



News for Immediate Release

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Enhance Penn's Woods Initiative Results in Addition of 971 Acres of State Forest

Harrisburg – Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Ellen Ferretti today announced that the department is adding 971 acres to Pennsylvania's state forest system by adding seven separate tracts to Bald Eagle, Gallitzin, Lackawanna, Rothrock, Tiadaghton and Tuscarora state forests.

These projects are part of **Enhance Penn's Woods** – a two-year, more than \$200 million initiative launched by Governor Tom Corbett to repair and improve Pennsylvania's state parks and forests.

"Although different in size -- as small as 3-acres and as large as 500-acres -- each of these projects protects important habitat and increases access for visitors to several of our state forests," Ferretti said. "Land is our most precious critical infrastructure and these tracts will enhance our existing state forest lands."

The lands that are being acquired include:

Cramer Tract (Gallitzin State Forest, East Wheatfield Township, Indiana County): At 80 acres, this tract provides important access to Gallitzin's Rager Mountain division as well as the Charles F. Lewis Natural Area. Acquisition protects the parcel from future strip mining activities. The tract includes a portion of Findley Run, which is classified as a high-quality stream. The site is primarily a mixed-oak and northern hardwood forest, which has undergone some timbering activity in the past. The timbered areas will provide excellent early successional habitat for both game and non-game wildlife species. It was purchased for \$266,385.

Hale Tract (Rothrock State Forest, Harris and Ferguson townships, Centre County): This 282-acre tract is located along the Tussey Mountain ridge that faces State College. The property is part of the well recharge zone for the drinking water supply to State College and is part of both an Audobon Important Bird Area and a Pennsylvania Game Commission Important Mammal Area. The acquisition also provides enhanced opportunities for recreation corridors, particularly from the Musser Gap trailhead. The tract was purchased for \$565,000 with the help of ClearWater Conservancy.

Junk/Shade Mountain Tract (Tuscarora State Forest, Tuscarora Township, Juniata County): This 6-acre parcel of previously owned lumber company land was slated for recreational cabin development. Purchase by DCNR provides access to more than 300 acres of adjacent state forest along Shade Mountain that was

previously inaccessible. The property contains several vernal ponds, which are critical habitat for amphibians and other wildlife. It was purchased for \$51,500.

Polish National Church Tract (Lackawanna State Forest, Thornhurst Township, Lackawanna County and Buck Township, Luzerne County): At approximately 500 acres, this acquisition protects exceptional-value headwaters in the upper Lehigh River watershed and connects two previously disjointed tracts of state forest land. The tract contains a large scrub-shrub wetland and portions of Choke Creek, a tributary to the Leigh River. This new state forest land will provide increased opportunities for hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, bird-watching, and other outdoor pursuits. The purchase of this property was facilitated by The Conservation Fund as mitigation for a PPL right-of-way. It was purchased for \$1.8 million.

Ruhl and Rawitz Tracts (Bald Eagle State Forest, Buffalo Township, Union County): These two tracts total 100 acres and constitute a significant indenture into existing state forest land, with over two miles of common boundary line. The properties span both sides of Buffalo Mountain and includes portions of the Spruce Run drainage, which is the the water supply for Lewisburg. Acquisition of these parcels will greatly reduce boundary line maintenance and improve access for forest managemnet and recreation. They were purchased for \$356,000.

Spall/Myers Drilling Tract (Lackawanna State Forest, Bear Creek Township, Luzerne County): This 3-acre tract provides a key public access point to 5,000 acres of adjacent state forest land surrounding Crystal Lake. It was purchased for \$145,000.

Some of the funds for purchase of these properties came from mitigation payments for rights-of-way and sale of state forest property, which is intended for the acquisition of new state forest lands. Additional funding came from the Growing Greener program.

DCNR compensates local governments on an annual basis as payment-in-lieu of taxes for public lands. This is meant to replace taxes that would have been generated if these land holdings were in private ownership.

For information on any of Pennsylvania's 20 state forest districts, go to www.dcnr.state.pa.us, choose "Find a Forest." For more information on **Enhance Penn's Woods** choose the icon on the homepage.

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