

WHARTON STATE FOREST ACCESS

- It is clear that damage has been done to the forest due to **illegal** activity
- It is clear that the status quo is not working and something needs to be done
- The DEP's solution is the Motorized Access Plan (M.A.P.) which closes 58%, or 274 miles, of the road and trail network to motorized vehicles - many of which have been used for decades
- This approach will be ineffective and will only impact law abiding outdoor enthusiasts



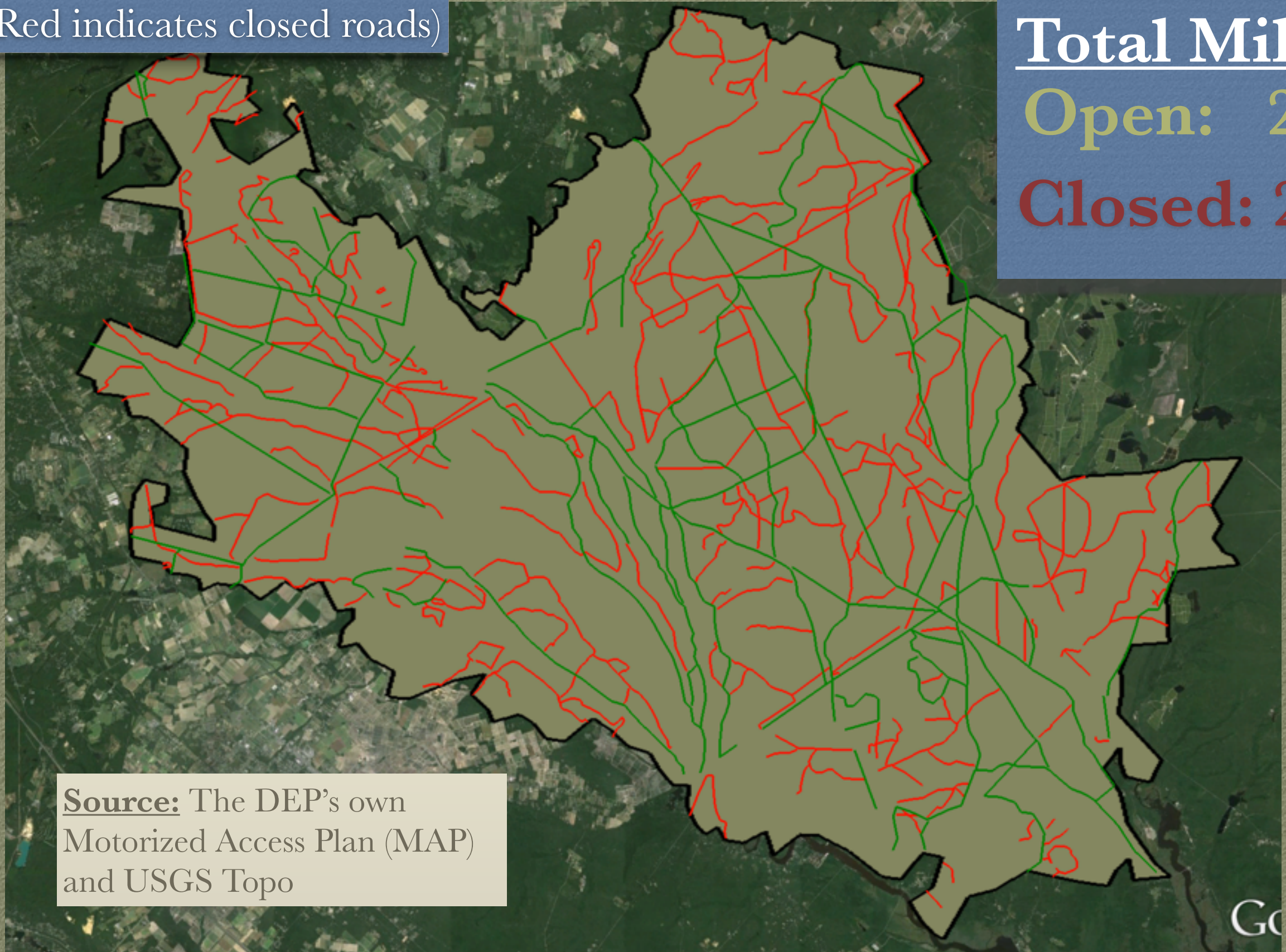
WHARTON STATE FOREST M.A.P. CLOSURES

(Red indicates closed roads)

Total Miles:

Open: 202

Closed: 274



Source: The DEP's own
Motorized Access Plan (MAP)
and USGS Topo

58% or 274 miles of roads are now off limits to motor vehicles

FAIR ACCESS TO WHARTON STATE FOREST

- Many citizens and municipalities of NJ are concerned about the M.A.P.
 - 4,708 have signed petition in opposition, 4 towns have passed resolutions in opposition- Waterford, Medford, Medford Lakes and Pemberton
- The M.A.P. was developed without transparency or public input
 - It was only *after* an enormous public outcry that the DEP backpedaled and called this a “proposal”, labeled the MAP as “draft” and stated that public feedback would be solicited
- The M.A.P. significantly changes a 50 year status quo of access that was enjoyed by hikers, hunters, kayakers, horseback riders, enduro riders and others
- Fundamental shift from “Permitted unless forbidden” to “Forbidden unless permitted”
- The M.A.P. will limit or eliminate access to these places for the very young, very old or disabled, but would make it significantly more difficult to access for even the able bodied
- The impact of the closures is much more significant than the DEP is acknowledging- 274 miles or 58% of roads are closed, while the DEP claims the majority are open (Debunked in upcoming slide)

THE M.A.P. PROGRAM WILL NOT ACHIEVE ITS OBJECTIVES

- The damage that is being done is *already* illegal- No additional regulation is needed, only enforcement of existing regulations
- The only ones who will be impacted are law abiding citizens
 - Will those who are destroying the forest *buy** a M.A.P. and suddenly abide by it?
- The State Park Police do not have the resources to patrol the park today.
- Without additional resources, how could they enforce 274 miles of newly closed roads?

Recipe for Failure:

“Approved, designated motorized recreation routes are identified on this map, *but are not marked or identified on the ground.*”

Source: DEP MAP

*A paper copy of the map will not be available for free, it must be purchased

ISSUES WITH THE DEP'S APPROACH

- Deceptive Communications- Original press release written almost as if access was expanded
- Continued denial of the extent of the closures
- DEP eventually communicated stakeholders forums would be held, however plan was *already* implemented
- Questionable use of Recreation Trails Program Funds

Before intense public pushback began, the DEP had *no intent* on soliciting public input

Source: M.A.P. Press Release 8/4

"Wharton State Forest is unique in that it provides an extensive network of sand and gravel roads, remnants of the area's rich history, that provide up-close access to secluded rivers, quiet forests, beautiful wetlands and sites of former villages and towns," "The MAP program will ensure continued access to these features...."

Timeline:

Apr 25	Some roads closed, goes largely unnoticed
Jul 18	Large scale closures begin, signs posted
Jul 18 - Aug 3	Social medial coverage explodes
Aug 4	First acknowledgment of MAP via DEP Press Release
Aug 5 - Aug 23	Petition exceeds 4,000 signatures, Medford and Medford Lakes pass resolutions in opposition
Aug 24	M.A.P. marked as "DRAFT"

QUESTIONABLE USE OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM (RTP) FUNDING

- RTP provides funds to develop and maintain recreational trails
- Intended to improve access for:
 - Hiking, bicycling, in-line skating, equestrian use, cross-country skiing, snowmobiling, off-road motorcycling, all-terrain vehicle riding, four-wheel driving, or using other off-road motorized vehicles
- Funds come from the Federal Highway Trust Fund, and represent a portion of the motor fuel excise tax collected from non-highway recreational fuel use

From the Recreational Trails Program site:

“The **Recreational Trails Program** (RTP) provides funds to the States to develop and maintain recreational trails and trail-related facilities for both nonmotorized and motorized recreational trail uses.”

Source: http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/recreational_trails/

QUESTIONABLE USE OF RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM FUNDING

- In Sept 2014, the DEP submitted an RTP application requesting \$618K (\$494K grant/\$124K match) under a project titled:
 - “**Restoring** Motorized Recreation Opportunities In The New Jersey Pine Barrens”
- Application cited desire to develop a maintenance program for **600+** miles of primitive roads
- The funds were used to repair a small number of roads and develop the MAP
- The self reported 600+ miles of roads were then *reduced* to 225

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION GREEN ACRES PROGRAM	
2013 RECREATIONAL TRAILS GRANT PROGRAM APPLICATION	
Applicant:	NJDEP – Natural and Historic Resources
Project Name:	Restoring Motorized Recreation Opportunities In The New Jersey Pine Barrens

The State of New Jersey, Department of Environmental Protection is proposing in this initial application, to use RTP funding in the amount of \$494,000 to begin restoring portions of the existing road system in the Pine Barrens and to facilitate the implementation of a road maintenance program. We propose to initiate a multi-phase/multi-year program beginning with Phase 1 in Wharton State Forest. The monies from the grant will enable the Division of Parks and Forestry to develop a regularly scheduled maintenance program for this area within the Pine Barrens that encompasses 600+ miles of primitive roadways. The program's implementation will result in the Division having a much-needed tool that will assist in providing access for all forms of recreational trail use. The proposed uses for RTP funding are outlined in

Source: RTP Grant Application

In the DEP's own words:

“The development of the brochure, *map and route* was funded by a \$600,000 federal grant that is also helping the Park Service to make repairs to roads, including filling in deep gullies that have formed.”

Source: MAP Press Release 8/4

ACCESS FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

- In an email dated Aug 24th, Mark Texel stated the MAP will:
 - "Improve coordination and access for emergency response including forest fires, search and rescue operations and severe storm response."
- The DEP claims to not be blocking access with trees or other barriers, however evidence seems to show otherwise
- How exactly will felling trees across trails improve access for first responders ?

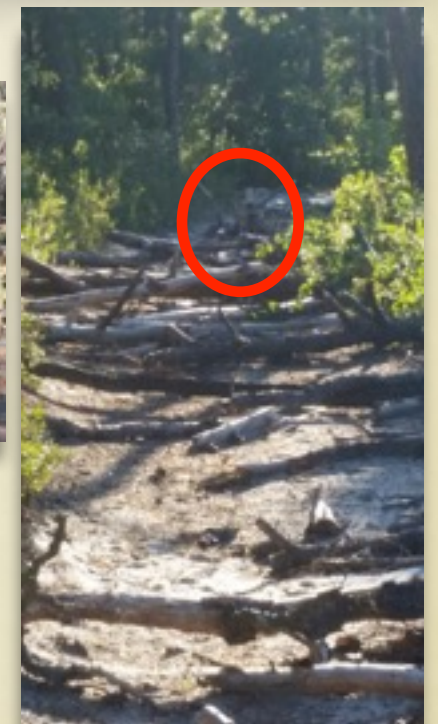
M.A.P. FAQ

- Q:** Will the State Park Service be blocking non-designated motorized recreation routes with trees, guardrails, gates, or other barricades?
- A:** "No. Many areas may be posted with appropriate signage but access will remain open for enforcement, first responders, forest fire personnel, and other permitted uses."

Source: DEP's M.A.P FAQ http://www.state.nj.us/dep/parksandforests/parks/docs/wsf_motorzed_access_plan_FAQ.pdf

 Waterford Township Environmental Commission added 7 new photos.
May 16 · 🌐

Environmental Commission members Rich Beswick and Sal Russomanno assisted Waterford Twp. Committeeman Dave Chiddenton, a host of Wharton Forest Volunteers (including the Wharton Superintendent Rob Auermuller), and the DEP, with a trail-blocking event on April 25th off of Chew Road. Unfortunately, ATV activity has been causing great damage to hiking trails, vegetation, and wildlife within our forest boundaries. The goal is to convince four-wheelers and monster trucks to stay on "traffic designated" roads, which are better able to handle the wear and tear from these vehicles.



Blocked trails appear at the same time the "No Motor Vehicles" signs are posted and the DEP was not involved?

Source: Facebook screen capture before it was deleted after being called out at the Waterford Environmental Commission meeting

Extent of the Closures- Debunking the DEP's Claim:

The Superintendent has claimed that the analysis of how many miles of roads are closed is incorrect, claiming they are not roads intended for motor vehicles

According to the DEP's own grant request:

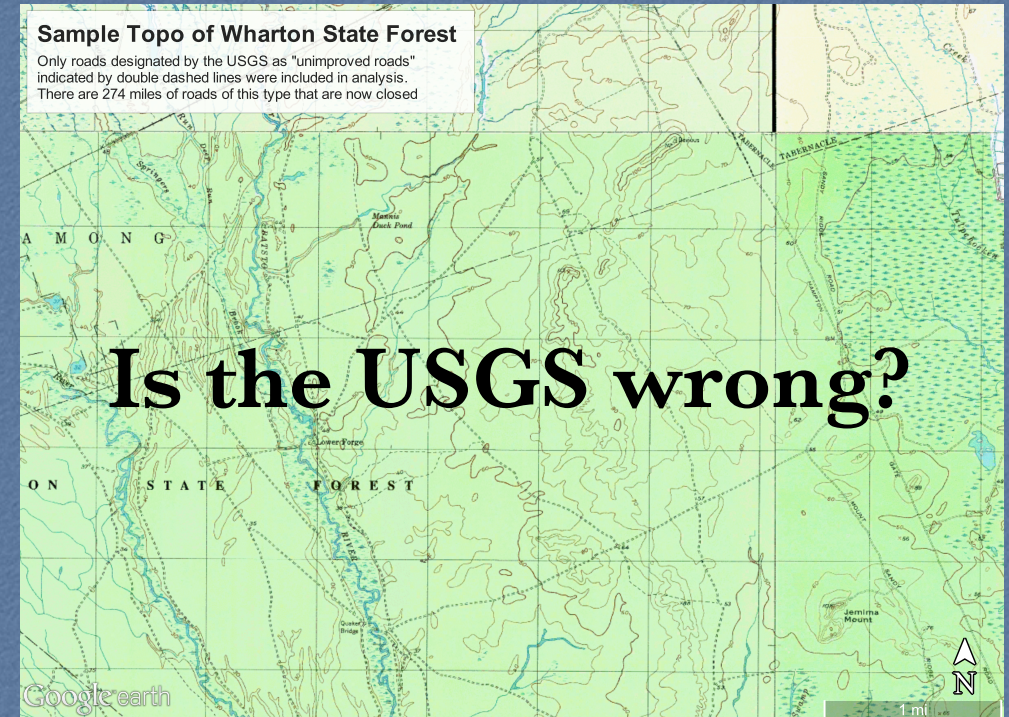
"... Driving these roads has long been a favored recreational pursuit..."

"... The monies from the grant will enable the Division of Parks and Forestry to develop a regularly scheduled maintenance program for this area within the Pine Barrens that encompasses 600+ miles of primitive roadway..."

Source: 2013 Recreational Trails Grant Program Application

The number of miles in the grant request is *even higher* than the total miles in our analysis (474 vs. 600+)

Only roads indicated as "unimproved roads" were included in the analysis



Is the USGS wrong?

The DEP's Definition of a "Road" Changes to Suit Their Needs

PATH FORWARD

- Everyone agrees that action must be taken
- Outdoor enthusiasts feel the M.A.P. is the wrong approach
- The solution is not road closures (which will not reduce damage and only affect the law abiding)
- Solution is enforcement of already existing laws
- Before anything is done, the public **MUST** be engaged
- State and Local government must engage- Throughout, the DEP has demonstrated they cannot be trusted
- Scrap the M.A.P.- Start with a "blank sheet of paper"
- DEP should define objectives for forest management and work *with* the stakeholders to identify solutions which *meet these objectives* while also *maintaining access* that is reasonable and takes into account the precedent set by decades of open access.

Scrap The M.A.P.! - Need a Fresh Start