

# WEISER STATE FOREST DISTRICT

## 2024 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 Weiser 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:

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## RECREATION

- Finalization of a CCPP grant awarded to the district. With this grant the district will install\construct seven hiking\biking\equine bridges on Roaring Creek and Haldeman tracts, water bottle fill stations and bike maintenance stand on the Roaring Creek tract. This work will be completed in the next few months.
  - Seven prefabricated fiberglass bridges have been installed on the Haldeman and Roaring Creek tracts. Approaches will be completed when snow melts and ground hardens to reduce equipment impact.
- The district is working with SAMBA and the friends of Weiser – Haldeman Greenland, on a proposed trail system at the Greenland Tract. The trail proposal will link to the Haldeman Tract through Williamstown Water Authority and Lykens Water Authority. This could potentially add 10 miles of shared-use trails to the district.
- The Catawissa Recreation Area master plan is complete. The Bureau is working through the process of developing a contract for concessionaires to bid on. DEP and Bureau of Forestry are working through the design and construction process to create public access to the tract. Construction should be complete in 2025.
  - The district is working to establish a trail system, stream crossings, and parking area in the southern parcels of the tract off Lofty Road for single track use.

### Organized Events

- Roaring Creek Tract
  - Cross Country Meet – September, Tentative
  - Hellbender Foot Race, 5k/Half Marathon – August, Tentative
- Haldeman Tract
  - Rattling Creek Foot Race – April, Tentative
  - Rattling Creek MTB Race – April, Tentative
  - Equestrian Endurance Ride – July, Tentative
  - Equestrian Competitive Ride – August, Tentative
  - SAMBA BASH MTB – September, Tentative
- Port Clinton Tract
  - Civil Air Patrol Wilderness Survival Training – July, Tentative

- Penrose Tract
  - Weiser Firefighter Inc training event – Spring, tentative
- Catawissa Recreation Area
  - Shotgun Enduro – Spring, tentative

## TIMBER MANAGEMENT

### **Marked and sold, potentially active**

- There are no sales that have been marked and sold at this time.

### **Sales posted for bid:**

- There are no sales posted for bid at this time.

### **Active Sales:**

- Greenland Tract – 56 acres to be harvested as an overstory removal to convert stand to an oak savanna to promote wildlife habitat. 13 acres of two-aged treatment for the road buffer. Prescribed burns were conducted in 2015 and 2021 to reduce the stem density and create an oak savanna, but desired results were not achieved. District staff applied a thinning from below treatment 2018 through 2020 to add fuel for the 2021 prescribed fire as well as mitigate standing snags and reduce undesirable species.

### **Potential Sales (not proposed)**

- Second Mountain Tract – 500+ acres of shelterwood and overstory removal to salvage *Lymantria dispar* mortality and release white pine regeneration.

### **Regeneration projects**

- Haldeman Tract – A fence dismantle project for the Hawks Nest timber sale will be submitted in 2023.

## RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

- Greenland Tract
  - Early Successional Habitat – proposing to conduct early successional habitat work on 100+ acres. A non-commercial treatment on a poor-quality site. Due to Covid-19 this treatment has been put on hold.

## ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

- Haldeman Tract
  - Dirt and Gravel funded project on White Oak Road to improve road drainage by replacing and adding culvert pipes and underdrains. Project location will be from the

intersection of Dietrich Road and White Oak east for 2.3 miles on White Oak Road.

## **PRESCRIBED FIRE**

- Greenland Tract
  - Big Larch is a 135 acre burn unit located off Berry Mountain Road and Scrub Oak Road. The objective of this fire is to promote the native species, scrub oak/pitch pine. This ecosystem is lacking within the state forest and grows better in a continually warming climate. Lastly, this burn will enhance that area for early successional wildlife such as golden winged and prairie warblers and ruffed grouse.
  - Little Larch is a 79 acre burn unit off Berry Mountain and Larch Road. The objective of this fire is to promote native species, scrub oak/pitch pine. Pitch pine/scrub oak, ecosystem is lacking within the state forest and grows better in a continually warming climate. Lastly, this burn will enhance that area for early successional wildlife such as golden winged and prairie warblers and ruffed grouse.
- Milton Hershey School
  - Approximately 40 acres of meadow management units are proposed for this coming Spring. The objectives are to reduce woody undesirable species in the units, thatch reduction, and in some units to create a blank canvas for broadcast seeding of more desirable species.
- Penn Forest Tract
  - The Yellow Run burn unit is 160 acres located on the Penn Forest tract in Carbon County. This unit was previously burned in Fall of 2020 with most objectives. In order to maintain objectives and keep the flush of scrub oak from taking over again, a follow up burn is proposed for Fall of 2024. Lepidoptera surveys are to be completed by Ecological Services this Summer.

## **INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENTS**

- Insect and disease monitoring and reporting will continue in 2024. The focus will be on the priority list provided by the Bureau of Forestry's Division of Forest Health. Report forms will be forwarded to Forest Health Specialist from the District Insect and Disease, (I.&D.) Coordinator to conduct ground truth and possible control efforts for reported insect and disease problems. Aerial survey flight(s) will be conducted in late June/early July to detect possible problem areas. District staff will continue to monitor for spongy moth egg masses at Greenland and Haldeman Tracts in Dauphin County.
- Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) will be monitored throughout the district. District staff will be re-

treating effected white ash trees this year at the following locations: Roaring Creek, Jakey Hollow Natural Area, and Haldeman tracts. Previously treated white ash trees look healthy.

- District staff will continue monitoring and treating non-native invasive species throughout the district. Focus will be on areas planned for timber sales and/or earthdisturbances. An aerial herbicide application will be done at the Port Clinton Tract to target mile-a-minute and Japanese stiltgrass before canopy leaf-out.
- Hemlock wooly adelgid (HWA) - District staff have treated three locations for this nonnative insect, first at the Weiser Resource Management Center (RMC), the east entrance to Roaring Creek Trail and Penn Forest Fire Control Station in Carbon County over the past years. In the fall of 2023 Weiser foresters will hemlock at the Penn Forest Fire Control Station.
- Spongy Moth – District staff did egg mass counts in 2023. Due to the high numbers of egg masses and defoliation that occurred on the Haldeman and Greenland Tracts, approximately 5800 acres will be treated with Mimic in spring of 2024 as part of the statewide spongy moth suppression program.

## **NATURAL GAS, OIL, AND OTHER GEOLOGIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

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

## **TOWER AND RIGHTS-OF-WAY PROJECTS**

- Currently no projects in the works.

## **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

- Dauphin County Woodland Owners Association is hoping to have their annual woodland owner's conference. This conference is tentatively scheduled for March 2024.
- September 2024, district personnel will staff a booth and answer questions at the annual Bloomsburg Fair, Bloomsburg, PA.
- October 2024, the district will provide the public with the opportunity to drive through the Roaring Creek tract. During this drive through we take comments, questions, and concerns from the public and respond to them.
- Throughout the year, various Friends Groups, RCVCA, wardens, and SRTA meetings will allow local stakeholders and the public to provide comments, questions, and concerns. Staff will be able to answer questions and provide additional information.

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

- The remediation and removal of the Natalie Culm Bank and construction of a State Forest administrative access road and public parking area immediately north of Natalie, Pennsylvania is ongoing.
- Planning and site preparation are underway for the Keffer's Fire Tower restoration, relocation/re-erection. Exact location to be determined, however it will be somewhere on the south rim of the Roaring Creek Tract, near the Weiser Resource Management Center.
- Continuation of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Milton Hersey School and Weiser State Forest, Bureau of Forestry to expand the Governors Youth Initiative by controlling invasive species and encouraging native grasses/flowers at Milton Hersey School.
- Aqua America will be doing rehabilitation work to the spillway on the Bear Gap No. 6 Reservoir. Reservoir water level will be drawn down to complete this work. Project will start early 2024 and be completed by early 2025.

## RESEARCH

- Oregon University. Earth Scope Magneto Telluric Transportable Array site on White Oak Road at the Haldeman Tract for ongoing monitoring of plate tectonic.
- Mid-Atlantic Center for Herpetological and Conservation. Pennsylvania Amphibian and Reptile Survey
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Evaluate species richness, pollinator abundance, and floral selection within young forest patches.
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection. Arboviral Surveillance Network.
- Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Tree-ring analysis to determine effectiveness and duration of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid treatments on Eastern hemlocks.
- Bloomsburg University of PA conducted field study of the burrows of the common crayfish.
- Hawk Mountain Sanctuary Association forest health research.
- Bloomsburg University of PA conducting vegetation surveys in Jakey Hollow Natural Area.
- Eugene Muth III avian raptor banding at Port Clinton Tract.
- Pennsylvania State University, Ex-situ conservation collections and development of pre-

breeding resources for ash.

- Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, spotted lantern fly treatment and surveillance.
- University of Pittsburgh, mapping garlic mustard.
- Pennsylvania State University, genome sequencing and diet analysis of golden winged and blue winged warblers.
- Pennsylvania State University, stream salamander occupancy study.
- Adventure Scientists, Illegal Timber Tracking: Eastern White Oak.

## **MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR**

- The Bald Spot Timber Sale was successfully completed.
- Acquisition of the Luceno Tract, an inholding at the Catawissa Recreation Area, added over 300 acres to Weiser State Forest and miles of motorized recreation trails.
- Acquisition of the Weatherly Reservoir, and inholding at the Penrose Tract, added approximately 22 acres to Weiser State Forest.
- Acquisition of the Karpenko Tract added 55 acres on the western end of the Roaring Creek Tract to Weiser State Forest.
- Acquisition of the Independence and Bailey's Islands on the Susquehanna River.
- Responded to, suppressed, and investigated 259 wildfires in seven counties burning approximately 736 acres.
- Contributed 81 bushels of seed to the nursery from cone and acorn collection. In total the district collected 34 bushels of white pine cones, 20 bushels of pitch pine cones, 24 bushels of chestnut oak acorns, and 3 bushels of white oak acorns.
- Utilized Lyme Funding from DOH to treat 37 acres of barberry at Roaring Creek and Port Clinton Tracts.
- Completed the first year of HWA treatments on old growth hemlock at the Jakey Hollow Tract.
- Catawissa Recreation Area Master Plan was completed.