

**March 5, 2024**

**TOWNSHIP OF MEDFORD**

**RESOLUTION 64-2024**

**RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING TO LOCAL RESIDENTS AND  
GOVERNMENT ENTITIES THAT THE TOWNSHIP OF MEDFORD  
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, with over 1,700 acres located within the Township of Medford; and

**WHEREAS**, residents of the Pinelands Natural Reserve municipalities 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 planned hike, a hunting or fishing expedition, or just going for a scenic drive through the forest, they need access to the various roads within Wharton State Forest; 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**, Open Trails NJ has collected almost 5,000 signatures, including over 100 Medford residents, asking to keep the Wharton State Forest roads open, a testament to their value to area residents as a way to enjoy this State owned recreational and open space area; and

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

**WHEREAS**, the NJDEP already enjoyed an over \$250 million budget in 2021, and residents of New Jersey already pay the highest property taxes in the nation, including special assessment taxes for parks and open space preservation, development and maintenance.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Township Council of the Township of Medford strongly opposes 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.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, we urge the New Jersey State Legislature and the Governor to take whatever action is necessary to halt the implementation of the Wharton State Forest Visiting Vehicle Use Map and instead adopt the map adopted by the Pinelands Commission in 2017.

**BE IT FURTHER 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.

*I hereby certify that the foregoing is a true copy of a Resolution adopted by the Township Council of the Township of Medford at a meeting held on the 5<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2024.*

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Dawn L. Bielec, Township Clerk