

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 ROAD CLOSURES

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, stargaze, picnic, meditate in nature, 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 WHEREAS, the proposed closure can be viewed as an attack on the public's freedom to enjoy the forest.

And WHEREAS, the DEP should ensure public safety and protection of natural, cultural, and historic resources in the state forest by providing the Park Police the resources they need to strictly enforcing the existing laws and regulations to address the negative actions of a small minority, rather than limiting access for responsible users

And WHEREAS, The DEP should provide a vehicle use map strictly for the purpose of navigating through the forest.

And WHEREAS, The DEP should encourage and support through open communication to complete protection projects by leveraging volunteer labor and funding for resource projection projects that will protect sensitives areas, but not close roads used to access them as well as education through a campaign to educate the public about our natural resources, why it is important to respect them, and educate them about how to access the forest safely.

and now be it RESOLVED, that the Mayor and Council of the Town of Tabernacle strongly oppose the proposed Wharton State Forest Road Closures 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 Road Closures 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