

GALLITZIN STATE FOREST DISTRICT

2022 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:

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RECREATION

Babcock Division

- **Bog Path Trail** – General trail maintenance including repair and/or replacing foot bridges and/or possible rerouting sections. Replace trail sign at intersection(s) of Boulder Trail.
- **John P. Saylor Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – General trail maintenance to include brushing back and armoring of wet areas.
 - **Swinging Bridge**– 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.
- **Lost Turkey Trail** (State Forest Hiking Trail) – Replace (3) foot bridges and armoring of a wet area. Replace deteriorating trail signs.
- **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.
 - Explore options for building a connector trail between the Buffalo Road parking area and the County Line Trail.
- **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.
- **Babcock Snowmobile Trail** – Continue armoring wet and muddy areas of the trail. Explore possibilities for connecting the western loop with the eastern loop (County Line).
- Expand parking lot at Wolf Rocks trailhead as time and funding permit.
- Establish motorized campsite areas in the Babcock Division as time and funding permit.

Rager Mountain Division

- **Clark Run Trail** – Spray invasive plant species along the trail.
- **Rager Mountain Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing trail where necessary.
- **Rager Mountain Snowmobile Trail** – General trail maintenance to include brushing trail where necessary. Replace deteriorating signs along the trail.
- **Laurel Run Shared - Use Trail System** – Continue to improve existing portions of this trail system.
- Expand parking lot at Mile Hill gate as time and funding permit.
- Expand parking opportunities along Laurel Run Road as time and funding permit.
- Finish construction of Snyder’s Vista overlooking the Conemaugh Gap. Trees were removed in the winter of 2020. Plans to build a platform and improve the trail to the site.

Babcock Picnic Area

- Replace pavilion roofs as time and funds permit.
- Continue to replace damaged and rotten sections of split-rail fencing.
- Continue to remove hazard trees as necessary.
- Re-paint the Picnic Loop Trail, re-establish tree identification signs

- Continue to spray brush and invasive species to maintain the open landscape.

Organized Events

- Based upon historical information of requested state forest land usage:
 - MWSS 471 Det. A Marine Airwing training.
 - 25th Marine Regiment Truck Company training.
 - 121st Transportation Company – USANG training.
 - Lost Turkey Trail Marathon.
 - Johnstown Saddle Club trail ride.
 - Chestnut Ridge Horseman’s Club trail ride.
 - Babcock Bog and Bolder Orienteering Challenge

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

- **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 southwest 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 was to be completed before September 30th, 2020. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, a free contract extension was granted to March 31, 2021 with purchased extensions extending the completion date until March 31, 2022. Cutting has not started on this sale as of this update (1/2022). Plans are to install a deer fence around the sale after cutting is 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. Harvesting is completed on this sale, and the skid roads and log landings will be graded and seeded when weather permits in the spring of 2022.

- **Coal Miner 2 Sale** – This sale was purchased by Accurate Logging, LLC. from Creekside in the summer of 2021. Harvesting is completed on this 89-acre 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. Skid roads will be graded, and log landings seeded when weather permits, in the spring of 2022.
- **More Ketchup Sale**- This 67-acre sale was initiated in the latter part of 2020 and is an overstory removal on the former Ketchup sale (06-2009 BC02). Abundant regeneration was present, so the decision was made to harvest the remaining overstory to allow the regeneration to grow and develop into the next forest. The sale was put out for bids in December of 2021 and purchased by Accurate Logging, LLC. in January 2022.

Marked but not yet sold

No sales meet this criterion at this time.

Proposed (not marked yet)

- **Formerly Mike's Sale**- With the departure of Mike Nelson, who moved on to greener pastures to a new job in Florida, we were left with the timbersale that he was working on (Rusty Grill). After some consideration, and knowing the current timber market conditions, we decided to combine Mike's former sale and two additional fenced shelterwoods along Gas Company Road into one large timbersale. Larger sales are easier to sell in today's market, and with the addition of the fenced shelterwoods, some higher quality timber can be offered to encourage buyers to bid on the sale. The sale will take place in three different areas of our Rager Mountain Division. Going from east to west, the first sale block is 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 this block in the spring of 2019. The second area of the sale consists of two fenced shelterwood blocks along Gas Company road totaling 45 acres that were harvested in 2012. These areas now contain abundant regeneration and are now ready for the overstory removal harvest. Silvah plots will be conducted on these blocks in early 2022.

The final blocks of the sale are situated between Rager Mountain trail, and Rager Mountain road, adjacent to the First Energy 500KV powerline on Rager Mountain (FM 5441). This 56-acre block will also be an oak shelterwood treatment. 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. We hope to begin marking this sale early in 2022.

Regeneration projects

- If funding permits, a fence is planned for the 23-acre shelterwood block that was part of the BM sale in the Babcock Division. No date for installation is available at this time.
- Two deer fence installations were completed in 2021. In the Rager Mountain Division, the 88-acre Compressor Station sale was fenced (06-2018BC01). In the Babcock Division, 26 acres (blocks 4 & 5), of the Railroad Grade 2 sale (06-2018BC02) were fenced.
- Approximately 6000 feet of deer fencing is scheduled for dismantling in 2022. Block 4 (four acres, 2099 feet) of the former Railroad Grade sale, adjacent to the Crows foot Vista in the Babcock Division will be dismantled. Also, block 4 of the former Project Oak sale, adjacent to Briar Knob in the Babcock Division, will be dismantled (16 acres, 3949 feet).

Other sales could potentially begin in 2022 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

- 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.

Woodcock/Grouse Habitat Project – Babcock Division

- Plans to re-cut additional blocks in the RT 56 Grouse Habitat project in the winter months as time permits.

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 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. **Tentative/on hold**
- Another area of habitat improvement 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**
- 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**

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.
- District staff to complete leaf blowing from roadside ditches along all State Forest Roads - spring and fall 2022.
- Work continues to implement a State Forest Road sign installation program to ensure consistency and assist the driving public with locations and directions.
- Continue to construct snowmobile run-arounds at vehicle gates on the Babcock Division snowmobile trail network.
- Continue to improve portions of Laurel Run Road as time and funding permit.
- Plans to place 650 tons of 2A limestone aggregate to Pot Ridge Road in Ogle Twp, Somerset County.
- Plans to improve Strip Road in Adams Twp, Cambria County with 2,500 tons of 4 minus limestone base and 1,400 tons of 2A limestone surface aggregate
- Plans are being developed to replace several large culverts on Laurel Run Road and Weigh Station Road in the upcoming years as funding permits.

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.

- No prescribed burns are planned at this time.

FIRE PREVENTION

Indiana/Northern Cambria Division

Currently all trainings, prevention programs, warden visits and volunteer fire company meetings are being addressed on a case-by-case basis due to COVID restrictions

- Fire prevention programs will still be continuing throughout 2022. 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 may have a booth at the Indiana County Fair as well as the Cambria County Fair in 2022. While the focus of both displays will not solely be on wildfire prevention, fire prevention materials will be handed out and Smokey Bear may be visiting with the public. Fire prevention programs may also occur at several other local fairs and festivals throughout 2022 including the Apple Cider Festival at Prince Gallitzin State Park and the Northern Cambria Fall Festival.

Blair/Southern Cambria Division

Currently all trainings, prevention programs, warden visits and volunteer fire company meetings are being addressed on a case-by-case basis due to COVID restrictions

- Contact local school district/preschool programs to advise of the 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 and teach two S130 and S190 classes each year, more if local fire departments have a need. 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 2021 and update warden identification cards.

INSECT, DISEASE, AND INVASIVE PLANT TREATMENTS

This year was the third year for our annual July week-long work party involving all district personnel, where everyone pitches in labor towards keeping our HVCA bird area in grass habitat. This involves tree cutting and a lot of invasive plant treatment including cut-stump, foliar and basal bark applications. Assuming 2022 won't be too wet, we expect to have another productive year controlling invasive plants. However, over the past several years, we have observed oriental bittersweet becoming established in areas we have not seen it before. This is a concern.

- Efforts to monitor and locate new infestations of the Beech Leaf Disease within the district continue. Research continues, on the effects of this disease.
- 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 2022 as time and funding allow.
- Spraying for invasive plants typically begins annually, after July 4, and continues through mid-September.
- Once again *Lymantria dispar dispar* (LDD - formerly known as the gypsy moth) populations appear to be rising in some areas of the district. Spring weather conditions may have a profound impact on the population and subsequent defoliation. Plans are in place to spray areas of State Game Lands within the district, but no State Forest Lands will be sprayed this year.
- 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.
- **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 2022.
- **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 2022.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

- Plans to staff an information booth at the PA Adventure RV Expo in Altoona, February 2022.
Cancelled due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to hold another landowner meeting/training at Yellow Creek State Park, June 2022 **Tentative due to COVID restrictions**
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Indiana County Fair in Indiana, August 2022. **Tentative due to COVID restrictions**
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Cambria County Fair in Ebensburg, September 2022.
Tentative due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Cambria County Arts & Heritage Festival, September 2022.
Tentative due to COVID restrictions
- Plan to staff an information booth at the Prince Gallitzin State Park Apple Cider Festival, October 2021. **Tentative 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.
- 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 is still in the planning phase. Several possible locations are being researched with the pros and cons of each being measured. No anticipated completion date at this time.

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 2021. More doses are planned for 2022.
- Plans are being drafted for the second phase of the Red Eyes project which includes constructing a series of limestone check dams on a major AMD flow impacting Babcock Creek.
- 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. – No updates

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- Continued working with DCNR land surveyors to address many areas of missing boundary lines and property corners throughout the district.
- Continued to implement the plan to convert existing food plots to native, herbaceous openings.
- Staffed an information booth at the Indiana County Fair, August/September 2021.
- Staffed an information booth at the Cambria County Fair, September 2021.
- Assisted private landowners in Blair, Cambria and Indiana Counties with forestry-related items when possible.
- Continued to treat approximately 200 patches of invasive plants.
- Assisted with the virtual Indiana County Envirothon.
- Spread and compacted 975 tons of 2A limestone on Pot Ridge Road in the Babcock Division.
- Treated invasive species and reestablished grassland habitat throughout 200 acres of the High Conservation Value Area in the Babcock Division.
- The district fire staff with the help of volunteer fire companies, forest fire wardens, the support crew and other district personnel suppressed and/or reported 71 wildland fires.
- Volunteers conducted follow up graffiti removal at Wolf Rocks in September 2021 with plans to continue with periodic treatments

- Placed 3,200 tons of Driving Surface Aggregate to Weigh Station Road
- With the assistance of the PA Outdoor Crew from Altoona, the maintenance staff constructed the joint use bridge over Laurel Run in the Rager Division. This project was many years in the making. In addition to the bridge approximately 2 miles of joint use trail was constructed connecting 2 established parking areas to the trail network.
- The forester and clerical staff assisted our Forest Health Division with the *Lymantria dispar dispar* (LDD - formerly known as the gypsy moth) spray program in the spring. The staff acted as block monitors and office dispatchers for the spraying of over 17,000 acres of forest lands for PA State Parks and PA Game Lands.
- With assistance from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council and Green Forests Work, contracted planters planted 28,700 seedlings on 42-acres of reclaimed strip mine in the Babcock Division. The site was prepped with a 2019 ripping (de-compaction) operation and a 2020 herbicide application.