

2023 Accomplishments | PA Bureau of Forestry

Conserving Forests and Connecting with People and Communities

By the Numbers



- ✓ **Forest Stewardship Program:** Program staff assisted and educated nearly **19,000** landowners to better manage their private forests.
- ✓ **Timber Management:** The bureau produced **97** sustainable timber harvests that will create more than **14,729** acres of early-successional habitat on state forest land. These operations provided about **\$19.5** million in revenue for the Commonwealth while supporting local jobs and the timber industry.
- ✓ **Wildfire:** The bureau responded to about **1,800** wildfires burning approximately **9,100** acres in 2023. The largest fire of the year burned about **4,000** acres in April.
- ✓ **Forest Health:** The bureau conducted a major spongy moth program, treating over **290,000** acres of forest in 2023. Egg mass surveys indicated the need to treat a smaller area (220,000 ac) in 2024.
- ✓ **Seed Collection:** The bureau collected **2,340** bushels of seeds and cones for propagation of a new generation of trees at its nursery.



Forest Recreation

ATV Recreation The bureau administered year three of the ATV Regional Connector Pilot in northcentral PA. Offering new connections and more mileage through collaboration with multiple stakeholders, approximately 5,255 pilot permits were sold, a 25 percent increase from 2022. The bureau provided a summary report of the program to the PA General Assembly in December.



Deer Hunting Abundant hunting opportunities were offered in 104 units in state forests and parks participating in the Game Commission's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). Forest managers opened more than 400 miles of roads prior to the start of deer season. Roughly 90 percent of all state forestlands could be accessed within one-half mile of a drivable road. Bureau staff also assisted over 200 mobility device applicants to increase access to hunting opportunities on state forests.

Camping Bureau staff accommodated nearly 15,000 camping reservations in 2023.

Forest Resource Management



Pennsylvania's 2.2-million-acre state forest system is certified under both FSC and SFI.



Dual Certification For the sixth consecutive year, the Bureau of Forestry successfully passed its dual certification audit, demonstrating its commitment to sustainable forest management under Forest Stewardship Council and Sustainable Forestry Initiative standards.

Natural Gas Activity Management The bureau currently manages approximately 1,600 gas wells. Revenues generated in 2023 from natural gas resources totaled over \$98 million.

Forest Protection

Wildland Fire Approximately 170 bureau and volunteer firefighters were deployed to battle blazes throughout the US during the 2023 fire season.

Prescribed Fire The bureau safely conducted 49 controlled burns on 1,290 acres of DCNR lands, reducing fuel loads while helping to restore fire-adapted forest communities.

Hemlock and Ash Treatment Bureau staff treated nearly 10,000 eastern hemlock and ash trees to combat invasive pests.

Conservation

Invasive Plant Management

The bureau treated 900 acres of invasive plants in 2023. Bio-control agents were released for mile-a-minute vine, spotted knapweed, and purple loosestrife.

Old Growth Forest Network

The bureau added the Snyder-Middleswarth Natural Area (Bald Eagle State Forest), bringing the total to 18 DCNR sites now designated as old growth forests.

Climate Change Through sound, science-based management, the bureau maintained the health of the 2.2-million-acre state forest system, sequestering an estimated 5.9 million tons of carbon. The bureau also oversaw the plugging of 16 orphaned or abandoned gas wells on state lands. The bureau also released Forest Carbon Management Principles (online document).

Rural & Community Forestry

TreeVitalize Program

The TreeVitalize program facilitated the planting of 6,706 trees and assisted 383 communities with tree programs.

Watershed Forestry Programs

The sixth DCNR Watershed Forestry Summit was attended by approximately 200 professionals. DCNR was awarded \$1.6 million in grants via the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) for the implementation of Watershed Forestry Practices. Additionally, approximately 137 acres were converted to meadow and seven acres to forest.



Other Accomplishments

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Belonging (DEIB)

The Growing Together committee focused on work within the Bureau in 2023. The committee collaborated with OA/HR to develop trainings for hiring managers and built understanding of DEIB content with managers through workshops, brainstorming, and large meetings. The team also supported environmental justice planning, worked with the Next Generation council, and partnered with PPFF and local organizations to host successful events for Latino Conservation Week.

Sign and Table Production

Sign and woodshop staff completed 14,407 new signs, 555 picnic tables, and six informational kiosk kits in 2023.

Awards

The bureau was recognized with a Leadership Award bestowed by the Forest Stewardship Council for 25 years of continuous certification. The bureau also was honored by the Pennsylvania Forestry Association with the J.T. Rothrock Conservationist of the Year Award.

State Forest Additions

The bureau added 7,800 acres to the state forest system in 2023 to improve recreational access, enhance carbon storage, protect ecological resources, and sustainably manage timber for wood products.

State Forest Infrastructure

In Forbes State Forest, The Mt. Davis observation tower at the state high point was completely rehabilitated. In Tioga State

Forest, staff installed 11 new CXT bathroom units on the Pine Creek Rail Trail and district camping areas. In Weiser State Forest, seven prefabricated bridges were completed as part of an ongoing C2P2 grant. The district also finished the Catawissa Recreation Area Master Plan.

Huling Branch Project, Sproul State Forest

The Huling Branch Acid Mine Drainage project was completed, rehabilitating 100 acres of land and eliminating 6,000 feet of dangerous highwall. The project included planting over 48,000 trees and 47 acres of grasslands.

Communications

Printed Materials

The bureau printed over 100,000 maps and recreation guides for public use in 2023.

Public Contact

The bureau answered over 1,100 natural resource and recreation questions posed via the AskDCNR and PaForester accounts. The bureau responded to intense interest in fall foliage, interviewing with at least 30 media outlets and providing statewide reports for six weeks.

Youth Education

The bureau continued to lead in youth education, administering Project Learning Tree, Envirothon, and Scout Forest Conservation Award programs.

