



Scott Farm Land Exchange:

NPS Addresses NORA Public Comments

The NPS received 42 comments in response to a Notice of Realty Action (NORA) between December 2025 – February 2026 for a proposed land exchange at the Appalachian National Scenic Trail, known as the “Scott Farm” exchange. In December 2025, the NORA was published for three consecutive weeks in *The Sentinel* newspaper of Carlisle, Pennsylvania and 28 notices were mailed to adjoining landowners and local, state, and federal officials. Thirty commenters were supportive of the action; 6 commented on a data center development proposed in the locality, which is unrelated to the action; and 6 expressed concerns directly related to the action. The following is a summary of concerns directly related to the proposed realty action, along with NPS responses.

Restrictive Covenants vs. Conservation Easement

Summary of Comments

Commenters raised concerns that the NPS placing restrictive covenants for historic and hydrologic resources on the Scott Farm property would not be as effective at protecting those resources as retaining a conservation easement on the property.

NPS Response

The NPS recognizes restrictive covenants as an effective and legally binding tool for meeting conservation objectives in alignment with NPS mission and policies. The Scott Farm covenants are designed to run with the land in perpetuity, providing a long-term conservation strategy with enforceable obligations on current and future landowners without the additional administrative burdens of being a perpetual easement holder. Unlike easements, restrictive covenants can offer flexibility while still maintaining enforceable restrictions on land and other uses. Each real estate transaction is unique and for Scott Farm, the NPS believes that cooperative oversight of the parcel’s unique historic and hydrologic resources by the NPS, trail partners, and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission can achieve the same conservation goals as an easement. The deed of conveyance from NPS would also include a clause requiring the restrictive covenants be attached to and made part of any future deed of conveyance for the property.

NPS Should Retain Ownership of the Barn

Summary of Comments

Commenters question why the NPS is disposing of the historic barn at Scott Farm when the NPS mission includes the preservation of cultural resources. Commenters believe the NPS should retain federal ownership of the barn.

Bats In the Scott Farm Barn Should Be Protected

NPS Response

The NPS acknowledges the historic value of the Scott Farm barn and a decision to transfer ownership does not diminish the importance of the barn nor leave it without protection. The NPS worked with the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission on implementing legally binding restrictive covenants designed to preserve the barn's character, prevent demolition, and maintain its cultural setting. This approach aligns with the NPS mission and policies and is intended to strengthen preservation goals through collaboration, community engagement, and sustainable stewardship by partner organizations and future landowners.

Summary of Comments

Commenter expressed that the NPS should protect bats in the Scott Farm barn.

NPS Response

The NPS evaluated the potential impacts of the proposed land exchange on species listed or proposed for listing under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The agency determined that the exchange would have no effect on listed bat species, both because no listed bat species were identified during review and because the restrictive covenants are designed to protect the barn and riparian habitat from demolition or significant alteration. If a future landowner sought to exclude bats from the barn, any such action would be subject to state wildlife regulations and would need to comply with the covenants attached to the property. These covenants reduce the likelihood of adverse effects on any bat species. Because the NPS is not proposing any construction, demolition, or habitat modification as part of the land exchange itself, hypothetical future private-landowner actions fall outside the scope of the NPS's ESA "effects" determination for the exchange.

Unmanaged Recreation And Safety

Summary of Comments

A commenter expressed concerns that visitor use at Scott Farm under private ownership may intensify existing issues with litter, sanitation, and unsafe or inappropriate activities.

NPS Response

Safety and visitor use management are important considerations for the long-term stewardship of the Appalachian Trail corridor. Conveying the Scott Farm property to a trail partner organization is intended to improve pro-active oversight and management of the property, which has been limited under NPS ownership.