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House of Representatives
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

COMMITTEES

Finance
Game & Fisheries, Secretary
Veterans Affairs & Emergency Preparedness
State Government

APPOINTMENTS

Joint Legislative Air & Water Pollution Control &
Conservation Committee
PA Hardwood Development Council

ORIGINAL: 1886
COPIES: McGinley

Nyce

Smith

Sandusky

Legal (2)

Notebook

Bureau of Forestry
Div. of State Forest Mgt.

November 9, 1997

PA Dept of Conservation & Natural Resources
Warren Ely, Chief
Division Of State Forest Management
P O Box 8552
Harrisburg, PA 17120-8552

Dear Mr. Ely:

I am extremely concerned about several proposed changes in the regulations governing State Forest Lands. Please carefully consider the following comments as part of the formal public comment process.

Sections 21.26 and 21.27: These sections would, in one broad swipe, close trails in State Forests to horses and bicycles. Although in theory the trails could be re-opened on a case-by-case basis to these uses, in reality they would more likely remain open only to hiking groups because the hiking groups have traditionally done the bulk of the volunteer maintenance on the trails. I support the current system of trail availability for the widest number of users and uses unless the District Forester posts a section "closed" due to a particularly fragile situation. After all, aren't we trying to promote the widest possible use of these lands?

Section 21.61: Most troublesome of all the proposed changes is the requirement of a camping permit, to be obtained from the District Forester during normal business hours. This proposal smacks of more big government control and red tape, and will, I'm certain, one-day be another way to charge taxpayers for the right to enjoy land which they already helped to purchase. My office has received several calls about this proposal, and the non-user-friendly nature of this change was also discussed at a meeting of the Oil Heritage Region Board of Directors. In our particular situation, the State Forest Land located in Southern Venango County along the Allegheny River is quite a remote area. It is very easy to envision circumstances when it would be impossible for campers to obtain permits even if they are free. Canoeists travelling down the river who are tired or behind schedule for other reasons (including inclement weather) who wished to stop and set up a safe camp on these public lands would be forced to break the law (assuming they were even aware of the regulation) or travel on under dangerous conditions. In my opinion, as well as in the opinion of several constituents, these camping permits are unnecessary and overly bureaucratic.