

July 1, 2005

The Honorable Maurice Hinchey
US Congressman
City Hall Third Floor
16 James Street
Middletown, NY 10940

Dear Congressman Hinchey,

**Re: Sterling Forge Estates Development Planned Within Sterling Forest State Park Preserve,
Tuxedo, NY -- DSEIS Accepted by Lead Agency**

On behalf of the Sterling Forest Partnership, I am writing to enlist your help on an issue of great concern for all of us who treasure Sterling Forest. Thanks to your extraordinary leadership we now have a 20,000-acre Sterling Forest State Park Preserve – a legacy that you should be very proud of.

Additionally, the Highlands Conservation Act has been signed into law and funded, in a landmark designation for our region, of which Sterling Forest is a keystone parcel.

In March 2004 the Sterling Forest Partnership wrote you a letter about a proposed development in the heart of Sterling Forest State Park. Now we would like to update you on the development plans. To allow this development would be an unwarranted use of the land and an affront to all those who supported spending federal, bi-state and private money to acquire it.

As you know, a 575-acre park inholding in the center of the Park was retained by Sterling Forest Corporation. The Corporation currently is seeking permits to build 107 luxury homes costing \$1.2 to \$2.2 million on 1 to 5-acre plots on this parcel known as Sterling Forge Estates.

To illustrate the alarming scope of this development plan, I have enclosed a map of the development site location within the Park and the applicant's location map for the 107 luxury homes. Additionally I have attached a list of key issues and concerns shared by the Sterling Forest Partnership.

You should be aware that on July 18th the Town Board of the Town of Tuxedo, as lead agency, will hold a hearing on the applicant's Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS). **The Sterling Forest Partnership asks that you urge Governor Pataki to ensure that New York State provides the proper oversight to protect the resources of Sterling Forest State Park. Furthermore, we ask you to encourage Governor Pataki to pursue negotiations for purchasing the 575-acre inholding so that Sterling Forge Estates property should remain in tact as part of Sterling Forest State Park.**

Our heartfelt thanks for your continuing work to protect Sterling Forest and the Highlands.

Sincerely,

<Your name>

Sterling Forge Development Plan

Key Issues and Concerns

- In an unprecedented cooperative effort, New York, New Jersey, the federal government and private foundations raised \$55 million to preserve most of Sterling Forest. An additional \$25 million of bi-state money has been spent to protect much of what remained unprotected in the greater Sterling Forest area.
- President Bush recently signed into law the Highlands Conservation Act, which declared that one of its purposes is “to recognize the importance of the water, forest, agricultural, wildlife, recreational and cultural resources of the Highlands region, and the national significance of the Highlands region to the United States.” Not only does Sterling Forest share this important designation, but the US Forest Service Highlands Study pinpointed Sterling Forest as being of the highest biodiversity value for the Highlands.
- Sterling Forest State Park serves a metropolitan area of 25 million people and is managed as watershed land, providing the major source of clean drinking water for two million New Jersey residents.
- Scientists, who are analyzing the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) prepared by the applicant, conclude that this proposed development will have serious environmental impacts that extend beyond the development parcel into the State Park and other surrounding neighbor properties. This includes habitat destruction and fragmentation of the timber rattlesnake, a NYS designated threatened species.
- This unfragmented forest habitat of Sterling Forest, with its associated highly diverse population of herpetological, avian, and mammalian species, as well as threatened and endangered flora and fauna, is the outstanding location for the new Highlands Environmental Research Institute.
- Sterling Forest State Park is a nationally significant historical and archaeological resource which dates back to 1736, playing a vitally important role in both the Revolutionary and Civil Wars.
- Palisades Interstate Park Commission is seeking to have holdings within the Park found eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, yet other equally important portions of the Sterling Iron Estate will not be protected simply because they remain in the ownership of Sterling Forest Corporation.
- The investment of over \$78 million of public and private monies will benefit inordinately 107 home dwellers (predicted by the applicant to be second homes for many) to the detriment of Park resources.

Additional Attachments

- Park map, with inholding site
- Applicant’s site map of development locations on the park inholding
- Sterling Forge Estates Fact Sheet
- Summary: “Potential Biodiversity Impacts of Proposed Development in Sterling Forest” 2/05