

Operations of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) on State Forest lands

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) is aware there is an increased interest in individuals wanting to fly Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), otherwise commonly referred to as “drones”. As such the DCNR has adopted a few fundamental guidelines that individuals should be aware of before flying an UAS on or over state forestlands. The following guidelines are intended to help provide the necessary protections of the resources and the other people using state forest lands.

Know Where to Fly

- Individuals and organizations may fly UAS for hobby or recreational purposes in compliance with Section 336 of Public Law 112-95.
- Be sure to fly your UAS below 400 feet and remain clear of surrounding obstacles.
- UAS are considered to be both “motorized equipment” and “mechanical transport” as such they cannot take off from, land in, or be operated from designated Natural and Wild Areas, or areas otherwise posted as closed.
- UAS are not permitted to fly in areas that have “Temporary Flight Restrictions” (TFR) in place, such as wildfires. You can search the FAA website for current TFRs by clicking <http://tfr.faa.gov/tfr2/list.html>.
- It is recommended that individuals wishing to fly their UAS for recreational purposes contact the forest district office to verify whether any local restrictions are in place before flying their UAS.
- It is required that individuals flying a UAS for commercial reasons, contact the local forest district office prior to the flight.

Protect Wildlife & the Environment

- Do not fly over designated Natural and Wild Areas as many people seek these places for the opportunities for the quiet solitude that these natural areas provide.
- Do not fly over or near wildlife, as this can create stress that may cause significant harm, and even death.
- Pursuit, harassment, or an intentional disturbance of animals is not allowed unless approved (in writing) as research or management.
- Follow state wildlife and fish agency regulations on the use of UAS to search for or detect wildlife and fish.
- Do not launch or fly the UAS within 100 meters (328 feet) of any wildlife. **Do not** approach animals or birds vertically with the UAS.

Fly Safely, Stay in Control

- Keep your UAS within your visual line of sight at all times.
- Take lessons and learn to operate your UAS safely.
- Remain well clear of and do not interfere with manned aircraft operations.
- Fly your UAS at least 5 miles from an airport or backcountry airstrip.
- Keep your UAS away from populated and noise-sensitive areas, such as campgrounds, trail heads, and visitor centers.
- Obey all privacy laws.

Follow Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Guidelines

- The FAA has authority over all airspace. Ensure that you comply with all FAA regulations and guidance for flying your UAS. Information on FAA regulations is available <http://www.faa.gov/uas/>.
- Do not fly any aircraft weighing more than 55 pounds (total weight, including payload and fuel source).

Commercial Operations

Any DCNR leased, contracted, or other commercially flown UAS on state forest lands will require a certified and registered aircraft, a licensed operator, and operational approval from the FAA before operation. A company, organization, or individual flying an UAS on state forest lands for commercial purposes will also be required to obtain written authorization in the form of a Commercial Activities Agreement (CAA) and have available upon request proof of having a remote pilot certificate and a properly registered aircraft.