

Clear Creek 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 Clear Creek 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

CLEAR CREEK STATE FOREST

Proposed Recreational Events:

- Fat Tire Mountain Bike Race starting at 8:30 at the Laurel Fields on June 18th, 2016.

Upgrades / Maintenance

Trails

- Improve the River Trail at Kennerdell, especially in the middle section above the Danner Campground.
- Repaint any blazes on the trails on the Clarion River Tracts that didn't get finished in 2015.
- Consider the feasibility of designing and laying out two loop trails in the eastern section of the State Forest at Clear Creek. (Callen Run, Dice Run, and Hetrick Run areas.) We could consider one loop to the north of Spring Creek Road, and another loop to the south of Spring Creek Road.
- Replace old maps, Rules & Regs, and other materials on kiosks with new copies.

Proposed Auto Tour Site Upgrade:

- Consider how to renew or replace the Auto Tour stop on Little Clear Creek Road with the Demonstration Fences. The fences and the forest in the area have grown to the point where it is difficult to see any real differences between the fences. Perhaps we could reduce the number of fences to just one, and have an interpretive panel explaining about deer exclosure fences, forest regeneration, and deer impacts. This would replace 5 fences attempting to demonstrate different harvesting practices.

KENNERDELL TRACT:

KIOSKS:

A new kiosk will be installed at the public parking lot by the Kennerdell Bridge.

TRAILS:

There will be continued improvement of the shared use trail system, with a local volunteer group, to improve the quality of the trail for all the user groups.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Timber management goals are based on the 2014-2023 district timber management plan that ranks treatment areas based on current and anticipated future conditions. Through stand examinations, primarily in fences that already have been treated; high priority treatment areas were chosen to advance the regeneration process toward completion. The district's harvest allocation model was instrumental in developing the management plan. Overstory removal and shelterwood harvest acres were calculated to be on target at the end of the 10 year period. Meeting these allocation goals will help the district balance its age class distribution.

Marked and sold, potentially active

- **Snubbing Post Sale:** Located north of Clear Run road it is made up of four fences with 58 acres of overstory removal and 11 acres of shelterwood. An area that was salvaged after a windstorm in 1999 is being treated with the Snubbing Post Sale. The disturbance from the past has initiated the regeneration process and they are now ready for the next step.
- **Bullwacker Sale:** Three fences along Callen Run and three Fences along McNeil Station Road will be combined in the Bullwacker sale totaling 95 acres. It has 32 acres of overstory removal, 53 acres of shelterwood, and 10 acres of buffer treatment.
- **Double Trip Sale:** located near the corner of Jimtown Road and Clear Run Road, will receive a 42 acre shelterwood treatment along with 35 acres of overstory removal in two fences. Having already received a shelterwood treatment, these areas have abundant competitive oak regeneration and are ready for the final harvest.
- **Klingensmith and Edeburn Sales:** A2 fences will receive a 66 acre overstory removal treatment. They contain a nice diversity of seedlings, including mixed oaks, which will become the next forest. A 25 acres shelterwood on a dry oak site is also a part of the sale. The area is located southwest of the intersection of Pine Run Road and Little Clear Creek Road.
- **Kennerdell Tract:** An active 94 Acre overstory removal is located to the North end of the Kennerdell Tract. The goal is to create a new age class with similar or greater species diversity than the present, allowing the stand to be more resilient to species specific insect and disease threats. Future stand composition should be dominated by Oak and Red Maple and a lesser proportion of Black Cherry, and other mixed hardwoods. Wildlife habitat will be greatly enhanced with the creation of early successional habitat. Residual islands with dens and snags will provide structure to further enhance the habitat.

Proposed (not marked yet)

- Maple Creek tract: a diverse area with young aspen forests, planted white pines stands, and northern hardwoods located along Maple Creek Drive in Forest County. Two fences and one unfenced area will receive overstory removals totaling 86 acres. All the areas have been treated with a shelterwood harvest and had a salvage entry in 2012.
- McKinnley timber sale: The 75 acre fences had a shelterwood harvest in 2003 and were mowed in 2014. The mowing was used to reduce birch competition and the proposed second shelterwood will further increase sunlight that's needed to make oaks seedlings more competitive. A first entry shelterwood on 35 acres of dry oak forest will be included to start the regeneration process.
- Bone yard Sale: The 62 acre fences had a shelterwood harvest in 2003 and a prescribed fire in 2015. The fire was used to reduce competing vegetation and a second shelterwood will increase sunlight to the oak seedlings that re-sprouted after the fire and allow them to be more competitive.

Regeneration projects

Fence Removal

Three fences to be removed in 2015 but have been rescheduled for 2016.

Painter – 47 Acres – East of the intersection of Pine Run Road and Little Clear Creek Road.

949 East – 31 Acres – East of Dutch Hill and north of State Route 949.

Iron Furnace – 30 Acres – South of parking lot at the end of DeWoody Road

Competing Competition

Competing vegetation will be controlled to promote regeneration; district staff will treat mid-story shade, laurel, and fern over 128 acres. Contractors will be used to mow 90 acres of laurel and treat 37 acres of fern.

RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

- Several existing wildlife food plots will be maintained throughout the year. The food plots are located throughout the district. They are in the vicinity of McNeil Station Road, Spring Creek Road, and Dice Run Road.

- To enhance wildlife habitat we are going to plant Chinese chestnut, late apple, crabapple, and spruce trees in existing openings on the Clear Creek State Forest. Large areas of the state forest do not have significant conifer cover, so the spruce thickets will greatly enhance the habitat.
 - Seven of the nine openings we will use are inside of already existing deer enclosure fences which will protect the trees from the deer until they are above the browse line. The other two sites will require wire cages to protect the trees.
 - Our plan is to plant a total of 140 hardwoods in 2016---113 Chinese chestnuts, 6 ash, 15 late season apple, and 6 crabapple trees. In addition, we will plant 300 Norway spruce trees for conifer cover.
 - We will plan on continuing to plant more trees in other openings in future years as time and resources allow.
- In October 2015 we relocated a total of 49 apple trees and 15 Chinese chestnut trees on the State Forest at Clear Creek. Planted in the late 1980's, they are spread over 12 different locations. They have been largely neglected for years, and our goal for 2016 is to give them some much needed maintenance and care.
- We will make a "Hunting Map" for the Clear Creek State Forest. It will show the established apple and chestnut trees, as well as completed timber sales that offer thick browse and cover for the animals.

ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

The road infrastructure throughout the Clear Creek State Forest serves as an integral part for recreation, timbersale operations, and other administrative purposes. In order to maintain the network of roads regular maintenance and intermittent road closure may occur. The following list are those activities that will occur in 2016:

- **Corbett Road:** A Driving Surface Aggregate (DSA) will be applied in 2016. The ideal time of placement would occur while the soil conditions are stable and the frost is out of the road surface. Typically this would occur in late May-July. DSA is applied with a tracked paving machine to a final compacted depth of 4 inches.
- **Other Roads:** Continual maintenance activities will occur on the other road surfaces during 2016. These activities include road grading, culvert replacement, aggregate placement, and ditch clearing. During these activities the roads will remain open. Delays may be noticed especially during culvert replacements. Timeframe for maintenance will be throughout the summer and fall.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Fire has been associated with the forest landscape since the beginning. It most likely is the reason why the Clear Creek State Forest is abundant with the Red Oak stands today. Today we utilize fire as a tool to remove undesirable vegetation to allow the more desirable growing stock to prosper and grow. In 2016 we plan on using fire for the following sites:

- **Headwaters Fence:** Prescribed fire has been planned in the 28 acre fenced area known as the Headwaters Fence. In early 2016 a Prescribed Burn Plan will be written for the site. The goal of this fire will be to control competing vegetation, primarily black birch. With controlling the black birch, the hope is to promote the growth of oak on the site. The best time to conduct this burn, will be when the black birch has started to grow its leaves for the season.
- **Maurice K. Goddard State Park:** As in years past, we will again utilize Prescribed Fire to increase stand vigor, improve wildlife habitat, remove excess fuels and control invasive species in areas within the park. Currently there are 13 sites to potentially burn under the burn plan, however, only several sites are burned per year and the remaining burned in somewhat of a rotation, or as time and weather permit.

INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENT

The year 2015 saw no appreciable activity from the gypsy moth, and we don't expect any in this area for the foreseeable future.

The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) was discovered in Cook Forest State Park in March 2013, and we immediately started treating trees for the pest. Treatments with Xytect (Imidacloprid) have continued thru 2014 and 2015. Most of the work has been in the area known as the Forest Cathedral.

The harsh temperatures of the last two winters was very damaging to the HWA, and their numbers were drastically reduced. However, we know we cannot count on such winters occurring on a regular basis. As of this writing, the winter of 2015 to 2016 has been unusually mild, and the forecast is for that to continue until spring. This will allow the numbers of HWA to rebound quickly. For this reason, the treatments continue. Based on past experience, we anticipate that the treatments will be effective for at least 5 years, and perhaps as long as 7 years.

In 2015 we treated a total of 1530 acres and a total of 188,457 inches of diameter of hemlock trees.

In 2016 we anticipate treating 1530 acres and a total of 177,260 inches of diameter. Most of this work is done by staff from the Bureau of Forestry and State Parks, and some by a contractor.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to ravage the ash trees all throughout the area. Ash trees are dead or dying in all parts of our Forest District. We have been treating a limited number of ash trees in a handful of State Parks and a few other locations. Altogether, we are

treating 110 trees in District 8. They must be treated every other year by injection of TREE-äge. Very wet weather each of the last three springs has caused several common diseases of conifer trees to proliferate throughout the northwestern corner of the state. Colorado blue spruce, Douglas fir, and Scots pine have been especially hard hit, with branches and even whole trees dying. Norway spruce hasn't been hit nearly as hard. If 2016 brings us a dry spring, the diseases will retreat and many of the trees can start to recover. However, if we get another wet spring, the diseases will continue to spread and we could see significant damage and mortality to the blue spruce and Scots pine.

- A 59 acre herbicide treatment will be conducted near the southern pipeline, on the Kennerdell Tract, to increase the health and diversity of native plant species and remove a localized community of invasive species.

NATURAL GAS, OIL, AND OTHER GEOLOGIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Currently, there are no new developments in regards to Oil and Gas or other mineral extractions. This could change as Seneca Resources analyzes the seismic results from the testing that was conducted in 2015.

TOWER AND RIGHT-OF-WAY PROJECTS

- None to report for 2016

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Oak Silviculture course June 20-24 in cooperation with USFS

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Bureau employs service foresters in each county in Pennsylvania to provide technical assistance to individuals, families and clubs that own woodlands, as well as educate on state forest activities. The work of the service forester is to improve the extent of sustainable management on privately-owned forestlands and woodlots throughout Pennsylvania, largely drawing from lessons learned and experiences of management on state forestlands. Service foresters utilize state forestland as examples of sustainable forest management to private landowners, landowner groups and the general public. Service foresters and landowner organizations sponsor events that tour state forestland and highlight our management. Many districts have 'demonstration areas' that are used for this education. Service foresters also communicate why activities occur on state forestland and how to become more involved. The public can contact the District office with questions regarding public outreach.

Key Public Outreach Events

Envirothons
School Field Trips
Woodland Owner Groups
Volunteer Days
Friends Group
Clarion County Woodland Owner Conference in February

RESEARCH

- Researchers from the U.S. Forest Service are conducting multi-year and multi-district research projects that will increase our knowledge and improve management activities. Fern can often limit regeneration by producing shade that keeps seedlings from growing. One study looks at the rate of herbicide needed to control the fern but not kill the seedlings. Beech trees often sprout from the root and can only be controlled with herbicide. A new study is trying to determine how long after a tree has been cut can the stump be treated and effectively control the sprouting. A multi-decade study on the effects of residual trees left after the final harvest is being done on four sites in the district. The study looks at how these tree impact seeding development, herbaceous vegetation, and song bird habitat.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- 2015 Timber Management – 4 Executed Contracts
185 Acres Overstory Removal - 2,805,584 board feet - \$1,360,393
- Oak Silviculture Course in cooperation with the USFS-Northern Research Station
- Clear Run Road DSA project
- Box culvert completed on Corbett Road
- Seneca Resources completed a 3D Seismic Project
- Completed Trail maintenance on 7 different trails which were maintained: Blyson Loop, Millcreek Loop, Kaufman Trail, Trap Run Trail, Little Clear Creek Trail, Allegheny River tract Trails, and Lower Round Top Trail.
- Conducted HWA and EAB treatments