

House Resolution 500

WHEREAS, the Loyalsock State Forest encompasses 114,494 acres in Lycoming, Sullivan and Bradford Counties; and

WHEREAS, the Loyalsock State Forest is home to a wealth of magnificent natural and recreational resources; and

WHEREAS, the heart of the Forest includes the Old Loggers Path, a 27-mile hiking path that does not cross a single paved road and features deep forests that are becoming increasingly rare; and

WHEREAS, the Old Loggers Path has attracted hikers from across the country and the world; people from England and Mexico have signed the trail registers on the Old Loggers Path; and

WHEREAS, it also contains the Devils Elbow Natural Area, a remote plateau of rare plants, bogs and hemlock forests; and

WHEREAS, the forest is home to Rock Run, an exceptional value stream, often described as the single most beautiful stream in the Commonwealth; and

WHEREAS, the forest's size, water quantity and quality, and lack of disturbance make it an especially valuable nesting habitat for interior bird species, including the Northern Goshawk, a rare raptor, and the state-endangered Yellow-Bellied Flycatcher; and

WHEREAS, there are 25,621 acres of Loyalsock State Forest, known as the Clarence Moore Lands, where the Commonwealth owns only the surface estate, and does not own oil and gas rights; and

WHEREAS, the subsurface oil and gas rights to this acreage are owned by Anadarko Petroleum Corporation and International Development Corporation; and

WHEREAS, this land is divided into an 18,780 acre tract and a 6,841 acre tract; and

WHEREAS, a Commonwealth Court decision in 1983 gives the Commonwealth the legal power, authority, and right to prevent Anadarko and IDC from using the surface of 18,870 acres of the Clarence Moore Lands to extract oil and gas; and

WHEREAS, Anadarko has entered into discussions with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) to develop the Clarence Moore Tracts; and

WHEREAS, according to the DCNR, Anadarko has proposed a development plan that includes the siting of 25 wellpads, clearing 60-foot-wide swaths of land for pipelines that traverse the Old Loggers path multiple times, the construction of compressor stations and impoundment pits in the area; and

WHEREAS, Anadarko's proposal would significantly degrade the wild character of the Loyalsock State Forest; and

WHEREAS, under Article I, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution, DCNR has a legal duty to conserve, maintain, and enhance State Forest lands for the benefit of all Pennsylvanians, including future generations; and

WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Conservation and Natural Resources Act specifically requires DCNR to protect, maintain and regulate the occupancy and use of State Forest lands; therefore be it

RESOLVED, Governor Tom Corbett and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Acting Secretary Ellen Ferretti should exercise all of their Constitutional, statutory, and discretionary powers to prevent drilling operations in the Clarence Moore Lands to the maximum extent possible, so as to preserve the wild character of the Loyalsock State Forest.