



News for Immediate Release

Jan. 22, 2013

Independent Review Hails Management of Pennsylvania's State Forests

Harrisburg – The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) released the results of an independent review team's annual study of state forestlands today, affirming the state's efforts to conserve resources through sound management.

"The auditors were very pleased with our forest management and our staff's dedication, and I extend thanks to each of the districts involved in this year's audit for another job well done," DCNR Secretary Richard Allan said. "This continued certification is an affirmation of the pride we take in managing our state forest system for many values and uses, while maintaining its long-term health and viability."

"Forest management faces many threats and challenges, including fragmentation and disturbance, invasive plants, destructive exotic insects and insufficient regeneration," Allan said. "The certification process shows we are doing everything we can to improve our management plans and practices. More importantly, it helps us identify areas we can improve to ensure our forests are well managed and in line with stakeholder expectations."

For the 15th consecutive year, when a team of scientists first began reviewing management of Pennsylvania's 2.2 million acres of state forestlands, researchers lauded Pennsylvania's commitment to its forests, and exemplary practices and innovation in managing forest resources.

The independent, third-party review was conducted in late August 2012 by Rainforest Alliance, recognized as the world's leading forest management certifier. Certification assures consumers that wood products from the state's public forests come from a sustainable, well-managed system, which helps Pennsylvania to compete in the growing niche consumer market for "green" label wood products.

The annual assessment is designed to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of DCNR's Bureau of Forestry according to guidelines established by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). The FSC® is an independent organization supporting environmentally appropriate, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests. It was formed in 1993 by environmental, social and forest-products industry representatives to establish guidelines for sustainable forest-management practices.

A Rainforest Alliance project team consisting of a forestry socio-economic assessor and a wildlife ecologist toured Gallitzen, Clear Creek and Sproul state forest districts. They met with DCNR officials and stakeholders, scoring woodlands on timber-resource sustainability, forest-ecosystem maintenance, financial and socioeconomic considerations and other categories. Auditors sought stakeholder input on deer impact in the forest; implementation of the Deer Management Assistance Program; forest regeneration; and remediation of trails following a motorcycle enduro race in Sproul State Forest.

Specifically, Rainforest Alliance applauded the bureau for:

- Habitat enhancement in a reclaimed surface coal mine, now home to threatened and endangered bird species, and designated as a High Conservation Value Forest in Gallitzin State Forest;
- Cooperation, training, co-coordination and research efforts with the USDA Forest Service in addressing potential regeneration shortfalls in Clear Creek State Forest;
- Reduced impact of the July 2012 motorcycle enduro race in Sproul State Forest; trail remediation after the event; and efforts to balance stakeholder needs and sound forest management in overseeing an event that drew some 250 participants.

"In each of these districts auditors also looked at the overall condition of our forests, roads, trails and infrastructure," Allan said. "Every employee should feel proud of the work they have done to help us maintain such a high standard."

The evaluation team and Rainforest Alliance work with the bureau to resolve any issues found during audits. Streamlining of special activity guidelines on motorized trails were requested in the 2012 study, and suggestions were made to improve stakeholder input and regeneration surveys after timber harvests.

"Just as recycled products have become common in the marketplace, many environmentally conscious timber consumers look for 'green' wood grown in certified forests," Allan said. "Continuing certification is especially good news when you consider our quality hardwoods help support the state's \$7 billion forest products industry that employs more than 60,000 people."

Copies of the Rainforest Alliance 2012 state forest evaluation and the State Forest Resource Management Plan can be found at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforestmanagement/index.htm>.

Media contact: Terry Brady, 717-772-9101

###