

# TUSCARORA 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 Tuscarora 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

- Blain Vista – This vista was created to allow a view of the Sherman’s Creek valley and the town of Blain. The vista is located on the Conococheague Mountain in Perry County north of Blain. The vista is accessed by a trail off of Kansas Valley Road just below the Big Knob Tower site, one of the highest points in the state forest. A log landing will be improved to facilitate parking, a trail will be improved to allow easier access, vegetation will be cut and treated improve the view, a flat area with a picnic table will be established for visitor comfort. The environmental review has been completed for this project. DCNR staff will direct an Eagle Scout candidate on this project together. 2017
- Doubling Gap Vista – This existing vista overlooks the Doubling Gap in the Blue Mountain in Perry County and Cumberland County. This popular vista is often visited by people touring the state forest by automobile. DCNR Volunteers cut the trees that were blocking the view. It needs a new sign, additional grading and vegetation control to maintain the view.
- Flat Rock Trail – Due to significant erosion issues associated with portions of the trail this trail will be refurbished using BMP’s from BOF Erosion and Sedimentation for State Forest Management. The trail assessment form will be completed prior to developing a plan for establishing the BMP’s. DCNR staff and volunteers will do the work by fall 2016.
- IN 2015 a Recreation Plan was developed by District Staff with input from Colonel Denning State Park Staff and the public. During 2016 recommendations from that plan will be implemented including trail work, improved signage and maps.
- Five new campsites will be improved on State Forest islands in the Juniata River, part of the Juniata River Trail.
- Campsite improvements – In 2014 DCNR staff and a volunteer assessed campsites in both the north and south blocks. Campsites were evaluated for accessibility, wear and tear, components, location, drainage, and surface material. Improvements will be made to campsites, our brochures and our web page and Facebook page.
- Auto Tour – This project involves the refurbishment of the existing auto tour stations and brochure. This 26 mile auto tour is located in the south block of the Tuscarora SF situated entirely in Perry County. The current 12 key locations need maintenance and new signs. An assessment of the route will allow district staff to add or subtract points of interest. The brochure will be updated with new and current information to better serve the public. The Facebook page will be updated so people can download the brochure at their convenience.
- Auto Tour – North Block - This project involves the creation of an auto tour complete with stations and brochure. This 26 mile auto tour is located in the north block of the Tuscarora SF situated entirely in Huntingdon, Mifflin and Juniata Counties. An assessment of the route will allow district staff to focus on points of interest and create a brochure. The Facebook page will be updated so people can download the brochure at their convenience.
- In addition to the Auto Tour, information on places of interest on the Tuscarora State Forest, which we call Tuscarora Treasures, will be provided to the public through Facebook the DCNR website and the Perry County Bicentennial website.
- The Hoverter & Scholl Box Huckleberry Natural Area has a nature trail with accompanying brochure that the District plans to update during 2017.
- The snowmobile trail will be improved and increased in length by adding the Whitesel Trail to make a loop from Licking Creek Drive to Flat Trail.

- Trails in The Hemlock Natural Area will be re-opened. In spite of treatment since 2003, the Hemlock Natural Area has suffered heavy mortality to the big trees due to the ravages of the hemlock wooly adelgid. This led to hazardous conditions as the trees and branches fell on the trails, and birch trees have grown up in the trail.
- We plan to re-open a trail on the Blue Mountain from the tower site to Ross & Randall road

### **Organized Events**

- Annual SORR Enduro on June 23 2016
- 3rd Annual Tuscarora Ultra 50K; March 26<sup>th</sup> 2016
- Tuscarora Trails 50K TBD (Fall 2016)
- Annual fishing Derby sponsored by the Newton-Wayne Sportsmen's Association TBD (probably in May)

## **TIMBER MANAGEMENT**

### **Marked & Sold, Potentially Active:**

- 03-2014BC01 Overstory removal on the top of Blue Mt along Blue Mt Road, in the vicinity of 3 Square Hollow Road. This is a lower quality sale which is designed to favor early successional species such as pitch pine and golden-winged warbler. Total 213 acres.
- 03-2013BC01 Overstory removal and shelterwood treatments in the area of the headwaters of Spruce Run. This includes areas previously treated with a shelterwood and also some new areas and a short extension of the haul road. Active harvesting began in 2014. Total 182 acres.
- 03-2014BC03 Along Holderman Haul Road off of Wynn Gap road, a combination of shelterwood and overstory removal. 169 acres.
- 03-20105BC01 Overstory Removal within fences along North Slope Haul road and Cider Path.

### **Marked but not yet sold:**

- Within the fence along Bower Mountain Road. Overstory removal within the fence. Marking has started.

### **Proposed (not yet marked):**

- Along Laurel Run Road for ash pre-hazard tree removal.
- Just off Rt 274 west of Bryner Road. This area has a lot of ash mortality and harvesting would benefit early successional species such as golden-winged warbler and woodcock.
- Sugar Valley: reduce red maple and black birch and increase the size of oak seedlings. This sale will also promote yellow poplar and sugar maple regeneration.
- Eby Ridge overstory removal to regenerate oak and pine
- Flat Trail
- Blain McCrea Rd off Robinson Road

- Miller Gap to Wharton Gap salvage of dead oak
- Blacklog Bench
- Along the Sunoco Pipeline for construction of new pipelines.

**Regeneration Projects:**

Basal spray herbicide of understory competing vegetation, mostly striped maple, red maple, birch and witch-hazel at the following locations:

- 43 acres located along Concord Haul Road in Toboyne Township, Perry County. North side of Concord Haul Road.
- 186 acres located along Vincent Tram Road in Milford Township, Juniata County; east of the power line.
- 196 acres on Little Valley Road in Northwest Madison Township, Perry County.
- 91 acres located on Pine Ridge Road in Bratton Township, Mifflin County.
- 97 acres located along Shearer Dug Trail in Toboyne Township, Perry County.
- 45 acres located on Pine Ridge Road in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County.

Cutting understory competing trees, mostly black birch at the following locations:

- 158 acres along Hemlock Road, near Big Spring Park in Toboyne Township, Perry County.
- 81 acres along Steltzer Road in Tuscarora Township, Juniata County.

We may install one new fence in the Hoverter tract off of Rt 233.

**RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS**

- Several small wildlife habitat fields will be treated with herbicides to control invasives and woody stems especially black locust
- Follow-up treatment of Japanese barberry in the Steltzer tract and along Blacklog Creek.
- Continue restoration of herbaceous community along Blacklog Creek and replant with native grass species in the Steltzer tract.
- The Allegheny Woodrat is prevalent in the Tuscarora SF. Work will begin on a guidance document by the BOF's wildlife biologist.
- Continue with treatment of privet at the Harling Tract, approx. 2 acres in 2016.
- Continue treatment of invasive oriental bittersweet around Hickory Ridge and Cedar Hill.
- With assistance of local NWTf chapters we plan to enhance wildlife habitat at up to 6 small opening in Gunter Valley.

## **ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS**

- East Licking Creek Drive work plans being made for repairs to the blacktop.
- New Driving Surface Aggregate for East Licking Creek Drive.
- Replace culverts on Kansas Valley and Little Valley Roads
- Continue improvements to Blacklog Bench Road
- Bridges in design for replacement: Bryner Road, Big Spring, Doubling gap (2)

## **PRESCRIBED FIRE**

- Plans are to utilize prescribed fire to treat areas along Birch Run Haul Road, Perry Lumber Road and Three Square Hollow Road. 2017

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

- Approximately 30,000 acres of the Tuscarora State Forest are scheduled for aerial spraying with Mimic for the suppression of a severe gypsy moth outbreak in 2016.
- Hemlock trees will be treated with imidacloprid for suppression of hemlock wooly adelgid in priority areas, potentially: Kansas Valley, West Licking Creek and The Hemlock Natural Area.
- Several sites throughout the District will be treated with herbicides to control high priority invasive plants including poison hemlock, mile-a-minute, Japanese knotweed, Japanese barberry, and oriental bittersweet.
- Due to the rapid progress of the emerald ash borer and the especially high risk posed by dead ash, potentially hazardous ash will be removed throughout the forest near roads, camps, parking areas, and trails.

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

- Presently there are no natural gas and or oil well development activities taking place on the Tuscarora State Forest.

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

- Sunoco Logistics Corp. has proposed construction of a new pipeline beside the existing pipeline which crosses the Tuscarora State Forest. An official proposal is being reviewed at this time.

## **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

- State Route 274 Highway Beautification Project – This project involves the planting of Flowering

White Dogwood Trees and Redbuds along both sides of the highway beginning at the state forest boundary by the district office and ending at the Big Spring State Forest Picnic Area. Several hundred trees have been planted since 2010. We will continue to use DCNR staff to place new trees in tubes along the highway as it approaches the picnic area and replace ones that have died since last year. Tree tubes will be removed on the trees that are growing out of the tube. The intent is to have a long row of flowering trees along the highway for people to enjoy.

- Wildflower plantings – Native wildflowers will continue to be planted in areas of high visibility and new bridges. The district has installed 9 new bridges and has planted erosion control grasses and native wildflowers on the construction site.
- The dam in Gunter Valley is scheduled for removal with site restoration following from 2016 through 2018.
- A new building is planned for construction at The Bryner Maintenance Headquarters as a new office, shop and storage garage. 2017

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- Facebook page – The district’s Facebook page will be updated to include information about management activities. Timber sales, fence construction and herbicide treatments will be updated quarterly.
- DCNR Tuscarora State Forest web page – The district’s webpage will be updated to include 2016 management activities to inform the public.
- Throughout the year staff are invited to schools in the area for guest lectures, special programs, fire prevention programs, and career days.
- The Tuscarora State Forest is involved in many school programs throughout the year. These are important opportunities for interactive engagement that encourages appreciation and understanding of the forests of Pennsylvania. It also provides an opportunity to receive feedback not only from students but also from teachers, administrators and parents. Some of the more significant school programs that staff participate in each year are:
  - Envirothons, one for Perry county and one for Mifflin & Juniata counties.
  - The Tuscarora State Forest also hosts fourth graders from Perry County for an outdoor classroom at Hickory Ridge that includes grade appropriate information about a full range of forestry subjects.
  - Several elementary schools that participate in the Trout in the Classroom program with Trout Unlimited and the PGC come to the State Forest to release their fry and learn more about forest and stream interconnections.
- Spring 2016 – Volunteer Day (TBD)
- Throughout the year 2016– Patrols will be conducted for conversations with visitors and to reduce illegal activities including ATV use on the state forest.
- Spring and Fall 2016 – 4 meetings with the Tuscarora Forest Property Owners Association
- Work with volunteers to continue improving access for stocking trout in East Licking Creek, especially in the DHALO area.

## RESEARCH

- Golden Eagle migration research – The Tuscarora SF cooperates with West Virginia University on a golden eagle migration research project throughout the winter months. Trail cameras and a bait station are situated on the state forest to document golden eagles migrating back and forth to Canada. Tens of thousands of photographs are analyzed by the researchers and some are shared on Facebook.
- Black Bear – The Tuscarora State Forest cooperates with the PA Game Commission to capture black bears as part of their ongoing research. Bear traps are deployed throughout the state forest beginning in April and continues into the late summer. Data such as overall health, gender, age, young of the year and numbers are recorded.
- The Oak Regeneration and Soil research project will continue at several sites across the southern part of the Tuscarora State Forest. It involves soil and foliage analysis and seedling monitoring. Evidence of this project includes digging soil pits, plastic fencing, flagging, and some tree removals. This project is funded by the Bureau of Forestry and involves principle investigators from the U.S. Forest Service and Penn State University as well as many cooperators.
- A second major research project involves a federally listed endangered species, *Scirpus ancistrochaetus* (northeastern bulrush). This project involves monitoring hydrology and increasing sunlight to improve habitat for this plant.
- As part of the Oak Regeneration Study in PA, Penn State has several sites they are monitoring in the Tuscarora State Forest. Generally these sites are at regeneration treatment areas such as fences and herbicide sites.
- Surveys will be conducted for snowshoe hare in Perry/Franklin County and also for Allegheny woodrat to document their presence.

## MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR 2015

- Restoration was completed on the stone water fountain originally built by the Mount Union CCC Camp.
- The cemetery originally serving the iron furnace community at Bell's Furnace was cleaned up and made easier to access.
- Big Spring State Park/Picnic Area received maintenance on trails, pavilions and hazard tree removal.
- October 2015 – Completed work on the Search and Rescue Trailer. New decals were placed on the trailer.
- Year round 2015 – Trail cameras were deployed to capture wildlife and criminal activity. Wildlife videos were seen on international media outlets and Facebook. Photographs of criminal activity were used to apprehend and prosecute burglars.
- May 2015 – The Juniata County Conservation District held the County Envirothon at Karl Guss Picnic Area.