

FISH AND WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT ON STATE FORESTS

Fish and wildlife management will be an active and integral part of the overall Division of Forestry property management direction. Habitat conservation and vegetative management will continue to be the major fish and wildlife management tools employed. Fish and Wildlife Operational Guides will be developed in cooperation with the Division of Fish and Wildlife for each state forest.

Guidelines for the Development and Protection of Critical Woodland Wildlife Habitats on State Forests

1) CONTINUOUS FOREST CANOPY AREAS

Areas of continuous forest canopy are an integral part of central hardwood ecosystems. These areas contribute to the habitat requirements of forest interior wildlife species and also contribute to ecological diversity and aesthetic values. The management of these areas will avoid activities which permanently interrupt the continuous canopy. Guidelines are provided in the appendix for the designation and retention of tree-based habitat features.

2) PERMANENT WILDLIFE OPENINGS

Small permanent openings located in predominantly forested areas provide necessary habitat diversity for certain forest wildlife species. These areas are particularly important for their herbaceous cover and forage, and as habitat for insects that are critical to the success of certain bird, reptile and amphibian species. Permanent openings must be maintained regularly to remain in an open condition. Permanent wildlife openings will not be created in areas where the cover type is predominantly mature hardwood forest, but only on old field sites and sites dominated by nonnative species. Certain log landings created during harvest operations in mature hardwood forest may be maintained as permanent openings. The amount and distribution of suitable open areas in the entire surrounding landscape should be assessed when deciding whether to create a permanent wildlife opening.

3) SUCCESSIONAL VEGETATION AREAS

These are areas in which the overstory vegetation is removed or significantly reduced at one point in time, and then the area is allowed to return to its forested state (example: regeneration openings created during timber harvest or 'daylighting' of a road). These successional areas provide woody browse, dense cover, and nesting sites for many species of mammals and birds. For the most part adequate successional areas are created on state forests during other management activities, but specific situations may require the creation of successional areas for wildlife purposes.

4) WETLANDS

Wetlands in forested environments provide a vital link in the total ecological chain in many situations. Wetlands are particularly valuable for their ground water holding capacity and because they are critical habitat to several threatened and endangered species. Protection, acquisition, and restoration of wetlands on state forests will be pursued.

5) OPEN WATER FISHERIES

The continued cooperative maintenance of open water fisheries by the Divisions of Fish and Wildlife and Forestry provide both ecological continuity and recreational opportunity.

Special Consideration – Indiana Bat

The Indiana bat is a species of special concern for state forest management. Several major winter hibernacula are located on or near state forest holdings. A major percentage of the current species population overwinters in Indiana. All state forests fall within the current delineated summer habitat area.

A strategy has been developed to assist properties with determining the impact of major management activities on Indiana bat habitat. All properties will evaluate activities using the strategy. All tract management guides that prescribe a major management activity will address the guidelines in the strategy. In older guides, the guidelines will be addressed in a guide amendment. The primary items that need to be evaluated under typical management activities are snags, large live trees, and riparian corridors. Protection of hibernacula is a special concern and is a high priority. Land acquisition opportunities that enhance or obtain major hibernacula will be a priority.

Guidelines for Wildlife Reestablishment and Restocking Programs on State Forests

1) GAME SPECIES

The reestablishment and restocking of native game animals refills human created gaps in the ecosystem and also provides the opportunity for recreational hunting and wildlife observation. Any proposed reintroduction or stocking project must be coordinated with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Forestry, Program Director or Property Section Head.

2) NONGAME SPECIES

The reestablishment and restocking of native nongame animals refills human created gaps in the ecosystem, can be used to reinforce the population of some threatened and

endangered species, and provides nonconsumptive recreational opportunities. Any proposed reintroduction or stocking project must be coordinated with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Forestry, Program Director or Property Section Head

3) FISH

The stocking and restocking of fish into state forest waters can be used to manage both vegetation and existing fish populations, while enhancing the recreational fishing opportunities. The control and removal of undesirable aquatic populations is to be considered a part of this program. Any proposed fish stocking project must be coordinated with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Forestry, Program Director or Property Section Head.

4) NONNATIVE (EXOTIC) INTRODUCTIONS

The introduction of nonnative species of either plants or animals should only be undertaken after careful consideration of the long term ramifications to the native ecosystem. Any proposed nonnative animal introductions must be coordinated with the Division of Fish and Wildlife and the Division of Forestry, Program Director or Property Section Head.

Guideline for Refuges and Special Management Areas

1) REFUGES

It is possible that posted refuge areas will be needed on some state forests, if it becomes apparent that efforts to establish and maintain populations of game or nongame species are being adversely effected by other activities. The establishment of posted refuge areas on state forests will require the approval of the Division of Forestry, Property Section Head.

2) SPECIAL MANAGEMENT AREAS

Special management areas may be established on some state forests on a temporary basis to accomplish specific management goals. The establishment of special management areas will require the approval of the State Forester. On these special management areas the wildlife management objectives may supersede other multiple uses.

Guidelines for Wildlife Population and Habitat Inventories

The Division of Fish and Wildlife, with the assistance of the Division of Forestry, will be responsible for making any surveys and inventories of wildlife populations necessary to establish the effectiveness of management measures or to identify areas of concern.

Fish and wildlife habitat conditions will be assessed during all forest resource tract inventories conducted by the Division of Forestry. The management prescription for the tract should address both positive and negative impacts that prescribed activities will have on various

habitats.

Collection of Animals

Properties occasionally receive requests from the public to gather or collect animals, including reptiles and amphibians. Removal of animals by individuals is prohibited except as provided by hunting, fishing, and trapping laws and regulation, or for legitimate research. Properties will not issue permits for animal gathering. Research that requires animal collection must receive a scientific collectors license through Central Office.

Section Bullet Summary

- State forest will promote a variety of vegetative stages to provide habitat diversity, with emphasis on contiguous forest habitat.
- Guidelines are available for tree based habitat features.
- Properties will evaluate the impact of major management activities on the Indiana bat.
- Fish or wildlife stocking programs will be coordinated with the Property Program Director.
- Inventories and surveys of fish and wildlife may be conducted.
- Animal collection, including reptiles and amphibians, is prohibited except as specified by laws, regulations and for approved research.