

Camping Policy for State Forest Lands

The Bureau of Forestry's Recreation Policy states, "The Bureau of Forestry will focus on the opportunity to provide dispersed low-density outdoor recreation and other recreational opportunities that are compatible with maintaining the integrity of forest ecosystems. All recreational infrastructures must be within the fiscal and physical (personnel, equipment, and facilities) resources of the Bureau. State forest visitors (recreating public) should be provided with the opportunity for a quality outdoor experience."

This Camping Policy is the operating procedure, which the Bureau will use to manage increasing recreational camper numbers and the resulting impacts on the State Forest ecosystems. The policy aims to provide consistency across the bureau in how camping on State Forest land is managed. It provides a framework to be sure that camping is practiced in a way compatible with the "low density, dispersed" nature of the recreation opportunities that the Bureau seeks to provide to the public. The policy further provides a consistent means to determine when and where camping as defined below may need to be restricted or eliminated from a specific area.

There are three types of camping on State Forest lands: motorized, primitive, and group. These are defined as follows:

- Motorized Camping – overnight camping in or near the vehicle where the vehicle continues to be used for storage or transportation.
- Primitive Camping – overnight camping where all equipment is transported manually (non-motorized vehicle methods including watercraft, bicycle, horse) and where a motorized vehicle is not located near or part of the camping experience.
- Group Camping – More than 10 people in a unit overnight motorized or primitive camping. Written authorization must first be obtained from the Forest District Manager or designee. A Camping Permit and written authorization are issued to the group leader.

General Camping Policies

- Camping without a current Camping Permit issued by the Forest District Manager or designee is prohibited.
 - Primitive campers do not need a permit if they stay no more than one night at any campsite.
 - A Camping Permit may be required at previously designated or posted areas and sites.
- A Camping Permit will be valid for no more than seven consecutive nights.
 - After occupying a site for seven consecutive nights, the camper must vacate the campsite for a minimum of 48 hours. Exceptions to this require authorization issued by the Forest District Manager or designee.
 - The Forest District Manager or designee will not issue a Camping Permit to any individual who has received a Camping Permit for more than 30 days in a calendar year, unless otherwise authorized by the Forest District Manager or designee.
- A Camping Permit will not be issued to anyone under the age of 18.
- A Camping Permit will be issued no more than 90 days in advance of the arrival date, and on a first-come, first-serve basis.
 - The permit holder must notify the Forest District office if the arrival or departure date changes from that listed on the Camping Permit.
 - The permit holder must occupy the location listed on the Camping Permit within 24 hours of the arrival date noted on the Camping Permit.
- The Forest District Manager or designee reserves the right to revoke a valid Camping Permit if the permit holder is found in violation of State Forest Rules and Regulations or permit conditions.
 - The Forest District Manager or designee can suspend camping privileges for a period of up to 90 days. Applicants shall receive written notification following a permit denial.
- No more than two Camping Permits will be issued at any one time.
- All field privies (cat hole or slit trench latrines) must be at least 200 feet from a lake, stream, spring, or other open water source. Self-contained portable toilets are encouraged and may be required to be used at some designated dispersed campsites.
- Only downed and dead wood within the immediate area of the campsite may be gathered for camp firewood. Power saws are not permitted without a Fuelwood Permit.

- Use of camp stoves is encouraged. Stone fire rings are to be scattered at "new", non-designated sites before vacating; stone fire rings are to remain intact at designated dispersed campsites.
- All trash and refuse resulting from camping must be carried out.

Motorized Camping Policies

- Each Forest District will provide a minimal number of designated dispersed campsites for motorized camping.
 - A designated dispersed campsite is a relatively small, distinctly defined area, accessible from a State Forest road or drivable trail, to accommodate one or a maximum of two vehicles, a fire ring, and space for the camping unit. Each site is identified with a vertical post indicating the site number at its entrance. The use of designated dispersed campsites will reduce wide spread soil compaction, loss of vegetation, negative riparian effects, and accumulation of trash and human waste.
- All motorized camping must be within 300 feet of a road open to public travel or a trail designated for motorized use.
- All motorized camping must be 300 feet or more from any building, Natural Area or State Forest Picnic Area. The only exceptions would be camping:
 - on a State Forest Leased Campsite with the lessee's permission, or
 - at the Asaph or County Bridge State Forest Picnic Areas.
- All motorized camping must be more than one road-mile from an entrance to a State Park having camping facilities or from a commercial campground.

Primitive Camping Policies

- All campsites must be at least 25 feet from the nearest edge of a trail.
 - The camp shall not be visible from the trail, where possible.
- All camping should be at least 100 feet from any stream or other open water source. Some primitive campsites may be unable to meet this criterion due to steep topography or other local permanent conditions.

Group Camping Policies

- A Camping Permit is issued for no more than 10 people at the same site unless:
 - A Forest District Manager may make an exception for more than 10 people; however, written authorization must accompany the Camping Permit. The Camping Permit shall indicate that a Letter of Authorization has been issued.
 - A Forest District Manager may issue written authorization with a Camping Permit for other reasons (ex. use of a pavilion or camp lease, State Forest Picnic Area, temporary structure), if deemed advisable.

If a Forest District believes it should not institute any of the above elements of the Bureau's Camping Policy, the Forest District Manager shall provide justification to the Assistant State Foresters and the Chief of the Operations and Recreation Division. After review by these and the Bureau's Recreation Committee, an appropriate exemption or modification of the standard policy may be made.

Appendix

- Those Forest Districts where a need is expressed by either the visiting public and / or staff will utilize the Self-Registration Camping Permit program.
- The Self-Registration Camping Permit is valid for no more than one night at a designated dispersed campsite. Forest Districts may revise the Self-Registration Camping Permit to allow a camper more than one night under this permit option.