



Thank you, Commissioners and Director Burhans, for the opportunity to comment this morning. My comments pertain to the proposed reintroduction of the American Marten.

My name is Brook Lenker. I am the executive director of Keystone Trails Association. Our organization provides, protects, preserves, and promotes hiking trails and hiking opportunities in Pennsylvania. Through our statewide network of members, donors, local trail clubs, subscribers, and social media followers, we are passionate communicators, advocates, and conveners regarding trail and hiking matters.

Hiking is popular and vast public lands are a favorite hiking venue because of the wilderness-like setting, the solitude, the quiet, and the chance to see native fauna. Hikers enjoy all kinds of wildlife sightings but the chance to observe charismatic, wily, secretive mammals, like the marten, is extra special. Such memories make the day. They inspire people to get out more and deepen their connections to nature. In short, bringing martens back to our state enriches the lives of Pennsylvanians.

This is more than a sentimental notion. The nature that surrounds our trails is therapy to our psyche. It de-stresses, soothes, and enlightens. The glimpse of a once extirpated species embodies hope – that restoration and resiliency are possible in a chaotic world reeling from climate change and other threats. They are emblematic of everlasting wilds.

Outdoor recreation is more than good for us physically and emotionally, it is good for our economy. The marten is symbolic of the draw of the outdoors burgeoning in the Keystone State. It is a small ticket to further success in getting more people outside, and familiarizing them to the important work of agencies like the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

Martens play into a virtuous cycle. Their presence will entice more hikers, hunters, birders, and other recreationists to support conservation policies and funding that nurture and expand habitat and protect natural resources. Our organization envisions roles for our constituents in reporting marten sightings or otherwise assisting the Game Commission in this effort, while advancing the ethos of respecting wildlife – in our recreational pursuits and daily lives. The marten is an apex predator and it could help take a collective spirit of stewardship to new heights.

We respectfully ask the commissioners to approve the marten reintroduction plan, and wish the endeavor the greatest success. Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brook Lenker".