

To: New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection
Attn: Wharton State Forest Visiting Vehicle Use Map Supervisor

12

2/28/24

Cecil

I am a responsible motorized recreation enthusiast and canoeist who cherishes the diverse recreational opportunities offered by Wharton State Forest, which I have visited...off and on...since 1968. I am writing to express my profound disappointment and strong opposition to the Proposed Visiting Vehicle Use Map. This Proposed plan, far from protecting the environment or improving public safety, feels like a heavy-handed attack on the very community that cherishes and respects this natural treasure.

My concerns stem from several fundamental flaws in the proposed approach:

1. Lack of consideration for alternative solutions: Closing roads appears to be the only option presented, despite offers of funding and collaboration with stake holder user groups to implement responsible recreation education and signage. These proactive measures, demonstrably effective in fostering respect for the environment and minimizing damage, seem completely absent from the current proposal.
2. Misidentification of the problem: While illegal ATV/UTV use and drivers leaving the established roads are a significant cause for concern and action, targeting legal motorized vehicles is unlikely to deter trespassers. Closing legal roads will only hinder enforcement efforts and disenfranchise responsible users who often act as valuable eyes and ears, reporting illegal activity.
3. The DEP collected surveys from users of the forest and the message was clear: Of the 1,610 surveys submitted, by a nearly 3 to 1 margin, users asked for the same access they have today. "Scenic driving" and "day to day travel" were mentioned over 1,000 times. The DEP then revealed a new map which closed over 250 miles of roads. Not a single input from the 1,610 survey participants appears to have been taken into account.
4. Increasing confined vehicle congestion and damage, an unintended but certainly predictable consequence. By funneling a diverse user base into fewer designated roads, the proposed closures risk concentrating recreational impact and amplifying environmental damage. Instead of spreading out users throughout the forest and minimizing pressure on specific sites, this plan threatens to create recreation hotspots with intensified environmental strain.
5. Mischaracterizing legal roadways: It is crucial to remember that the proposed closures target established forest roads, not wilderness trails. These roads are intended for and currently restricted to road-legal, insured, and registered vehicles (motorcycles and full-sized vehicles only), demonstrably different from off-highway vehicles causing environmental damage. Almost all have been in use for several decades, with some far longer.
6. Please see the enclosed copy of your Map #8, Comparison Map. I have highlighted numerous existing sand roads that I have ridden on for decades. They do NOT cross creeks, streams, nor wet-lands. They are established sand roads that have no discernable difference from many of the roads that will remain open. Many have road names that show on legacy maps which suggests their longevity. Even when referring to your stated criteria for closure, I fail to see the logic nor requirement for their closure. I **request that you revisit these and many other of the roads that are proposed for closure.**

In closing, I recognize and appreciate the DEP's responsibility to properly manage all New Jersey State Forests for proper multiple-use. That being said, I strongly dis-agree with the Proposed WSF Visiting Vehicle Use Map in its current form and request significant revisions before it is implemented. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely, Richard Colahan

Upper Black Eddy PA, 18972

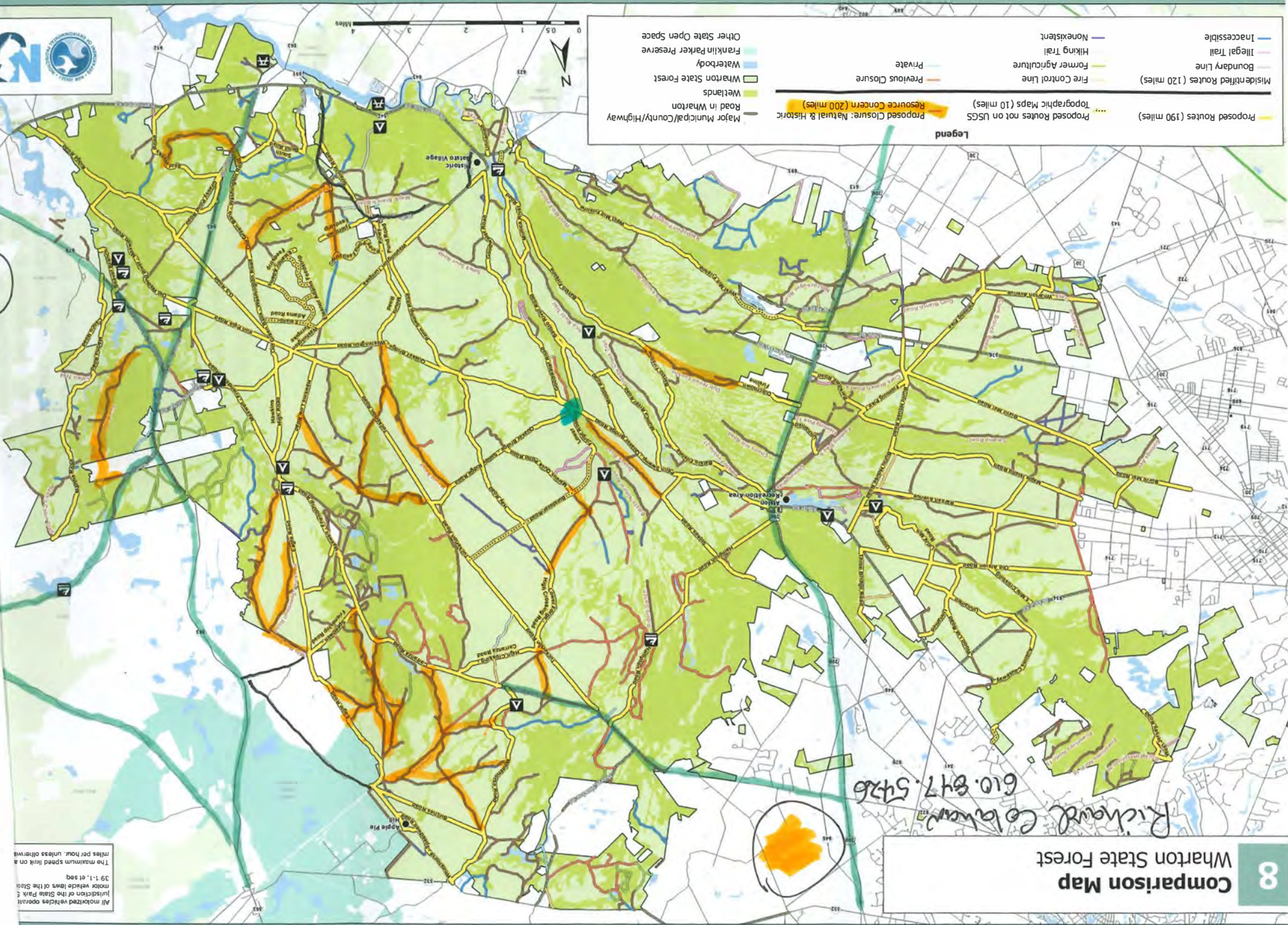
Please reconsider closure of the roads high-lighted in orange

8

Comparison Map Wharton State Forest

Richard Coleman
610.847.5426

- Legend**
- Proposed Routes (190 miles)
 - Misidentified Routes (120 miles)
 - Proposed Routes not on USGS Topographic Maps (10 miles)
 - Resource Closure: Natural & Historic
 - Previous Closure
 - Private
 - None
 - Former Agriculture
 - Hiking Trail
 - Inaccessible
 - Boundary Line
 - Fire Control Line
 - Other State Open Space
 - Franklin Parker Preserve
 - Waterbody
 - Wharton State Forest
 - Wetlands
 - Road in Wharton
 - Major Municipal/County/Highway



All motorized vehicles operate
jurisdiction of the State Park &
39 1-1, et seq
The maximum speed limit on a
miles per hour, unless otherwise