

Stewart State Forest Newsletter

Summer 2007

**NY State Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Division of Lands and Forests
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New Paltz, NY 12561
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UMP

The **Stewart State Forest Unit Management Plan** was approved in December 2006 and distributed in January and February. If anyone would like a hard copy of the plan or a CD with an electronic version of the plan in PDF format, please contact George Profous (256-3082 or gvprofou@gw.dec.state.ny.us), Jeff Wiegert (256-3084 or jawieger@gw.dec.state.ny.us) or Rob Messenger (256-3004 or rwmessen@gw.dec.state.ny.us). The UMP can also be downloaded from the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/22544.html>.

Conservationist Article

The February issue of DEC's *Conservationist* magazine included an article about Stewart State Forest, entitled "In High Demand: Stewart State Forest – one-of-a-kind buffer." The three-page article, written by George Profous, informed people of the outstanding resources of the Stewart property, its uses and history.

Stewart State Forest Map and Guide and New Trails

A two-sided, 11 x 17-inch Stewart State Forest Map and Guide has been designed and is being copied and distributed to anyone who requests a sample. Once funding becomes available, much larger quantities of an updated version will be published by DEC printers.

A marked trail system is being installed on the property as outlined and approved in the UMP. Not all trails are being marked. Only key trails which will serve to help users find their way around the property and reduce the incidence of getting lost have been marked. Not all trails approved in the UMP are being marked. Most existing trails, if not causing damage to their surroundings will remain open, but new trails will not be allowed. In areas where multiple trails in close proximity

to each other duplicate one another, most will be closed, leaving the best and most appropriate trails open. Carsonite (fiberglass) stakes and mowing will be used to guide users on hard to follow trails crossing fields. Some trails in field areas have not been completed and users are warned on the map that some trails will not be completed until 2008.

The DEC, working with volunteer inmates from local prisons, took advantage of the mild weather during the winter of 2006-07 and worked to clear and re-open several trails, including the Maple Avenue to Weed Road connector and Buchanan Hill Trails. The clearing of trails and trees from some fields for mowing will continue in the Winter 2007-08. Several volunteers have continued to assist DEC with installing trail markers throughout 2007.

TRPs (Temporary Revocable Permits)

Over 20 TRPs have been issued thus far in 2007 for special uses of Stewart State Forest, including retriever trials and training, bicycle races and events, horse rides, and farming. Four farmers are currently maintaining fields at Stewart State Forest.

Volunteers

The DEC is helped by a growing number of volunteers, including the following:

- Cleanups and projects by Dark Horse Cycles, SPARC, and the Fox Hill Bruderhof Community;
- Maintenance of snowmobile trails with the Rock Tavern Sno Riders;
- Horse trail and park maintenance with Linda Myer;
- Bird monitoring and natural resource protection/invasive species control with the Edgar A. Mearns Bird Club;
- Mowing, trash pickup and road maintenance by the Westchester Retriever Club.

Invasive plant species removal, especially the removal of Mile-A-Minute Vine, has also received a substantial boost by dozens of volunteers working as part of a larger attempt to stop the spread of this plant into southern New York. This work has come in the form of hand-pulling the weed which, as the name implies, is incredibly fast growing. It grows in and among other plants such as multiflora rose, and hand removal of it is therefore tedious and difficult. The department is planning additional efforts to eradicate this plant from the property (see Invasive

Species Control below).

There is always more work to do, and the department would not be able to accomplish nearly as much as it does without the help of volunteers, who truly appreciate the value of the Stewart State Forest and are willing to donate their time and energy to help protect it. Anyone who is interested in conducting a volunteer project on the property is encouraged to contact George Profous.

Kiosks

A new kiosk will be installed along Barron Road South in Summer 2007. In subsequent years, a parking lot, called for in the UMP, will be built here. Maps and information are being updated at the existing kiosks. The Lexan cover at weed Road is damaged and will be replaced, and the kiosks will be stained as well.

Rare Plants

Draft Plans are being created for preservation of the Purple Milkweed field at Barron Road South, including a schedule for mowing, liming, controlling and removing purple loosestrife and fertilizing, if necessary. (For more information on purple loosestrife control, see Invasive Species Control below.)

Parking along Barron Road and Route 207

The Department of Transportation has confirmed that the hunter parking spaces called for in the Unit Management Plan, to replace those lost during the reconstruction of Drury lane, will be replaced by fall. We will continue to monitor progress on this work, and remain in communication with DOT to ensure that the work is completed in time for the 2007 hunting season.

Invasive Species Control

Mile-A-Minute Weed

DEC and the Hudson River National Estuarine Research Reserve co-sponsored an invasive species field trip and Mile-A-Minute vine pull on June 23 and will hold another on August 25 at 10:30 AM. Participants in the August field trip should meet at Barron Road South off Route 208. For more information, contact Laura Weyeneth at laweyene@gw.dec.state.ny.us (Tel.845-889-4745, ext 115).

The DEC has worked for two years to create a low impact program to eliminate Mile-A-Minute (MAM) vine from Stewart State Forest. Although it is found in many locations especially to the south and west of the State Forest, it is the department's goal to keep Stewart State Forest MAM - free. With this in mind, the DEC is contracting with certified pesticide applicators with the intent to spray four locations in the Barron Road area, once before mid-July and again by mid-August. The contractor will be required to use backpack sprayers, which allow good control over the spray and will help to limit the herbicide application to the target species. The timing of the project is designed to eliminate Mile-A-Minute vine before it sets seed this year.

The spray to be used is a glyphosate known as Rodeo. It was chosen because it can be used in wetland areas and breaks down very quickly in the environment. All major access points will be posted with information and users will be kept out of the sprayed areas for 3 days. The areas being sprayed are not along any roads or recreational trails, so few people will even notice the project. Red dye will be incorporated into the herbicide to allow for improved monitoring of the contract, helping DEC staff ensure that the contractor is limiting their spraying to MAM vine. The dye will dissipate quickly with rain.

Because MAM vine seeds remain viable in the soil for at least five years, it is anticipated that similar efforts in conjunction with targeted hand pulling will need to continue in subsequent years. DEC is applying for an Invasive Species Eradication Grant to continue the program for three years, and monitoring will continue for 5 years. No more than 20 acres on the State Forest will be sprayed in any one year.

Japanese Knotweed

The DEC has also applied for an Invasive Species Eradication Grant for the control of Japanese knotweed on approximately eight acres of the State Forest. Japanese knotweed is found in several locations, always near trails and roads, which can help its spread into moist and wetland area fringes throughout the property. Its eradication is very important to stem its future spread throughout the property. One example of its prolific nature is the Weed Road/Ridge Road intersection, where it swallows the road every summer. Mowing and ditching along roadsides will now be done very carefully, and equipment used for these purposes will be cleaned afterward to help ensure that pieces of the plant, which sprout quite readily, are not moved to new parts of the property. If grant funding is received,

the control program will run for three years starting in 2008.

Purple Loosestrife

Garucella beetles, the larvae of which feed on purple loosestrife and are part of an effective control plan, will be released at the Barron Road purple milkweed site and the wetlands north of Wilkens Pond in late June or early July. They have been released elsewhere on the property for at least five years, and appear to be helping to keep the purple loosestrife population in check.

Road Maintenance

The DEC is soliciting bids for the reclamation of the most eroded and damaged asphalt roads on the property. Given the money available for this work and the estimated cost per mile, four to five miles of road should be able to be reclaimed this year. The existing asphalt surface will be taken up, ground, and placed back on the road surface, with extra gravel as needed. The resulting road surface will be essentially the same as traditional gravel roads, and will be more easily maintained by grading and raking.

The orange paint with arrows on the roads that users may have seen recently are intended to delineate the approximate areas to be reclaimed. The highest priority sections are on Weed Road, approximately 1.5 miles of Ridge Road and some very poor sections of Maple Avenue. Although the reclamation of the asphalt will be done through a contract, ditching along the roads will be carried out by DEC Operations crews as needed. Care will be taken with ditching near any invasive plants (to avoid spread) or wetlands, and roadsides will be checked for special plants before work commences. The work is scheduled to begin sometime in August, 2007.

Regulation Implementation

Department staff are drafting regulatory language to implement certain changes approved in the UMP. Specifically, those changes are as follows:

- Allow the use of shotguns, muzzle loaders and .22 caliber rimfire handguns; prohibit the use of rifles
- Limit the use of snowmobiles to designated trails only
- Allow camping by permit only; prohibit camping during big game season

- Allow fires by permit only
- Allow fishing and the use of non-motorized or electric motor boats on all waters on the property; allow ice fishing except during big game season
- Open property to all users, except during big game season; limit use during big game season to licensed big game hunters and their companions; eliminate party size and dog restrictions.

Until the new regulations are approved and adopted, the existing regulations will remain in effect. In addition to writing the actual language (known as “express terms”) of the regulations, staff must also complete several forms required to outline the needs and benefits of the regulations, and to demonstrate that the regulations will not have negative impacts on local small businesses, jobs or employment opportunities, costs to local governments, etc. The express terms and supporting documents are then reviewed by the Governor’s Office for Regulatory Reform, and if approved are released for public comment. Once the public comment period is complete and necessary changes (if any) are made to the express terms, the regulations are filed with the Department of State and adopted. The process is not expected to be completed until 2008.

Weed Road Power Line

DEC Operations staff will be working this summer to clear the electrical lines that provide power to the Weed Road check station. Trees and branches have grown into the lines and must be removed to maintain safe utility line clearances. The work must be done before the fall hunting season in order for Central Hudson to provide electric service.

Mowing

DEC staff will soon begin mowing operations on the property. The first two weeks will concentrate on road rights-of-way, to avoid impacting field habitats prior to the July 15 date recommended by Fish & Wildlife staff. Delaying mowing until after this date is intended to allow ground nesting birds greater opportunity to raise and fledge their young. Mowing is a priority to maintain a balance of diverse habitats throughout the property. The field mowing started two years ago and continues the plan set forth in the Unit Management Plan. Some clearing of individual trees which have grown in the fields will take place in late summer with a mechanical brush hog and in winter with the help of inmates.