

# Gallitzin State Forest District

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## 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 Gallitzin 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**

**Babcock Division**

- **Bog Path Trail** – General trail maintenance including repair and/or replacing foot bridges. Replace trail sign at intersection(s) of Boulder Trail.
- **John P. Saylor Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – General trail maintenance to include brushing back and armoring of wet areas. Replace deteriorating deck boards on suspension bridge. Install new hand protector on the cable of the suspension bridge.
- **Lost Turkey Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – Replace three (3) foot bridges and armoring of a wet area. Replace deteriorating trail signs.
- **County Line Shared Use Trail** – Finish rehab of the switchback portion of this trail to address drainage and erosion issues.
- **Cross Country Ski Trail** – Replace deteriorating trail signs at the intersections of the three loops. Continue to cut dead hazard trees (beech) along the trail.
- **Babcock Snowmobile Trail** – Install three (3) culverts and armoring of muddy areas along the abandoned gas line portion of the trail. Widen the trail section across the Allegheny front to allow better access for the groomer.
- **Snowmobile Trail Extension** - to Ogletown Parking lot.
- **Erect three (3) new kiosks in the Babcock Division:** HCVF, Woodcock Project and Babcock Creek Road Snowmobile Parking Lot.
- **Install Three (3) New Benches** - along trails/trailheads.
- **Develop a Self-guided Driving Brochure for the Babcock Division.**

**Rager Mountain Division**

- **Clark Run Trail** – Replace the foot bridge along the upper portion of the trail where it crosses Clark Run. Spray invasive plant species along the trail. Replace trail signs at the intersections of Rager Mountain Trail.
- **Rager Mountain Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing back of trail where necessary.
- **Rager Mountain Snowmobile Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing back where necessary. Replace deteriorating signs along the trail.
- **Laurel Run Shared-Use Trail System** – Begin construction of this trail system.
- **Erect Snowmobile Bridge & Culvert** – on Shared Use Trail in Laurel Run.

**Babcock Picnic Area**

- **Construct a new latrine.**
- **Replace deteriorating roofs on the pavilions that need it.**
- **Babcock Picnic Area - Picnic Loop** – Place tree identification markers on the trail.

**District Wide**

- **Complete District's Interpretive Plan.**

- **Complete District's Wildlife Brochure.**

### Organized Events

- **Babcock Tour** – hold a tour in fall 2016 inviting public to visit various highlighted areas within our Babcock Division.

### **TIMBER MANAGEMENT**

- Timber management will include stands identified in the landscape exam process as high priority for treatment due to high levels of natural regeneration, stand health issues, and prior (ongoing) regeneration projects.
- **Marked and sold, potentially active**
  - Two previously marked and sold timber sales are likely to be active for 2016. The Schubert Sale is a 77 acre sale in the Rager Mountain Division, on the east side of Dishong Mountain Road, one mile south of U.S. Route 22, combining 62 acres of shelterwood harvest and 15 acres of overstory removal. The Babcock Lodge Sale in the Babcock Division, on the east side of Hollow Road, across from the Babcock Lumber Company Lodge, is a 50 acre shelterwood harvest. These sales are either near completion, currently active or sold and waiting for the buyer to begin operations.
- **Marked but not yet sold**
  - **Golden Acres Sale** - This 44 acre sale is an overstory removal on an existing mature stand comprised primarily of American Beech, Black Cherry, and Red Maple. It is located .3 mile southeast of Verla Drive, .6 mile southwest of the intersection of PA Route 56 and Verla Drive. Marking on this sale was completed in early fall of 2015. The sale has not been put up for bids, because it requires that a deer fence be installed prior to cutting or immediately afterward. If this is not done regeneration most likely will fail. Problems with the statewide fencing contract have made it unclear as to when this fence can be installed. For this reason, we are postponing putting this sale out for bids until it is certain as to when the fence will be installed.
- **Proposed (not marked yet)**
  - **POOR II Sale** - is a 74 acre overstory removal being planned off of Crum Road on the east and west sides of the Project Oak sale haul road. The removal will occur in two adjacent deer enclosure fences. This timber sale was cut in 2009 as a shelterwood, and now the regeneration is abundant. Removing most of the larger overstory trees will release the seedlings to allow further growth and development into a new stand. Stand analysis plots will be completed in early 2016. The area will then be marked to prescription in late spring/early summer, and offered for bid a short time later.



- **Red Eyes Sale** - This 51 acre shelterwood will target mainly smaller, low quality trees. The sale is situated on the west side of Babcock Creek Road, .25 mile south west of the intersection of Babcock Creek Road and Stripmine Road. This treatment will essentially be a “thinning from below”. This type of treatment is designed to remove the present undesirable, low quality, and dying trees in the mid-canopy and co-dominant positions, to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and promote the development and establishment of desirable seedlings on site. Stand analysis plots will be taken in early spring to facilitate the final stand prescription. The area will be marked according to prescription following the planned broadcast herbicide treatment in mid to late summer. Following the marking of the site the area will be put out for bid.
- **Dead End Sale** - This 55 acre sale will consist of two cutting treatments, a 25 acre wildlife clearcut in poor quality timber to promote early successional habitat, and a 30 acre shelterwood block designed to promote oak regeneration. The sale is situated at the end of Rager Mountain Road, 1.3 miles northwest of the Gas Company and Rager Mountain Road intersection. This type of treatment is designed to remove the present undesirable, low quality, and dying trees in the mid-canopy and co-dominant positions, to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and promote the development and establishment of desirable seedlings on site. Stand analysis plots will be taken in spring to early summer to facilitate the final stand prescription. The area will be marked according to prescription following the planned broadcast herbicide treatment in mid to late summer. Following the marking of the site the area will be put out for bid.
- **Cherryland Overstory Removal Sale** – Located .1 mile north of PA Route 56 on the west side of Buffalo Road, Stand analysis for this 22 acre sale was completed in the late fall of this year (2015). Marking should take place in early 2016. The primary goal of this treatment is to advance the Bureau of Forestry’s overall goal of balancing our forest age classes. Removing the overstory will allow established regeneration to develop and form a new age class. Secondary goals include creating early successional habitat for neo-tropical migrating songbirds, and improving the tree species diversity and composition in the replacement stand.
- **Long Haul Sale** - This 51 acre sale will consist of two cutting treatments, a 13 acre overstory removal on a previously cut shelterwood harvest, and a 38 acre shelterwood block designed to promote oak regeneration. This timber sale is located 1.8 miles north of PA Route 56 up Buffalo Road, .75 mile due west of Buffalo Road. The overstory removal is necessary at this time because the dominant species is Black Cherry and it is dying off at an increasing rate. Following the cutting, the area will be heavily planted with conifers, to provide winter thermal cover for wildlife. The shelterwood cutting block is designed to remove the present

undesirable, low quality, and dying trees in the mid-canopy and co-dominant positions, to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and promote the development and establishment of desirable oak seedlings on site. Stand analysis plots will be taken in spring to early summer to facilitate the final stand prescription. The area will be marked according to prescription following the planned broadcast herbicide treatment in mid to late summer. Following the marking of the site the area will be put out for bid.

- **Regeneration projects**

- Regeneration projects are implemented to address issues that impede the development of desirable regeneration. For 2016, five regeneration projects will be undertaken in the Gallitzin State Forest, three in the Babcock Division, and two in the Rager Mountain division. The projects in the Babcock Division consist of two broadcast herbicide applications and one basal bark treatment. The first broadcast treatment consists of 38 acres just east of the Big T sale off of Buffalo Road (see **Long Haul** sale), and the other is a 51 acre block just west of Babcock Creek road (see **Red Eyes** sale), about ¼ mile south of the intersection with Strip Mine Road. The basal bark treatment, which is being conducted by district staff, is a 22 acre treatment of birch and striped maple inside the remaining Cherryland deer fence just west of Buffalo Road, ¼ mile north of PA Route 56. The projects in the Rager Mountain division are both broadcast herbicide treatments. One block (25 acres) is just off of Gas Company road, approximately ¾ mile south of the compressor station. The other block (30 acres) is at the end of Rager Mountain road, on the north side. These two blocks will comprise the **Dead End** sale, described as a separate section. The intent of all the regeneration projects is to increase the amount of sunlight reaching the ground by reducing the amount of fern and undesirable understory components such as beech brush, birch and striped maple.
- Several fences are slated to be installed in 2016. Problems with the state deer fencing contracts have greatly impacted the installation of fences statewide. As a result we are 2 to 3 years behind with fence installations. We are in need of twelve fences, and are hoping to have at least nine fences installed in the district as soon as possible. Two fences covering 50 acres will be installed just south of the Mile Run bridge in the Babcock Division, around the herbicide blocks that will eventually become the New Bridge sale. Also in the Babcock Division, one 34 acre fence will be installed around block #4 of the POOR sale, and another 44 acre fence will be constructed around the Golden Acres timbersale. Three fences totaling 99 acres will be installed around the Coal Miner I sale off of Strip Mine Road. In the Rager Mountain Division, two fences totaling 78 acres will be installed around the Mile Hill timbersale. Total fencing acreage planned for 2016 is 305 acres.

*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. We will periodically update this document throughout the year to better inform our constituents to the Gallitzin State Forest.*

## **RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS**

### **High Conservation Value Forest - (HCVF)**

- District and Central Office staff continued work on the Babcock HCVF Management Plan.

### **Woodcock/Grouse Habitat Project**

- All cutting has been completed on the Woodcock/Grouse Habitat Project along Rt. 56. These areas will be allowed to grow for 10 to 15 years, and the cutting cycle will be repeated.
- We continue to look for other suitable areas to create this type of habitat.
- A parking area for hunters has been created in the center of the project area, where the old FAA outer marker for the Johnstown Airport was located.

### **National Wild Turkey Federation**

- Received grants from three NWTf branches for habitat work on Gallitzin State Forest.

## **ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS**

- Laurel Run Road, an administrative road, will receive major repairs as a result of a Road Use Agreement FM-10223, with Equitrans, LP. Road improvements include:
  - Replace ten existing culverts
  - Place geotextile on 0.9 mile of road with 924 tons of No. 3 limestone.
  - Top dress 3.3 miles of Laurel Run Road with 4,000 tons of 2A limestone.
- District staff to construct a new road from the Laurel Run Road to the Dryzal food plot.
- District staff to make improvements to the Shortline food plot access road.
- District staff to make improvements to the Red Gate Road off of Benshoff Hill Road.
- District staff to make improvements to the Cramer Tract access road.
- District staff to complete annual maintenance of State Forest Roads (25 miles) to include road grading and ditch maintenance.
- The bridge on Babcock Creek Road is scheduled for repairs in 2016.
- Rager Mountain Road (1.1 miles) will be top dressed with driving surface aggregate.
- Gas Company Road (1.4 miles) will be top dressed with 2A limestone.

## **PRESCRIBED FIRE**

### **Gallitzin State Forest**

Certain areas of the Gallitzin State Forest have been developed to enhance cool and warm season grasses. Prescribed fire is a tool used by the Bureau of Forestry to reduce fuels, control competing vegetation, and to create and maintain habitats. A side benefit of prescribed fires is that it aids in the training of firefighters

- There were two areas of the Gallitzin State Forest that received prescribed burns in 2015.
  - Three warm season grass fields in the Laurel Run Tract received a prescribed burn in the spring.
  - A one acre blueberry patch alongside Buffalo Road also received a prescribed burn treatment in the spring.
- The Babcock High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) area is expected to receive a prescribed burn in several warm season grass fields in the fall of 2016. The HCVF area plan will designate the location and rotation of these burn sites.

### **Cooperative Efforts**

The Gallitzin State Forest staff oversees Prescribed burns on Several State Parks located within the district.

- **Yellow Creek State Park** – The District staff conducted a prescribed burn on three (3) warm season grass fields in 2014. These fields are scheduled to be burned again in 2107.
- **Prince Gallitzin State Park** –A warm season grass burn was conducted near Headache Hill in 2014. The area is being monitored to assess the timing of a future burn.
- **Canoe Creek State Park** – Two areas of warm season grasses on the north side of Canoe Creek Lake had prescribed fire treatments in the spring of 2015. Other sections of this area are planned to be burned in the spring of 2016. Those areas are burned in a three (3) year cycle.

## **FIRE PREVENTION**

### **Indiana/Cambria Division**

Fire prevention programs will continue throughout 2016. Attempts are made to achieve a minimum of sixteen Smokey Bear school programs (Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) during the regular school year. Smokey Bear programs will be provided to summer school / summer daycare requests as well. These program requests may number six or more. Three Smokey Bear / fire prevention programs are planned with two cooperating state parks (Yellow Creek State Park and Prince Gallitzin State Park).

### **Blair Division**

Fire prevention programs will continue throughout 2016. Attempts are made to achieve a minimum of sixteen Smokey Bear school programs (Kindergarten to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) during the regular school year. Three high school programs will be conducted as well. Three Smokey Bear / fire prevention programs are planned with cooperating state parks. The Blair Division will have Smokey Bear present at 5 Altoona Curve games, the local AA baseball team. There will be a sportsman's show at the Altoona Jaffa Mosque and 3 different farm shows throughout the community that will have fire prevention programs. The Blair division will also present prevention programs to two sportsmen's clubs.

### **INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENT**

- Approximately 200 areas (spots or large patches) were treated in 2015, comprising two weeks of work for spraying Japanese Knotweed at Laurel Run, Rager Mountain, and Babcock Divisions. As Knotweed patches are eliminated we expand treatments to other areas. For example, we treated three large patches in the Charles Lewis Natural Area during the summer of 2015 that we haven't treated previously.
- We continue to make headway in our strip mined areas in the Babcock Division spraying for Autumn Olive. We continued using spray blocks delineated by roads, ditches, and other logical delineators. This aids us in knowing where we've been and how many acres were sprayed. As blocks are eliminated from Autumn Olive we can progress to other blocks. The block system also gives us a systematic method to revisit areas for touch-up. This is working very well for us. In 2015 we sprayed 692 acres. While autumn olive was the primary species, multiflora rose and honeysuckle was also targeted.
- Spraying for invasive plants begins after July 4<sup>th</sup> and continues to mid-September.
- Other than the known such as Beech scale, HWA and EAB we are not experiencing any other serious insect infestations.

### **NATURAL GAS, OIL, AND OTHER GEOLOGIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Presently there are no new natural gas or oil development activities taking place within the Gallitzin State Forest.

### **TOWER AND RIGHT-OF-WAY PROJECTS**

The EQT gas line replacement project on the Rager Mountain tract should be completed by March or April of 2016. This project involves the placement of a new 20 inch line from the compressor station on Rager Mountain, through the Laurel Run Tract to the substation on Benschhoff Hill Road. 14,060 feet of this line passes through the Gallitzin State Forest.

There is a proposal for installation of one 16" and one 20" gas lines by Sunoco across the northern portion of the Rager Mountain Division. These lines would follow an existing Right of Way which currently contains an 8 inch pipeline. Approximately 9,800 feet of this line will pass through Gallitzin State Forest lands.

- **Tower** – in 2016, Lost Mountain Fire Tower will be put out for bid to be dismantled.
- **Right-of-Way Projects** – No new or known Right-of-Way projects are anticipated in 2016.

### **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- Maintain and/or plant additional RST (Recurrent Selection Timber) backcross American Chestnut orchard at the Dryzal habitat management area in the spring of 2016.
- Maintain and/or expand Beech Bark Scale Disease resistant American Beech planting at the Stevenson Farm habitat management area in the fall of 2016. Add additional trees as they become available.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- A Gallitzin State Forest Public Meeting is scheduled for the fall of 2016.
- The District currently has eight kiosks that contain information on private forestland stewardship, fire prevention, insects and disease, maps etc., as well as pre-paid postage public comment cards.
- DCNR Conservation Volunteer Program allows volunteers to aid with improvements on State Forest Land.
- A public tour of the Babcock Division of the Gallitzin State Forest is scheduled for October 2016. This tour will be open to the public and showcase the timber sales, habitat projects, recreational opportunities, and maintenance of the Babcock Division.

### **RESEARCH**

- The Paint Creek Watershed Association has installed a weir on a tributary to Babcock Creek to monitor flows. This will provide base data for a future AMD (Acid Mine Drainage) treatment facility to be constructed in the same area. This has been dubbed the "Red Eyes" project because the iron discharge areas look like two red eyes on the aerial photo view.

### **MISCELLANEOUS**

- District staff established a 125 tree RST (Recurrent Selection Timber) backcross American Chestnut orchard at the Dryzal habitat management area in the Spring of 2015.
- District staff, in cooperation with Tina Alban and Penn Nursery, established a Beech Bark Scale Disease resistant American Beech planting at the Stevenson Farm habitat management area in the Fall of 2015. Plans are to add additional trees each year as they become available.

- Construction of the new Gallitzin State Forest Resource Management Center, .3 mile south of the intersection of US Route 22 and Dishong Mountain road, is delayed and it is not known when construction will begin.
- Department of Correction inmates helped with the removal of two deer fences from the former Chestnut Flat timbersale, .2 mile northeast of the intersection of Babcock Creek road and PA Route 56.
- One of our emphasis areas in 2016 will be to obtain a Right of Way into the New Ashtola tract.

### **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR**

- A State Forest Resource Management Plan Public Meeting was held in Bedford in conjunction with the Buchanan State Forest.
- Buffalo Road: Contractor paver placed 8,691 tons of DSA over 3.4 miles of road.
- Pot Ridge Road: District staff spread 1,639 tons of 2a limestone over 2.7 miles of road.
- District staff opened up a new road (Red Gate Road) for hunters to access Gallitzin State Forest.
- Daylighted Babcock Creek Road.
- Painted 25 miles of State Forest Boundary.
- Cut approximately 100 hazard trees along Shade Road and within the Babcock Picnic Area.
- Planted 1500 trees/shrub seedlings for wildlife habitat in food plots and around ponds.
- Wildland fire crew members assisted Alaska, Idaho, and Montana with fire suppression.
- Babcock Picnic Area: created a 1.0 mile picnic trail loop hiking trail. Erected swing sets and moved the volleyball court. Created opening for new latrine.
- Completed the aspen cuttings along Route 56 for Woodcock/Grouse Habitat project.
- District staff participated in a week long (S-211) Advanced Pumps class.
- Over 692 acres of State Forest Land was treated by district staff with herbicide to control invasive plants like: Autumn Olive, Japanese Knotweed and Multiflora Rose.
- Nine Strip Mine Reclamation Ponds were stocked with warm water fish. PA Fish & Boat Commission provided some of the fish; and the district purchased some as well.
- Constructed a shared use trail through the Laurel Run Tract.
- HCVF: Created approximately 50 acres of grassland habitat through planting, mowing, and tree/shrub removal.
- District staff cleared the vista off of Skyline Drive.
- Cleared all district trails: hiking, shared use, and snowmobile.
- Established a parking Lot off of Route 22 for public access.