it back to its former glory.

The NJ School of Conservation is a rare gem. Long before DEI practices were so prevalent the NJSOC sought to provide equal opportunity and inclusion to the outdoors and seeks to do so now. All these years later we know that many lives were enriched by the NJSOC and they were changed for the better. The dedication and hard work of the Friends provides a connection between community and history.

As a member of the Conservation community, the NJ State Council of TU, has seen the growth of Friends as it has become an astonishing management Team. Because many of the members have a history with the SOC they feel a special bond, level of enthusiasm and dedication. All of this is necessary for the solid Team of supporters, development of programs, and variety of opportunities to support and rebuild the NJSOC.

The NJ State Council of TU believes that the Friends organization is in the best position to rebuild, restore and protect the NJ SOC and enable it to continue as a one of a kind source of environmental education, while promoting community alliances, citizen science, responsibility and inclusion. They already have a qualified professional Team that is more than capable of managing the NJ School of Conservation. We believe that they are well suited for the job!

Thank you!

on Behalf of the Members of

The New Jersey State Council of Trout Unlimited

Marsha Benovengo,

Chair