

PA Senate Briefing on Tiadaghton State Forest ATV Pilot Connector
- George Durrwachter -

Good morning, Majority Chairman Gene Yaw, Minority Chairwoman Carolyn Comitta and members of the Pennsylvania Senate Environmental Resources and Energy Committee.

I am George Durrwachter a local resident who has lived most of my life at the mouth of Trout Run, tributary to Pine Creek, in the village of Cammal. To say the least, I have deep roots in the valley. I practiced orthodontics for 32 years in Williamsport and served as the western representative on the Lycoming County Planning Commission for nearly 30 years. My father, George and grandfather, Ornie Campbell, worked as Forest Rangers for the Department of Forest and Waters and had Trout Run watershed as part of their service responsibilities. In fact my father was a foreman in the CCC camp at Trout Run and help build the Lebo Road. Trout Run and Lebo roads were part of his DNA. Whenever there was a major storm he would make sure that the drains and culverts were function properly, even if it was a Sunday. The realization that due to the steepness of Lebo, there was always a lot of run off and if any of the drains were malfunctioning, he would have major repairs after the storm event. Not as fast as today, but the word soon traveled that there was a spectacular view of Pine Creek from the Lebo road, so with the blessing of the District Forester, Homer Metzger, Dad built the upper view shed "look out" so that people did not have to drive down the steep hill to have the view. Over the years several accidents happened on this road and it was eventually closed to vehicle traffic. On August 23, of this year I had a tour of the road and it has not become any less dangerous. However, it was grass seeded and much better stabilized. Snow mobiles use it in the winter but ATVs will definitely have a negative impact causing increased erosion and sedimentation, along with accidents. This area has limited emergency response and this route will definitely have its share of accidents.

The Trout Run Road was an old railroad grade and many parts of it were almost at stream level, so that when it rained Trout Run became very muddy, due to erosion and sedimentation. The Fish and Boat Commission along with studies of DEP realized that this was a Class A Trout stream and with some abatement it could be even better. So, for about 3 miles, from the Second Fork of Trout Run to the Bear Trap Hollow, the road was close to motorized traffic. This made a tremendous

improvement to the run off and now Trout Run clears in a lot less time, after a heavy rain event.

The Northcentral Pennsylvania Conservancy, of which I am a founding member, did some stream improvement work to help with water quality as well. All of these efforts afforded a degree of protection to a very special watershed, with a good population of wild Brook trout.

Opening this road to ATVs will only increase erosion, sedimentation and increase the fishing pressure, which was previously being afforded a certain degree of protection.

I am not opposed to motorized recreation, after all I am 83 years old, and as a child when older people would say the mountains are getting steeper, I now understand what that meant. I am opposed to having Trout Run Road and the Lebo Road being part of this connector route. I am sure that there can be a collaborative public and private partnership that will keep ATVs somewhat close to route 44.

I thank you Senators for giving me this opportunity to hear my concerns.