

**CHAPTER 27. STATE FOREST NATURAL AREAS—  
STATEMENT OF POLICY**

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**Source**

The provisions of this Chapter 27 renumbered from 25 Pa. Code §§ 11.101—11.105, June 7, 1996, effective June 8, 1996, 26 Pa.B. 2707, unless otherwise noted. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (183010) to (183014).

**Cross References**

This Chapter cited in 7 Pa. Code § 128.102 (relating to protected designated areas).

**§ 27.1. Background.**

(a) The Department has long recognized the value and need for setting aside unusual or interesting areas of Commonwealth forest land. In 1921, certain areas were set aside as Forest Monuments. In December of 1970, the State Forest Commission changed the name State Forest Monuments to State Forest Natural Areas and created a new class of Commonwealth forest land called Wild Areas. The Commission defined each class, established guidelines to govern the administration of each, and then approved the designation and setting aside of 13 Natural Areas and one Wild Area.

(b) To establish official policy for designating State forest areas as Natural Areas or Wild Areas, or removing these areas from designation, the Department has adopted the procedure set forth in § 27.5 (relating to procedure).

**Source**

The provisions of this § 27.1 adopted April 4, 1975, effective April 5, 1975, 5 Pa.B. 721; amended December 4, 1992, effective December 5, 1992, 22 Pa.B. 5784. Immediately preceding text appears at serial page (145092).

**§ 27.2. Objectives.**

(a) The 13 designated Natural Areas and one Wild Area have been established and managed according to the guidelines in the Commission Resolution. The Department recognized the need for additional natural areas and wild areas and incorporated the following objectives into the Forest Resource Plan which coordinates all resource activities on State Forest land:

- (1) Protect areas of scenic, historic, geologic or ecological significance through the establishment of Natural Areas which will remain in an undisturbed state, with development and maintenance being limited to that required for health and safety.

- (2) Set aside certain areas of land to be known as Wild Areas where development or disturbance of permanent nature will be prohibited, thereby preserving the wild character of the area.
- (b) During the inventory phase of the Forest Resource Plan, all unique or unusual biologic, geologic, scenic and historic areas were considered and studied for possible natural area designation. In addition to the “unique” or “unusual,” representative examples of all major forest types occurring in this Commonwealth were also included in the proposed natural area system. Natural area status was considered advisable whenever other resource development would have an adverse effect on the future utility or value of the area.
- (c) Like potential Natural Areas, potential Wild Areas were also located during the inventory process of the Forest Resource Plan. To be considered, an area had to be: 3,000 acres or larger; relatively free of man-made developments such as roads, rights-of-ways, pipelines, powerlines, campsite leases; mineral ownership in this Commonwealth; and possessing high scenic values.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 27.2 adopted April 4, 1975, effective April 5, 1975, 5 Pa.B. 721.

**§ 27.3. Natural area definition and guidelines.**

- (a) A Natural Area is defined as an area of unique scenic, historic, geologic or ecological value and of sufficient size and character so as to allow its maintenance in a natural condition by the operation of physical and biological processes, usually without direct human intervention. These areas are set aside to provide locations for scientific observation of natural systems, to protect outstanding examples of natural interest and beauty.
- (b) The guidelines governing the administration of Natural Areas are as follows:
- (1) Human habitation will not be permitted, except that primitive type, backpack camping may be permitted in designated areas only.
  - (2) Access for all but essential administrative activities will be restricted to foot trails.
  - (3) Buildings and other improvements will be restricted to the minimum required for public health, safety and interpretative aids.
  - (4) Timber harvesting will not be permitted except as may be required for maintenance of the public safety.
  - (5) Rights-of-way, leases and mineral development will be prohibited; provided, however, that subsurface oil and gas rights may be leased where no surface use or disturbance of any kind will take place on the Natural Area.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 27.3 adopted April 4, 1975, effective April 5, 1975, 5 Pa.B. 721; amended November 9, 1979, effective November 10, 1979, 9 Pa.B. 3746. Immediately preceding text appears at serial page (26453).

**§ 27.4. Wild area definition and guidelines.**

(a) A Wild Area is defined as an extensive area which the general public will be permitted to see, use and enjoy for such activities as hiking, hunting, fishing and the pursuit of peace and solitude. Development of a permanent nature will not be permitted so as to retain the undeveloped character of the area.

(b) These areas will be administered according to the principles of forest protection and management applied to Department-managed lands with the following restrictions:

(1) Campsite leases will be prohibited.

(2) A new public access road will not be constructed. Existing roads will remain open only where there is a public need. All motorized conveyances or vehicles will be prohibited with the exception of licensed vehicles which may be operated only on open public roads.

(3) Forest trail use will be restricted to hiking, horseback riding and bicycling.

(4) Buildings and other improvements will be restricted to the minimum required for public health, safety and interpretative aids.

(5) Rights-of-way, leases and mineral development will be prohibited; provided, however, that subsurface oil and gas rights may be leased where no surface use or disturbance of any kind will take place on the Wild Area.

(6) Overnight camping will be limited to the backpack primitive type.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 27.4 adopted April 4, 1975, effective April 5, 1975, 5 Pa.B. 721; amended November 9, 1979, effective November 10, 1979, 9 Pa.B. 3746. Immediately preceding text appears at serial page (26453).

**§ 27.5. Procedure.**

(a) Recommendations for designation, or removal from designation, of areas as Natural Areas or Wild Areas should be submitted to the State Forester accompanied by a map and a complete description of the character of the recommended area. Recommendations for areas to be removed from designation should be accompanied by a statement explaining that the criteria originally meriting designation no longer exist, or other substantial justification for removal.

(b) The State Forester, upon receipt of a recommendation proposing an area for designation, will review the proposal and determine whether the area meets the criteria for Natural Area or Wild Area designation as approved by the Department. Recommendations for areas proposed for removal from designation shall be reviewed to determine the appropriateness and impact of the removal.

(c) Upon a determination by the State Forester that areas proposed for designation meet the criteria for Natural Areas or Wild Areas respectively, the State Forester shall recommend designation of the proposed areas to the Deputy Secretary for Parks and Forestry and the Secretary.

(d) A notice of areas proposed for designation as Natural Areas or Wild Areas will be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. This notice will include the name of the area proposed for designation, number of acres, State forest, location and features qualifying the area for designation. There will be a public comment period of at least 30 days. If significant public concerns are raised during the comment period, the Secretary may schedule one or more public meetings. Following the public comment period and public meetings, the Secretary may direct that the proposed areas be designated as Natural Areas or Wild Areas. The Secretary's decision will be final and the designation will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

(e) A notice of areas proposed for removal from designation as Natural Areas or Wild Areas will also be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. This notice will include the name of the area proposed for removal, number of acres, State forest, location and justification for removal from designation. There will be a public comment period of at least 30 days. If requested in writing during the public comment period, the Department may schedule a public meeting. If no significant objection to the removal is made either during the public comment period or at the public meeting, the Secretary may direct that the proposed areas be removed from designation as Natural Areas or Wild Areas. The Secretary's decision will be final and the removal will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

#### Source

The provisions of this § 27.5 adopted December 4, 1992, effective December 5, 1992, 22 Pa.B. 5784.

#### Cross References

This section cited in 17 Pa. Code § 27.1 (relating to background).

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