

# Rothrock Roundup

2014 Edition



## From the Desk of the District Forester

It is becoming somewhat of a routine the last number of years for those of us on the Rothrock State Forest - another year of changes. I write this to you now in the seat of the District Forester, a position I assumed at the end of August. Jason Albright, with us for a period of three years, left to take on the position of Assistant State Forester. He now works directly under the acting Director of Bureau of Forestry, Chris Plank supervising the ten central forest districts (from the New York to Maryland borders) in addition to our Penn Nursery. The District was sad to see Jason leave, but truly wish him well in his new position. We were glad to see him climb the ranks of the Bureau and take on this position, taking with him a variety of field experiences to draw his decision making upon.

On December 27th our Forest Maintenance Supervisor Larry Lauck, overseeing maintenance operations in our Trough Creek and Greenwood divisions, retired after 34 ½ years of service with the Commonwealth. We thank Larry for his contributions and wish him well in retirement.

So, for five months now, I have pulled 'double' duty until recently when David Yeager came on board at the end of January as our new Assistant District Forester. Dave comes to us from our Recreation Section in Harrisburg and spent some time prior on the Michaux State Forest. You will find a further introduction of Dave, by Dave further in the newsletter.

We also said a goodbye to Forest Technician Jeremy Dayhoff in August. Jeremy left to attend graduate school in the furthest reaches of the UP of Michigan. We hope to soon see him back with the Bureau of Forestry in the future.

Hopefully over the next couple months we will successfully fill our vacancies and return to a full compliment. We are still a small staff of twenty nine individuals at a full compliment. These twenty nine individuals work together to administer many varied programs, provide public contact and enforcement of State Forest rules and regulations, and maintain the infrastructure across the State Forest. Our responsibilities span beyond the State Forest boundaries when dealing with private forests and wildland fire prevention and suppression, where we venture into areas of Centre, Huntingdon, and Mifflin counties. Some staff are members of one of the three Incident Management Teams that the Bureau has assembled, responding to all-hazard incidents across the state, but predominately wildfires and searches. We also have several staff lending assistance every year on wildfire incidents at the Federal level. So our staff is multi-faceted and strive to provide the utmost of services and opportunities to the users of the State Forest, share forest conservation information, and effectively implement sustainable resource management activities across the Rothrock State Forest.

cont. on page 2

To the right: Comparison photos courtesy of Rusty Glessner Photography.



MID STATE TRAIL  
JULY 24, 2013



MID STATE TRAIL  
FEBRUARY 6, 2014

What's New

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## SO WHAT DO WE EXPECT TO ACHIEVE THIS COMING YEAR?

You will see several improvements to our infrastructure. The restroom facility at Alan Seeger has failed and is scheduled for replacement. With the popularity and heavy use of our Galbraith Gap trailhead, a new restroom facility should be in place by mid-summer. We will be having several miles of road resurfaced with an application of paver placed and rolled DSA (driving surface aggregate). The DSA provides a very smooth and durable driving surface and with the compaction achieved through rolling, allows us to defer grading for a period of time. Historically we graded each and every mile of public use road every spring. As we get more and more miles surfaced with DSA we hope that grading needs will be reduced and more time will be available for staff to address other needs on the forest.

We will enlarge and surface a parking area at the south end of Coopers Gap Road. The expansion will accommodate greater parking, primarily for our winter recreationalists (snowmobilers). We will continue to improve our number of vistas across the District. Over the last few years the vegetation has grown and has begun to inhibit views. Staff worked on cutting back the vegetation on the vistas on Colerain Road last fall, and will work to improve those remaining throughout the District.

In 2007 the District acquired the 423 acre Musser Gap Tract through the tremendous efforts of the Clearwater Conservancy, just east of Pine Grove Mills. We hope that we have now leaped some hurdles and will begin some work to connect recreational users from the Trailhead to the existing trails of the Rothrock State Forest. Some of this work will require some 'sweat equity' from our volunteers. If you or your group are interested in helping us out, please make contact with our Recreation Forester, Jake Mazzei. Much of the initial work (which I hope you will see completed by September) will be improvements to the existing access road, improved stream crossings, and much needed installation of drainage structures.

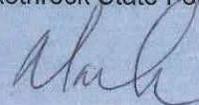
While we're on the subject of recreation, I must share my sincere gratitude to all of our volunteers. If you weren't aware, the majority of the trail maintenance conducted on the Rothrock is accomplished by our robust legions of volunteers. They contribute thousands of work hours annually brushing trails, removing windthrows, installing erosion control structures, and re-routing unsustainable sections of trail. Without their efforts users would not enjoy the miles of trail that they are able to hike, mountain bike, snowmobile, or ride horses. So the next time you are out and you pass someone or a group doing some work on the trail, stop and take a moment to thank them. Better yet, contact our office and become a volunteer yourself and put some of your own sweat equity into the trails that you enjoy.

I don't want to take up all of the pages of the newsletter, as I could share many more activities and accomplishments of the great staff I have on the Rothrock. I do want to quickly touch on two areas, our resource management program and deer management on the state forest.

Please remember, we are a 'working forest'. In addition to providing all of the recreational opportunities, places of solitude, natural and wilderness areas, sanctuaries for threatened and endangered plants and animals, we also provide support to the local economy and create early successional habitat (benefiting a wide array of wildlife species – several of which are declining in populations) every year through our timber management program. As you may have read in our resource management plan, our goal is to eventually balance the age classes found in the forest. Much of our acreage consists of mature timberland, not providing a diverse mixture of habitats and structure (structure being a variety of height classes in the canopy). Last year, Forester Long described how the foresters determine the areas of the forest to begin the regeneration process. This year you'll find a narrative of the close administration of a harvest site conducted by our foresters. Our sustainably managed and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified forest lands are a very important component to PA's forest industry. But note, non-industrial private forestlands provide the bulk of the resource for these Pennsylvania companies. So it is in all of our interests to support and promote wise stewardship towards all of Pennsylvania's private forest land owners.

Lastly, let me touch on deer and the Rothrock. Over the last decade you have observed a decreasing deer herd. I hope so, anyhow, since that is what we have been attempting to achieve. Now, I also know that there are those of you that agree with this and some that do not. And that's alright, if everyone agreed on everything this would be a pretty monotonous world. But, rest assured we take management of the vegetative resources and the deer herd on the forest very seriously. Decisions are made backed by sound and current support data. Staff are out every year evaluating the conditions in the forest and at what levels the deer herd is impacting the forest. Our tool to impact deer populations on the state forest is the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). Very soon we will be evaluating the data collected last year, evaluate the recent deer harvest numbers, get input from our staff of foresters and develop our plan for enrollment in DMAP for the 2014 hunting seasons. The ultimate goal: to maintain a deer herd that is in balance with what the habitat can support; this means the foresters can readily and successfully regenerate their timber harvests, our forested stands contain structure – there are herbaceous plants and wildflowers on the forest floor, the understory has an abundance of shrubs and regenerating tree saplings, the deer herd is composed of healthy animals with an acceptable buck to doe ratio, and there is a diverse array of wildlife species in the forest due to ample habitats.

Have a great year ahead, be safe, and take some time to enjoy all the Rothrock State Forest has to offer.



# STATE FOREST RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN UPDATE:

**By: Mark Potter**

In the year 2000, the year I became a forester on the Bald Eagle State Forest, the Bureau of Forestry had begun the process of updating the State Forest Resource Management Plan (SFRMP). The first authored in 1955, followed by updates in 1970 and again in 1985. The 2000 plan was not released until 2003. Why? Because it was a significant revision compared to past plans and incorporated coverage of many more areas involved in managing the State Forest and we were moving from managing the forest at the stand level and transitioning to managing the forest as an ecosystem; a living, dynamic ecosystem. We were also broadening our scope and rather than managing by stands within a compartment, looking at the forest (and what occurs within them) from the perspective of broader landscapes. The '03 plan was updated again in 2007. So we have moved from a more static 15-year management plan to a more dynamic 5-year plan (or close to).

The Bureau is currently feverishly working on updating the current SFRMP. You can look forward to a different format and hopefully a more condensed, comprehensive document. But being some months away from its completion, why do I bring it up? Because soon will be your opportunity to voice your opinion on how the State Forest should be managed. The Bureau of Forestry is the land manager of state forests. State Forests belong to the citizens of the Commonwealth. YOU.

How will you be able to participate? Some of you may have already filled out a survey. In the coming months a series of public meetings will be held around the state. Comments can be sent to our Central office. I emphasize, this is your opportunity to contribute. We will be sure to notify you when and where the meetings are scheduled. If you are not already on one of our email distribution lists, please contact Brandy so we can get you added.

## A NEW FACE AT ROTHROCK

First off, allow me to introduce myself, I am David Yeager the new Assistant District Forester. I am filling the position recently vacated by our new District Forester Mark Potter. By all accounts these are mighty big shoes to fill. Fortunately for me there is a terrific staff in the Rothrock State Forest and through working with them I expect nothing short of great experiences to continue.

I most recently came from Central Office, Harrisburg, in the Division of Operations and Recreation. I was the Infrastructure Specialist in the Recreation Section. My primary duties related to issues and impacts to recreation and state forest infrastructure related to shale gas development on state forest lands and also part of the Shale Gas Monitoring Team. I had been in that position for nearly 3 years. Prior to this experience I was a forester in Michaux State Forest for about 8 years with my duties being primarily related to timber, wildlife, and fire management. I began my career with the bureau as an intern for three seasons and then two seasons as a forest technician in the Tuscarora State Forest.

On the home front, I am married to my wonderful wife Christina, and have two youngsters running around, my daughter Kimber, who is in kindergarten, and my son Coal, who is still in pre-school. I would be remiss if I didn't mention our two German shepherds that seem to always be into something.

My extracurricular interests lie heavily with outdoor activities. I enjoy hunting, fishing, and getting out as often as possible in these pursuits with family and friends. I also like to go camping and hiking in PA and other wild places across our great country. As time allows I find myself restoring old cars and trucks in my father-in-laws shop. Currently I'm focused on building an early bronco and getting a 71 Chevy 4x4 truck out the door.

Well that is a brief description of me, and I look forward to meeting and working with you on one of the many projects going on in the Rothrock this coming year, whether it is training, a fire, a prevention activity, or one of the many other happenings which occur in our forest. I wish you all a safe and fruitful year and hope to meet you all soon.



# WOODLOT MANAGEMENT

By: William Bow

As a Service Forester of Huntingdon County, one of my job duties is described as, "Meet with private forest landowners to provide technical assistance and information related to the conservation of the private forest resource." In Huntingdon County, I schedule visits every 5 years with over 100 landowners that have written management plans. I also receive over a dozen calls per year from landowners to come and look at their timber because they want to know the value of it, or their timber was cut 20 years ago and it should be ready to cut again, or who can I get to cut this timber. They do not have management plans.

I always follow-up the answers to their questions with the suggestion to have a management plan written for their woodland. A plan will reduce the stress and confusion of selling timber. Before a plan can be written, the property owner's objectives have to be determined. The objectives will become the backbone of the plan.

Some basic ingredients of a plan are maps, property history, general description of property, identification of special sites for protection and social considerations. The map should define and delineate different wooded areas within the property. These areas are referred to as stands.

Each stand should have an inventory of trees by size and species with a description of plant and land characteristics. Each stand should have a prescription for future management activities, the older and larger the trees are in a stand, as they reach maturity, requires more detail in the prescription plans.

With a management plan and periodic updates, issues and stress of cutting timber can be minimized. If your objective is to harvest timber, always remember; never remove the overstory, the biggest and best, without established regeneration on the forest floor.

## TRAIL ETIQUETTE

**It is important for everyone to do their part to be courteous and respectful of other forest users. When you encounter other users, it presents an opportunity to meet and talk. This is an important part of building mutual respect and developing good communication and cooperation among different user groups. To ensure that all users have an enjoyable outdoor experience and promote recreational opportunities, State Forest rules and regulations should be followed and proper trail etiquette practiced.**

<p>CONTINUE STRAIGHT</p> 	<p>RIGHT TURN</p> 	<p>LEFT TURN</p> 
<p>CAUTION</p> 	<p>END OF TRAIL</p> 	<p>REMEMBER</p> <p>Only use trails that permit your recreational use.</p>

# RECREATIONAL TRAIL BLAZING: WHAT DO THE SHAPES AND COLORS MEAN?

BY RECREATION FORESTER JAKE MAZZEI

Whether you travel State Forest roads looking for that perfect picture from one of our breath-taking scenic views or you're an avid recreational trail user exploring the many miles of trails, undoubtedly, you have seen painted trail blazes that indicate a trail intersection or trailhead. A trail blaze is some type of marking, usually painted but can be a plastic or metal sign, to reassure the trail user that they are following the designated trail and not a wildlife path or old woods road. As you explore the Rothrock State Forest, this will become a more common sight as we continue to re-blaze and update trail marking standards as well as strive for more consistency in our trail blazing, not only in the Rothrock, but across Pennsylvania's State Forests. Now, let's delve into the question, "What do the Shapes and Colors Mean?"

There are two basic trail blazing shapes that indicate a recreation trail on the Rothrock State Forest. The first and more common shape that forest users will notice is a vertical rectangle approximately 2" x 6" in size (roughly the size of a dollar bill) and is usually painted on a tree. This reassurance blaze indicates a non-motorized trail. Marking arrangement, whether there is a single blaze or double blaze, directs travel by letting the user know if a turn is approaching, to use caution, or to continue straight on the trail. The second shape that you may notice is a colored plastic or metal diamond. This diamond is orange with reflective white borders and is about 5" x 7" in size. This type of blaze indicates a motorized snowmobile trail. There are no motorized ATV trails located on the Rothrock State Forest. Snowmobile trails indicated with an orange diamond may also be used as a non-motorized trail.

Going along with trail blaze shapes are colors that designate trail usage. The blaze colors will vary for different trail uses and the type of activity that is permitted on that trail. A trail that is marked with a red vertical rectangle blaze indicates a Shared-Use Trail. This trail is open to a variety of uses including equestrian, mountain biking, and foot travel. A trail that is marked with a yellow vertical rectangle blaze indicates a Local Hiking Trail. This trail is open to foot travel only and is closed to all other uses. There are also two State Forest Hiking Trails that traverse through the Rothrock State Forest. They include the Mid State Trail and the Standing Stone Trail. Both of these trails are marked with an orange vertical rectangle blaze and are open to foot travel only. Another, less common trail marking color you may come across is a blue colored blaze. This blue color indicates a promoted or recommended Cross-Country Ski Trail.

When you venture onto the Rothrock and intend to use recreational trails to explore the forest, it is important for everyone to do their part to be courteous and respectful of other forest users. When you encounter someone on the trail, it presents an opportunity to meet, talk, and build mutual respect among different groups. To promote recreational opportunities and enjoyable outdoor experiences, please adhere to the trail marking guidelines and colors that designate trail use. So, the next time you come across another state forest user on the trail and they ask you, "What do the shapes and colors mean?" you will know exactly how to answer.

Before you travel into the forest, it is recommended that a map of the area with designated trails be obtained. Public use maps and area specific Recreational Guides are available at various trailheads across the state forest as well as at our District Forest Office located in Huntingdon.



## MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS BY ROBERT WETZEL

Once again winter is acting like winter with freezing rain falling on the 18 plus inches of snow on the ground. As I look out at this winter wonderland, I think back to 2013. The maintenance staff of the Rothrock State Forest had another productive year keeping things working, roads passable and buildings upright. With seven full time and seven seasonal employees, the maintenance staff maintained the 180 plus miles of state forest roads; kept our fleet of equipment and vehicles safe and operating; assisted with trail maintenance; in addition to all the other projects that are required to keep the Rothrock State Forest safe and operating for the public to enjoy.

The spring of 2013 brought the usual post winter tasks and projects. These included cleaning up any leftover storm damage such as down limbs or trees; filling the hundreds of potholes created by the winter thawing and freezing; grading and shaping road surfaces; and unfortunately collecting the large amounts of trash that accumulates throughout the winter months along the roadsides. Another of our spring time chores is applying stone to the surface of selected roads within the district. As funding is available, we attempt to add 2RC limestone to as many miles of road as possible. Unfortunately the 2013 budget did not allow for the addition of any 2RC, but we did have funding for the rehabilitation of the Crowfield Road in the northern section of the district along with the application of DSA to Beidleheimer, Conklin and Lingle Valley Roads, plus the reclamation of a section of the Stone Creek Road pavement.

The Crowfield Road project was a fairly large project completed entirely in house with the exception of having the stone delivered by contractors. Crowfield Road was in need of surface stone, sub-base and drainage repairs. Utilizing Key 93 funding for materials, the district staff added or replaced 11 culvert pipes including a 36 inch diameter pipe where the road crosses a tributary of Potter Run. They placed 7,200 feet of GeoFabric to stabilize the road base then placed 4,788 tons of #3 limestone to elevate the road surface and correct drainage issues. The final step was to apply 4,380 tons of 2RC limestone for the running surface. Once the stone was in place and shaped it was compacted with a vibratory roller.

Beidleheimer Road received a treatment of 3,504 tons of DSA to a 6,472 foot section from the intersection with Greenlee Road up over Bells Ridge. Conklin Road received 2,185 tons of DSA to the remaining 4,118 feet thereby completing the resurfacing of the entire road. Lingle Valley Road also received an application of DSA to a 1,900 foot section at the Milroy end of the road. This material was applied to replace material that was placed in 2010 that was substandard and failing. The parking areas at Alan Seeger and Pine Hill Picnic Areas also received applications of DSA.

So what is DSA? Driving Surface Aggregate is what the acronym DSA stands for. Well what is it you may ask. DSA was developed by Penn State's Center for Dirt and Gravel Road Studies with input from many partners including industry and the Bureau of Forestry. It was developed in 2000 and the BOF started applying it to some of our higher volume roads that same year. DSA is a mixture of crushed stone developed specifically as a surface wearing course for unpaved roads. It has a specific particle size distribution designed for maximum compaction and wearing properties. DSA can be made from either limestone or sandstone. It is a specified blend of different sized stone particles ranging from stone dust up to 1.5 inch diameter with minimal clay and silt content. When these particles are mixed correctly with the proper moisture, placed with a paver and rolled with a vibratory roller, they compact into a very solid and durable road surface.

So why use such a fancy material you may ask. DSA has many advantages over the usual 2RC stone that has been historically used for road maintenance. The first advantage is lower sedimentation from runoff. Since the material "locks" together when compacted, the fine particles stay in place better and are less likely to end up in our creeks and streams. Another advantage is lower dust created by vehicles. One again since the particles are locked together there is less material moving in the road surface to create the large dust plumes associated with dirt and gravel roads. The lower dust levels also come from the low content of clay in the material. Less required maintenance is another advantage of DSA, once properly placed and compacted, DSA roads only need grading and shaping once every 5 years or so. Our first DSA placement was completed on the Pine Swamp Road in 2007 and it will be graded, shaped and rolled for the first time this spring, a major time and money savings.

Another road project completed on the Rothrock this year was the reclamation/grinding of the pavement on the first section of Stone Creek Road. As many of you know the pavement on Stone Creek Road is old and in poor condition. The district staff decided to grind this failing paving and turn the road back to stone. This was completed on the first 4,763 foot section in May. 2A limestone was added then a large reclaimer machine was used to grind and mix the pavement and 2A into a suitable base layer. Once this base layer was shaped and compacted, 2,168 tons of DSA was applied to create an acceptable running surface.

During the summer months the staff was busy filling potholes, cleaning culverts, collecting trash and replacing several failing culvert pipes. During this time between normal maintenance tasks, the crew boom mowed the brush along a majority of the Brady Road, cut brush on the Colerain Road and painted all the metal administrative gates throughout the district.

Cont. page 7

# MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS CONT.

## BY ROBERT WETZEL

In cooperation with the recreation forester, a parking area was constructed on Coopers Gap Road at the Peep Trail trailhead. Improvements were made to the Carcass Trail, Galbraith Gap Trail and Chute Trail all located near the Galbraith Gap parking area. The Galbraith Gap Trail improvements included the application of a material called Trail Surface Aggregate (TSA). This is a blended stone material similar to the DSA that I described earlier, but designed for trails. This TSA placement was completed with help from the PSU Dirt and Gravel Center and will be used as a test for different TSA mixes. The Chute Trail project was a different and interesting project. The staff completed what is called "Appalachian Armoring" of an approximate 500 foot section of steep, eroded trail. This involved placing a lot of large, flat rocks to create a durable, sustainable trail tread, much like a sidewalk or garden patio. This project was much different than any previous projects completed by the maintenance crew, many lessons were learned but nobody got hurt and the project was a success.

The fall found the staff completing roadside mowing, leaf blowing, painting boundary lines and picking up trash. Fall is the time to start preparing for winter. Equipment is serviced and placed in storage, culverts are checked for debris and buildings are prepped for the long cold period.

One major personnel change occurred this year. After 34 plus years of service to the Commonwealth, Larry Lauck retired in December of 2013. Larry was the Maintenance Foreman of the Trough Creek and Greenwood Divisions. We are in the process of filling this vacant position and hope to have the new foreman in position before the end of spring.

2014 is shaping up to be another busy season for the maintenance folks in the district. There will always be roads to grade, deer fences to inspect, culverts to clean and buildings to maintain. Some of the additional projects scheduled for this year include the construction of a 5 bay storage building at our Greenwood Headquarters. This building is to replace an existing shed inherited from the old Greenwood Nursery that is in poor condition. This new building will give the district a better place to store the tractors, grader and dump truck stationed at Greenwood. Keeping these expensive pieces of equipment inside out of the weather extends their service life and reduces expenses. DSA placement projects are scheduled for portions of Coopers Gap and Colerain Roads this spring. A second section of Stone Creek Road is scheduled for grinding and DSA placement this spring as well. Two large culverts will be replaced this year as well as several smaller cross drain pipes. The parking area at the Woodland end of Coopers Gap is to be expanded this year to accommodate forest users in that area.

The maintenance and operations staff is looking forward to another busy and rewarding year improving the infrastructure of the Rothrock State Forest for all state forest users to enjoy.

Bob Wetzel  
Forest Assistant Manager  
Maintenance and Operations



New 36 inch culvert installed by maintenance crew, September 10, 2013 on Treaster Kettle Road

## SUCCESSFUL DEER HUNTING ON THE ROTHROCK

BY: FORESTER JOSH THOMPSON

It's no secret that hunting deer on the Rothrock State Forest or any public land in Pennsylvania can be challenging. The deer numbers aren't particularly high, time is limited, and there are always plenty of other hunters out there sharing the woods, but for the hunter who is willing to put in the effort, success is within anyone's grasp. Certainly each hunter measures a successful hunt a little differently. For me, spending time outside enjoying creation, sharing time with family and friends, and returning home safely is always considered a good day; harvesting a deer is usually just icing on the cake. But that doesn't mean I don't head to the woods with the hope of filling tags every year. I try my hardest each time I'm afield and will share a few tips on how to fill a tag or two this upcoming season instead of eating them. The whole key to hunting deer on PA State Forest land is having reasonable expectations. This means that you shouldn't go hunting with the expectation of harvesting a deer each time out or seeing 20 deer per day. If your expectations are too high the whole experience can become frustrating instead of fun. Truthfully, if you talk to anyone who does any amount of hunting they will tell you that some days you may not even see a deer. While this is not what we hope for, it makes harvesting a deer that much more rewarding when it finally happens.

There are many techniques for hunting deer and everybody has their own preference. Some enjoy hunting with large, organized groups and others would rather stand or still hunt by themselves, but at the end of the day it all comes down to scouting. While many hunters get lucky on occasion and just happen to be in the right place at the right time, the most consistently successful hunters put in time scouting. They've studied their prey, knowing its general habits and patterns, they know the land they intend to hunt, and they have put in the practice time with their weapon of choice. Put all these things together with plenty of effort and lots of patience and you'll be packing your freezer with meat.

Start out by scouting for food sources. Deer generally follow their bellies, so if you can find a good food source there should be some deer around. Deer definitely need water too, but in our area of the state water is relatively easy to find, so pinpointing the exact spot where deer are watering can be unpredictable. Good habitat is also critical to finding deer, probably the most critical, because they spend more daylight hours here than any other place. I don't spend time hunting public land that doesn't have good bedding/escape cover in the area. For the average hunter, habitat is the easiest element to scout for. Habitat generally doesn't change from one year to the next like food can and scouting out good habitat can be done over years too. Each year hunters should take notice to which portions of the landscape the deer prefer and over time a general pattern will usually be noticeable. This brings up another important aspect of patterning deer. Deer are always using funnels in nature; funnels are different aspects of the landscape that dictate how and where they travel. Two very obvious examples of this would include a saddle on a ridgeline or the corridor between two deer fences. However, many funnels are very subtle such as a thicker patch of brush connecting two bedding areas or the edge of a bench separating two rocky slopes. The bottom line is that nature is full of funnels

and if you find them and hunt them (in conjunction with other scouting efforts) you will score. Very often, deer will use these funnels while heading toward those bedding/escape cover areas during times of high hunter pressure.

Another important aspect to successful deer hunting that may seem obvious is being comfortable and very proficient with your weapon. Just about everyone goes out a week or two before gun season and makes sure their gun is "shot in", but few people spend enough time on the practice range throughout the year without the aid of sandbags. The reality with hunting public land is that you have to put in a lot of time, energy, and patience just hoping for an opportunity to present itself. My experience is that opportunities don't come often and when they do you need to make every shot count. We don't always get that "perfect" broadside shot at 50 yards, sometimes you are faced with an "all or nothing" head shot and preparation will dictate whether you connect or go home empty handed. In those situations you'll be grateful for all the practice time...or be wishing you'd taken the time last summer for it.

One rut that hunters often fall into is hunting the same area year after year no matter what. We often hear complaints that hunters don't see deer like they used to while hunting the same spots each and every season. If conditions are right deer may be there as they were in the past, but when food and/or habitat are lacking so will deer sightings be. This is when you need to put on some miles and check out some new areas. Hardly a year goes by that I don't hunt new areas, and when I do I find good spots to hunt that I never knew about. This definitely takes some time and effort, but even if you scout an area that is not so good you can at least cross that spot off the list and move on to the next. Sooner or later, you will find a decent hunting area. To sum it up, hunting the Rothrock isn't always easy, but if a hunter is willing to dedicate the proper amount of time and effort opportunities will eventually come.



## FROM THE DESK OF DAN LECRONE

Punxsutawney Phil predicts 6 more weeks of winter and the next day we get 4" of snow but spring will get here and with that fire season. Last year state wide there was 632 fires burning 1,785 acres. In the district we had seventeen fires burning 30 acres. Once again the acreage was kept low due to quick response time from the VFD and we sincerely appreciate the help. Again this year the grant monies we get are federal dollars. At the time of this article we don't know how much we are getting for the cost sharing grant but we do know it is driven by numbers. For that reason it is important that as you respond to fires this spring you call 814-643-2340 or email [dlecrone@pa.gov](mailto:dlecrone@pa.gov). Please provide the location, rough size and cause if known help us help you.

We also put over 400 people through a variety of training last year and already have 2 PA-130/190 courses on tap along with the urban interface course and standard fire line refresher. Again call or e-mail with any fire training needs.

Smokey had another banner year with over 45 appearances. He is also turning 70 this year so we will be looking for ideas for and places to celebrate with Smokey.

We had two prescribed fire plans left from 2012 that we did accomplish them this past year. With cooperation from the Alpha and Petersburg fire companies, Pa. Game Commission, forest districts 2 and 12 and our own staff, we completed 40 acre Beidleheimer Fence on May 3rd and the 30 Acre Harry's Valley West Fence on May 7th. The objective for both burns was to remove competing vegetation to encourage regeneration of desirable tree species.

Objective 1- Reduce understory competition/interference, i.e. striped maple, birch, barberry, witch hazel, and Ericaceous plants

Objective 2- Reduce depth of leaf litter (Organic Layer)

Last fall it looked like we did get a good kill in the competing vegetation on both sites will have a better idea when things green up later on this spring. The national picture for fire showed a below average year with 46,000 fires that burned four million acres. This was well below the 10 year average. Despite the slow season Pennsylvania supported its national partners with 7 Type II IA crews 1 engine crew and 18 single resources of that the District sent 1 squad (5 people) out 1 Information officer and 1 Type 1 Safety officer.



Prescribed Burn on Beidleheimer Rd

# WINTER DRIVING ON STATE FOREST ROADS

## BY RANGER ONAVAGE

Driving in Pennsylvania can be a challenge when snow and ice are on the highways and state forest roads. Be extra careful when driving on our forestry roads across the state. Although state forest roads remain open to the public, they differ from PENN DOT, Township, and Borough roads in that they are not classified as "public highways". The Bureau of Forestry maintains state forest roads for administration and management of Pennsylvania's state forest system as well as allowing safe access to motorists visiting our state forests. State Forest roads are generally one car width wide and not as wide as our public highways. When encountering another motor vehicle, most of the time someone has to make a decision where they will be pulling off to the side of the roadway to allow the other vehicle to pass. Speed limits are at 25m.p.h as per our forestry rules and regulations. With a few limited exceptions state forest roads in the Rothrock are not maintained in the winter. Don't expect them to be plowed and or cindered. The majority of state forest roads consist of dirt and gravel with a high crown in the middle of the roadway to allow for drainage. Add the elements of mother nature, consisting of snow and ice, and the roads become treacherous !

This time of year you also have to be aware of other users such as snowmobiles traveling on our state forest roads too ! Most of our roads in the Rothrock are "joint use"; meaning that they are open to both properly licensed motor vehicles and registered-insured snowmobiles during the snowmobile season.

Snowmobile season begins the day following the last day of regular or the extended antlerless deer season as established by the PA Game Commission through the following April 1st. These roads are posted with signs at the exterior ends of our roadways entering state forest.

Considering all these factors, perhaps the best advice for traveling state forest roads in the winter is to stick to snowmobiles, snowshoes, or fat-bikes. If traveling by vehicle stick to the perimeter of the state forest using maintained PENN DOT roads and township roads to access trailhead parking areas such as Colerain, Musser Gap or Galbraith Gap. If you choose to venture into the Rothrock on our state forest roads, here are some tips.

- \* 4 wheel- drive vehicles are highly recommended. Even 4 wheel -drive vehicles should be equipped with tire chains for sufficient traction.
- \* Think long and hard about moving to the side of the road to allow oncoming vehicles to pass. Only do so where you are sure you will be able to get back on the road. If necessary (and possible) back up to a point where you can allow the other vehicle to pass.
- \* Accelerate and decelerate slowly. Applying the gas slowly to accelerate is the best method for regaining traction and avoiding skids. Don't try to get moving in a hurry. Remember, it takes longer to slow down on snow and icy roads.
- \* Drive slowly. Everything takes longer on snow-covered roads. Give yourself time to maneuver .
- \* Always look and steer where you want to go.
- \* Have a shovel and bag of cinders or a tub of cat litter in your vehicle in case you need to dig yourself out. A come-along, tow chains or even a winch also come in handy.

Cont. on Page 11



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If you are driving on a snow/ice covered forestry road, don't rely on a cell phone to get you out – much of the state forest has insufficient coverage. Make sure someone is aware of your route who will check to see if you arrived at your destination.

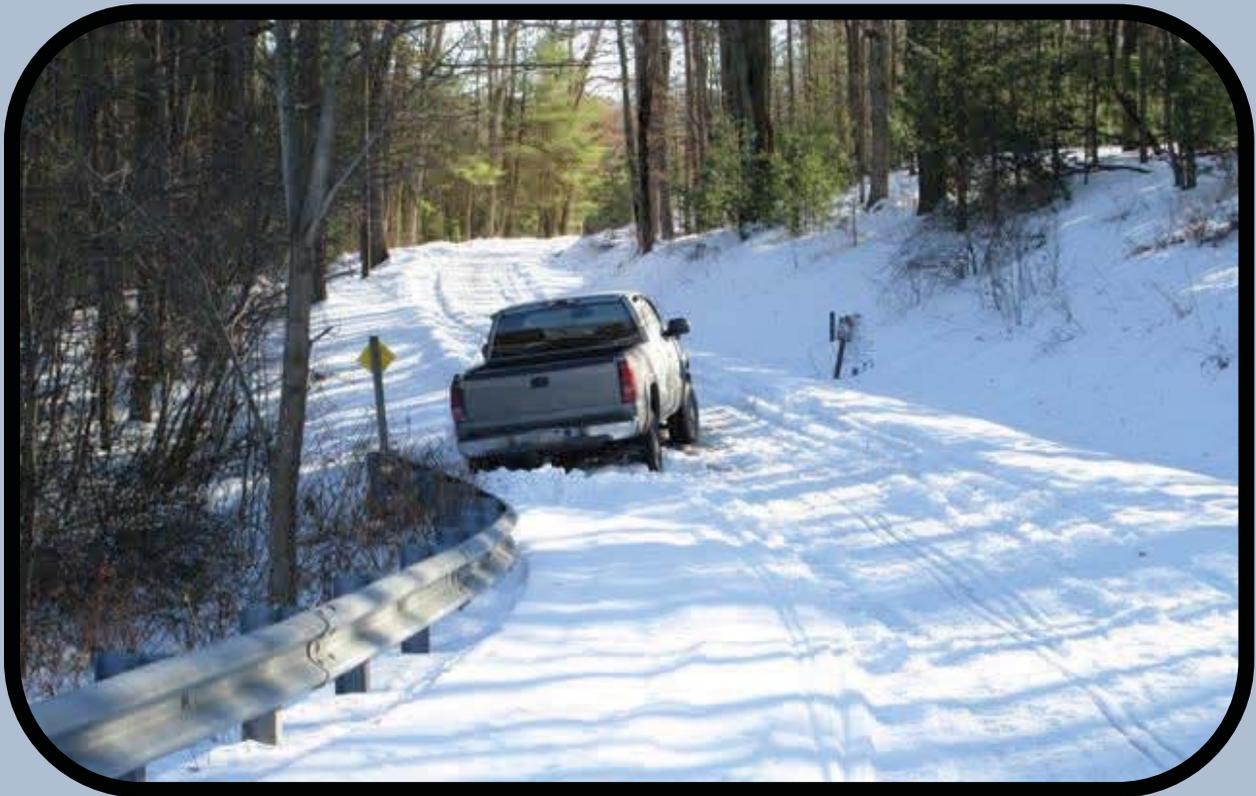
If you do become stuck and you find yourself in an emergency situation, call 911 for assistance. This is for true emergencies where you can not reach other assistance. Your vehicle may not immediately be retrieved, but you will be.

- \* Try to avoid driving when visibility is poor.
- \* Keep your gas tank at least half full to avoid gas freeze-up.
- \* Use your seat belt !

Beware those few nice days of weather! Winter vehicle and snowmobile traffic often creates a thick icy base on state forest roads. Ice can remain long after the snow is gone, especially on north-facing slopes or in gaps with coniferous areas.

Beware of having "shortest route" programmed in your GPS unit. The shortest route may not be the best route to get yourself out of the state forest when the roads are covered with snow and ice. Winter is a great time to enjoy the outdoors in our state forests.

Remember, while driving through our state forests safety is first !



## FAT BIKES IN ROTHROCK

BY RANGER KITCHEN

Take 20% ingenuity, 20% inspiration, 20% determination, 20% perspiration and 20% spirit: Add them up and apply it to the thought: I wish I could ride a bicycle the whole year, especially in the winter, and not be intimidated by the snow. Some people who recreate in Rothrock State Forest have discovered and are perfecting the answer, the "Fat Tire" Bicycle.

You may have seen a person riding a "Fat Tire Bike" and maybe during the "Frozen FAT". It's a bicycle race that has seen its second official debut in Rothrock State Forest. The race was held on January 18th this year and it was a big success. The people with the Rothrock Outfitters coordinated the race, organized support crews, set the check points and provided for the festivities occurring before and after the race.

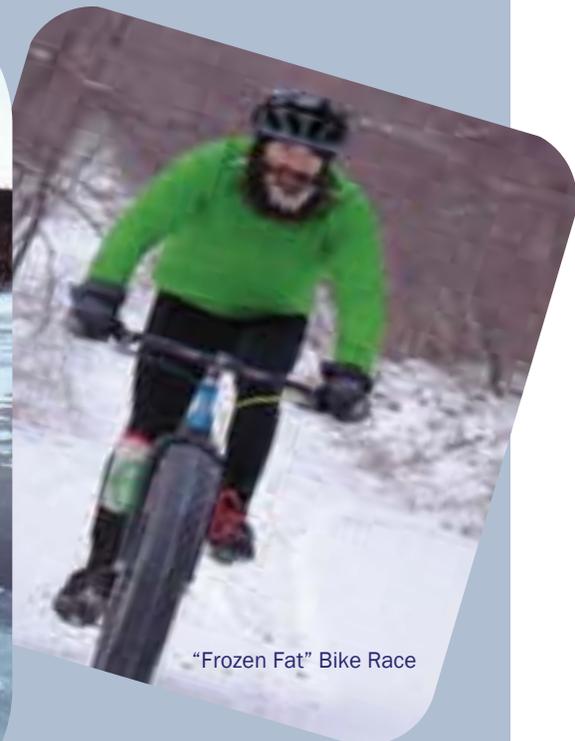
I visited the Rothrock Outfitters at 418 Penn Street, Huntingdon, PA on February 13th. I spoke with Evan Gross about the new twist on the sport of bicycling. Basically the Fat Tire Bike is affecting the bicycle industry like the evolution of the Mountain Bike in the early 1980's. There was much skepticism on how effective somebody could ride a bicycle through rough mountain terrain. Also the application and adaptation of different mechanical technologies were still being perfected and adapted to make the Mountain Bike we see today. The eventuality was that the Mountain Bike took an otherwise predictable activity that was best suited for smooth and paved roads and evolved it to a completely different sport. The bicycle was modified to satisfy the desire of riding through woods, over rocks, climbing boulders and pedaling on mountain roads made of dirt and loose gravel.

Fat Tire Bikes basically allow the rider to transport over the same terrain as Mountain Bikes with a simpler solution to the hindrance of poor traction and bumpy terrain. A bigger tire, otherwise known as a "Fat Tire" that maximizes traction, absorbs bumps, and enhances the rider's balance. There is no limit on where a Fat Tire Bike may take its rider. The day may come when a race starts in the snow and ice packed mountains of Pennsylvania and end up at a warm and sandy beach, perhaps somewhere along the eastern Atlantic coast.

As with any twist to a recreational activity, issues evolve, and the Fat Tire Bike is not immune. Luckily, the Fat Tire Bike gets to tread and ride over the same terrain of the Mountain Bike. However any concern we have is the same with any activity that occurs in the natural resource, impact. Impact in the "physical" sense and the impact in the "relationship" sense "Just because you can ride anywhere, does not mean you should!"

Currently we have many demands upon the State Forest. Many involve various dimensions. Walking, hiking, recreational running, sport running, marathons, and ultra-marathons all employ the same mode of transportation, LPC's, an acronym from my U.S. Army days, Leather Personnel Carriers. So be warned that the Fat Tire Bike is out there, but you need not be concerned: it is simply another dimension to a recreational sport that is constantly evolving, just like our State Forests.

Photo Courtesy of Rothrock Outfitters riding to work via Raystown Lake



"Frozen Fat" Bike Race

## FAT BIKES (CONT.)

### What are some basic equipment guidelines for a fat bike that will be primarily ridden on snow?

- Wide tires — deep snow coverage may require tires wider than 3.5 inches.
- Tire pressure will often be less than 10 PSI.
- Enough floatation that you can travel over snow without leaving a rut deeper than one inch.
- Sufficient traction that you are able to safely control your bike and ride in a straight line.

### Best Practices for Fat Biking on Groomed Nordic Trails

- Only ride at ski areas that allow and encourage biking.
- Yield to all other users when riding. Skiers don't have brakes but you do!
- Ride on the firmest part of the track.
- Do not ride on or in the classic tracks.
- Leave room for skiers to pass (don't ride side-by-side with all of your buddies blocking the full trail).
- Allow the track time to set up after grooming and before riding.
- Respect alternate-use days for bikers and skiers.
- Some areas require riding only a purpose-built fat bike, not any old mountain bike. There may be a minimum tire tread width.
- Be an ambassador for the sport: stay polite, educate other riders, discourage bad behavior and follow the rules.
- Help out and get involved by joining your local Nordic club.
- Consider donating money for trail grooming.

### Best Practices for Riding on Snowmobile Trails

- When riding on snowmobile trails, use a front white blinker and rear red blinker at all times. Wear reflective material on both the front and rear of your body.
- Stay to the far right of the trail and yield to snowmobiles.
- Know and obey the rules of your local land manager. Understand that some trails may be on private property and might not be open to alternative uses.
- Be prepared. Winter travel in the backcountry requires carrying proper gear and dressing properly. Be self-sufficient!
- Use extreme caution when riding at night. Be visible and use the brightest lights you can find.
- Be friendly! Fat bikers are the newest trail users. Be courteous and open to suggestions from snowmobile riders.
- Help out by supporting your local snowmobile club.
- Consider donating to trail maintenance efforts.

Greg Simpson during the "Frozen FAT" after the last check point along Turkey Hill Road. Simpson was riding this course in preparation to ride "Arrowhead" a 135 mile race in International Falls, Minnesota. Riding a Fat Tire Bike in Rothrock provides unique challenges and conditioning demands because of the hills and mountainous terrain. The challenge and the difficulty are extra demanding, pedaling hard to make it up hill and then coping with the freezing air and controlling speed going downhill. Consider donating to trail grooming and maintenance efforts.



## BUREAU OF FORESTRY EVENT SALUTES FOREST FIRE WARDENS, FIREFIGHTERS

Some came to receive awards, others were there to renew professional ties and brush up on wildfire detection, investigation and protection techniques, but when the 60 men and women filed from the Shavers Creek Volunteer fire hall all took home the same thing—warm thanks from DCNR Secretary Ellen Ferretti.

“We may have 2.2 million acres of state forestlands, but we have 17 million acres of woodlands stretching across Pennsylvania—and we need all the help we can get when wildfire threats often soar in spring and fall,” Ferretti told attendees at the March 4 gathering. “When we see the wildfire devastation in other states, we must always be appreciative of the dedication of folks like you—our fire wardens and volunteer fire companies.”

The DCNR secretary was the featured speaker at the annual Rothrock State Forest District Forest Fire Warden Training Meeting, bringing together both local volunteer firefighters and Bureau of Forestry employees to improve and honor district efforts in prevention, suppression, and investigation of local forest fires. Each district conducts this annual training for its local Pa. Forest Fire Wardens and volunteer fire department members who cooperate in local wildfire suppression. Ferretti thanked her listeners for their “extended history of serving long, volunteer hours to be the local eyes, ears and boots on the ground in detecting, fighting and preventing wildfires—often on private land.

“Thankfully, I know these efforts do not go unnoticed. I see the media accounts of your prevention programs and school appearances.”

Marked by a proud history in which their 100th anniversary will be celebrated in 2015, about 1,600 men and women serve as volunteer Pa. Forest Fire Wardens. Properly trained local forest fire wardens are appointed primarily to detect, extinguish and investigate wildfires. Wardens actively promote fire prevention in their community, often visiting schools and civic groups in a statewide, team-effort that earned them a national salute from the USDA Forest Service.

In summer 2013, federal officials applauded the “Wardens Helping In Prevention,” or WHIP, program, created in 1988. The all-volunteer team developed a warden manual enabling them to better incorporate public education into their wildfire fighting and prevention duties. The program is an all-volunteer effort.

“Understandably, this program has developed strong ties among the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and other state agencies, volunteer fire departments and school districts. Some of your program volunteers oversee as many as 150 programs a year!” Ferretti said. “You folks are very adept, indeed, in spreading the word on the dangers of wildfires and the need to prevent them. DCNR is proud to be a part of your team effort.”

The DCNR secretary also participated in award ceremonies, joining in the presentation of the annual Arthur N. Creelman Award for distinguished wildfire prevention work. Honoring the late former chief of the bureau’s Division of Forest Fire Protection, recognized as a national leader in wildfire prevention, the award honors recipients with an outstanding desire to disseminate the wildfire prevention message throughout their lifetime.

The Creelman award was presented to volunteer William Shaffer, along with recognition for overseeing 14 WHIP programs. Other attendees honored include:

Kermit Port, WHIP Award for one program; Dave Felice, WHIP Award for 11 programs and service award for 15 years as a fire warden; Buddy Houck, Petersburg Volunteer Fire Department and Tony Berrena, Alpha Volunteer Fire Department, recipients of appreciation plaques for assistance provided to the district on a prescribed fire project; Dave Coder, WHIP award for nine programs and service award for 30 years as a fire warden; and Frank Yoder, recognized for 2013 service on an out-of-state, federal fire assignment.



Award recipients and attendees at the Rothrock State Forest District's Forest Fire Warden Training Meeting included, seated, from left, Kermit Port, William Shaffer, and Dave Felice. Standing, from left, are Randy White, chief, Division of Forest Fire Protection, DCNR's Bureau of Forestry; Jason Albright, Assistant State Forester; Ellen Ferretti, DCNR secretary; Buddy Houck, Petersburg Volunteer Fire Department and Tony Berrena, Alpha Volunteer Fire Department, ; Dave Coder, Frank Yoder, Dave Yeager, Assistant District Forester and Mark Potter, District forester.

# TIMBER SALE ADMINISTRATION AND INSPECTION

BY: FORESTER MARK LONG

Timber sale administration refers to handling the aspects of a Timber Sale following the completion of sale layout, proposal and timber marking. Once timber marking is complete, information is compiled such as sale volumes, road work requirements, restrictions, permits etc. and a prospectus is completed. A sale prospectus is mailed (or advertised electronically), explaining the specifics of the sale and inviting potential bidders to a timber tour with the forester. Bids are compiled and opened weeks later and the winning bidder then signs a legally binding contract before any work may begin on the sale. Once the contract has passed through legal scrutiny, the timber company will contact the forester when they are ready to begin work on the sale.

More often than not the sale will require some haul road construction or improvement. Costs associated with building or improving these haul roads have been deducted from the estimate of the timber value listed in the prospectus. Foresters typically require road work to be completed first. Timber companies either complete the work themselves or will sub-contract the work to an excavator who specializes in that field. When road building commences, the forester is on site throughout the entire process to ensure that all contract requirements are being met. All road materials specified in the contract must be accounted for, such as loads of shale or stone, culvert pipes, gates, geotextile materials, etc. The road layout must be adhered to or within reason from what was advertised. Weather conditions can play a huge role in completing road work correctly. In fact, road work can be postponed if current weather conditions are unfavorable. Careful attention must be paid to the moisture content of forest soils, freeze and thaw cycles that limit hauling of stone, and location of water resources on or near the site. Favorable weather conditions will minimize the risk of any erosion or sedimentation problems. Once the road infrastructure is completed and log landings have been cleared, work may progress on harvesting the site. During the initial sale layout phase, the forester divided the sale into cutting blocks. Timber is purchased by the cutting block, where each block is paid for prior to harvesting and each block is completed satisfactorily prior to beginning the next block, and so on. In addition to receiving the payment for the cutting block, the forester must identify that a trained crew leader exists on the logging crew. This person must have completed necessary training and carry the credentials proving so. Also, the logging crew is required to have an oil spill kit and E&S plan on site at all times. Crewmembers are required to wear PPE, including hard hats, chainsaw chaps, etc. Finally, logging signage along roadways must be in place to warn oncoming traffic of truck presence.

A timber sale inspection is completed at least once a week. During periods of inclement weather, sale inspections may need to be completed more often. In a typical inspection, the forester will arrive on site and discuss how the work is progressing. At this initial briefing, the logging crew can make the forester aware of any problems or concerns they are experiencing. The forester will take this knowledge and carefully inspect the area that has been harvested since the last inspection. Foresters will examine the condition of skid trails and landing areas for excessive rutting that may result in erosion problems. Also, trees not marked for removal will be examined for any damage by equipment or by other trees felled in the harvesting process. Damaged trees are tallied and the contract holder is billed for the trees. The forester will also insure that stump heights are low; logging slash is 'lopped' to a reasonable height and not piled against reserve trees or left on trails or stream banks. Logging crews are cautioned against leaving litter on the site as well as maintaining equipment to avoid oil or fluid leaks. Sale operations may be shut down if deficiencies are not corrected in a timely manner; however this rarely occurs and is a last resort. More often than not, poor weather conditions force the temporary closure of a sale. When the final inspection is done on each cutting block, crews may progress to the next block if payment for the new block is received.

When all harvesting is completed, sale retirement will begin. All haul roads, skid trails, and landing areas are graded (where necessary) and seeded with an appropriate mix. Long term water control measures such as water bars or broad dips may be added to prevent erosion in the future. Haul road access may be barricaded at that time as well to prevent vandalism such as dumping or off-road 4-wheeling. The forester will then ensure that all contract requirements are complete and forward necessary sale termination paperwork to Central Office in Harrisburg. This paperwork includes all payment information as well as inspection reports and a harvesting assessment. When all is in order, the performance bond insuring that the job is completed satisfactorily is then returned to the buyer. Foresters return to the sale areas periodically in the future to assess tree regeneration development and ensure disturbed areas have been seeded successfully.

