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Township Takes Title to Ingham Spring Property

Protection of Aquetong Lake, Spring, and Surrounds Are Ensured

It's official! After many years of negotiation and planning, on Sept. 24 the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania signed the Ingham Spring property over to Solebury, ensuring the protection of this precious natural resource and granting complete stewardship to the Township and its citizens.

The property's freshwater spring, which produces 2,000 gallons of water per minute and feeds the 15-acre lake, is the largest spring in Bucks County and a significant Pennsylvania natural resource.

The transfer includes conservation easements for the permanent protection of the entire property—which includes Aquetong Lake, the surrounding land, and several buildings—ensuring that it cannot be sold for private development.

More than 10 years of planning, community hearings, and complex negotiations with federal and state officials led up to the formal transfer of the Ingham Spring property from the state to the Township.

Approval by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission, the state legislature, and Gov. Ed Rendell all had to be won before title could be transferred.

Now, with deed in hand, the next step is for the Township to restore the property in an environmentally sensitive manner, so that it

continues to serve as an important native habitat for a wide range of aquatic and non-aquatic life.

Doing that means reconstructing the earthen lake dam, dredging the lake, and revitalizing buildings and the historic landscape.

The completed project is expected to fulfill residents' long-stated desire to preserve the area for passive recreation and as a natural preserve.

For the last several years, the Township has worked steadfastly to identify and secure commitments for outside funding for the extensive and necessary repairs.

The Township successfully negotiated to have up to \$837,000 of the costs of the dam replacement applied toward the purchase price of the property. The Township also obtained a grant of \$600,000 toward the purchase price from the Bucks County Natural Areas Program. State and federal officials have committed funds to help pay the remaining cost of the repairs, which are estimated to exceed \$6 million.

The Parks and Recreation Board will resume work on the Ingham Spring Master Plan, which envisions the site as a passive park with facilities for fishing, nature walking, and environmental education.

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AQUETONG LAKE is prized by Township residents as a symbol of Solebury's rich history and abundant natural environment. *(Photo by Simone Collins Landscape Architects)*

Ingham Spring (cont. from pg. 1)

Across the last decade, a number of citizens groups have taken an active role in planning on how best to use the lake: The Native American Alliance, local environmental education organizations, and local historic societies have all expressed their vision for the site, and groups like Bucks County Trout Unlimited have worked closely with the Township to ensure that the project provides the greatest benefit to the most people, while also serving as an

important natural habitat for the fish, songbirds, and pollinating insects that play critical roles in Solebury's ecosystem.

Solebury has secured approval for the dam replacement through the Water Development and Resources Act; once authorized by the Army Corps of Engineers, the Township can proceed with the engineering of the project.

Once these details are in hand, the Township can provide an estimated timeline for both the repairs and work on the Ingham Spring Master Plan. 🌲



THE KATE SMITH HOUSE, one of two homes on the Ingham property, was built in the 20th century on the foundation of a 19th-century mill. (Photo by Simone Collins Landscape Architects)



THE JUDY HOUSE was built in the 1950s by Dr. Perry Bond and his wife Helen, who helped preserve the lake and spring across 39 years of ownership. A 400-square-foot living room with a large bay window affords picturesque views of Aquetong Lake. (Photo by Simone Collins Landscape Architects)

A Brief History of Ingham Spring

Tracing the Name

According to research cited for the development of the Ingham Spring Master Plan,* what we now call Ingham Spring was originally the site of a Lenne Lenape village that was abandoned after a smallpox outbreak.

The Lenne Lenape referred to the location as *Achewtong* or *Achewe-tank*, meaning "among the bushes."

The property was transferred to William Penn in 1682 as part of the Great Treaty, and Penn in turn transferred ownership of the "Great Spring Tract" to James Logan around 1701.

In 1747, Logan sold 200 acres, including the spring, to Jonathan Ingham, who used the spring to power a fulling (or woolen processing) mill.

During ownership by Ingham's son and namesake, Dr. Jonathan Ingham, George Washington and his troops made camp on the property; as this coincided with the retreat from New Jersey in 1776, Jonathan tended to the wounded soldiers.

A member of the next generation, Samuel D. Ingham—a U.S. Congressman and U.S. Treasury Secretary under President Andrew Jackson—inherited the property in 1800 and built a paper mill on the site, which operated until Samuel's death in 1860.

By that time, the site had become locally known as Ingham's Spring, thanks to more than 100 years of the prominent family's ownership.

The dam was constructed in 1870 to continue to power the mills, thus creating Aquetong Lake; around the same time, a fish hatchery was built to raise shad, brook trout, and terrapin turtles.

The roughly 200-acre property continued to be owned privately until 1993, when the Pa. Fish and Boat Commission purchased it with the goal of creating an educational and recreational facility.

Solebury will now see that goal to fruition.

* For more, see the research of Donald R. Repsher, of Bath, Pennsylvania, at: www.lenapenation.org/lenapehistory.html