

ELK STATE FOREST DISTRICT

2016 MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY PLAN

The mission of DCNR Bureau of Forestry is to conserve the long-term health, viability and productivity of the Commonwealth’s forest and to conserve native wild plants. One of the ways the bureau carries out this mission is through the [State Forest Resource Management Plan](#) (SFRMP), a document that guides the management of the 2.2 million-acre state forest system. The SFRMP is updated approximately every 5 years and includes an extensive public engagement process.

One of the policies in the bureau’s strategic plan ([Penn’s Woods: Sustaining Our Forests](#)) includes, “Public participation will be an integral part of the management of state forest lands.” The purpose of this Management Activity Plan is to communicate to the public about upcoming management activities, projects, and events that will be conducted to implement the SFRMP on Elk State Forest. This document will be revised at the start and middle of each calendar year to provide sufficient time for public review, questions, and feedback. The bureau is committed to considering the views and perspectives of the public and stakeholders and strives to accommodate public interests in planning management activities and decision making. We encourage comments or questions regarding planned or proposed activities be directed to the state forest district conducting the activity.

For questions, comments, or more information about this plan, please contact:

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RECREATION

- Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail (Non-motorized shared use trail): hardening surfaces, stoning, signing, brushing
- Bucktail Path - trail brushing and northern terminus relocation
- Ridge Trail - trail brushing
- Clear and reroute Sand Springs Ski Trail
- Continue yearly maintenance of all trails.
- Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area Structure rehabilitation
- Miller Run Wildlife Viewing Area Development
- Develop and install kiosks and educational panels:
 - Nobles Chambers site-specific panels
 - Site-specific vista panels
- Install kiosk and educational panels:
 - Lower Jerry Run Natural Area site-specific and Elk Scenic Drive
 - Lick Island Trail System with a Timeless Trails and site-specific
 - Miller Run
- 2015 Organized Events:
 - January/February: St. Marys Snowmobile Association Dice Run
 - May: Sinnemahoning Sportsman’s Fishing Derby in Brooks Run
 - September-October Weekends: Public Outreach at Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area
 - October: Ultra-Marathon

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

MARKED AND SOLD, POTENTIALLY ACTIVE

- 13-2013BC08 72 acres second entry shelterwood off of Marshall Farm Road
- 13-2014BC01 78 acres first entry shelterwood off of Steam Mill Road
- 13-2014BC07 80 acres first entry shelterwood off of Cowley Hill Road.
- 13-2014BC10 39 acres regeneration cut, 33 acres overstory removal, and 12 acres first entry shelterwood along Ridge Road.
- 132015BC04 50 acre overstory removal at the end of Switchback Trail road.
- 132013BC04 78 acre shelterwood will be cut by May 31st 2016. Location is off Boone Mt. Road, Fox Twp. Elk County
- 132015BC05 148 acre overstory removal & 48 acre improvement along the South Dividing Ridge Cameron County.
- 13-2013BC11 33 acres of overstory removal in the Rock Run area of Potter Co.
- 13-2014BC06 164 acres, 21 acres of two-aged shelterwood, 45 acres of shelterwood and 98 acre overstory removal in the Pepper Hill area of Cameron Co.



- 13-2014BC09 202 acres of shelterwood on North Fork Road, Elk co.
- 13-2015BC01 283 acres, 206 acres of shelterwood and 77 acres of overstory removal in the Hunts Run area of Potter Co.
- 13-2015BC02 100 acres overstory removal on Bird Box Road Elk Co.
- 13-2015BC03 85 acre overstory removal on Blazingstar Road Elk Co.

PROPOSED (NOT MARKED YET)

- 132014BC08 65 acre shelterwood located near 4points/Gardner Hill Road, Fox Twp. Elk Co.
- 13-2016BC01 51 acres first entry shelterwood and 35 acres final removal, near Whitehead
- 13-2016BC03 213 acres total, 115 acres shelterwood, 98 acres overstory removal on County Line Road McKean and Elk Counties.
- 40 acre shelterwood off of Boone Mt Road, Fox Twp. Elk Co.
- 135 acre overstory removal near Pepper Run.
- 50 acre overstory removal near Hunting Shanty Run.
- 90 acre Two-Age along Waldy Run.
- 67 acre shelterwood near Brooks Run Fire Tower
- 160 ac of aspen clearcut, improvement cut, shelterwood, two-age removal, and overstory removal along the Ridge Road near the Hunts Run intersection
- 69 ac overstory removal in upper Whitehead watershed
- 71 ac salvage shelterwood and salvage clearcut near Salt Run Township, Cameron County
- Overstory removal in 2 fences totaling 89 acres. Shelterwood totaling 80 acres. This sale is located at the top of McDonald Draft, Elk County
- Overstory removal in 35 acre fence, located at the bottom of Porcupine Rd, Elk County
- 147 acres up Coal Bank Road, Elk County
- 223 acres off of West Hicks Run Road, Cameron County.
- 106 acres off of Dewey Road, Elk County
- Other sales could potentially begin in 2016, but forecasting that activity at this time is difficult due to a variety of reasons that may inhibit them coming to fruition.

REGENERATION PROJECTS

WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE CONTRACT INSTALLED IN 2016

- 59 acres of Woven Wire to be installed in the Still House Hollow area

WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE CONTRACT DISMANTLED 2016

- Russell Camp 1, 51 acres, off of Ridge Road
- Russell Camp 2, 38 acres, off of Ridge Road
- Doll Hill 2, 29 acres, off of Sizer Run Road
- Doll Hill 3, 19 acres, off of Sizer Run Road

- Five Mile 2, 38 acres, off of RT. 46

ELECTRIC FENCES TO BE INSTALLED IN 2016

- NONE

ELECTRIC FENCES TO BE REMOVED IN 2016

- NONE

HERBICIDE BLOCKS

EAST BRANCH DAM AREA

- 147 acres on Deer Pen Road Elk Co.

RIDGE ROAD AREA

- 51 acres in the South Whitehead area.
- 59 acres in the Still House Hollow area.
- 40 acres at the top of Crooked Run road, next to Ridge road.
- 90 acres along Ridge road near Mackey Hollow
- 133 acres along Ridge Trail

HICKS RUN AREA

- 223 acres in the Skillman Tract off of East Hicks Road
- 35 acres on Big Porky haul road

DIVIDING RIDGE AREA

- 183 acres along South Dividing Ridge Road

MONTOUR RUN AREA

- 48 acres along Montour Run Road

ROYER BLOCKS

- 66 acres along Ridge Trail

RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

- Plant 50 Flowering crab apple trees in the Boone Mt area.
- 100 crabapple, 100 speckled alder, 50 hawthorn, and 50 aspen to be planted in the Hackett Trail area to improve old failed cuts and burnt areas from the late 1800's.
- 3 wood duck boxes on Clermont 2 land acquisition
- Plans are being developed to plant trees – conifer and hardwoods and conifer in groups in areas that were cleared for National Fuel Gas Midstream's Phase 1 pipeline development and within the pipeline right of way, totaling about 9.75 acres.
- The District will rehabilitate 5 acres of food plots.

- The District, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, maintains and enhances more than 40 food plots that encompass more than 450 acres that were developed, mainly for the elk herd, but used by many different species. Some of these food plots were initially funded through local and national wildlife organizations
 - Food plots to be sprayed, no-till seeded, and fertilized = 81 acres
 - Food plots to be mowed, may be once or twice = 450 acres
 - Food plots to be limed = 46 acres
 - Vegetated roads to be mowed = 18 miles
 - Apple trees to be pruned = 10
 - Wood duck nesting boxes maintained = 6
 - Acres to be cut in the winter for aspen regeneration = 15 acres, this will also result in releasing about 1000 fruit-producing shrubs and creating about 100 small brush piles.
- The District will continue to locate, document and prune old apple trees.
- The District will continue to locate, document American chestnut trees.
- Plant 3,090 conifer trees (located within pipeline right-of-ways)
- Plant 290 hardwood and soft mast producing trees
- 6.6 acres of new and potential food plots (located within pipeline right-of-ways)
- 1 stream quality improvement project on Hicks Run

ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

- Ridge Trail stoning project
- Brooks Run Underdrain Project
- Montour Run Road energy dissipaters and underdrain
- Short Bend pipe replacement
- Lower Lick Island pipe replacement
- Upper Lick Island parking area, drainage and pipe installation
- Whitehead Road culvert replacement
- Upper Dents Run Road stoning project
- Dents Run Road rip-rap projects
- Stabilize scour holes on two new bridges from flooding of 2015
- Bell Draft pipe replacement x1
- Dents Run Road pipe replacement x2
- East Hicks Run Road pipe replacement x3
- Rehabilitation of Shaffer Draft Haul Road
- Rehabilitation of Sleepy Hollow Haul Road
- Rehabilitation of Thunder Mt. Haul Road

- North Fork Road rip-rap
- East Branch Grade Road drainage rehabilitation
- Martin Road drainage rehabilitation and brushing
- Fee Hollow Culvert Protection
- Various drainage improvements (pipe and under drain installation, stream bank stabilization, sloping, etc.) throughout district area

PRESCRIBED FIRE

- 35 acres of fenced shelterwood associated with proposed timber sale 13-2016BC01
- 67 acres in the Big Flat (Ridge Trail) fences
- 43 acre off of Barr Hollow Road
- 16 acre off of Huston Hill Road

INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENT

- Develop a district hemlock Plan due to the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid
 - Treat Hemlock stands per the District Hemlock plan
- Review and update the District Invasive Plan
- Planned Invasive Plant Treatment Areas 2016
 - **Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area:** Herbicide treatment will again resume by May and continue as needed throughout the summer. The area will be monitored for overlooked and newly sprouted barberry plants.

Japanese stilt grass was found to be thriving in the understory of a four acre Scotch pine plantation at the Hicks Run site. The stilt grass has grown aggressively and formed nearly an impenetrable layer on the understory, subsequently choking out recently planted conifer seedlings and many other native plants. An herbicide treatment was applied to approximately one acre of stilt grass late in the 2015 growing season. For reforestation efforts to succeed, control of stilt grass will be essential. To complicate matters, mile-a-minute vine was also found at the site. The size of infestation encompasses approximately 2.5 acres, but was found to be confined solely to the Scotch pine stand adjacent to the viewing blind. A pre-emergent herbicide is planned to be applied in early spring with continued treatments implemented through the years, due to a sizeable seed bank. Scouting out surrounding land will be necessary to determine whether there are any other mile-a-minute populations that need addressed. Diligent treatment and control of the Hicks Run mile-a-minute is warranted because of it being the only known infestation along the Bennett Branch of the Sinnemahoning Creek.



- **Four Mile:** A sizeable patch of Japanese knotweed, stretching along the stream for approximately 200 feet, was discovered in 2014. Stream walks will be conducted in June of 2016 to determine areas that will need re-sprayed and chemical treatment will continue through the summer and fall.
- **East Cowley Run:** The scope of infestation in East Cowley Run has still yet to be clearly defined. A conservative estimate on the range of barberry in the East Cowley drainage is 400 acres. The heaviest concentrations of barberry are located on the northern side of East Cowley Run Road, between Sizerville State Park and Double Barrel Hollow. Due to the terrain, access to much of the barberry infestation is limited. With limited access, control and treatment of barberry will be primarily restricted to backpack spraying. A systematic control of barberry is planned for the 2016 spraying season. Treatment will begin at the highest point in the watershed where barberry has been observed, and from there, methodically proceed downstream.
- **Hoover Road:** In the summer of 2014 a portion of Hoover Road, in Nanny Run, was treated for Japanese knotweed. Some untreated areas still remain, so initial and follow-up treatments will begin by June of 2016. The treatment area consists of approximately one mile of roadside, with much of the knotweed infestation being located on a steep embankment. The roadway is maintained and graded annually, so eradication of any knotweed plants is crucial to stop the further transfer of seed and root fragments.
- **Pepper Hill:** Goats Rue at the Pepper Hill site was again treated in 2014. Known populations of goats rue stretch for approximately .40 miles along the roadway. Treatment will resume in 2016 and continue on an annual basis until the existing seed bank is exhausted. A future timber sale is anticipated in the area for 2016, so extra attention will be given to monitoring for any spread of goats rue at the site.
- **Wykoff Run:** Japanese Knotweed eradication has been ongoing since 2008, but an end is in sight. After no spraying since 2012, we would like to do a stream walk from the highest infestation point downstream to the intersection of Wykoff Run and the state forest boundary in June 2016. With the sites having negative sightings for 4 years in a row, we feel confident there should not be any knotweed on Wykoff Run as long as there are no disturbances from external factors in the watershed.
- **East Branch Dam:** Monitor, pull and treat Goats Rue in several locations where active gas activity is occurring. Seneca is actively involved in this process.
- Review and update the District Ash Plan
 - Continue to visit and notify camp leases about ash on or around their lease
 - Continue to assess roadways, buildings, camping areas, etc. for ash and mitigate
 - Treat ash stands per the District Ash plan

Continue insect and disease monitoring from aircraft and ground-truthing

NATURAL GAS, OIL, AND OTHER GEOLOGIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Severed Rights:

Seneca

- Construction and development of at least two additional well pads with a possible 3 to 5 additional well pads being constructed depending on results of the two planned pads. Average pad size varies on the number of wells but averages between 8 and 10 acres.
- Development of fresh water wells and water pipelines on the 2015 property acquisition. This water will be used to frack Marcellus wells in the area and will reduce the amount of water truck traffic on roads in the area.

EQT

- Renewal of FM-10002 Road Use Agreement until October of 2016 covering Hicks Run and East Hicks Run Roads for access to Game Lands 14.

TOWER AND RIGHT-OF-WAY PROJECTS

- Construction and completion of National Fuel Midstream's Phase II A South pipeline.
- Timber clearing, construction, and completion of National Fuel Midstream's Phase II A North pipeline that will connect planned Marcellus wells to the main NFG transmission line in the Clermont area.
- Tentative plans to plant 1135 conifer trees (mix of White Pine, White Spruce, and Red Pine) in strategic locations within the work space portions of National Fuel Midstream's Phase II pipeline corridor. Trees will be planted in various locations covering a total of approximately ½ acre.
- Completed 16 integrity digs on Enterprise 8" propane transmission pipeline.

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- The District applied for and received two grants to develop a wildlife viewing/canoe access area along SR555.
- Reestablished snake basking areas that were becoming overgrown
- Replacement of the Brooks Run, Whittimore, and Boot Jack Fire towers

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- The District writes and disseminates weekly news releases to both papers and radio on proposed projects, completed projects and articles of interest
- A yearly newsletter is created and sent to all camp lease owners and placed in local business
- The District has a Facebook page
- Recreational Stakeholders Meetings are held
- Volunteer projects are planned and advertised for additional participation
- Staff man the Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area during peak visitation weekends
- We attend the Bendigo State Park Winter Fest and have a booth
- We cosponsor the Sinnemahoning Sportsman Fishing Derby
- We attend the May Hollow Youth Field Day
- We attend the Sinnemahoning Youth Field Day
- We assist with the Envirothon
- We sponsor the Ultra Marathon which occurs almost entirely on state forest lands and we have a booth in town
- We attend both Cameron County and Elk County fairs and maintain a booth
- We attend the Emporium Fire Company's *Fire Prevention* programs
- We attend the Bavarian Fest
- The District Office is open weekends for deer and bear season
- We attend and do programs for the "All About Nature" sponsored by the Cameron County Conservation District
- We attend the Sportsman's' Clubs Meetings
- We are on the St. Marys Shade Commission Board
- We sponsor and attend meetings and visit tree issues for *Tree City USA*

RESEARCH

- Timber rattlesnakes – An assessment of the genetic variation and gene flow among timber rattlesnake populations throughout Pennsylvania.
- Timber rattlesnakes – Classify historic rattlesnakes sites and provide accurate locational information and habitat boundaries and asses den viability and treats. In addition, blood samples will be collected. This is a collaborative project with the PFBC
- Ginseng – Assessing American ginseng populations and sampling plant material for a regional study of genetic structure and habitat occupancy.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- Acquired 17,487 acres of land near Clermont, McKean Co.
- Met our timber management goals and produced 1,011 acres which sold for \$1.56 million with 4,016 MBF and 1,968 HCF
- Replaced pipes on Brooks Run Road
- Stoned Brooks Run Road
- East Hicks Run Road pipe replacement and extensions
- Little Dents Road extension
- Dents Run Road pipe work
- Thunder Mt. Equestrian Trail extension approximately 25 miles
- Made a wash bay for state vehicles
- Named and signed roads, painted boundary line, painted gates in 17,487 acre acquisition
- 5 Educational panels were developed to be installed at trail heads
- 3 Educational kiosk were constructed to be installed at trail heads
- We treated approximately 40 acres of invasive species last year. 22 different sites were treated. Treatment occurred for Japanese barberry, Japanese knotweed, goats rue, mile a minute vine, Japanese stiltgrass, bull thistle, and tree of heaven.
- Treated approximately 80 ash trees to protect them from the Emerald Ash Borer
- Two prescribed fire for silvicultural treatments
- Staff assisted with western wildfire suppression needs
- 3,090 of conifer trees planted (located within pipeline right -of-ways)
- 290 of hardwood and soft mast producing trees planted
- 6.6 acres of new and potential food plots (located within pipeline right-of-ways)
- 1 stream quality improvement project

Assisted the public with information and education information.