

Elk State Forest

2015 MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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.

The SFRMP is implemented at the local level by district-specific resource management plans that aim to balance many uses and values of the forest, while maintaining ecosystem health and the wild character of the forest.

The purpose of this Management Activities document 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. For questions, comments or more information about this plan, please contact:

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RECREATION

- Gray Hill/Chase Hollow Multi-Use Trail System (Non-motorized shared use trail)-hardening surfaces, stoning, signing, brushing
- Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail (Non-motorized shared use trail): hardening surfaces, stoning, signing, brushing
 - Sleepy Hollow to Shaffer Draft Connector Improvement
 - Chase Hollow Area Improvements to PA Game Commission (PGC) Trails
 - Tot/Sadler Connector Improvements
 - Little Dents Run Connector
- Quehanna Multi-Use Trail System (Non-motorized shared use trail): hardening surfaces,

stoning, signing, brushing

- #11 and Red Run Trail Connections
- Bucktail Path - trail brushing
- Ridge Trail - trail brushing
- Develop and install educational panels:
 - Thunder Mt. Equestrian Trail Day Use Site for Elk Scenic Drive
 - Lower Jerry Run Natural Area site specific and Elk Scenic Drive
 - Lick Island Trail System with a Timeless Trails and site specific
 - Miller Run with a Fish and Boat and site specific
- Construct and install kiosk:
 - Lower Jerry Run Natural Area Trail
 - Lick Island Trail System
 - 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

SALES THAT ARE SOLD

- Pure Intentions is a 72 acres of a second entry shelterwood, was sold, and may be harvested in 2015. This sale is off of the Marshall Farm Road.
- Monkey Knuckle is a 78 acres first entry shelterwood and two age shelterwood is currently up for bid and could be harvested in 2015. This sale is off of Steammill Road.
- 13-2013BC09 Bear Trail Removal Sale, 66 acre overstory removal located along South Fork Road, East Branch Area (EBA). Sold to St Marys Lumber, possible harvesting operations in 2015.
- 13-2013BC10 Briggs Hollow Removal Sale, 158 acre overstory removal located along CCC Road and CCC Loop Road, EBA. Sold to St Marys Lumber, possible harvesting operations in 2015.
- 13-2012BC04 78 Acers Shelterwood Sale. Out for Bid and will sell 11/5/14. Sale is along Boone Mt Road Fox Twp., Elk Co. May be cut in 2015
- 13-2013BC11, Blackened Whitehead: 33 acres of overstory removal sold to ITL. Cutting is likely to take place throughout winter months (and winter 2015-16 if it is not completed this year). The sale is located off the Whitehead Fire Road, approximately ¼ mile west of Ridge Road, Lumber Township, Cameron County.

- 13-2013BC02 “EQ”: A 211 acre shelterwood timber sale that was sold to Emporium Hardwoods. Harvest operations can begin at any time. The timber sale is located behind gate #214, 6.5 miles up Dents Run Road.
- 13-2013BC05 “Four Mile”: A 190 acre overstory removal that has been sold to Firth Maple Products. The harvest will begin in the fall of 2014 and will be finished by the fall of 2015. The sale is located at the end of Indian Run Road behind gates #30 and #31.
- 13-2014BC04 “Stone Pitch”: A 166 acre overstory removal, 23 acre improvement and 9 acre two-age buffer timber sale that has been sold to St. Marys Lumber Company. There is a possibility of harvest operations beginning in 2015. Sale is located at the end of Sizer Run Road, behind gate #27.
- 13-2014BC05 “Russell Camp”: A 75 acre overstory removal and 15 acre two-age buffer timber sale that has been sold to St. Marys Lumber Company. Harvest operations are scheduled to be started in the fall of 2014 and continue throughout 2015. The sale area is within the two Steam Mill fences, along Steam Mill Road.
- 13-2014BC09 “Woolrich Sale”: A 202 acre shelterwood harvest along Ospeck Road in the East Branch Dam Area. The sale will be sold on 11/19/14 and harvest operations may begin in 2015

SALES THAT ARE PLANNED

- Ragin Slab is an 80 acre first entry shelterwood sale in which the marking will begin in 2015. This sale is off Cowley Hill Road.
- Fat Apple is a 39 acre regeneration cut, 33 acre overstory removal and a 12 acre first entry shelterwood sale in which the marking has begun. This sale is in Norcross.
- Crazy Woman 2 Removal Sale, 111 acre overstory removal located along Bird Box, Bird Box Loop and Bird Feed roads, EBA, to be marked in 2015.
- Straight Creek 2 Removal Sale, 85 acre overstory removal located along Ermily and Blazingstar roads, EBA, to be marked in 2015.
- Williamsville Removal Sale, 60 acre overstory removal located along Five Mile and South Five Mile roads, EBA McKean County, to be marked in 2015.
- 65 acres sale to be proposed off Gardner Hill Rd (back Jack Pine Ridge). Will be marked and sold in 2015
- 13-2014BC06, Whispering Pants: 164 acre sale, 46 of which is overstory removal within the Pepperhill Fence, to be sold fall 2014, marking and tallying nearly complete. Timing of cut is currently unknown. This sale is located along the east side of the Ridge Road and bordering the Pepper Hill Trail. The sale proposal has been submitted to the Silviculture Section, Gibson Township, Cameron County.
- 13-2014BCxx, Currently Unnamed: ±290 acres, ±210 acres of shelterwood and 77 acres of overstory removal from inside Road Hollow I and Road Hollow II fences. The timber sale is

located on the east side of the Ridge Road along the Berge Run Road. Sale proposal is in progress and will be submitted to the Silviculture Section this winter for marking early/mid 2015, Wharton Township, Potter County.

- 13-2014BC03, Ixodes Con Quercus: 71 acres of salvage, 68 of which is salvage-shelterwood and 3 of which is salvage-clearcut. Likely to be marked summer/fall of 2015 and cut during winter months 2015-16 and/or 2016-17. The sale location is the ridgetop immediately north of Salt Run and east of PA-155. The sale proposal is nearly completed and will be submitted to the Silviculture Section this winter, Portage/Shippen Townships, Cameron County
- 13-2015BCxx, Rainbow Ridge: 223 acres of overstory removal from the south end of the McNuff Haul Road. The timber sale is located on the ridge between Hunts Run and the McNuff Branch. Sale proposal has not been started, and this is likely a 2016 sale, Lumber Township, Cameron County
- 13-2010BC10 "Smoke In My Eyes": A 116 acre shelterwood comprised of 3 fenced areas that will be marked as an overstory removal in the spring of 2015. This sale borders the Thunder Mountain Equestrian Trail. It is located near the top of Stringer Hollow off of Dents Run Road
- 13-2009BC11 "Cougar Ambush": A 77 acre shelterwood comprised of 2 fenced areas that will be marked as an overstory removal in the spring of 2015. Located behind gate #213 on Dents Run Road, near the intersection with Porcupine Road
- 13-2004BC07 "Mad Bull": A 90 acre shelterwood comprised of 2 fenced areas that will be marked as an overstory removal in the spring of 2015. Located behind gate #222 off of Bell Draft Road
- Other sales could potentially begin in 2015, but forecasting that activity at this time is difficult due to a variety of reasons that may inhibit them coming to fruition.

WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE CONTRACT INSTALLED IN 2015

- An 11 acre fence of the shelterwood treatment of timber sale 13-2005BC11 along Whitehead Fire haul road
- A 43 acre fence of a proposed timber sale 13-2014BC03 along Ridge Trail off of Ridge Road.
- Two fences totaling 111 acres around the recent shelterwood harvest of timber sale 13- 2013BC01 along Marshall Farm Road

WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE CONTRACT DISMANTLED 2015

RIDGE ROAD AREA

- Steam Mill 1 and Steam Mill 2 fences along Steam Mill and Russell Camp Roads

DIVIDING RIDGE AREA

- Stony Pitch 1 and Stony Pitch 2 fences off of Doll Hill haul road
- Kimball and Eddy Run fences along Eddys Run haul road

HERBICIDE BLOCKS SCHEDULED FOR AFTER July 1st, 2015

EAST BRANCH DAM AREA

- 71 acres flat herbicide block off of Sugar Run Road
- 44 acre flat herbicide block along County Line Road

RIDGE ROAD AREA

- 12 acre steep herbicide block in Norcross Hollow
- 7 acre steep herbicide block at the top of Hunts Run Road
- 9 acre steep herbicide block off of Whitehead Fire haul road
- 58 acre flat herbicide block off of Rock Run haul road
- 20 acre and 5 acre flat herbicide blocks off of McNuff Pipeline haul road

HICKS RUN AREA

- 223 acre steep herbicide block in the Skillman Tract off of East Hicks Road
- 35 acre flat herbicide block on Big Porky haul road

DIVIDING RIDGE AREA

- 341 acre steep herbicide block bounded by Dividing Ridge and Waldy Run Roads

RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

- The District in conjunction with the Elk and Cameron Conservation District Offices developed stream habitat restoration projects with grant funding from the Sinnemahoning Stakeholders. These projects began in October of 2014 and will continue into 2015 and consist of 3 cross vane on East Branch of Hicks Run.
- 3 Bat boxes will be constructed by two seniors from the Cameron County High School for their senior projects. The bat boxes will be installed in Quehanna Natural Area near the bat hibernaculum.
- District staff will plant approximately one acre of a failed timber sale from the early 1970's with Washington Hawthorn (50 trees), assorted sweet crabapple (50 trees), Nannyberry viburnum (50 seedlings), and assorted pear and apple trees (25 trees). The trees will be planted in tubes or fences to reduce deer and elk browsing. The objective is to develop and old farm field type habitat for wildlife.
- 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, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission, maintains and enhances more than 40 food plots 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.

ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

- Ridge Road (Liquid Fuels, \$40,000) driving surface aggregate (DSA) south of FY2013 Hunts Run Intersection project
- Brooks Run Road (Dirt & Gravel, \$249,000) Bank Stabilization and DSA from Ridge and Brooks Run Intersection south along Brooks Run Road
- Beldin Hollow Culvert Replacement
- Sand Spring Culvert Replacement
- Fee Hollow Culvert Replacement
- Various drainage improvements (pipe and under drain installation, stream bank stabilization, sloping, etc.) throughout district area

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Two areas totaling 76 acres that had an overstory removal treatment during timber sale 13-2010BC09 are planned for a prescribed fire. The areas are located off of Grant Hill Road, in between Dents Run and Benezette. The areas are currently fenced to protect the new sprouts from deer and elk browsing after the prescribed fire treatment.

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 2015
 - **Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area:** The forest surrounding the wildlife food plot at the Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area was found to be harboring a substantial population of



Japanese barberry. Much of the barberry located on the hillside directly above the food plot was chemically treated in the spring and summer of 2014. However, since the conclusion of the spraying season a number of outlying barberry plants have been located on nearby state forest land. Herbicide treatment will again resume by May of 2015 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 2014 growing season. Since many of the overstory Scotch pine are either dead or dying, reforestation efforts are planned for the site in 2015. For reforestation efforts to succeed, control of stilt grass will be essential. Treatments planned for 2015 include either chemical or mechanical control.

To complicate matters, mile-a-minute vine was also found at the site in September of 2014. 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. Due to much of the seed already being mature and cast-off, treatment was postponed until 2015. A pre-emergent herbicide is planned to be applied in early spring of 2015 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. The main infestation was both mechanically and chemically treated throughout the summer and early fall months of 2014. Along with this acre-sized infestation, sporadic populations of knotweed were found downstream along the banks of Four Mile for approximately .90 miles. By the conclusion of the 2014 spraying season, all known knotweed populations had been initially treated. The knotweed found on state land in Four Mile is the likely culprit for the proliferation of other knotweed populations on private lands lower in Four Mile. With that being said, controlling knotweed on state forest land will be the key to total eradication of knotweed on the Four Mile drainage. Stream walks will be conducted in June of 2015 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 2015 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 2015. 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. Herbicide applications to the area were conducted in July and August. No known plants went to seed in 2014. Treatment will resume in 2015 and continue on an annual basis until the existing seed bank is exhausted. A future timber sale is anticipated in the area for 2015, 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 2015. With the sites having negative sightings for 3 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.
- 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 AND OIL DEVELOPMENT

- Severed Rights:
 - East Branch Dam area -
National Fuel Midstream Phase II pipeline clearing and installation of approximately



15.15 miles of midstream and gathering pipelines to support Seneca Resources Marcellus shale development in the area. Timber will be cleared in late 2014 through March of 2015 with pipeline construction to begin in late April or early May of 2015

Seneca Resources has tentative plans to construct and develop up to 5 Marcellus Shale well pads with 4 to 10 wells on each pad. Average clearing areas for one pad is around 6 acres. Drilling and fracking of these wells will follow at an unknown time (usually within 3 to 6 months).

Continue development and completion of the West Compressor site between Wildwood Fire Tower Road and the Shawmut Grade

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- The District applied for and received two grants to develop a wildlife viewing/canoe access area along SR555.
- 3 Benches will be constructed for our viewing areas by a Boy Scout for an eagle badge.

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 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 county 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*

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- 1 Bridge on Naval Hollow Road was replaced
- 3 Bridges on Bell Draft Road were replaced
- Stillhouse Road had 1795 tons of DSA spread by staff
- Brooks Run Road had 86 tons of R6 and 130 tons of DSA spread by staff
- Brooks Run Road had 2070 tons of DSA spread by staff
- West Hicks Road had 76 tons of R6 and 76 tons of R7 placed by staff
- Ridge Road had 2330 tons of DSA spread by staff
- Hicks Run Road had 120 loads of DSA spread by staff
- 4 Hiking trail bridges were constructed and installed on trails
- 4 Educational panels were developed and installed at trail heads
- 3 Educational kiosk were constructed and installed at trail heads
- Staff completed a snowmobile reroute due to oil and gas activity

RESEARCH

- Timber rattlesnakes – An assessment of the genetic variation and gene flow among timber rattlesnake populations throughout Pennsylvania.
- Timber rattlesnakes – Classify historic rattlesnake 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.