

Stephen R. Maitland, Member

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House of Representatives
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Board of Probation and Parole

October 31, 1997

Mr. Warren Ely, Chief
Division of State Forest Management
Department of Conservation and Natural Resources
Rachel Carson State Office Building
P.O. Box 8552
Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552

RECEIVED

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Bureau of Forestry
Div. of State Forest Mgt.

Dear Mr. Ely:

I am writing to you today to comment on your proposed new regulations concerning the use of state forest land. There are several areas of concern for me.

Sections 21.26 and 21.27 would prohibit horses and bicycles on the 18 state forest designated hiking trails and the national hiking trails unless posted as open to such use. It is my understanding that hiking groups maintain these trails - groups historically opposed to allowing bicycles and horses on these trails. Because district foresters rely on hiking groups to maintain these trails, I believe that few if any trails would be listed as "open" for bicycles and horses. Please change the regulation to leave the trails open to as many taxpaying Pennsylvanians as possible.

Section 21.61 would require that a camping permit be acquired by all campers on state forest land. This requirement would substantially interfere with camping on state forest land. At the present time, some District Foresters require a permit for designated areas. If a camping permit is required, it is secured at the District Forester's office during normal business hours. This is impractical for many individuals in certain circumstances. For example, an individual who works during the week may be unable to secure a camping permit. There is no mechanism to obtain a permit on a weekend. Our state forest land, for the most part, consists of large expanses of undeveloped land. There is no reason to require a camping permit unless it is an overused area or fragile area. If the Department insists on permits, then it should establish a 24-hour, toll-free telephone line so that individuals can easily secure permits.

Third, Section 21.70a prohibits snow plowing on state forest roads unless a District Forester or a representative grants permission. In my legislative district and in neighboring districts, there are many privately owned cabins located on state forest land. In addition, there are many privately owned cabins on private lands which can only be accessed through state forest roads.

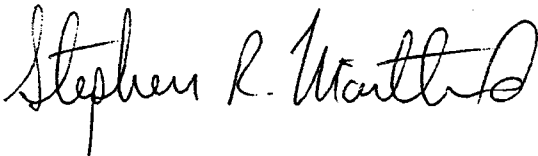
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Under the proposed regulation, a District Forester could prohibit snow plowing and thereby deny individuals access to their property.

I hope you will take these concerns into account as you proceed through the regulatory process. Feel free to contact me if I can provide more information or be of assistance to you in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen R. Maitland". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Stephen R. Maitland
State Representative
91st Legislative District