

GALLITZIN STATE FOREST DISTRICT

2020 ACTIVITY PLAN

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.

One of the policies in the bureau's strategic plan (Penn's Woods: Sustaining Our Forests) includes, "Public participation will be an integral part of the management of state forest lands." The purpose of this Activity Plan is to communicate to the public about upcoming management activities, projects, and events that will be conducted to implement the SFRMP on Gallitzin State Forest. This document will be revised at the start and middle of each calendar year to provide sufficient time for public review, questions, and feedback. The bureau is committed to considering the views and perspectives of the public and stakeholders and strives to accommodate public interests in planning management activities and decision making. We encourage comments or questions regarding planned or proposed activities be directed to the state forest district conducting the activity.

For questions, comments, or more information about this plan, please contact:

Robert W. Wetzel, Jr., District Forester
Gallitzin State Forest
155 Hillcrest Drive
Ebensburg, PA 15931
814-472-1862
ra-fd06@pa.gov

RECREATION

Babcock Division

- **Bog Path Trail** – General trail maintenance including repair and/or replacing foot bridges. Replace trail sign at intersection(s) of Boulder Trail. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **John P. Saylor Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – General trail maintenance to include brushing back and armoring of wet areas. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - Rehab of the Adirondack shelter along Middle Ridge loop utilizing the PA Outdoor Crew. **Canceled due to COVID restrictions**
- **Lost Turkey Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – Replace one (3) foot bridges and armoring of a wet area. Replace deteriorating trail signs. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **County Line Shared Use Trail** – Finish rehab of the switchback portion of this trail to address drainage and erosion issues. Plans are being drafted to build a stream crossing along the headwaters of Clear Shade Creek. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Cross Country Ski Trail** – Replace deteriorating trail signs at the intersections of the three loops. Continue to cut dead hazard trees (beech) along the trail. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Babcock Snowmobile Trail** – Continue armoring wet and muddy areas of the trail. Widen the trail section across the Allegheny front to allow better access for the groomer. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Swinging Bridge on the JP Saylor Hiking Trail** – Plans are currently being developed for the replacement of this bridge due to its age and continual repair needs. No time frame for this replacement has been established. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Expand parking lot at Wolf Rocks trailhead as time and funding permit. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Establish motorized campsite areas in the Babcock Division. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**

Rager Mountain Division

- **Clark Run Trail** – Spray invasive plant species along the trail. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Rager Mountain Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing trail where necessary. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Rager Mountain Snowmobile Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing trail where necessary. Replace deteriorating signs along the trail. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- **Laurel Run Shared - Use Trail System** – Continue construction of portions of this trail system. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - Stream crossing permit has been approved and funding gathered for the installation of a bridge on the lower portion of this trail where it crosses Laurel Run. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Expand parking lot at Mile Hill gate. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Expand parking opportunities along Laurel Run Road. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**

Babcock Picnic Area

- Replace pavilion roofs as time and funds permit. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Replace damaged and rotten sections of split-rail fencing. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Continue to remove hazard trees as necessary. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**

Organized Events

- Based upon historical information of requested state forest land usage:
 - MWSS 471 Det. A Marine Airwing training – October 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - 25th Marine Regiment Truck Company training – March 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - Lost Turkey Trail Marathon – July 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - Johnstown Saddle Club – May & June 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
 - Chestnut Ridge Horseman's Club - May, June, July, August, September 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

Timber management will include stands identified in the landscape exam process as high priority for treatment due to high levels of natural regeneration, stand health issues, and prior (ongoing) regeneration projects.

Marked and sold, potentially active

- **Dead End Sale (06-2020BC01)** - This 55-acre sale consists of two cutting treatments, a 25-acre wildlife clearcut in poor quality timber to promote early successional habitat, and a 30-acre shelterwood block designed to promote oak regeneration. The shelterwood block of this sale is situated at the end of Rager Mountain Road, 1.3 miles northwest of the Gas Company and Rager Mountain Road intersection. This type of treatment is designed to remove the present undesirable, low quality, and dying trees in the mid-canopy and co-dominant positions, to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and promote the development and establishment of desirable seedlings on site. The clearcut block will provide much needed early successional habitat for several habitat specific species of birds, as well as cover for game species such as wild turkey, ruffed grouse and Whitetail Deer. Stand analysis plots were taken in summer 2017 to facilitate the final stand prescription. The area received a broadcast herbicide treatment in midsummer 2016. Marking was completed in November of 2017, and the sale was awarded to Dachenbach Sawmill in January 2018. Unfortunately, the buyer was not able to fulfill his obligation on this contract. The sale was re-bid in February 2020. The new buyer is Accurate Logging from Creekside.

- **Red Eyes Sale (06-2017BC03)** - This 51-acre shelterwood will target mainly smaller, low quality trees. The sale is situated on the west side of Babcock Creek Road, .25 mile south west of the intersection of Babcock Creek Road and Strip Mine Road. This treatment will essentially be a “thinning from below”. This type of treatment is designed to remove the present undesirable, low quality, and dying trees in the mid-canopy and co-dominant positions, to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor and promote the development and establishment of desirable seedlings on site. Marking was completed in August 2018. The sale was sold to Shawn A. Claar Logging from Imler PA. By contract, the sale will need to be completed before September 30th, 2020. Plans are being made to have a woven wire deer fence installed around the sale after the timber sale has been completed.
- **BM Sale (06-2019BC01)** – This 85-acre sale is the final overstory removal, a two-age treatment of the original two blocks (shelterwood treatment) from the Brian and Marge Sale (06-2010BC04). Added to the original Brian and Marge sale are two more blocks. One is a 17-acre shelterwood block from the Cherry Land Sale (06-2004BC01), which is now receiving an overstory removal treatment. The second additional block is a 23-acre block, which is an attempt to rehabilitate an apparent unsuccessful past shelterwood treatment with spraying, fencing, and further shelterwood treatment. This sale was sold to A. Swarey & Sons Hardwoods, LLC from Mill Creek.

Marked but not yet sold

At the time of document preparation, no sales are presently marked and awaiting sale.

Proposed (not marked yet)

- **Route 22 Ski Doo Sale** - This sale is in the early planning stages. It will be a 51-acre oak shelterwood on the south side of Route 22. A combination herbicide treatment for the area was conducted in the Summer/Fall of 2018. This consisted of a broadcast treatment for fern with a backpack mist-blower, and basal bark treatment of Witch Hazel, Red Maple, Striped Maple, and Black Birch with a back-pack sprayer. Silvah plots were conducted on the sale area in the spring of 2019, with timber marking to be started in the summer of 2020
- **Rager Trail Sale** - Situated between Rager Mountain trail, Rager Mountain road, and adjacent to the First Energy 500KV powerline on Rager Mountain (FM 5441), this sale is also in the early planning stages. A broadcast herbicide application for fern control was performed on the area in the Summer of 2018, applying Oust with a backpack sprayer. Silvah analysis plots were conducted on the area in the spring of 2019, with timber marking to be started sometime in the summer of 2020.
- **Coal Whiner Sale** – Work will begin on an approximately 100 acres overstory removal. This is a follow up treatment to the previous Coal Miner (06-2010BC05) sale, which was a shelterwood treatment. An overstory removal allows a lot of sunlight to reach an already established understory

of desirable tree seedling regeneration, whereas a shelterwood treatment prepares the forest stand for the creation of abundant tree seedling regeneration. The sale is expected to be up for bid in late 2020 or early 2021. It's named Coal Whiner Sale as trudging through 100 acres of briar-filled early successional forest isn't going to be fun.

Regeneration projects

- Regeneration projects are implemented to address issues that impede the development of desirable regeneration. For 2020, one new regeneration project will be undertaken in the Gallitzin Forest District, in the Babcock division. The treatment will involve 23 acres of an approximately 50-year-old selection cutting. The treatment is a broadcast herbicide application targeting fern, beech-brush and striped maple. It is located approximately one-half mile north of PA Route 56, and one-quarter mile west of Buffalo Road in Ogle township, Somerset county. The treatment is designed to reduce the low shade component and allow new tree seedlings to germinate and grow into advance regeneration; eventually providing a new forest when the canopy trees are harvested. The herbicide treatment is scheduled for mid-summer of 2020.
- One deer fence installation is planned for 2020, if funding is available. In the Rager Mountain Division, the 88-acre Compressor Station sale will be fenced (06-2018BC01).

Other sales could potentially begin in 2020 but forecasting that activity at this time is difficult due to a variety of reasons that may inhibit them coming to fruition. We will periodically update this document throughout the year to better inform our constituents of the Gallitzin State Forest.

RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

High Conservation Value Area - (HCVA)* - Babcock Division - Delayed due to COVID restrictions

- The Babcock HCVA Management Plan continues to be implemented as time and resources permit.
- We continue to use the skid steer with the forestry cutter and hand work to expand the areas of grassland habitat and control invasive plants on the HCVA.
- Following the forestry cutter mowing, foliar herbicide treatments will be applied to the invasive plants that re-sprout.
- A planting of Pin Oaks was installed on April 18, 2019 around Ponds 1 and 2 to provide potential habitat for Wood Ducks. The seedlings were obtained from Musser Forests, Inc. in Indiana, PA.

Woodcock/Grouse Habitat Project – Babcock Division

- The Ashtola Woodcock Fence project has been re-cut. This work was completed in February of 2020.

- Plans to re-cut additional blocks in the RT 56 Grouse Habitat project before spring. **Canceled due to COVID restrictions**

Pennsylvania Environmental Council Tree Planting – Babcock Division

- The Gallitzin Forest District received a grant from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council in 2019 for tree planting using the ARRI (Appalachian Regional Reforestation Initiative) method. This is a method of restoring forest cover to reclaimed strip-mine areas that are highly compacted, which severely inhibits tree establishment and growth. The area is ripped using a large bulldozer with a four-foot chisel plow (hook) attached. This breaks up the compacted soil and allows tree roots to penetrate the soil and gain access to water and nutrients.
- The planting area is located 1.3 miles southeast of Dunlo on Strip Road in Adams township, Cambria County. Using a D9 Caterpillar bulldozer, the ripping was completed in late November of 2019. Approximately 29,000 trees will be planted on this 42-acre site. A 2-acre volunteer planting will be held on May 9, 2020, to kick off the project, with the remaining acreage to be planted by professional tree planters. If you are interested in volunteering for this project, contact the Gallitzin State Forest offices at 814-472-1862. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Since the planting of this project was delayed due to COVID, funding was obtained to perform an herbicide project to reduce the competition from the planted cool season grasses on the site. Reducing the competition from these grasses will increase the likelihood the seedlings will become established and grow faster.

Rager Mountain Division Habitat

- We are planning on expanding the warm-season grass area on the Laurel Run Tract. Basal herbicide application targeting the black locust is complete, as well as cutting of the larger Austrian and Scotch pines. The forestry cutter will be used during the summer of 2020 to remove brush and help prepare the area for planting. The National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) has agreed to supply the seed for planting in Spring of 2021. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**
- Another area of habitat improvement for 2020 is near the Short Line wildlife opening (food plot). This narrow strip of forest buffers a small tributary to Laurel Run and has experienced a significant loss of canopy cover due to Ash mortality caused by the Emerald Ash Borer. A variety of invasive shrub species also plagues the area. Plans are in the works to plant Pin Oaks in the canopy gaps and treat the invasive species as time permits. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**

- Preliminary plans are being developed for a 200-acre wildlife habitat area on the Rager Mountain Division. Several habitat types are being planned to benefit a wide range of both game and non-game species of wildlife. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**

ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

- District staff to complete annual maintenance of State Forest Roads (25 miles) to include grading, ditch maintenance, mowing and culvert cleaning. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- District staff to complete leaf blowing from roadside ditches along all State Forest Roads - spring and fall 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Work continues to implement a State Forest Road sign installation program to ensure consistency and assist the driving public with locations and directions. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Plans to install several cross-drain culverts on Weigh Station Road and Shade Road - Summer 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Continue to construct snowmobile run-arounds at vehicle gates on the Babcock Division snowmobile trail network - 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Continue to improve portions of Laurel Run Road as time and funding permit - Summer 2020. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Plans begin improving Weigh Station Road near Mine 42 Road by placing 4 minus limestone to improve the road base then topping with 2A limestone running surface. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Plans to continue improving Pot Ridge Road by placing 2A limestone to the northern end.

PRESCRIBED FIRE

Certain areas of the Gallitzin State Forest have been developed to enhance cool- and warm-season grasses. Prescribed fire is a tool used by the Bureau of Forestry to reduce fuels, control competing vegetation, and to create and maintain habitats. A side benefit of prescribed fires is that it aids in the training of wildland firefighters.

- There are currently no planned prescribed fires in 2020.

FIRE PREVENTION

Indiana/Northern Cambria Division

- The divisional boundaries that were modified in the fall of 2017 will continue to stay the same thru 2020. This area will still be all of Indiana County and all of Cambria County, north of State Route 22. Fire prevention programs will still be continuing throughout 2020. Attempts are made to achieve a minimum of sixteen Smokey Bear school programs (Kindergarten to 3rd grade) during the regular school year. Smokey Bear programs will be provided to summer school / summer daycare requests as well. These program requests may number six or more. Multiple Smokey Bear / fire prevention programs are planned with two cooperating state parks (Yellow Creek State Park and Prince Gallitzin State Park). Much of the fire prevention programming is achieved by Pennsylvania fire warden efforts or in cooperation with the fire wardens. The district will have a booth at the Indiana County Fair as well as the Cambria County Fair in 2020. While the focus of both displays will not solely be on wildfire prevention, fire prevention materials will be handed out and Smokey Bear will be expected to be visiting with the public. Fire prevention programs will also occur at several other local fairs and festivals throughout 2020 including the Apple Cider Festival at Prince Gallitzin State Park and the Northern Cambria Fall Festival.

Blair/Southern Cambria Division

- Fire Forester (Mandy Burgoon) for this coverage will be contacting local school district/preschool programs to advise of the available Smokey Bear Programs/fire prevention programs and forestry related programs that are available. With the help of the fire wardens, many of previously held programs will still be attended. These include: Smokey/prevention programs, Altoona Curve games, and various events around Blair County. Continue to build the wildland fire program in my coverage area and teach two S130 and S190 classes each year, more if local fire departments have enough interest. Assist the Dividing Ridge Support Crew with trainings and support them as much as possible. Continue to do annual visits of wardens not seen in 2019 and update warden identification cards.

INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENTS

2019 was generally dryer than 2018, consequently a lot was accomplished in spraying invasive plant species. Additionally, this year was the first of an annual July week-long work party involving all district personnel where everyone pitches in labor towards keeping the HVCF birding area in grass habitat. It involves tree cutting and a lot of invasives spraying. Assuming 2020 won't be too wet, we expect to have another productive year controlling invasive plants. However, over the past two years, we have observed oriental bittersweet becoming established in areas we have not seen it before. This is a concern.

- We will continue to treat Japanese knotweed, mile-a-minute weed, Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, bush honeysuckle and autumn olive throughout the district in 2020 as time and funding allow. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Spraying for invasive plants typically begins annually, after July 4, and continues through mid-September. **Delayed due to COVID restrictions**
- Other than known species such as beech scale, hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA) and emerald ash borer (EAB), we are not experiencing any other serious insect infestations currently.

NATURAL GAS, OIL, AND OTHER GEOLOGIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- Presently there are no new natural gas or oil development activities taking place within the Gallitzin State Forest.

TOWER AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY PROJECTS

- Construction of the Mariner East Pipeline by Sunoco (now called *Energy Transfer Partners*) started in June of 2017. All construction on State Forest Land has been completed and the site has been seeded for erosion control. Currently site monitoring is taking place. Final seeding and planting to be done in 2020.
- **Fire Tower** - Lost Mountain Fire Tower is planned to be dismantled and moved as funding is available. – No updates.
- **Right-of-Way Projects** – No new or known Right-of-Way projects are anticipated in 2020.
- **Communication Towers** – Work with county EMA personnel to upgrade infrastructure for the new statewide radio system
- We anticipate powerline and pipeline maintenance activities such as mowing, tree trimming and spraying to be conducted in 2020.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Plan to staff an information booth at the PA Adventure RV Expo in Altoona, February 2020.
- Plan to hold another landowner meeting/training at Yellow Creek State Park, June 2020
Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Indiana County Fair in Indiana, August 2020. **Canceled due to COVID restrictions**

- Plan to staff an information booth at the Cambria County Fair in Ebensburg, September 2020.
Canceled due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Cambria County Arts & Heritage Festival, September 2020.
Canceled due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Prince Gallitzin State Park Apple Cider Festival, October 2020. **Tentative/on hold due to COVID restrictions**

SPECIAL PROJECTS

- Maintain RST (Recurrent Selection Timber) backcross American Chestnut orchard at the Dryzal habitat management area during the growing season for 2020.
- Maintain Beech Bark Scale Disease resistant American Beech Planting at the Stevenson Farm habitat management area. Add additional trees as they become available.
- The new Gallitzin State Forest Resource Management Center has experienced yet another delay. Issues with the existing location will require a new site to be located and prepped. This will more than likely add an additional year or two to the project which had a revised completion date of April 2022.

RESEARCH

- The district continues to work with the Paint Creek Watershed Association on the “Red Eyes” project. Additional doses of limestone sand have been delivered to the 4 culvert crossings along Strip Mine Road during the spring, summer and fall of 2019. More doses are planned for 2020.
- The district has plans to work with the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy to begin a lime dosing program on Mile Run Creek, a tributary of Clear Shade Creek. Applications are planned to begin in spring 2020.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- Worked with PA Outdoor Corps crew to install wooden steps, clear a vista, repair washouts, blaze and cut brush on the Rager Mountain and Clark Run Trails in the Clark Run Natural Area.
- Working with DCNR land surveyors to address many areas of missing boundary lines and property corners throughout the district.
- Improved the ditch line drainage and addressed vertical shoulders on approximately 1 mile of Laurel Run Road in the Rager Mountain Division.

- Continued to improve sections of the Laurel Run Road by adding #3 limestone for base and top dressing with 2A limestone.
- Using Dirt and Gravel Road funding, completed a running surface improvement project to the northern half of Strip Mine Road. This project consisted of placing Driving Surface Aggregate to the running surface of the road with a paver and compacting with a vibratory roller.
- Developed a plan for improving wood duck habitat at several locations throughout the district. Planted Pin Oak trees and cut unwanted vegetation around ponds in Babcock Division.
- Began to implement the plan to convert existing food plots to native, herbaceous openings by eliminating replanting, liming and fertilizing work and expanding mowing intervals.
- Inventoried and assessed planted fruit trees throughout the district. Developed and implemented a plan for less intensive maintenance.
- Continued to remove hazard trees from the Babcock Picnic Area.
- Staffed an information booth at the PA Adventure RV Expo Show in Altoona, February 2019.
- Staffed an information booth at the Indiana County Fair, August 2019
- Staffed an information booth at the Cambria County Fair, September 2019
- Staffed an information booth at the Cambria County Arts & Heritage Festival, September 2019.
- Staffed an information booth at the Prince Gallitzin State Park Apple Cider Festival, October 2019.
- Assisted with Envirothons – Blair, Cambria & Indiana counties.
- Participated in many Forest Fire Prevention and school programs.
- Assisted many private landowners in Blair, Cambria and Indiana Counties with forestry-related items.
- Continued to treat approximately 200 patches of invasive plants.
- Completed a road resurfacing project to the northern half of Strip Mine Road in the Babcock Division. Placed and compacted 5,200 tons of driving surface aggregate (DSA) using Dirt and Gravel funding.
- Spread and compacted 1,500 tons of 2A limestone on Pot Ridge Road in the Babcock Division.

- Replaced the bridge on Babcock Creek Road with an open bottom, pre-cast concrete structure.
- Replaced the failing metal culverts where Strip Mine Road crosses Paint Creek with pre-cast concrete structures.
- Planted 25 shade and ornamental trees in the Babcock Picnic Area with funding and volunteers from REI, Bedford, through the Pennsylvania Parks and Forestry Foundation.
- Organized and conducted, in conjunction with State Parks, a private landowner meeting/training at Yellow Creek State Park, June 2019.
- Treated invasive species and reestablished grassland habitat throughout 200 acres of the High Conservation Value Area in the Babcock Division.
- Coordinated and instructed numerous wildland fire-related trainings to local volunteer fire companies and forest fire wardens.