The state forest system of Pennsylvania, approximately 2.2 million acres, comprises 13 percent of the forested area in the commonwealth. This great expanse of forestland provides a wealth of benefits to Pennsylvanians, including wildlife and aesthetic beauty, timber products, water purification, revenue from gas extraction, and a variety of healthful recreational opportunities. Balancing the various uses, resources, and values of state forest land requires a thoughtful and deliberate approach to management. Since 1955, the Bureau of Forestry has been developing State Forest Resource Management Plans (SFRMPs) that guide our management and communicate our management principles and goals to the public. While society continues to place increasing needs on state forest land, such as greater recreational use and resource extraction, the forest is also under pressure from environmental stressors, such as climate change and invasive plants, insects, and disease. In light of these challenges, the bureau must carefully plan its management of state forest land to ensure sustainable ecological, social, and economic benefits now and for future generations.

The 2016 SFRMP upholds the policies set forth in our Strategic Plan – *Penn's Woods* – and builds upon the principles of ecosystem management that were outlined in that document. Upon the foundation of *Penn's Woods* and previous SFRMPs, the bureau has developed an array of principles, goals, and objectives which will move the forest into the future. The 2016 SFRMP is the first update of the plan in nine years. One accomplishment of this SFRMP is to memorialize the various planning and management activities that the bureau has undertaken over the past nine years into one comprehensive document. These include the accomplishment of meeting our first decade targets in the harvest allocation model, successfully implementing the Deer Management Assistance Program across the state forest system, managing and monitoring Marcellus and other shale-gas development, and developing management plans for the influences of hemlock woolly adelgid and emerald ash borer. The 2016 SFRMP also provides points of emphasis for future management, such as climate change,

prescribed fire, lakes, river islands, cultural resources, and communication via social media and interpretive opportunities. We attempted to make this SFRMP more useable and accessible, both for staff reference and for public consumption.

An important part of the SFRMP development process is the incorporation of public input. As part of the early planning process, prior to developing a draft of the SFRMP, the bureau conducted an online survey to gauge public opinion on state forest management, to which we had over 3,250 respondents. After the draft SFRMP was released last fall, the bureau held a four-month public comment period and twelve public meetings to provide an opportunity for the citizens of Pennsylvania to have a say in how their land is managed. We received comments from nearly 4,800 people and organizations during the public comment period. This critical input from the public is reflected in the final SFRMP. Notable changes to the SFRMP that were influenced by public comment include the introduction of Core Forest and Wild Character Focus Areas, to better conserve these values on state forest land, and the development of a new position statement on oil and gas development on state forest and state park lands, which states that further leasing of state forest and state park lands will not be considered at this time.

The 2016 SFRMP provides a broad framework that leaves the bureau poised for the development of district-level plans in upcoming years. District-level plans will have increased focused on local resources and values, and the development process for district-level plans will include additional avenues for public input.

The 2016 SFRMP is the culmination of months of hard work, and it sets the course for sustainable management of state forest land for years to come.

Dan Devlin
State Forester