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DCNR Announces Key Appointments to Forestry Districts, State Nursery Overseen by Its Bureau of Forestry

Harrisburg, PA - The Bureau of Forestry has appointed two new district foresters to oversee operations of state forest districts in central and western Pennsylvania, and named a new manager at its recently renamed nursery and wood shop in Centre County, State Forester Daniel Devlin announced today.

Scott Miller, formerly chief of the bureau's Silviculture Section based in Harrisburg, was named district forester for the Tuscarora State Forest District, encompassing Perry County and portions of Cumberland, Franklin, Huntingdon, Juniata and Mifflin counties.

Robert W. Wetzel Jr., former assistant district forester in Rothrock Forest District, headquartered in Huntingdon, Huntingdon County, was appointed district forester for Gallitzin State Forest District. His district includes Indiana, Cambria and Blair counties, and portions of Somerset and Bedford counties.

Finally, Annetta Ayers, former manager of the Pa. Game Commission's Howard Nursery in Centre County, was named manager of DCNR's Mira Lloyd Dock Resource Conservation Center. Also in Centre County, the center formerly known as Penn Nursery and Wood Shop was renamed earlier this month.

"All three managers bring a wealth of technical and administrative skills to their new positions after having served most admirably in their prior posts with both the bureau and game commission," said Devlin. "Their interpersonal skills will be a strong asset as they work with district employees, residents, and visitors to their state forest districts and nursery."

Heading two of 20 state forest districts across the state, Miller and Wetzel will oversee forest-growth management, personnel coordination, infrastructure maintenance, and fire prevention and suppression. They also will manage service foresters who provide support, direction and technical assistance to private forest landowners.

Dating back to 1908, the nursery headed by Ayers supplies seedlings for reforestation efforts in state forests and state parks across Pennsylvania. Over the years, nursery operations expanded to include state-of-the-art sign and picnic table construction that enhance public visits to more than 2.2 million acres of state forestland and 121 state parks.

Headquartered in Blain, Perry County, Tuscarora State Forest District bears the name of its landmark mountain and the Native American tribe that took up residence in that area in the early

1700s. Comprised of state forest tracts totaling almost 92,000 acres, the Tuscarora district offers a variety of recreational and economic activities.

“Since starting my career, I have always felt extremely lucky at each level to work every day and be a steward of the land and grasp the responsibility of that mission,” Miller said. “Now, to be given the opportunity of managing one of the most beautiful state forests and its talented staff, I’d say it’s a pretty special responsibility. And I am really looking forward to that opportunity.”

Miller, 40, replaces Gene Odatto, who retired after serving in that position since 2009.

Tuscarora’s new district forester began his career with the bureau in 1997, working as an intern with its Division of Forest Pest Management. Two years later he was hired as a seasonal forest technician, working in both in Bald Eagle and Susquehannock forest districts. In January of 2000, Miller was promoted to forester in the Michaux, and in 2003 he was named assistant district forester in the Forbes State Forest District. Most recently, Miller spent 11 years in the bureau’s Harrisburg headquarters central office in the Silviculture Section, the last four as its chief.

Miller holds an associate’s degree in forest technology from Penn State Mont Alto, and a bachelor’s degree in forest science from the Pennsylvania State University, University Park. He and his wife, Theresa, reside on their farm in Halifax, Dauphin County.

Named in honor of Demetrius Augustine Gallitzin, “Prince-Priest of the Alleghenies,” who in 1795 established a mission at Loretto in what is now Cambria County, Gallitzin State Forest district is composed of more than 24,370 acres in northern Somerset, Bedford Cambria and Indiana counties. Much of Gallitzin rests on the Allegheny Front and the Laurel Ridge.

“I am looking forward to working with the district’s incredibly talented staff,” Wetzel said. “Together with their help, I know we can make the Gallitzin State Forest an even better place for folks to visit.”

Most recently serving as assistant district forester in the Rothrock Forest District, Wetzel began his career with the Bureau of Forestry as a forest technician in the Susquehannock District in 1997. He also worked as forest technician in the Bald Eagle District, and as a forester in Rothrock. Before joining the bureau, Wetzel was self-employed as a logger and consulting forester.

Wetzel, 44, succeeds Terence Stemmler, who retired.

The new Gallitzin State Forest District manager holds an associate’s degree in forest technology from Penn State Mont Alto, and a bachelor’s degree in forest science from the Pennsylvania State University, University Park. Originally from Waynesboro, Franklin County, he resides with his wife, Heather, and young daughter, Amelia in Huntingdon.

A native of Apollo, Armstrong County, Ayers succeeds Tina Alban, who retired as manager of the Mira Lloyd Dock Resource Conservation Center in Spring Mills.

“I’m incredibly grateful for the opportunity to work with such a dedicated and talented group of people in an organization as diverse as DCNR,” Ayers said. “The nursery and wood shop has had a unique role in the shaping of Pennsylvania’s state forests and parks, and look forward to

continuing to expand the capacity and quality of education, conservation and restoration that we are able to provide.”

Looking to reside in the State College area with her husband, Ayers, 41, holds a bachelor's degree in forest science from the Pennsylvania State University.

She had headed the game commission nursery since 2011, and earlier worked as a Pa. Game Commission forester for 11 years. She also worked two years as a forester for the USDA Forest Service in Cumberland, Md., and was employed as a forester and technician in the private sector.

For more information on the resource conservation center, Tuscarora, Gallitzin and Pennsylvania's other 18 districts, visit www.dcnr.pa.gov (click "Forestry").

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