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## **Future of Pennsylvania's State Forests Outlined in Resource Management Plan**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn announced that the plan that will chart the course of Pennsylvania's future state forests has been finalized and is now available on the DCNR website.

"Management of our state forest system is an ever-changing undertaking, as there are constantly new challenges and best practices. Society continues to place increasing needs on state forest land such as recreational use and resource extraction, and the forest also is under environmental stressors including climate change and invasive plants and insects," Dunn said. "The careful and deliberate approach to management outlined in the plan will help protect and sustain the forest's ecological, social and economic benefits now and for the future."

Since 1955, DCNR's Bureau of Forestry has been developing statewide plans that guide state forest management and communicate principles and goals to the public. The plan is updated approximately every five years.

DCNR received more than 4,000 comments on the plan. About 330 people attended a series of 12 public meetings that provided an opportunity for citizens to have a say in how their public lands are managed.

"We've listened to the public to produce a flexible, dynamic guidance document that will continue to evolve in order to protect the long-term sustainability of our forests," Dunn said. "Enhanced communication and public input will continue to be a priority as we implement this plan."

Notable changes in the plan as a result of comments include:

- The introduction of Core Forest and Wild Character Focus Areas to better implement these values on state forest land (see pages 34 and 42 of the [plan](#));
- A section on water resource protection and enhancement, and;
- The development of a new [position statement on oil and gas development](#) on state forest and park lands.

Core Forest Focus Areas include the most extensive and exceptional core forests and unfragmented parcels in the state forest system. Wild Character Focus Areas include exceptional areas in the state forest where visitors can expect primitive-type recreational experiences in an undeveloped setting.

“This broad framework sets the stage for local plans in each of our 20 forest districts in the upcoming years to focus on local resources and values,” State Forester Dan Devlin said. “The district plans will include additional opportunities for public comment.”

Devlin noted some points of emphasis for future management outlined in the plan are:

- Adapting to impacts of a warmer climate;
- Prescribed fire as a management tool;
- Improved management of lakes, river islands, and cultural resources on state forests; and
- Communicating through social media and interpretive opportunities.

Pennsylvania’s more than 2.2-million acres of state forests comprise about 13 percent of the forested area in the commonwealth and are one of the largest expanses of public lands in the eastern United States.

DCNR manages the state forests for sound ecosystems, retaining their wild character, maintaining biological diversity, providing clean water and habitats for plants and animals, emphasizing opportunities for recreation, providing sustained yields of quality timber, and ensuring environmentally sound utilization of mineral resources.

To see a copy of the final State Forest Resource Management Plan visit the DCNR website at [www.dcnr.pa.gov](http://www.dcnr.pa.gov) and choose Forestry.

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