

STOP WHARTON STATE FOREST ROAD CLOSURES NOW: SCRAP THE M.A.P!!

Have you noticed all of the brown fiberglass posts, labeled "No Motorized Vehicles", which have suddenly sprung up on previously "legal" roads throughout Wharton State Forest ("WSF")? These recent road closures are a part of the NJ DEP's new Motorized Access Plan ("MAP"). This plan was forged in secrecy, without any public input, to close approximately 58% of all roads in WSF, denying the public access to 274 miles of roads. Among other types of recreation, these roads are also used for exploring, accessing favorite fishing or hunting spots, or dropping in a canoe or kayak. WSF is the first state park of several to have this type of MAP implemented. This government overreach of denying citizens their right to public lands needs to be stopped NOW, before it goes any further. Anyone who values their time in WSF needs to fight to ensure future access to these roads which are on OUR STATE LAND, which we, the tax payers, pay for and have a right to enjoy.

The MAP of WSF represents a sudden blanket closure of virtually ALL narrow interior roads and non-through roads that lead to points of interest, a large amount at water's edge. THE DEP cites motorized damage as the reason for the closures, but don't believe the hype! Irresponsible damage is already illegal and stopping further damage is quite simply an issue of enforcement and proper maintenance. Additionally, roads are being closed that have no damage at all. The remainder of the still open major roads are to be "rehabilitated" into wide, graded, orange gravel roads which with all traffic now focused on so few roads, will likely become dusty and heavily wash-boarded in short time. These wide-graded roads, made of non-natural earth, represent a HUGE environmental impact themselves and will forever change the inherent charm of WSF. They are also very uncomfortable to travel (think Carranza Road). This closed-door shift in policy is the largest and most negative change for the public in the management of WSF since it was purchased in 1957.

Since our efforts began in mid- August the DEP has removed the M.A.P from the NJ Parks website, claiming it is now in draft form and that stake holder meetings will take place in October with a larger public meeting on November 5th, in Hammonton, they will stage them with pre-planned outcomes in mind, just to pacify us and say we had input. You must register to attend these meetings by calling (609) 704-1964 and/or emailing whartonmapcomments@dep.nj.gov

We need to coordinate our efforts, so please contact us at: <http://opentrailsnj.org/> so we can fight this together.

Who can you contact to express your concerns: (call, email, visit in person)

Your local state representative: <http://www.nileg.state.nj.us/members/legsearch.asp> (Elections are around the corner!)

Governor Christie: 609-292-6000 Write a letter: Office of the Governor, PO Box 001, Trenton, NJ 08625-0001

Lt. Gov. Guadagno: 609-777-2581

Director Bob Martin DEP: 609-292-2885 Bob.Martin@dep.nj.gov

Mark Texel, Head of the State Park Service: 609-292-2773, Mark.Texel@dep.nj.gov

Cindy Randazzo, DEP: Cindy.Randazzo@dep.nj.gov She wants to hear "How this will affect you and your family."

Sign the Petitions online at: <http://tinyurl.com/nqdx3jt> and <http://tiny.cc/s35h4x>

Email your comments about the MAP to whartonmapcomments@dep.nj.gov.

Tell them you are concerned:

- * by the lack of transparency and public involvement in reaching this decision and now you are concerned that the stake holder meetings will only be used to pacify the public while continuing with the plan as THEY see fit.
- * that this closure is not consistent with the plan of conservation under which the Wharton Tract was originally bought and paid for by tax payers.
- * the closure of many of these 100+ year old roads will negatively impact accessibility of cultural and historic sites, which will in time be lost to NJ.
- * these closures unfairly affects veterans, the very old, the very young, and the disabled.
- * about the severe negative effects these closures will have on Hunting, Fishing, Canoeing/ Kayaking, and many, MANY other forms of recreation.
- * about the State Park Service's intimate relationship with special-interest groups and you wonder if these closures may more closely represent the interests of these groups than the publicly stated purposes of the closures.

Be polite, be honest, but BE FIRM. This land BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE and motorized access should remain open for ALL to enjoy EVERYTHING it has to offer!