



## NEWS RELEASE

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### **NEW BIKING TRAILS PLANNED FOR CONSERVED STERLING RUN PROPERTY**

#### *Increased Use in 2021 Prompts DCNR to Expand Recreational Access on Property with Conservation Easement*

**Emporium, Pennsylvania** – Pennsylvania’s Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is developing 20-30 miles of new biking trails in Cameron County, Pennsylvania, of which at least 10 miles are planned on Sterling Run, the conservation and public access easement donated to the state by The Lyme Timber Company as part of a 2018 financing package with PENNVEST. Completion of approximately 15 miles of trail is expected later this year, allowing for winter fat tire biking and in time for widespread use in 2023.

The new bike trails serve to mitigate ongoing safety incidents between hikers, equestrian riders, and bicyclist on the Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail near Benezette. Marshall Farm Road, adjacent to the immediate northeast of Sterling Run, will provide year-round access to both the new biking trails and cross-country ski trails also under development for winter recreational enthusiasts. Within the Sterling Run property, trail designers are currently laying out the new trails, taking into consideration the existing topography and new infrastructure needs.

The design of outdoor recreational amenities must consider compatibility among different uses, and dedicated biking trails will improve users’ safety and enjoyment. In addition, trail designers look to maximize the use of existing trails by connecting them with new assets, creating a much larger network and options for users. The Sterling Run property presents unique opportunities to connect existing trails and provide dedicated biking amenities, while remaining a working forest with the commensurate economic benefits to the community.

The biking trails will be the latest addition to the 9,152-acre Sterling Run property. In 2018, affiliates of The Lyme Timber Company (Lyme) donated a conservation and public access easement to Pennsylvania as part of a financing transaction with PENNVEST. The Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) holds the conservation and public access easement and is responsible for managing access opportunities.

While the property remains in private ownership, the easement secures permanent recreational access for the public. Joe Kellert, DCNR Elk State Forest, district forester, said “The Sterling Run Easement is an example of cooperative collaboration at work for the benefit of both conservation and public enjoyment. It’s a testament of what can be accomplished when the respective strengths and disciplines of public and private entities are leveraged and put into action.” Under the conservation and public access easement, the lands are open for public recreation for uses very similar to state forests but stay in private ownership with the associated economic and taxing benefits to the local community.

Three Rivers Forest Management, a division of Lyme, manages the Sterling Run property, part of Lyme Timber’s 160,000-acre timberland holdings in northwest PA and western New York.

The Sterling Run lands have enjoyed widespread public use. Lyme has been working cooperatively with The Keystone Elk County Alliance to plant high quality forage plots, including clover, timothy, and bromegrass, that elk, deer, and turkey prefer. While several main access roads are open year-round subject to road conditions, many gates were opened for deer season last fall to help hunters access the entire property. This tract is also enrolled in the Deer

Management Assistance Program (DMAP) through the Pennsylvania Game Commission with a total of 167 tags available each year. Maps and additional information are available at [ThreeRiversForest.com/leasing](http://ThreeRiversForest.com/leasing).

DCNR has been actively working to improve conditions for public access on the Sterling Run Parcel. In the past year, three miles of road have been resurfaced with Driving Surface Aggregate. Planning has begun for a parking area along May Hollow Road at the intersection of Bender and Bobolink Lanes. Preliminary designs are also underway to replace two large culverts which carry Bender Run and Portable Run.

Ben Porkolab, Conservation Education Coordinator, Keystone Elk Country Alliance, said "Being an avid outdoorsman, and enjoying hunting, fishing, trapping, and hiking with my family, I am overjoyed that this property that has been private in the past is now open to the public to enjoy. This immense wild area has many diverse habitats and is teeming with a variety of wildlife species."

### **About Lyme Timber**

Founded in 1976, The Lyme Timber Company is a private timberland investment management company that focuses on forestry-related investments in the US and Canada. The Company's current portfolio includes approximately 1.5 million acres in New York, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Florida, Michigan, and Wisconsin. Alongside its timberlands, the Company invests in and supports locally-managed forest management companies, sawmills, logging businesses, and log distribution yards.

Lyme owns approximately 160,000 acres of forestland in the North-Central Pennsylvania region. The Company has invested in several local forest products businesses, including Three Rivers Forest Management in Coudersport, PA, Northern Appalachian Log and Forestry in Coudersport, PA, Emporium Hardwoods in Emporium, PA, and Bradford Forest in Bradford, PA. These businesses employ over 240 people in the region and support many additional jobs in logging, trucking, and related businesses.