



State Forest Resource Management Plan

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Bureau of Forestry

State Forest Resource Management Plan

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RECREATION

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Introduction

The Recreation Section of the State Forest Resource Management Plan is the means by which the recreation policy, goals and objectives are translated into operating guidelines. The operating guidelines coordinate the management and development of recreation opportunities on state forest lands.

The Pennsylvania State Constitution states, in Section 27, "The people have a right to clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of the natural, scenic, historic and esthetic values of the environment. Pennsylvania's public natural resources are the common property of all the people, including generations yet to come. As trustee of these resources, the Commonwealth shall conserve and maintain them for the benefit of all the people." The Commonwealth's obligation to conserve and maintain these resources for all people is foundational for the Bureau of Forestry. Further, the Conservation and Natural Resource Act of 1995, P.L. 89, No.18 authorizes the establishment and provides for the use and control of state forest lands. This law states, in part, that one of the purposes for which the state forests was created is "... to furnish opportunities for healthful recreation to the public."

Because of the size of the land base, state forests provide a unique opportunity for dispersed low-density outdoor recreation that cannot be obtained from small forest areas or from private ownership. However, state forests are finite and cannot provide everything to everyone. Recreational opportunities on state forest land will be aimed at those forms of dispersed forest recreation that are not being provided by other land uses or ownerships and that are compatible with the forest ecosystem.

Outdoor recreational pursuits are continually changing. Our social structure, affluence, mobility, leisure time and a multitude of new recreation equipment influence these changes. As opposed to basic human needs for forest products, recreation deals more with attitudes and emotions. The department has in the past and will continue to be aware of attitudes toward recreation and will strive to provide a healthful outdoor recreation experience.

Today there are many forest users who have views and activities that sometimes conflict. Some people seek the peace and solitude that forests provide in order to promote mental and physical fitness. Others enjoy more physical activities to achieve the same outcome. There are those who prefer traditional forms of recreation such as sight-seeing, hiking, hunting, fishing, horse-back riding, cross-country skiing and others who find state forests ideal places to ride ATVs, snowmobiles, mountain bikes, hang gliders, and dog sleds.

Increasing recreational use is having a greater impact on other resources and the forest ecosystems. With the influx of more individuals and groups in pursuit of their recreational activities, it becomes increasingly important for the bureau to develop management strategies to provide a quality outdoor experience, minimize conflicts and maintain ecological processes.

The recreation section consists of a history of state forest recreation, an inventory of current recreational opportunities, a statement of policy, goals and objectives, operating guidelines that regulate the coordinated management and future development of recreation, indicators of progress towards goals, and a list of critical research needs.

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History

The first purchase of state forest land was in 1898. The original intent of state forest land was to acquire and protect watersheds following the devastating logging practices and resulting fires of the late 1800's and early 1900's. Shortly after the first state forest land was acquired for conservation it became apparent that these lands were ideal places for outdoor recreation.

In 1900 Governor William A. Stoner declared that "forest reservations" were to be parks and outing grounds for people forever. In 1904 the first rules for the use of state forest land included camping rules and references to picnicking. Although Mont Alto, Caledonia, Promised Land, George W. Childs, James Buchanan and Pine Grove Furnace State Forest Parks were in existence when Governor Stoner made his declaration 1900, the first concerted effort to establish formal recreation areas on State Forest land did not begin until 1920. This is when Snyder-Middleswarth, Voneida (Now known as Hairy Johns Picnic Area) and Leonard Harrison State Forest Parks were developed. These early parks were developed on state forest land and the Bureau of Forestry was responsible for their management.

However, the main emphasis for these new lands was on fire control and reforestation. The top priority for these new lands was to develop access. Eventually people began to use these roads and trails for other purposes. Forest reservations soon became places for people to enjoy their recreational pursuits.

Hunting and fishing were the favored outdoor sports during this time. Many hunters and fishermen became so attached to their favorite hunting grounds that they needed places to stay for longer periods of time. On March 27, 1913 the legislature passed an act to legalize the leasing of permanent camp sites on state forest land. Thirty leases were developed in this first year. The number of leased camps increased to 2088 by 1929 and jumped to 3180 by 1935. The number of leases grew to 4500 when the program stopped allowing new leases in 1970.

In 1927 a Division of Parks was established within the Department of Forest and Waters to satisfy the demand for new recreational opportunities.

On March 31, 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the Emergency Conservation Work Act. This was the legislation that created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The CCC was responsible for much of the infrastructure that is found on state forest land today. Many CCC projects resulted in improved access and were designed specifically to satisfy the public's recreational demands. Projects included the construction of roads, bridges, foot trails, horse trails, cabins and recreational impoundments. This program was de-authorized in 1942 in response to the U.S. involvement in World War II.

In 1949 the Division of Parks was elevated to the Bureau of State Parks within the Department of Forest and Waters. Five forestry and state parks regions were established headed by a regional forester. These were abolished in 1953 and The Bureau of State Parks was returned to division level within the Bureau of Forestry. By 1955 there were 45 state forest parks, 5 state historical parks, 4 commissioned parks and 45 state forest picnic areas on state forest land.

Governor Leader signed the Oil and Gas Lease Fund Act in 1955, which provided for the development of state parks. This is commonly referred to as Dr. Maurice Goddard's 25-mile rule. It was his vision to place a state park within 25 miles of every resident in the Commonwealth. There were 14 state parks developed as a result of this legislation between 1955 and 1962. Ten of these were located away from state forest land.

Management philosophies and objectives for parks were rapidly evolving. It became apparent that the management of parks was moving in a direction that was not always compatible with management philosophy for state forest land. Because of this, the Division of State Parks was

once again elevated to bureau status in 1962. Unlike the shifting of administrative responsibilities between state forests and parks in the past, this separation allowed them to evolve independently. The current structure of these two agencies is a result of this decision.

In 1970 Governor Raymond Shafer signed Act 275 creating the Department of Environmental Resources. This legislation placed the resource agencies and the environmental regulatory agencies into a single department. Natural resource concerns soon took a back seat to environmental regulatory priorities. As a result bureau programs, including recreation, began to suffer.

Although this action created difficult times for the bureau, there were a few major accomplishments. In 1978 the National Scenic Trails Act provided funding for trail relocation and construction. This led to the development of the state forest trail system and many cross-country ski trails.

The Pennsylvania Economic Revitalization Act 104 (PCC) OF April 10, 1984 was the largest building construction, maintenance and improvement effort since the CCC. The main focus of this program was to provide disadvantaged youth ages 18 to 25 with work experience, job training and education on major public work programs. Their projects included the construction, improvement and maintenance of many recreational facilities and trails.

The current era, sometimes characterized by conflicting uses on state forest land, began sometime around 1970. Modern technology and changing socio-economic conditions resulted in a population that had more leisure time to spend on recreational activities. New technology resulted in the development of off-road vehicles, and improvements and new conveniences were developed for traditional outdoor-related recreational equipment.

The snowmobile was the first off-road vehicle to find its way on to state forest land in large numbers. Snowmobiles were considered to be appropriate for state forest use. Soon after its appearance on state forest land, conflicts began to occur with other users. Traditional users were complained about noise and competition for the trails. Soon after the introduction of the snowmobile other users saw state forests as places to enjoy their recreational pursuits (e.g., all-terrain vehicle riders, mountain bikers, mushers, equestrians and hang gliders). These sports are still looking to the Bureau of Forestry to provide a place for them on state forest land.

In 1995, Governor Tom Ridge signed the Conservation and Natural Resource Act. This legislation split the Department of Environmental Resources and placed all natural resource agencies in the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. Once again the resource agencies were given cabinet level attention. This legislation restated the purpose for which state forest land was created. The language stated that state forest land is to "Furnish opportunities for healthful recreation to the public".

New recreational equipment and conveniences continue to be developed. More and more people are traveling longer distances to take advantage of the recreational opportunities that state forest land provides. Many of these visitors are unaware of their impact on forest ecosystems and their philosophies do not always agree with those of the traditional user. Some have complained that certain activities are obtrusive and do not belong on state forest land. Others are of the opinion that most uses can be accommodated but perhaps not on the same trails or areas. Some traditional users are fearful that their use may be overly restricted as the number of new users increase. There are some groups that have been actively maintaining trails for years on state forest land and are critical of others that use these "adopted" trails.

Opportunities for conflict are much greater today because of the variety of recreational activities available and the increase in the number of visitors using state forest facilities. The bureau is working to develop solutions to the problem. The recent hiring of forty-two state forest rangers is the first step in improving communications and safety for all state forest visitors. The ranger's role is to provide resources for public safety and for public contact.

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Recreation Inventory

The first step in the recreation planning effort is to inventory existing uses of State Forest land. The recreational use of State Forest land is quite varied. Some of the most common activities include scenic driving, hunting, camping, hiking and nature watching. Some of the less common uses include hang gliding, dogsledding, and kayaking. Some forests accommodate all these uses and some only a few. The following sections give an overview of the more common activities.

Non-motorized Recreation

Camping

The Bureau of Forestry manages camping in three distinct categories: primitive backpack camping, motorized camping and group camping. Primitive backpack campers are those who camp at undeveloped sites and for not more than one-night. These camping opportunities are normally located along trails, although virtually all State Forest acreage, with the exception of Natural Areas, is open to such use. The State Permits are not required for this type of camping unless the camper plans to spend more than one night at a campsite.

Motorized camping is done by the roadside, and as the name implies, it is done in close association with a motorized vehicle. The vehicle continues to be used for storage or transportation during the camping experience. This is unlike backpack camping where the camper carries all their gear for a day or more away from their vehicle. Motorized camping requires a permit from the District Forester and is obtained by contacting the local district office. As with primitive camping, additional rules can be found at

<http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/picnic.htm> and some districts may have additional requirements.



The third type of camping is group camping. It is defined as camping with ten or more people. Forest managers typically restrict these activities to sites where there will be little or no environmental impact. This type of activity requires a special activities agreement available from the forest district office serving that area.

Picnicking

Picnicking is permitted anywhere on state forest land. In addition, the Bureau of Forestry maintains 27 accessible picnic areas with pavilions, tables, parking areas, and restrooms.

Leased Campsite Users

This recreational group leases state forest land for their cabins. These cabins are primarily privately owned. A small parcel usually ¼-acre in size is leased for a renewable 10-year term. The sites were first leased mostly to hunting groups in the first half of the 1900's. The long-term lease allowed them to construct small cabins for recreational use on the site. This program was started in 1913 and continued through 1970. However, in most cases existing leases may be transferred to new owners, provided the new lessees are Pennsylvania residents. Today 4,006 campsite leases are administered in 16 state forests.

Hunting and Trapping



Hunting is a recreational activity, but in many cases it also plays a key role in sustainable forest management. Forests can only be sustainably managed if balanced populations of wildlife are maintained. This is particularly true for herbivores, such as deer. If left to multiply unchecked, deer will eat the entire next generation of understory plants in a given area. If generations of new seedlings are lost, the forest soon loses its ability to renew itself following disturbances. Likewise trapping can help

keep rodents and other wildlife in balance with their habitat. Thus hunters and trappers provide a valuable service to the public, while enjoying their sport.

The Bureau of Forestry is the Commonwealth's largest landowner. Nearly all of Bureau's 2.1 million acres is open to public hunting and trapping. There are over 5,100 miles of trails for foot travel open to allow hunters and trappers access to this large public landholding.

In addition, the Bureau of Forestry maintains 19-gated roads in 14 State Forests that are opened seasonally for disabled hunters. Maps and information on these areas can be obtained from district offices.



Fishing

State forest land has an abundance of streams, ponds and lakes that supply opportunities for cold-water and warm-water fishing. State forests have some of the most pristine waters in the Commonwealth and they support abundant fish life. The Department of Environmental Protection classifies 2,970 miles of waterways as high quality and 626 miles of waterways are classified as exceptional value. In addition the Fish and Boat Commission classifies 207 miles as wilderness trout streams. http://sites.state.pa.us/PA_Exec/Fish_Boat/mpag1.htm

Hiking

Hiking trails have been developed in 19 State Forests. Hiking trails may be divided into at least five categories: National Scenic, National Recreation Trails, Keystone Hiking Trail system, local district trails and interpretive trails. [Recreational Trails Database Totals](#) (Adobe PDF - 57 Kb)

National Scenic and National Recreation Trails are designated by the National Park Service and often travel across state boundaries. The Appalachian Trail, a National Scenic Trail, is partially located on state forest land. Portions of two National Recreation Trails, the North Country Trail and Laurel Highlands Trail are located on state forest land. There are 69 miles of National Scenic Trails and 51 miles of National Recreation Trails on state forest lands.



Another type of trail is the State Forest Hiking Trail. It is of regional importance and often travels through more than one State Forest. These trails are usually maintained by volunteer hiking groups with varying amounts of assistance from forest districts. Most of these trails were formerly part of the district trail network. Many sections are designated for hiking use

only. There are 18 Keystone Hiking Trails. About 14% of all trails on state forest land or 713 miles are Keystone Hiking Trails. These trails each have their own maps and/or guidebooks. A list of the organizations maintaining these trail guides is listed on the back of a Bureau of Forestry map entitled Hiking Trails in Pennsylvania. It should be noted that this map shows 16 additional trails of regional importance besides State Forest Hiking Trails. District public-use maps also show these trails.

Local district trails are by far the largest category of hiking trail. 86% of state forest trails or 5,100 miles are local district trails. They are of great local importance for accessing state forest land. These trails are generally open to a wide variety of user groups, not just hikers. Therefore, they are sometimes referred to as shared-use or multi-use trails. Bureau of Forestry personnel maintain these trails with considerable volunteer help on some segments. Many district trails appear on public-use maps and separate maps have been developed for some shared-use trails.

The last category of trail is the interpretive trail. Seven Districts maintain over 40 miles of interpretive trails designed to educate the public about the forest environment. Most sites have a trail-head parking lot and information signs maintained by Bureau of Forestry. Maps and/or guidebooks for each trail are available at district offices.

Mountain Biking

Eleven State Forests maintain 447 miles of designated trails for mountain bicycling with another 3,353 miles open for use. Public-use maps are available in each district showing these trails.

Many rail trails have been developed for mountain biking on abandoned railroad grades throughout the State, and many transect the State Forests. Many have been surfaced specifically for this use and the bicyclist does not have to worry about motorized vehicles on these trails. Some rail trails such as the 62-mile Pine Creek rail trail have developed trailheads and camping facilities. Most of these trails also have specific trail maps developed for users. Maps for trails in the State forest are available from the district offices.

Most district trails also permit mountain biking. Those not permitting mountain bikes will be posted as closed to that activity. Some districts have produced maps either specifically for mountain biking or for specific trail systems that are multi-use trails. The best source for other district trails open to mountain biking is the public use map available from District offices.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is a rapidly growing activity on state



forest land. Twelve State Forests maintain over 616 miles of trails designated for Horseback riding with a total of 3,728 trail miles that are available for use. In addition, 1.9 million acres of state forest land is available for cross-country riding. Only Natural Areas, Keystone Hiking Trails and certain other areas posted closed are off limits to equestrians.

Several districts have developed equestrian trails specifically designed for horses. Although these trails were designed for horses, other trail users are welcome. These horse or equestrian trails have large trailhead parking areas and maps are available at district offices.

Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating/Rafting

Pennsylvania is second only to Alaska in the number of miles of streams in one state. There is also an abundance of lakes and ponds. This means that there are many great opportunities for water activities in the Keystone State. These activities can be divided into at least three categories: Canoeing/kayaking, boating and rafting.

Canoeing on Pennsylvania's streams has a long history dating back to the Native Americans. European settlers used the streams for transportation and most of our first towns started on their banks. Today, many of Pennsylvania's stream banks have been cleared and developed. However,



many miles of Pennsylvania's state forest streams are still relatively wild and remote. There are 5,132 miles of rivers and streams on state forest land. Potentially, many of these waters are navigable and open to canoeing and kayaking. Six Forest Districts have developed water trails on waters that transect state forest. The water trails are more fully described in the individual forest supplements. This link delivers real-time information on stream flow that can aid in

determining whether or not a stream or river may be navigable for you type of vessel.

<http://waterdata.usgs.gov/pa/nwis/rt>

The Bureau of Forestry also has management responsibilities of all unwarranted and unpatented rivers islands in the State. These islands offer some excellent recreational opportunities. Today, the Bureau partners with several volunteer groups that design, develop and maintain river islands trails throughout the Commonwealth. These volunteers also serve as trail stewards for maintenance, monitoring resource impacts and tracking public use. Many of these river island groups produce maps and brochures describing the trail. The trail maps will show access sites and river islands designated for day use and primitive camping.

Boating typically occurs on the lakes and ponds, although some of the larger rivers on state forest land are good for boating too. The Bureau of Forestry has several lakes and ponds larger than 5 acres that can be used for boating along with many smaller ponds. The Bureau of Forestry has district public-use maps that show state forest lakes, access roads and parking areas. See boating guidelines for the permits required.

Finally, rafting occurs mostly on the white water stretches of state forest streams. The most notable of which is the Pine Creek through the Pennsylvania Grand canyon. Private companies provide the rafts. The Bureau of Forestry has developed launch sites, parking and camping facilities along the Pine Creek.

Cross-Country Skiing

The Bureau of Forestry maintains 560 miles of cross-country ski trails in 15 districts. Trail maps are available from district offices. Potentially all 3671 miles of state forest trails are open to this use. Each district has a public use map showing roads and trails. The Bureau of Forestry also has a toll-free number listing snow conditions across the state and a website:

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/snowmobile/trailconditions. It is up-dated twice a week during the winter months by each district.

Birding/ Nature Observation

Bird watching and nature observation are uses that occur through out the 2.1 million acres of state forest land. The best locations for these activities depend on the habitat requirements of the species involved. The Audubon Society has designated certain areas of state forest land with unique or unusual bird species as Important Bird Areas. These parts of the state forest have particularly large and unique habitats for some unusual bird species. Most state forest lands have

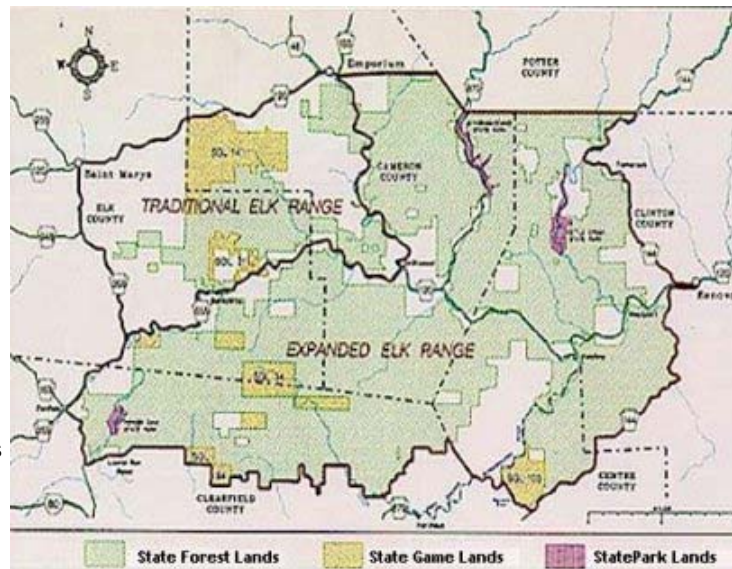
diverse habitats and support great numbers of birds. More information on important bird areas can be found at www.audubon.org/bird/iba



State forest land with its many roads and trails and generally quiet environment is ideal for nature observation. A public use map of the roads and trails is available from each district to aid nature observers. Natural Areas and Wild Areas are managed with this objective in mind, but the entire state forest system is maintained in a largely natural system. Nature photographers and artists also find an abundance of natural settings on state forest land.

Elk Viewing

Elk were extirpated from the Commonwealth in 1867. In 1913 elk were reintroduced into Pennsylvania. Since 1913 through cooperation with the PA Game Commission, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation and many others, the Bureau of Forestry has taken an active role in the restoration of a healthy elk herd on State Forest land in north central Pennsylvania. The herd has grown rapidly in recent years to an estimated 700 animals in 2002. The elk range covers 865,000 acres of land in northcentral Pennsylvania. The Elk, Moshannon and Sprout Districts are all actively involved in the



restoration project. Some of the activities include habitat enhancement by creating food plots, Elk relocation into new areas and land acquisition for additional habitat. Most elk viewing is done at viewing areas or from a vehicle along public roads. In cooperation with others, elk viewing vistas and parking areas are maintained for this use. Also, in cooperation with many partners, food plots are being intensively maintained in support of elk viewing. The most popular elk-viewing site at Winslow Hill attracts 70,000 visitors per year to the region. There is an Elk Expo held in late September that attracts elk viewers to St. Mary's and state forest lands.

Elk viewing can be enjoyed through out the elk range in northcentral Pennsylvania. A scenic Elk Highway Scenic Corridor has been developed in cooperation with the Penn DOT and others.

Motorized Recreation

Scenic Driving/Pleasure Driving

This is the largest recreational use of state forest lands. Most recreational users participate in this activity coming to and from the state forest, but for many this is the sole purpose of their visit to state forest land. The beauty of the forest, the solitude, tumbling mountain streams, scenic vistas, and ever changing colors, attract great numbers of visitors.

The Bureau of Forestry maintains many miles of roads and beautiful vistas open to drivers. The Bureau of Forestry produces public use maps to help drivers find there way through the backwoods. Some districts have developed written automobile tour routes and guide books as an

aid to pleasure driving. The Bureau of Forestry also has a toll free number in the autumn describing up-to-date foliage colors across the state for scenic drivers.

Snowmobiling

41,101 snowmobiles were registered with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources in 2000. More than 1,358 miles of snowmobile roads and trails are maintained in 14 districts across the state. Snowmobile riding on state forest land is restricted to this system. Many miles of these roads and trails are groomed when snow conditions permit. The Bureau of Forestry has a toll-free number listing snow conditions across the state and a website:

www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/snowmobile/trailconditions. It is up-dated twice a week by each district during the winter months.

All Terrain Vehicle Riding

All terrain vehicle ownership is at an all time high in the Commonwealth and growing at an enormous rate. Over 101,985 ATV's are registered with the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. In one year the number of ATV's has more than doubled making the growth in the last several years almost exponential. Beginning in the 1970's the Bureau of Forestry opened limited trails to ATV use in Districts 12 & 15. Today the ATV trail system has grown to over 214 miles of trails in 10 different State Forests. Subsequently the damage realized from ATV use has continued to increase, most of which is from illegal use. It is the policy of DCNR to not significantly increase the current ATV trail system on existing state forest land. DCNR is also targeting development of ATV activities to private, municipal, and county lands where the focus can be solely on motorized recreation. The development of trails on private, municipal, and county lands assisted by a DCNR grant program.



The Bureau of Forestry maintains maps of the current trail system and are available from the district office along with specific rules regarding the use of that trail. Additional information on ATV trails can be found at the Bureau of Forestry ATV website www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/atv.

Misc. Recreation

State forest land is host to an almost endless list of other recreational uses. These include astronomy, dog sledding, geo-caching, gold panning, jogging, hang gliding, ice-skating, motorcycle riding, orienteering, photography, rock climbing, rappelling, sleigh riding, sledding, snowboarding, snowshoeing, spelunking, swimming, snorkeling and tubing. All these are allowed on state forest land. Many of these sports are not actively managed, but nonetheless they are enjoyed in the wild and peaceful setting of state forest land.

Adjoining State Parks

In addition to these recreational activities on state forest land, an inventory of recreation would not be complete without mentioning the former state forest lands that are now state parks and environmental education centers. Fifty one state parks and education centers are internal to or border state forest land, many with overnight facilities. Their proximity to state forest lands and many human amenities make them excellent starting points for recreational activities on state forest lands.

Policy Statement

The Bureau of Forestry will provide opportunities for dispersed low-density outdoor recreation that is compatible with maintaining the integrity of the forest ecosystem.

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Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To provide opportunities for healthful, low-density recreational opportunities that are compatible with maintaining the integrity of forest ecosystems.

Objectives:

- Where environmentally appropriate, provide recreational opportunities to state forest visitors so that the aesthetic, biological and ecological features of the forest can be viewed and enjoyed.
- Maintain road and trail systems and other facilities for state forest visitors .
- Maintain a Keystone Hiking trail system.
- Identify and develop shared-use trail systems that minimize conflicts between user groups.
- Provide recreational sport hunting, fishing and fur-taking opportunities, as well as non-consumptive uses to the public so that wild fauna and flora can be utilized and enjoyed.
- Assess environmental impact of existing and potential recreational uses of State Forest Land
- Develop and implement measures to minimize invasive species introductions in the course of recreational activities
- Maintain our present ATV trail system while developing an environmentally sensitive strategy to address the concerns of all-terrain vehicle (ATV) users.
- Develop publications and other user information that will identify and promote recreational trails and facilities currently available for all users.
- Continue the existing leased forest campsite program.
- Consider the recreational needs of individuals with a disability and facilitate, when possible, their access to facilities and activities.
- Where environmentally appropriate, consider new or expanding recreational pursuits and integrate and coordinate them with existing forest uses.
- Investigate the development of a recreational management zoning system.

Goal 2: To provide information and assistance to the public while ensuring public safety.

Objectives:

- Inform the public about recreational opportunities on state forest lands.
- Inform the public about the laws, rules, and regulations governing recreational activities on state forest land.
- Inform the public about how to minimize environmental impacts due to recreational activities.
- Seek to expand the State Forest Ranger Program to monitor and protect the forest resource and provide for the safety of state forest visitors.
- Provide additional interpretive and educational opportunities to state forest visitors.
- Provide user-friendly and consistent informational material to state forest visitors.

Goal 3: To develop and implement consistent and coordinated recreation strategies throughout the state forest system.

Objectives:

- Cooperate with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and the Pennsylvania Fish & Boat Commission in the management of wild fauna to provide quality recreational opportunities.
- Coordinate with the Bureau of State Parks, other government agencies and organizations in the development and management of joint recreational opportunities and facilities.
- Develop and maintain regional consistency for applying operational guidelines.
- Coordinate with volunteer trail clubs on the routes they maintain when planning significant trail changes.

Goal 4: To cooperate with regional and state interests in the promotion of low density, ecologically sound tourism opportunities associated with state forest lands.

Objectives:

- Work with tourist promotion agencies and local communities in fostering tourism opportunities that are compatible with the bureau's policies, goals, objectives and resources.
- Work with heritage regions/parks and others in fostering tourism opportunities and forest ecosystem education.
- Maintain quality outdoor experiences and minimize adverse impacts to the environment while pursuing the potential for additional tourism promotion.

Goal 5: To promote and effectively use volunteers to increase the Bureau of Forestry's recreational programming, planning and development.

Objectives:

- Promote the use of conservation volunteers in the development and maintenance of recreational opportunities and facilities on state forest lands.

- Educate volunteers on potential adverse impacts of recreational activities and enlist their help in minimizing those impacts.
- Educate volunteers in the identification of invasive species and implement a system to record, prioritize and act on reports of invasions.
- Evaluate opportunities to increase bureau efforts, employee complement, and equipment, for recreation planning and development.

Goal 6: To develop baseline recreational user data for state forest land.

Objectives:

- Develop efficient and appropriate data collection methods and systems that will adequately measure recreational use.
- Conduct district pilot projects to test and adjust these data collection systems.
- Conduct and maintain a comprehensive inventory of recreational facilities and opportunities.
- Monitor and evaluate recreational pursuits on state forest land

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Guidelines and Actions

The Bureau of Forestry has numerous guidelines to direct and coordinate the development of recreational opportunities on state forest land. These guidelines aim to conserve all the values of the forest while allowing recreational useage. They are summarized below and categorized by recreational user groups.

Within the framework of these guidelines we have identified a list of actions necessary to meet the goals and objective listed above. Each forest district lists a more detailed set of actions that will contribute to meeting overall statewide objectives.

Non-motorized Recreation

Camping

Guidelines

The Bureau of Forestry manages camping in three distinct categories. Primitive backpack camping, motorized camping and group camping.

Primitive backpack campers are those who camp at undeveloped facilities. Campers who arrive at their site by boat may also be included in this classification. Permits are not required for primitive camping unless the camper plans to spend more than one night at a campsite or is camping with more than 10 people. One exception, the Weiser State Forest requires permits for all primitive camping. State Forest Rules and Regulations (17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21) list rules regarding campfires, sanitation, littering, closure, parking, and other regulations pertaining to camping. The 1999 paper entitled "Guidelines for Camping on State Forest Lands" further defines permissible camping areas and activities

Motorized camping requires a permit from the District Forester. As with primitive camping the rules can be found in the State Forest Rules and Regulations. Most motorized camping is done at sites chosen by the camper along state forest roads. Some motorized camping is done at specific sites identified by the District Forester specifically for camping. These are termed designated sites. Guidelines for determining the location of campsites are listed in the 1999 paper entitled "Guidelines for Camping on State Forest Lands".

The third type of camping, group camping, is defined by the Bureau of Forestry as more than 10 people at the same site. This requires a Letter of Authorization or in some cases a Special Activities Agreement issued through the District Forester. Guidelines for these permits are further detailed in the 2000 Bureau of Forestry booklet entitled "Policy and General Guidelines for Special Activities Agreements and Letters of Authorization."

Actions

- Produce a standardized camping pamphlet based on Guidelines for Camping on State Forest Lands and State Forest Rules and Regulations. (Goal 2)
- Through regional District meetings maintain consistency concerning camping policies between adjoining Districts. (Goal 3)

- Create a database to monitor motorized camping use. District data should be annually summarized statewide. (Goal 6)
- Examine survey methods and develop a procedure for sampling primitive camping use (Goal 6)

Picnicking

Guidelines

Picnicking may be done anywhere on state forest land subject to State Forest Rules and Regulations (17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21). However, designated state forest picnic areas are governed by a separate law entitled Rules and Regulations for State Forest Picnic Areas (17.Pa. Code, Chapter 23).

State forest picnic areas should be regularly inspected and maintained. Special care must be exercised to prevent health or safety hazards. The District Forester is responsible to see that inspections and maintenance are completed.

An aesthetic buffer will be maintained around designated state forest picnic areas. This buffer will be managed in accordance with the guidelines established in the Silviculture section of this plan.

Picnic areas and their associated facilities should be accessible to, and useable by individuals with a disability.

Actions

- Develop an inventory of picnic area facilities with type of building (i.e. pavilion, latrine, etc.) dimensions of buildings, type of construction and general condition of the building. Create a statewide database to track this information and prepare a report by building types and condition. This information would be useful in planning the number of units needing replacement statewide and within a district (Goal 1 & 5)
- Develop a standardized sampling method for use by Districts to monitor picnic area usage and a database with statewide summary reports. (Goal 6)

Leased Campsite Users

Guidelines

Leased forest campsites, as authorized by the legislature, are limited to Pennsylvania residents. The intent for their use is health and recreation. Their use as a permanent residence or domicile is prohibited. On April 30, 1970, state forest land was closed to additional leased forest campsites. (Leased Forest Campsite Manual) With the advance written approval of the department, a lease may be transferred because of sale of the improvements.

Existing Forest Camp leases will be permitted to remain in Wild Areas and Natural Areas. If a cabin on a Forest Camp Lease is destroyed by fire, storm, flood or other natural causes the lease will be relocated to a site outside of the Wild Area or terminated according to the wishes of the lessee.

The lessee may terminate the lease at any time. The department may terminate the lease on six months notice if the site is required for a higher public use, or on three months notice for justifiable cause.

Management of the forest surrounding a leased forest campsite will be to preserve and enhance the aesthetic value. A 150-foot uneven-age management buffer will be maintained around the existing main campsite building. Around group camp leases a 660-foot uneven-age management buffer will be maintained as described in the Silviculture section of this plan.

Actions

- Combine all memos and update existing Leased Campsite Manual for distribution to district lease administrators. (Goal 1,2 & 5)
- Encourage districts with more than 100 campsites to conduct at least an annual public meeting with campsite lease holders to address concerns and communicate Bureau of Forestry activities affecting them. (Goal 2 & 3)

Hunting

Guidelines

Hunting and trapping is permitted on state forest land, unless otherwise posted, in accordance with the current State Forest Rules and Regulations(17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21) and the laws, rules, and regulations of the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

The fauna section of this plan details specific guidelines for maintaining and creating habitats for specific game species. The silviculture section likewise discusses habitat goals for wildlife.

Certain designated areas are managed according to a 10/98 paper entitled "Guidelines for Pilot Program Allowing Persons with Disabilities to Use Off-road Motor Vehicles on Designated Areas of State Forest Land." An application must be completed and approval must be obtained from the District Forester prior to using these areas. A list of sites available is contained in the paper entitled, "A complete listing of Designated Areas on State Forest Land for ATV use by Disabled Persons and Special Conditions."(10/99)

In addition to these areas the Bureau of Forestry has a number of disabled accessible hunting trails. No application or permit is necessary to use these trails from the Bureau of Forestry, however a letter of approval is required from the Game Commission. This letter documents the individuals status as a person with a disability.

Actions

- Maintain and post a list of roads open just for hunting season in each District. The list should include specific dates of when the road will be opened and closed. (Goal 2)
- Encourage districts to post an explanation of deer fencing along the road side of fences and to invite hunters into the fence to remove deer. (Goal 2)
- Develop a standardized sampling method for use by districts to monitor hunting useage and a database for storing and creating statewide summary reports. (Goal 6)
- Continue to work with the Pa Game Commission and sportsmen's clubs to improve deer and other game management

Fishing

Guidelines

Fishing is permitted on state forest land, unless otherwise posted, in accordance with the current State Forest Rules and (Regulations17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21) and the laws, rules, and regulations of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission.

Bureau of Forestry streamside buffering policies and road construction and maintenance policies outlined in the Bureau "Timber Management Manual" all contribute to healthy stream environments.

Actions

- Continue water quality and stream improvement projects in cooperation with the Fish and Boat Commission (such as Dirt and Gravel road efforts, Stream liming, habitat improvement) (Goal 1)

Hiking

Guidelines

National Scenic and National Recreation Trails are managed according to trail agreements established between the Bureau of Forestry and the organizations responsible for maintaining them. There is an aesthetic no timber cutting buffer along these trails as outlined in the silviculture section of the State Forest Resource Plan.

A list of the 18 State Forest Hiking Trails is maintained by the Recreation Section of the Bureau of Forestry and is entitled "National and State Forest Hiking Trails"(10/02). These trails have been maintained and promoted by the Bureau, hiking trail clubs and other trail organizations specifically for hiking. There is an aesthetic buffer zone on each side of these trails. State Forest Hiking Trails are marked as described in the "Guidelines for Marking Trails on State Forest Lands" (5/00). The only exception to this is the blue marked Tuscarora Trail.

District trails are marked and maintained according to standards established by the districts. . The marking of District trails is more fully described in the "Guidelines for Marking Trails on State Forest Lands" (5/00).

Interpretive trails are marked and maintained according to standards established by the districts. They are intended to provide the public with natural resource, historical and forest management practice information. All of these have an interpretive trail brochure or interpretive signs on the trail.

Trails have been developed for accessibility of persons with disabilities according to Americans with Disabilities Act standards and ADA standards for Recreational Facilities.

Actions (for all non-motorized trails unless noted otherwise)

- Continue to produce and improve public use maps and specific trail maps (Goal 3).
- Improve bridges and trail surfaces (Goal 1). · Improve marking, blazing and signing (Goal 1,3).
- Evaluate trailhead facilities and improve where appropriate (adequate parking, attractive information sign boards, restroom facilities). (Goal 1,3).
- Promote, advertise, educate and encourage trail volunteers, both individuals and clubs. (Goal 5).
- Maintain the current trail system. (Goal 1).
- Develop a standardized sampling method for use by Districts to monitor useage and a database for storing and statewide summary reports. (Goal 6)

Mountain Biking

Guidelines

Mountain bikes and other non-motorized mechanized equipment are permitted on most local State Forest trails. These trails are maintained by the local forest district and forest conservation volunteers. Districts determine construction standards. Trails developed specifically for mountain biking will be marked with the white international mountain bike symbol on a brown diamond according to the 5/00 "Guidelines for Marking Trails on State Forest Lands. Most local State Forest trails are open to mountain biking. Only Natural Areas, some portions of Keystone Hiking Trails and certain other areas posted closed are off limits.

Actions

- See the non-motorized trail action list covered in the hiking section above.

Horseback Riding

Guidelines

Some shared-use trails have been designed and developed by the forest districts for horse riding. These trails are maintained and promoted by the Bureau, equestrian clubs and other trail organizations. Horse riding is not restricted to designated equestrian trails. Most local State Forest trails are open to horse riding. Only Natural Areas, some portions of Keystone Hiking Trails and certain other areas posted closed are off limits.

Actions

- See the non-motorized trail action list covered in the hiking section above.

Canoeing/Kayaking/Boating/Rafting

Guidelines

Canoeing, kayaking, boating and rafting in Pennsylvania are permitted on state forest land, unless otherwise posted, in accordance with the current State Forest Rules and Regulations and the laws, rules, and regulations of the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission. State Forest Rules and Regulations(17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21) subsections 21.11.Use, 21.12.Mooring and launching, and 21.13 Motorized boats specifically regulate this activity on state forest land. In brief these regulations permit boating on all state forest waters unless posted closed. A DCNR Boat Launching permit is required for launching. Launching is also permissible with a Fish and Boat Commission registration. Motorized boats may only be powered by electric motors. Also, if

camping overnight along a stream from a boat, please see the guidelines in the camping section above.

Some particularly scenic waterways have been designated as water trails. Districts determine maintenance and construction standards for water trails.

Actions

- See the non-motorized trail action list covered in the hiking section above.
- Conduct risk assessment and take measures to reduce risk of invasive species introductions due to boating (see goal 1)

X-Country Skiing

Guidelines

Some trails have been designed and developed by the forest districts for cross-country skiing. Although cross-country skiing is not restricted to designated cross-country ski trails, state forest trails present varying degrees of difficulty. They are maintained by the local forest district and forest conservation volunteers. Construction standards are determined by districts and marking is standardized in the paper entitled "Guidelines for marking trails on state forest lands" (5/00) .

Actions

- See the non-motorized trail action list covered in the hiking section above.

Birding/ Nature Observation

Guidelines

Other sections, such as the Fauna and the Silviculture section of this plan, contain detailed lists of species and more fully describe what is being done to maintain and improve habitats. Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory, Forest Project Reviews, Timber Sale Reservation Guidelines, Natural Areas, and Stream and Vernal Pond Buffer Guidelines are just a few of the many tools used to improve bird watching and nature observation on state forest lands.

Actions

- See the non-motorized trail action list covered in the hiking section above.

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Motorized Recreation

Scenic Driving/Pleasure Driving

Guidelines

Since the 1950's, Recreational surveys have shown pleasure driving to be the number one recreational use on state forest land. For the majority of the public, the forest they know is the forest they see from the road. Management of the roadside views is important in order to maintain or enhance the driving experience as well as the publics' perception of state forest lands.

Vistas should be established to provide views into the forest or through it to any unusual or attractive feature of the landscape. Vistas are important and those now in existence should be maintained and new ones created at advantageous places.

Vistas can create safety hazards for motorists as well as an easy location to dump garbage. When designing and improving vistas, careful consideration must be given to the creation of barriers and parking areas to help alleviate these problems. Where there is a large area to be viewed, parking should be provided along with a sign or signs pointing out important landmarks, counties, distances, etc. Signs are necessary if the vista is to be fully appreciated by those who are not familiar with the local area. The naming of vistas is done by the districts with approval of the State Forester.

Viewscapes are another important consideration when managing scenic driving. Viewscapes are the scenic portions of the landscape that can be seen primarily from a transportation corridor. Public perception should be carefully considered when implementing forest management activities in a heavily visited viewscape.

The recreational value of the forest can also be increased by pointing out and explaining interesting features such as unusual forest types or species, geologic formations, or historic features such as abandoned towns, charcoal hearths, logging railroads, old mill sites, etc. These points of interest may include any features of the forest that may be of some general interest to the public.

Actions

- Consider public perception carefully when working in heavily visited viewscales (Goal 1,4).
- Consider the development of district auto tour guides in areas that have numerous points of interest (Goal 2).

Elk Viewing

Guidelines

The elk range and viewing opportunities are being developed with cooperation of a large number of agencies and organizations including but not limited to the Bureau of State Parks, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, PennDOT, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the National Wild Turkey Federation, and the North Central PA Regional Planning and Development Commission. The state agencies have contracted with Fermata, Inc., a consulting firm, to make management recommendations for development of the region. Development of the region should be in cooperation with the other agencies involved and follow the directions outlined in the 2001 Fermata Report. Current guidelines related to the Bureau of Forestry include developing elk viewing parking areas, developing food plots, patrolling public highways to assist visitors, promote safety, and reduce resident/visitor conflicts, continue to purchase key habitats in the range, and to promote other nature viewing opportunities in the area along with elk viewing. A brochure for visitors has been produced in 2002 entitled "Wildlife Watching in Pennsylvania's Elk Country"

Actions

- Develop state forest lands only to the degree that it is consistent with the concept of low density dispersed recreation and sound ecosystem management.(Goal 1)
- Continue to coordinate with other agencies and organizations involved in the development of the elk range.(Goal 4)
- Continue to support funding and development of food plots.(Goal 2)
- Continue to support development and signing of elk and wildlife viewing areas.(Goal 2)
- Continue to acquire important habitats in the elk range as funding permits.(Goal 1)

Snowmobiling

Guidelines

These trail systems are a combination of connected shared-use trails and public-use roads open for snowmobile use. Snowmobiles are restricted to trails designated for their use. They are maintained by snowmobile clubs, local forest districts and forest conservation volunteers. Trail construction standards are determined by local districts. Snowmobile trails are marked as described in the "Guidelines for marking trails on state forest lands" (5/00).

The use of snowmobiles is regulated by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (75. Pa. Code, Chapter 77). It is further regulated by State Forest Rules and Regulations (17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21) subsection 21.22 Snowmobiles. Briefly, State Forest Rules and Regulations only permit snowmobile operation on designated trails and designated areas of state forest land. State forest land is only open to snowmobiling following the last day of antlerless deer season to April 1. A valid Pennsylvania registration (or reciprocal state registration) is required.

Actions (for both ATV & Snowmobile Motorized Trails)

- Maintain appropriate signage on all motorized trails (Goal 1)
- Purchase additional specialized equipment for trail development and maintenance (Goal 5)

- Continue to produce specific trail maps (Goal 3) - Maintain water crossings and trail surfaces (Goal 1)
- Improve trailhead facilities (adequate parking, attractive information sign boards, restroom facilities) (Goal 1,3)
- Promote, advertise, and encourage volunteer participation from motorized recreation clubs (Goal 5)
- Develop a standardized sampling method for use by Districts to monitor trail and trailhead useage and a database for storing and statewide summary reports. (Goal 6)

All Terrain Vehicle Riding

Guidelines

ATV use is regulated on state forest land by State Forest Rules and Regulations subsections 21.23a All-terrain vehicles, 21.24 Spark Arresters, and 21.25 Parking. ATV use is further regulated by the Snowmobile and ATV Law (Chapter 77 of the Vehicle Code, Title 75).



Riding on state forest land is restricted to designated areas only. These trails are divided into summer and winter use trails to reduce the impact of vehicle use on soils, trails, and streams. Summer Trails are open from Memorial Day weekend to September 24. Four trail systems are also open in the winter from the day after antlerless deer season until April 1.

ATV trail marking has been standardized as a black ATV on a green diamond background. Trail construction standards are set locally the District Forester.

Actions

- Maintain the current system.
- Assess the environmental impact of existing trails, monitor to ensure that use is environmentally sound and take appropriate action where environmental damage is observed (Goal 1).
- Take measures to limit introduction of invasive species along ATV trails.
- Assess potential impacts to wildlife habitat, movement, and reproductive ecology as a result of trail use.
- See the motorized trail action list covered in the snowmobile section above.

Miscellaneous Recreational Activities

Guidelines

Many miscellaneous activities occur on state forest land. These include astronomy, dog sledding, geocaching, gold panning, jogging, hang gliding, ice-skating, orienteering, photography, rock climbing, rappelling, sleigh riding, sledding, snowboarding, snowshoeing, spelunking, swimming, snorkeling and tubing. All of these activities are permitted unless they are in conflict with State Forest Rules and Regulations (17. Pa. Code, Chapter 21).

Others are regulated directly. Motorcycle riding is detailed in subsection 21.23 Trail bikes and other off-road vehicles and subsection 21.24 Spark Arrestors. Gold panning is regulated by a 1996 policy administered by the Minerals Section. Hang gliding sites are developed by district standards in cooperation with gliding clubs and they are restricted to use by fully trained pilots. Geocaching is another new activity and the Bureau of Forestry, Recreation Section maintains a policy dealing primarily on the placement and maintenance of caches.

Actions

- Monitor new recreational uses of state forest lands and evaluate their impact on the environment to develop policies that protect the environment and all state forest users.

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Monitoring

- Assess the degree to which trails are facilitating invasive species introductions.

- Conduct a risk analysis regarding accidental introduction of invasive plant or animal species through recreational boating and take action as appropriate to reduce risk.
- Assess impact of trails on wildlife habitat, movement and reproductive ecology.
- Create a monitoring and early-response system (using volunteers where feasible) for new invasive species introductions in high-use areas.
- User Days (from district specific inventories & surveys).
- Trail/Area closures and opening relating to degradation (reporting form needs development).
- Informational material developed and produced.
- Public satisfaction (surveys, number of complaints, trail logs, public meeting input).
- Number of Incidents/Warnings/Citations (within district).
- Tourist promotion material developed.
- Fiscal allocations to recreation cost functions (ATV, snowmobiles, Key 93, Growing Greener, etc.).
- Personnel time working on recreation (AMIS Reports).
- Number of Volunteer Hours.
- Number of Forest Rangers.
- Number of ADA compliant facilities.

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Critical Research Needs

Recreational use surveys of state forest land.

Accurate information regarding the level of recreation use is necessary for a variety of reasons, including forest planning, budget allocation and measuring user satisfaction. Current methods utilized by the Bureau of Forestry of estimating recreation use are inadequate. In response to these needs the Bureau of Forestry needs to implement a process to measure recreation visitation as a part of its annual inventory and monitoring efforts. The data collected will allow the Bureau to better understand its customers and assess the success of the Bureau's recreation management programs.

A comprehensive assessment of the present and projected future environmental impacts associated with recreational use of State Forest Land is also necessary. Decisions regarding potential expansion of recreational activities must be made with sufficient information in hand to adequately address the potential for environmental damage.

Explore the feasibility of requiring weed-free (horse) feed to limit invasive species introductions.

Criteria & Indicators

Environmental

- Extent of area by forest community type in protected area categories.
- Extent of areas by forest community type in protected areas (natural / wild areas, plant sanctuaries) defined by size/age class or successional stage.
- Percent of water bodies in forest areas (e.g. stream miles, lake acreage) with significant impairment.

Economic

- Level of expenditure on research and development.

Social

- Acreage of state forest lands.
- Number of miles of roads open/closed to public access.
- Mechanisms in-place to provide opportunities for public input in decision-making related to state forest management.
- Central depository for data collection, monitoring efforts and research are in place.
- Level of expenditure on research, information and education monitored.
- User Days (from district specific inventories & surveys).
- Trail/Area closures and opening relating to degradation (reporting form needs development).
- Public satisfaction (surveys, number of complaints, trail logs, public meeting input).
- Number of Incidents/Warnings/Citations (within district).
- Number of Volunteer Hours.

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