



Pennsylvania Department of
Conservation & Natural Resources

Forest Focus

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Cultural and Historical Resources Management

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DCNR's cultural and historical resources (CHR) program began working with state parks and state forests in April 2021. From the start, the CHR program mission has been to balance the needs of parks and forests with the benefits of preserving, contextualizing, and managing our public heritage resources. From a functional standpoint, the focus has been to identify or build tools to enable our agency to do this effectively and at a broader scale than past efforts. "We are very pleased to be taking significant steps to formalize our management of cultural and historical resources on state forest lands," said State Forester Ellen Shultzabarger. "These resources are important components of state forest lands and valuable to Pennsylvanians," she added.

Starting with the first Pennsylvania state park at Valley Forge in 1893 and the first acquisition of state forest land along Young Womans Creek in 1898, DCNR, in its various historical forms, has been managing cultural and historical resources for present and future use, education, and enjoyment. Our agency predates the creation of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) in 1945 and its legislative guidance (codified in 1988), so many of our earliest efforts to preserve heritage sites were internally driven at a local or informal level. Our roots were established, but our direction now is one of intentional consideration and conservation.

Despite our legacy of managing myriad resources, cultural resources management was not formalized at DCNR until the past decade.

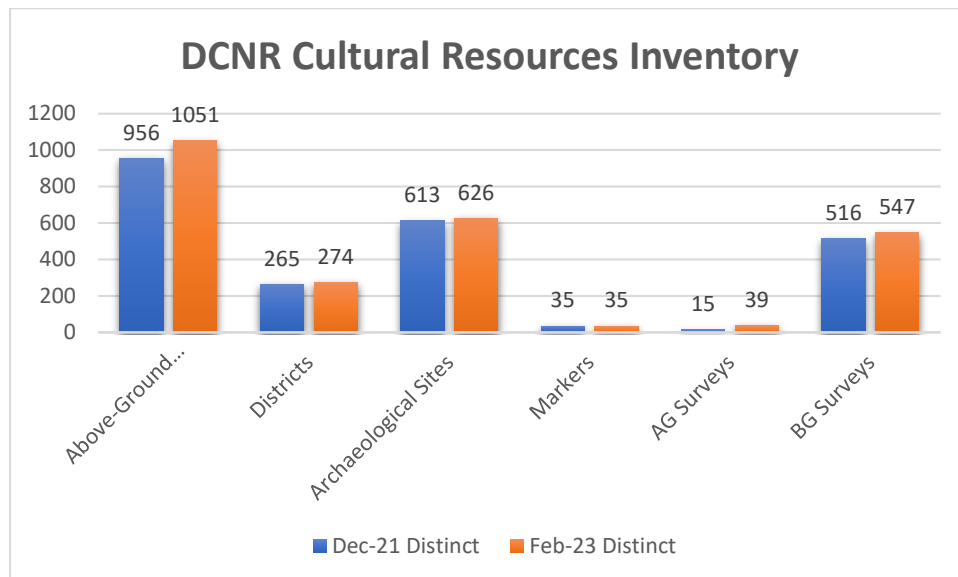
- 2016: *State Forest Resource Management Plan* included its first chapter on Cultural and Historic Resources with a defined principle, goals, and objectives.
- 2021: *Penn's Parks For All: A Plan for Pennsylvania's State Parks of Tomorrow* called out and identified the need to develop a CHR program.
- 2022: DCNR and the PHMC's State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) executed their first Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Cultural

Resources Review. With 130 years of experience managing Pennsylvania's parks and forest lands, DCNR's foundation of resource management will greatly benefit cultural resources management.

In addition to managing cultural and historical resources for 130 years, DCNR also manages more sites and structures than any other agency in Pennsylvania.

The latest data share from PA SHPO shows our efforts to enhance our management of CHR are already having a positive impact on the status of inventoried resources in our state parks and forests.

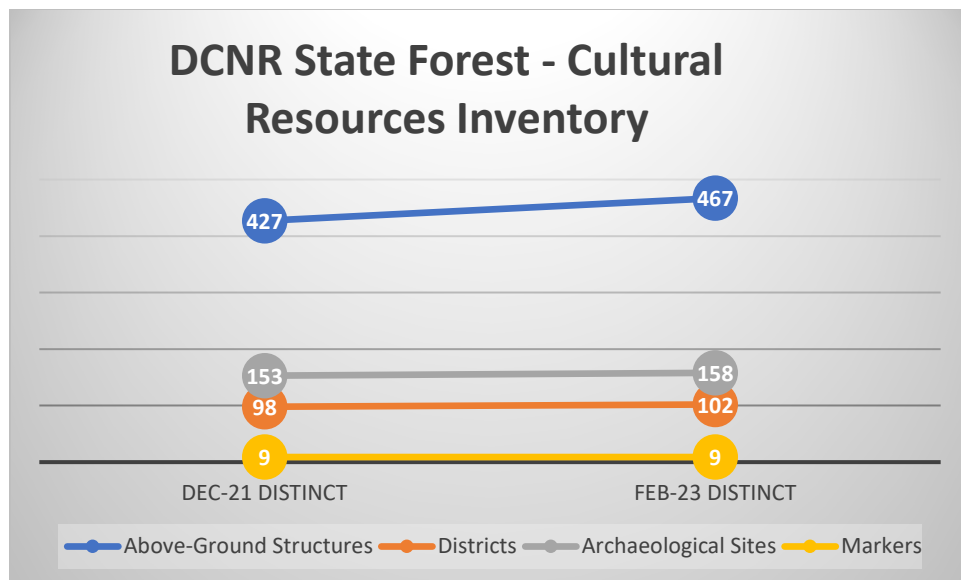
As a note, the data housed in the PA SHPO's PA-SHARE ([PA-SHARE - Welcome!](#)) includes only *recorded* cultural resources that have been entered into their system. It does not represent a full census of historic resources on DCNR properties. Inventorying DCNR properties for historic resources and incorporating other internal inventories are important steps toward understanding what we have and how best to manage these resources moving forward.



State forests are home to over 736 previously recorded cultural and historical resources:

- 467 above-ground structures
- 102 historic districts
- 158 archaeological sites
- 9 historical markers

These numbers are up from last year's count of distinct resources (687).



Cultural resources management is happening in a variety of ways in our forests (see photographs), but it can also include (bolded are the most common or frequent uses):

- **reviews of projects that might impact resources**
- review and comment on scopes of work or proposals impacting cultural resources
- **conducting surveys of projects and inventorying or recording resources**
- **working with Native and Indigenous groups on our tribal consultation efforts**
- helping to interpret Pre-Contact (sites dating to before European contact) and Historic-period sites and structures by conducting background research or developing contexts
- working with staff or researchers to develop signage or curriculum content
- **public archaeology and history outreach events or efforts**
- **put staff into contact with local university and preservation partners**
- identify and share technical publications for preservation techniques/methods/best management practices
- help identify grant and partnership opportunities to support preservation of resources

As state forest and state park visitation has risen, we have also witnessed increased public interest in experiencing the history of these places. The PHMC surveyed Pennsylvanians in 2018 to better understand what they valued about their communities. Queried as to which resources they felt most enhanced their communities, the top three responses were older and historic places, beauty/views, and parks and open spaces.

Building off DCNR's legacy of stewardship, we aim to ensure that Pennsylvanians can connect with the heritage they seek in our forests by conserving our cultural and historical resources.



DCNR and PA SHPO Staff with the PAOC crews at Carroll Cabin (circa 1775-1952), Forbes Forest District.



Bob and Joanna Robinson take part in an oral history interview from their time at the UCC Church Camp (circa 1947-1972), Camp Michaux, Michaux Forest District.



Field view of the intersection of a modern hiking trail, the Laurel Highlands Hiking Trail (LHHT), and the historically known Native or Indigenous Glades Path in the Roaring Run Natural Area, Forbes Forest District.



Field view of a coal chute/ramp from a prospection phase at the Eagleton Mining Complex (circa 1846-1848), Sproul Forest District.

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