

TANYA SULIKOWSKI

215 Bear Creek Road Andover, NJ 07821

March 5, 2022

State of New Jersey
Department of Environmental Protection, Natural & Historic Resources
Office of Leases & Concessions, Mail Code 501-04C
PO Box 420
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0420

To Whom it May Concern:

I'm writing to express my support for the "Friends" to take on management for the New Jersey School of Conservation (NJSOC). I have a long personal history with the school and was an MSU Faculty member at the NJSOC at the time of its closure. In addition, I have worked closely with the Friends for the past 18 months as the Co-Chair of the Program Committee.

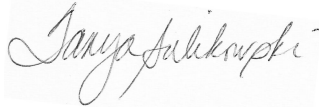
I've had the unique opportunity to experience many facets of what the NJSOC offers NJ's residents. My middle school overnight field trip at the NJSOC in 1987 changed the course of my life. I pursued a career in wildlife ecology and outdoor education which almost certainly would not have happened without the foundational experience that I received at the NJSOC. I returned later as a student teacher and had the opportunity to see the experience through my students' eyes. What happens for kids at the NJSOC is hard to describe- it's an awakening for students who do not get to spend time outdoors, which is sadly the case for many of NJ's children. Then, in 2014 I returned to the NJSOC yet again to conduct my thesis research in the Flat Brook River. Finally, I was hired by Montclair State University (MSU) for my dream job at the NJSOC in 2018. For two years I had the opportunity to share this special place with students, teachers and researchers from across NJ until MSU made the decision to close the school.

The Friends understand the power that this special place holds and are deeply passionate about preserving the history and looking towards a bright future for the NJSOC. They have worked tirelessly to accomplish a spectacular suite of fundraising, programmatic and leadership achievements over the past year, *amidst a global pandemic*. The group of supporters and partners they have assembled is a historic feat and this is the first time in the long history of the school that so many diverse organizations from across NJ are rallying to be a part of the movement to save the NJSOC. And, they are supporting *the Friends* because they admire their accomplishments, respect their vision and trust that the Friends will be good stewards of the campus *in perpetuity*.

I implore you to do whatever is in your power to grant the Friends the management rights. At no time in our state, national, and global history has there been a greater need for exactly the type of environmental education that SOC has provided for decades and the Friends and their partners are the perfect group to continue this critically important work.

I'm certain that with the Friends resourceful and creative leadership, the School of Conservation can continue to play a role in environmental education and research that New Jersey residents can point to with pride.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Tanya Sulikowski". The signature is written in dark ink on a light-colored, slightly textured background.

Tanya Sulikowski
Formerly, Educator/Researcher at NJ School of Conservation
Currently, Environmental Specialist at Merrill Creek Reservoir