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The Honorable Suzanne Smith, Chairwoman
Committee on Resources, Recreation and Development
New Hampshire House of Representatives
Legislative Office Building, Room 305
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Dear Chairwoman Smith and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to register the Forest Society's opposition to House Bill 1316. We have two primary objections to this bill.

First, in 2017 the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources completed the update of the Nash Stream State Forest Management Plan. That process took four years to finish and involved extensive review and input from the technical team at DNCR, the Nash Stream Citizens Committee and members of the public.

Final approval rested with the New Hampshire Council on Resources and Development (CORD) which has the legal responsibility for management and administration of all lands acquired through the NH Land Conservation Investment Program, including Nash Stream Forest. In short, the development of the updated master plan is a legally-required process involving multiple state agencies and the public.

The end result was the 2017 Management Plan relative to recreational activities would continue to emphasize traditional, low-impact, recreation but allow for limited ATV and UTV access on the two existing OHRV trails. It also allows for the consideration of a "Southern Connector Trail" subject to nine specific conditions including passage of the coarse and fine filter criteria.

Unfortunately, HB 1316 undermines this thorough process and appears to violate the requirements of RSA 215-A:42 and RSA 215-A:43. As you know, those sections of law set the conditions for the operation of ATVs and trail bike on state lands.

Second, as the members of this committee recall, the Legislature approved HB 660 during the 2019 session. That bill called for DNCR to prepare a master plan for an integrated network of OHRV trails in Coos county, prepare an update of the department's 2003 Statewide Trail Plan for ATVs and trail bikes and undertake a study of the effects of OHRV activity upon the state's economy.

We would urge the Legislature to ensure the work called for in HB 660 is funded and completed before it allows the establishment of additional ATV trails on state reservations. Therefore, we would ask you to vote HB 1316 as Inexpedient to Legislate. Thank you and I will be happy to answer any questions.

Sincerely,

Matt Leahy, Public Policy Manager
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests