

# Elk State Forest

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## 2024 MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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 Elk 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

### MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED

- Bobolink Lane parking area development and DPVR installation
- Proposed recreational trail connector (Bauer Hollow to Steam Mill Road)
- Continue developing Gravel Biking opportunities that reach Emporium, Austin, Costello, Wharton, and Keating Summit in the Ridge Road and Marshall Farm non-motorized recreation areas.
- Improve parking areas along Marshall Farm Road
- Continue improvement of access to Old Cameron County Dump for dark sky and wildlife viewing on Cameron County Property
- Continue development of “Universal” (ADA) trails in Marshall Farm Road area
- Develop proposed McKean County Snowmobile Trail Connections (Sackett Hollow to Clermont and Clermont to Martin Road)
- Investigate the feasibility of proposed Cameron County Snowmobile Trail Connections (West Creek Recreational Trail to Rich Valley or South Fork Road)
- Proposed Cameron County Snowmobile Trail reroutes onto portions of retired NFG pipeline (Intermittently between Grove Hill Road and Hunts Run Road)
- Work with KTA to set-up trail crew weekend
- Bucktail Path rehab as identified (brushing, rerouting, etc.)
- Hackett Trail rehab (brushing, benching, and blazing) to Bucktail Path bridge (McNuff Draft)
- Installation of interpretive signage and trail development at 3 Sisters site
- Install trail system signage at the 3 Sisters site
- Continue yearly maintenance of trails
- Organized Events:
  - Throughout the Year: Collaborate when necessary Elk County Riders events
  - July: Mountaineer Search and Rescue Bigfoot Hunt
  - September: Bicycle race (Second Stage of Sinnemahone Triple Crown)
  - October: Ultra-Marathon (Third Stage of Sinnemahone Triple Crown)
  - Fall Weekends: Public outreach at Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area

## TIMBER MANAGEMENT

### MARKED AND SOLD, POTENTIALLY ACTIVE TIMBER SALES

- 13-2019BC02 332-acre shelterwood Montour Road, Cameron County
- 13-2021BC01 95-acre shelterwood Ames Hollow Road, Cameron County
- 13-2021BC03 221-acre shelterwood Russell Camp Area, Cameron County
- 13-2021BC04 145-acre shelterwood Thunder Mountain Road, Elk County
- 13-2021BC05 230-acre shelterwood Truman Area, Cameron County



- 13-2021BC07 264-acre removal Deer Pen Road, Elk County
- 13-2022BC01 114-acre shelterwood Marshall Farm Road, Cameron County
- 13-2022BC03 250-acre shelterwood Patterson Hollow, Elk County
- 13-2022BC04 125-acres shelterwood Sizer Run, Cameron County
- 13-2023BC01 115-acre shelterwood Canoe Run Road, Cameron County
- 13-2023BC02 197-acre shelterwood Thunder Mountain area, Elk County
- 13-2023BC06 47-acre shelterwood Logue Run, Cameron County
- 13-2023BC07 35-acre salvage Little Bailey, Cameron County

**PROPOSED, NOT SOLD YET**

- 85-acre shelterwood in Lumber Township, Cameron County
- 75-acre shelterwood Stillhouse Road, Cameron County
- 225-acre removal West Hicks, Elk County
- 180-acre salvage removal Dividing Ridge, Cameron County
- 98-acre shelterwood Ospeck Road, Elk County
- 154-acre shelterwood Shawmut Grade, Elk County

Other sales could potentially begin, but that activity can be hard to predict due to the length of timber sale contracts. Please contact the District Office at [fd13@pa.gov](mailto:fd13@pa.gov) or (814)486-3353 for information on active sales.

**REGENERATION PROJECTS**

**WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE INSTALLED (approximately 10-15 fences)**

- McNuff salvage sale 250 acres
- Sleepy Hollow sale 164 acres
- Whiting Hollow sale 214 acres
- Ridge Trail Road sale 130 acres

**WOVEN WIRE FENCES TO BE CONTRACT DISMANTLED**

- 37-acre Little Bear North Fence, McDonald Draft Road, Elk County
- 57-acre Little Bear South Fence, McDonald Draft Road, Elk County
- 63-acre McDonald Draft Fence, Elk County

**ELECTRIC FENCES TO BE REMOVED**

- NONE

**HERBICIDE BLOCKS**

- 115 acres Hackett Trail area, Cameron County
- 60 acres Bauer Hollow area, Cameron County
- 12 acres Norcross area, Cameron County
- 80 acres Pepper Run, Cameron County
- 150 acres East Branch area, Elk county

## RESTORATION AND HABITAT PROJECTS

### MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED

- Blue Bird box maintenance – Maintain/Repair/Install bluebird boxes throughout the district
- Implement 3 Sisters Tract Plan for woodcock and grouse habitat
  - Develop timber sale to create necessary edge habitat
  - Layout trail location
- The District, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Game Commission and Keystone Elk Country Alliance, maintains and enhances more than 40 food plots that encompass more than 450 acres that were developed, mainly for the elk herd, but used by many different species. Some of these food plots were initially funded through local and national wildlife organizations
  - Food plots to be sprayed, no-till seeded, and fertilized = 81 acres
  - Food plots to be mowed, maybe once or twice = 450 acres
  - Food plots to be limed = 46 acres
  - Vegetated roads to be mowed = 18 miles
  - Apple trees to be pruned and/or daylighted = 10
  - Wood duck nesting boxes maintained = 6
- The District will continue to locate, document, and prune old apple trees.
- The District will continue to locate, document American chestnut trees.

## ROAD AND BRIDGE PROJECTS

### MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED

- East Cowley Run Road DSA project with Dirt and Gravel funds
- Red Run Road DSA project with Dirt and Gravel funds
- Various drainage improvements (pipe and under drain installation, stream bank stabilization, sloping, etc.) throughout district area
- Contracted box culvert and bridge work: Simons Lane (Bender and Portable Runs).

## PRESCRIBED FIRE

### MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED

- Sage Farm Field 1.5 acres of warm-season grasses
- McDonald Draft Field 19 acres of warm-season grasses
- Mad Bull Sale, 30 acres of overstory removal in McDonald Draft Area
- Other prescribed fires are in the planning and review phase and may be implemented in 2024

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

- Review, update, and treat hemlock per the District Hemlock Plan
- Review, update, and treat ash per the District Ash Plan
- Review, update, and treat invasive plants per to District Invasive Plan
- Planned Invasive Plant Treatment Areas Continue
- Work with PennDOT and McKean County Conservation District to treat Goats Rue along Rt./ 146 and 46 adjacent to state forest lands.
- Continue insect and disease monitoring from aircraft and ground truthing.

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

### Seneca Resources (Severed Rights)

- 1 new pad is proposed for 2024, timeframe TBD.
- 1 new produced water line to be installed for 2024
- 3 unconventional wells plugged in 2023
- 3 to 6 wells proposed to be drilled on several existing pads, timeframe TBD
- Several roads to be daylighted in the Clermont area in 2024.

### Other Developers

- EQT plans to plug 4 wells starting in April 2024 as part of a field retirement project in the Hicks Run area.
- Diversified will plug 1 well and remove a compressor station as part of the retirement of Tract 168 in the Steam Mill area.

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

### NFG Supply

- NFG FM-100-line restoration completed in late 2023.
- Wellendorf pipeline coating project scheduled to take place in early 2024.
- Abandonment of the FM-120 line in the Dents Run area partially completed in 2023, more work to be done in 2024.

### EGT&S

- Preliminary abandonment of Line 1800 (M-1813) set for late 2024. Working on details for execution with other Districts and the Operations section regarding equipment access and permitting to protect designated Wild Areas.

#### Diversified

- Abandonment of Lease Tract 168 to be completed in 2024 as mentioned in the Natural Gas section. This includes a few miles of pipeline and above ground infrastructure to be removed.

#### EQT

- Several miles of integrated pipeline will be removed in conjunction with the project mentioned in the Natural Gas section. This process will take a few years to complete.

### **SPECIAL PROJECTS**

#### **MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED**

- Aspen cut to improve habitat for grouse and other wildlife at McDonald Draft.
- Reestablished snake basking areas that are overgrown.
- Create habitat for woodcock and grouse, develop a trail, and install interpretive panels on the 3 Sisters site

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT**

#### **MAY BE RESTRICTED/CANCELED**

- The District periodically writes and disseminates news releases to both papers and radio on proposed projects, completed projects and articles of interest.
- A yearly newsletter is created and sent to all camp lease owners.
- The District maintains a Facebook page.
- Recreational Stakeholders Meetings are held as needed.
- Volunteer projects are available for additional participation.
- Staff the Hicks Run Wildlife Viewing Area during peak visitation weekends.
- We assist with the Envirothon for both Cameron and McKean Counties.
- We host the Gravel Race and the Ultra Marathon which occurs almost entirely on state forest lands and we have a booth in town.
- We attend County fairs.
- We attend the Emporium Fire Company's fire prevention programs.
- The District Office is open weekends on opening days of deer and bear season.
- We attend the "All About Nature" sponsored by the Cameron County Conservation District.
- We attend the Sportsman's' Clubs Meetings.
- We are on the St. Mary's Shade Tree Commission Board.
- We sponsor and attend meetings and visit tree issues for *Tree City USA*.
- Present DCNR career opportunities at the Cameron County career day.

## RESEARCH

- Site Class and 2019 Canopy Heights based on LIDAR and how they can be utilized to guide timber rattlesnake habitat management activities
- Snowshoe Hare Density Research
- Autonomous Recording Unit (ARU) survey for Great Horned Owl and Barred Owl Vocalizations
- Parturition Timing and Calf Survival in PA Elk
- Stream Salamander Occurrence
- Timber Tracking of Tulip Poplar (genetic and chemical compositions)
- Timber rattlesnakes – Classify historic rattlesnake sites and provide accurate locational information and habitat boundaries and assess den viability and treats. In addition, blood samples will be collected. This is a collaborative project with the PA Fish and Boat Commission.
- Ginseng – Assessing American ginseng populations and sampling plant material for a regional study of genetic structure and habitat occupancy.

## MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS FROM PREVIOUS YEAR

- Timber management on 241 acres. Producing 648,000 board feet and \$169,698.00
- Cleared and painted over 50 miles of district trails
- We treated Mile-a-minute populations at several sites: Hicks Run, Brooks Run, Norcross, Ridge Trail, Lebo Road, Ive's Farm, and Short Bend Treated knotweed at Four Mile, Boyer Run, Nanny Run, and along Rt. 120
- Continued mechanical treatment of Goatsrue at Pepper Hill and herbicide treatment of Goatsrue and Mugwort in the East Branch Dam area by contractor and staff. Other non-native invasive plants treated throughout district: Japanese barberry, multiflora rose, autumn olive, bush honeysuckle, garlic mustard, and Japanese stiltgrass
- Staff assisted with intra-state and out-of-state wildfire suppression requests
- Assisted in multiple Search and Rescues Incidents, including the escaped prisoners
- Improved drainage and replaced pipes on northern end of Ridge Road
- Assisted the public with general and educational information
- The following bridges/box culverts were installed: East Cowley Run and Red Run Roads
- Barr Hollow Road DSA stone project with Dirt and Gravel funds
- West Hicks Run Road DSA stone project with Dirt and Gravel funds (northern end through PGC Lands)
- Cooks Run Road drainage and surface improvements on two miles of drivable trail.
- Planted approximately 6 acres of warm-season grasses/pollinator mix