

**Resolution #042-2024 – Opposition to Wharton State Forest Vehicle Use Map**

**RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING TO LOCAL RESIDENTS AND GOVERNMENT ENTITIES THAT THE MUNICIPALITY EXPRESSES ITS OPPOSITION TO THE ADOPTION OF WHARTON STATE FOREST VISITING VEHICLE USE MAP**

**WHEREAS**, Wharton State Forest is the largest state forest in New Jersey at approximately 123,000 acres; and

**WHEREAS**, residents of the Pine Barren municipalities, and throughout the state, have enjoyed unfettered access to the elaborate system of roads since the land officially became Wharton State Forest in 1954 and even well before its official designation; and

**WHEREAS**, regardless if visitors are driving to get to a hike, a hunting or fishing expedition or just going for a drive through the forest, they need access to the various roads within Wharton; and

**WHEREAS**, the most comprehensive baseline of roads are documented in the USGS Topographical maps and were adopted as the baseline by the Pinelands Commission in 2017; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection collected 1,600 surveys from users and chose to ignore them and implement the same failed map from 2015; and

**WHEREAS**, a vehicle permitting system could be closely matched to the Department of Environmental Protection's \$195 per-vehicle permit in Island Beach State Park; and

**WHEREAS**, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection already enjoyed an over \$250 million budget in 2021, and residents of New Jersey already pay the highest property taxes in the nation; and now be it

**RESOLVED**, that the Mayor and Council of the Town of Hammonton strongly oppose implementation of the proposed Wharton State Forest Visiting Vehicle Use Map as it will effectively deny access of law-abiding citizens to many areas of Wharton State Forest and will do very little to reduce or prevent the type of damage that has been caused by a small minority to certain specific areas of the forest.

**Further; we** urge the New Jersey State Legislature and the Governor to take whatever action is necessary to discontinue the Wharton State Forest Visiting Vehicle Use Map and instead adopt the map adopted by the Pinelands Commission in 2017.

**RESOLVED**, that certified copies of this Resolution be forwarded to Governor Phil Murphy, Lieutenant Governor Tahesha Way, New Jersey Senate President Nicholas Scutari, New Jersey Senate Republican Leader Anthony M. Bucco, New Jersey Assembly Speaker Craig Coughlin, New Jersey Assembly Republican Leader John DiMaio, and our State Senator and Assembly members.