

**CHAPTER 17. STATE PARKS NATURAL AREAS—  
STATEMENT OF POLICY**

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**Source**

The provisions of this Chapter 17 renumbered from 25 Pa. Code §§ 11.111—11.115, June 7, 1996, effective June 8, 1996, 26 Pa.B. 2707, unless otherwise noted. Immediately preceding text appears at serial pages (183014) to (183017).

**§ 17.1. State Parks 2000 Natural Area policy.**

Areas within State Parks containing outstanding, unique or sensitive resources should be set aside for protection through designation as Natural Areas to ensure their continued quality for future generations. A Natural Areas Program would also create opportunities for research to bring about a better understanding of the natural world and promote greater opportunities for environmental education.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 17.1 adopted August 20, 1993, effective August 21, 1993, 23 Pa.B. 3943.

**§ 17.2. State Parks Natural Area definition.**

A Natural Area is an area within a State Park of unique scenic, geologic or ecological value which will be maintained in a natural condition by allowing physical and biological processes to operate, usually without direct human intervention. These areas are set aside to:

- (1) Provide locations for scientific observation of natural systems.
- (2) Protect examples of typical and unique plant and animal communities.
- (3) Protect outstanding examples of natural interest and beauty.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 17.2 adopted August 20, 1993, effective August 21, 1993, 23 Pa.B. 3943.

**Cross References**

This section cited in 17 Pa. Code § 17.201 (relating to definitions).

**§ 17.3. General management guideline.**

The protection of Natural Areas will be guided by the need to maintain their significant ecologic values. Generally, physical and biological processes will not be subject to direct human intervention. Activities which interfere with these processes or threaten to degrade the inherent values of these areas will be prohibited. Management of surrounding lands may not adversely impact these areas.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 17.3 adopted August 20, 1993, effective August 21, 1993, 23 Pa.B. 3943.

**§ 17.4. Administration/operation of Natural Areas.**

(a) Natural Areas will be left undisturbed with natural succession allowed to occur. Artificial regeneration will not be permitted. Resource management practices will not take place except as required for public safety and when activities or events threaten the natural values of the area. An uneven-age management buffer will be maintained around the Natural Area where possible.

(b) Control measures will be considered if the feature for which the area was designated is in jeopardy. Insect and disease control will be determined on an individual case basis. Fire control will be permitted and will follow normal Bureau of Forestry operating procedures. Aerial spraying of herbicides to maintain rights-of-way within and bordering Natural Areas will not be permitted. Vegetation on these rights-of-way may be cut and controlled by direct spray application to cut stems.

(c) Only activities congruous with the natural resources will be permitted. Human habitation or overnight camping will not be allowed. Written permission from the State Park Director will be required to conduct research or other similar activities. Activities may be prohibited during certain periods during the year if necessary to protect a sensitive natural resource. Access for all but essential administrative activities is restricted to foot travel and nonmotorized watercraft.

(d) Buildings and other improvements will be restricted to the minimum required for public health, safety and interpretive aids and shall be provided only when it will facilitate the appreciation of the unique resource. The development shall be compatible with the protection needs and management strategies for the resource.

(e) Mineral leases and development will be prohibited. New rights-of-way will also be prohibited.

(f) Signs may be erected at access points and where needed along roads bordering Natural Areas. Information should include the name of the Natural Area, why the area is so set aside and special restrictions which might apply.

(g) Management activities planned on Natural Areas will require prior written approval of the State Park Director.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 17.4 adopted August 20, 1993, effective August 21, 1993, 23 Pa.B. 3943.

**§ 17.5. Natural Area designation procedure.**

(a) Recommendations for designation, or removal from designation, of areas as Natural Areas should be submitted to the State Park Director with a map and a description of the character of the area. Recommendations for areas to be removed from designation should be accompanied by a statement explaining that the criteria meriting designation no longer exist, or other substantial justification.

(b) The State Park Director will review the proposal to determine whether the area meets criteria for Natural Area designation. Recommendations for removal from designation will be reviewed to determine the appropriateness and impact of removal.

(c) Upon determination that areas proposed for designation meet the criteria for Natural Areas, the State Park Director will recommend designation of the areas to the Deputy Secretary of Parks and Forestry and the Secretary.

(d) A notice of areas proposed for designation as Natural Areas will be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. This notice will include the name of the area proposed for designation, the State Park in which the area is located, the size of the area and the features qualifying the area for designation. There will be a public comment period of at least 30 days. If significant public concerns are raised, the Secretary may schedule a public meeting. Following the public comment period, and any possible public meeting, the Secretary may direct that the proposed areas be designated as Natural Areas. The Secretary's decision will be final and the designation will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

(e) A notice of areas proposed for removal from designation as Natural Areas will also be published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*. This notice will include the name of the area proposed for removal, the State Park in which the area is located, the size of area and the justification for removal from designation. There will be a public comment period of at least 30 days. If requested in writing during the public comment period, the Department may schedule a public meeting. If no significant objection to the removal is made either during the public comment period or at the public meeting, the Secretary may direct that the proposed area be removed from designation as a Natural Area. The Secretary's decision will be final and the removal will be effective upon publication in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 17.5 adopted August 20, 1993, effective August 21, 1993, 23 Pa.B. 3943.

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