

State presses for ruling on 4 SIDC group homes

The state has asked an appeals court to decide soon whether the construction of four group homes at the Staten Island Developmental Center can proceed without a full-scale trial on the matter.

The request for the Appellate Division of state Supreme Court to expedite its decision came from the state attorney general's office, which is appealing a lower court ruling that barred construction of the homes in a

wooded area known as Corson's Brook Woods, pending a trial for a permanent injunction.

Last month, Supreme Court Judge Rose McBrien ruled in favor of the Protectors of Pine Oak Woods, an environmental group, after members saw that 40 trees had been knocked down, and underbrush removed, at Corson's Brook Woods, which environmentalists want to pre-

serve as a natural area.

The trees and underbrush were removed in connection with site preparation for two of the group homes to house 24 mentally retarded persons from the center.

The state wants to erect the homes in an effort to comply with a nine-year-old federal plan to assimilate into the community the handicapped at the center.

The environmental group does not oppose the group homes. It seeks only to have them relocated on the grounds so that the wooded area will not be further despoiled.

When the state filed its notice of appeal in the McBrien ruling, it obtained an automatic stay of the court order.

Technically, the state could proceed with construction while the appeal process is moving forward. However, Terence H. Benbow, a lawyer who represents the environmental group, said the state attorney general has agreed that no additional work will be carried out while the case is before the appeals court.