



FACT SHEET

Assessing the Health of Simon Kenton Council Properties

Overview:

Simon Kenton Council (SKC) maintains four primary camps:

- Camp Lazarus in Delaware
- Camp Falling Rock in Newark
- Chief Logan Reservation in Ray
- Camp Oyo in Portsmouth

Every five years, we conduct a thorough, detailed review of our properties. We look at usage, infrastructure, operating costs and on-site facilities, among many other areas. Earlier this year, at the request of our Camp Property Stewardship Committee, we invited an expert team of experienced volunteer Scouters from the Central Region to conduct an in-depth review of our properties. This review revealed that each camp boasts unique features, programs and potential opportunities, but the financial impact of maintaining four camp properties is not sustainable for the long-term.

The council is subsidizing total camp operations at a cost of more than \$500,000 per year (\$500,000 above and beyond the income that our camps generate.) In addition, the majority of SKC Scouts attend resident camps outside of our council. There are 43 other Scout camps available within a 3-hour drive of our council.

Recommendations:

Based on the results of the assessment, members of the SKC Property Stewardship Committee have developed two recommendations that will support the council's goals of providing quality camp programs and facilities, while remaining financially responsible with the dollars we have and the dollars we raise each year to operate our council.

The first recommendation is to concentrate our resources on remaining camps by discontinuing operations at Chief Logan Reservation and then selling or leasing the property after the 2020 summer camp season. Second, we would explore the sale or lease of a small portion of Camp Lazarus that is currently not being used by SKC. We intend to invest sale proceeds and yearly operational savings in our remaining properties as we are also developing a long-range master plan for creating "destination" camps that attract Scouts within and outside of our council.



Questions & Answers:

1. How was the properties assessment conducted?

The assessment included an independent review earlier this year by volunteer Scouters familiar with camps and camp operations from BSA's Central Region. SKC conducted an additional review to verify the findings. The assessment looked at many aspects of our properties including land features, program potential, infrastructure (roads, waste treatment, utilities), physical size, camp layout, costs to bring the facilities to a "B" level, operations costs, competition with other camps in the area, land use restrictions and ecological diversity (range of terrain, plant and animal life, water bodies, etc.)

2. What did the assessment reveal?

Our four properties scored very low compared to other councils' properties within our area. The assessment team estimated that the cost for needed improvements at our camps would exceed \$25 million. Many of our facilities were rated a D or an F. The team pointed out that the camps are operating at a loss of more than \$800,000 each year. Our own review suggests that the number is in excess of \$500,000. The team emphasized that this is not a sustainable model; the properties committee agrees.

3. Were attendance and camp use considered?

Yes. The committee looked at camp attendance during the summer, outside of summer and during the whole year. They also considered whether summer camp programs could be accommodated at other properties (for example, would there be the capacity to increase the number of summer campers at Falling Rock or other camps?)

Camper attendance at Falling Rock and Lazarus are highest (10,000 campers outside of summer camp at Falling Rock; 20,000 at Lazarus.) Chief Logan Reservation and Oyo see about 2,000 campers each outside of summer camp. During summer camp, about 775 Scouts from SKC and 355 from other councils attend Chief Logan Reservation. 375 SKC Scouts and 55 from other councils attend Falling Rock.

4. Why are camp properties operating at a loss? Would it help to charge more for camping and use of the camps?

Camp properties are expensive to maintain, and we are always looking for ways to be more efficient. Expenses include camp upkeep, utilities, facility improvements, staff, insurance, equipment and maintenance. In addition, capital improvements often require significant investments. We've invested more than \$600,000 in necessary capital improvements during the past three years alone.

We keep the cost of camping low to encourage attendance and make camping affordable for the 34,698 campers (including summer campers) who visit our properties each year. This includes many campers from other councils that benefit from the support needed to operate camps. We would have to raise rates a considerable amount to cover all of our operating costs plus capital improvements for four camps.



5. What about Friends of Scouting? I thought that campaign helped fund our camps?

We are absolutely appreciative of the funds raised through our annual Friends of Scouting (FOS) campaign. The \$640,000 collected each year does help fund programs at our camps, as well as camperships and other council offerings that benefit our Scouts. FOS does not fund capital improvements to our properties, but it is extremely important to helping us deliver ongoing quality programs and opportunities.

6. What are the next steps?

Members of our volunteer executive board, many of whom are Scout parents and unit leaders, will discuss the Property Stewardship Committee's recommendation during their next meeting. Any decision will be deliberate and informed, with well over a year of due diligence considered. After thoughtful deliberation, the board will move forward with planning to ensure the best use of our properties, including additional investments and program adjustments for the go-forward properties.

Members of our executive board will hold an information session on Nov. 12 at 7:00 p.m. (location TBD) for anyone who would like to better understand the assessments and factors that led to the property recommendation. If you have questions, please send them to SKCquestions@scouting.org. We'll do our best to address them during the informational session and through ongoing communications.

We appreciate the support of everyone in our Scouting family and look forward to continuing to provide opportunities for growth and development for our youth.