Pennsylvania contains about 17 million acres of forestland. Of this total, over two million acres are in the state forest system. The Forbes State Forest comprises over 60,000 acres in Westmoreland, Somerset, and Fayette Counties. The Forbes provides a unique opportunity for a wide variety of dispersed low-density recreation pursuits. It is our goal to minimize conflicts amongst these sometime competing experiences and expectations.

**Laurel Mountain**

The Industrial Revolution swept the United States at the turn of the 20th century, demanding raw natural resources from Pennsylvania's forests. The increased need for timber resulted in the overharvesting of many of our forests, including the ridge top of Laurel Mountain. The loss of forestland caused many environmental problems including, loss of wildlife habitat, erosion, uncontrolled wildfires, and contaminated water.

During this time, the PW&S (Pittsburgh, Westmoreland, and Somerset Railroad) traversed along Laurel Mountain, extending from Rector to Somerset. Much of the timber that was harvested on the ridge was taken to the Byers-Alen Saw Mill, located at a base of Laurel Mountain. After the timber resources were exhausted, the PW&S RR closed in 1916.

Forbes State Forest was founded in 1909, when the Commonwealth of PA purchased 8,532 acres of land from the Byers & Alen Lumber Company. This forest land was the first of its kind to be purchased within the Ohio River Watershed.

Today, the Bureau of Forestry works to provide clean water, habitat for plants and animals, low density recreation, sustained yields of quality timber, and to promote overall forest health.

**Laurel Highlands Trail System**

Summer Recreation

The most common recreational use of this area is biking, hiking, mountain biking, hunting, sight-seeing, exploration, and some agricultural use. Please note that tether lines must be used when horses are kept on site, and they may not be tied directly to trees or shrubs. Manure and hay must be removed from all parking areas.

Winter Recreation

Winter enthusiasts come to the Forbes State Forest to hike, cross-country ski, snowmobile, snow shoe, and even dog sled.

A warming hut is located along Laurel Summit Road, which contains a wood stove and picnic tables so you may dry out, warm up, eat lunch, or take a break. Overnight use of the warming hut is prohibited. It is open year-round.

**Winter Trail Etiquette:**

- Do not walk on ski trails or permit pets to walk on trails.
- Snowmobiles only on snowmobile trails, for the safety of all users.
- Be tolerant and respectful of other winter recreationists.
- Yield to faster skiers and snow-grooming equipment.

For more information on winter trail etiquette, obtain a brochure from the district office or online at [www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry).

**Points of Interest**

- **Laurel Mountain warming hut**—located off of Laurel Summit Road, the warming hut is always open. During the winter months, Nordic Ski Patrol volunteers are present on weekends.
- **Beam Rocks**—can be accessed from Beam Rocks parking lot and trail; this one-mile, round-trip hike offers a scenic vista of the surrounding forest to the east, in Somerset County. This area closes at dusk and alcoholic beverages are prohibited.
- **Wolf Rocks**—can be accessed from the Laurel Summit State Park parking lot; this 4.5 mile roundtrip hike leads visitors to a scenic vista of the Linn Run valley.
- **Spruce Flats Bog**—Spruce Flats Bog is a 28-acre wetland located on the toe of the Laurel Ridge. The bog can be accessed from the Laurel Summit State Park parking lot; this one mile, roundtrip walk allows visitors to walk out into the bog onto a viewing platform.
- **PW&S Railroad Grade**—the Pittsburgh, Westmoreland, and Somerset Railroad (PW&S) once traversed Laurel Mountain (~1900-1916), running from Rector to Somerset. An old sandstone quarry and stone crusher can be seen off the side of the trail. The railroad grade has since been converted to roads and trails and can be utilized for snowmobiling during the winter time and biking, hiking, and horseback riding during the summer months.