



**Forest Stewards Guild Position Statement on “West Virginia State Parks Logging Bill”  
Senate Bill 270/House Bill 4182**

**We strongly oppose SB 270 and HB 4182 for their proposition of timber production as a forest management goal for West Virginia State Parks. This proposition conflicts with the key purpose and value of Parks to preserve scenic, aesthetic, scientific, cultural, archaeological, and historical values, natural wonders, and provide public recreation (1931 Code of West Virginia §20-1-7); is being planned without stakeholder input or public involvement in the process; and is attempting to legislate the complex process of long-term public forest management.**

The Forest Stewards Guild firmly believes in the importance of state parks for recreation and the enjoyment of nature. Forest preserves and parks provide an important balance to areas managed for timber and other forest products. For the Guild, both preserves and timber management areas are important. We practice and promote ecological forestry, which means timber harvests are designed to ensure all forest values are protected. At the same time, we value parks because they are crucial places where people connect with forests and where the next generation can develop a love for the woods. This proposed bill challenges our core values.

We see three crucial problems with these Bills:

1) The **central values of West Virginia State Parks** as areas for preserving special natural places and providing nature-based recreation and scenic beauty are not driving the proposed new State Park forest management goal. West Virginia State Parks provide places for citizens and visiting tourists to improve their wellbeing, view scenery, and connect with nature. State Park forests provide fresh water, clean air, wildlife habitat, and scenic and ecologically important old forests. Stewardship of West Virginia State Park forests should reflect that.

2) **Stakeholder input** regarding the users, uses, and values of West Virginia State Park forests is not informing the proposed new State Park forest management goal, and the public is not being included in the forest management goal-setting process. Stakeholders and the public deserve a voice at the table in the management of public forests. Responsible stewardship of West Virginia State Park forests requires understanding all the current uses and values of each forest area and incorporating public input.

3) A **comprehensive, public, stewardship planning process**, framed by clearly-defined West Virginia State Park forest management goals and informed by forest health specialists, recreation experts, wildlife scientists, and other stakeholders, is not directing the proposed forest management actions. Forests can benefit from good stewardship, and the stewardship

planning process on public forests cannot be replaced by undercutting public engagement and legislating forest management actions. By setting cutting limits, as proposed in each Bill, the State is setting its treasured Parks up for the practice of high-grading, which liquidates the value of the woods for short-term financial gain and leaves the weakest, least desirable trees to form the future forest. Such practices do not reflect the mission and values of the West Virginia Division of Forestry.

### ***About the Forest Stewards Guild***

Forest Stewards Guild members include forestry and conservation professionals who manage some of the most beautiful forests on private and public lands across the United States. We practice and promote responsible forestry as a means of sustaining the integrity of forest ecosystems and the human communities dependent upon them. We support much needed management of State Parks forests in ways that are transparent, science-based, expert-informed, and State Park-driven.

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