This document presents public survey data and responses to the public comments received by the Bureau of Forestry (bureau) on the Pinchot District State Forest Resource Management Plan (DSFRMP). The public survey data is based on online poll results as well as paper comment forms received during the public comment period on the Pinchot DSFRMP. The public comment period was open for two months following the date of the Pinchot DSFRMP public meeting, which was held on December 5, 2018. The public survey data is not a statistically valid public poll, but rather the opinions of interested stakeholders that chose to fill out the online or paper survey. The bureau received 115 responses to the survey.

**State Forest Uses**

In Question 1, survey respondents were asked to check their primary uses of state forest land. The figure below displays the responses from those that took the Pinchot DSFRMP survey. It shows that hiking and biking are by far the two most common uses of state forest land amongst survey respondents.
Non-motorized activities such as hiking and biking are permitted on most state forest trails. In Pinchot Forest District, there are 22 miles of state forest hiking trails, and 39 miles of shared-use district trails, that may be used for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing and other non-motorized activities.

**State Forest Values**

In Question 2, survey respondents were asked to select the top three values they perceive for Pinchot State Forest. The figure below displays the responses from those that took the Pinchot DSFRMP survey. It shows that outdoor recreation (such as hiking, biking, and picnicking), at 81%, is the top-rated value amongst survey respondents. It should be noted other intrinsic values of forest land such as clean air and water, wild plant and wildlife habitat, natural beauty, and conserved open space are highly rated by over 40% of the respondents. In addition, hunting and fishing recreational pursuits were included as a separate choice that scored 19%.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Values of State Forest Land</th>
<th>Percentage of Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor recreation, such as hiking, biking, and picnicking</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clean air and water</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plant and wildlife habitat</td>
<td>47%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scenic and natural beauty</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conserved open space</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunting and fishing</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Timber and forest products</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal, natural gas, and mineral extraction</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pinchot State Forest lands occupy the mountains and ridges which surround the urbanized valley communities of the greater Scranton-Wilkes Barre-Hazleton Metro area and provides a host of outdoor recreation opportunities to the region and beyond.
State Forest Threats

In Question 3, survey respondents were asked to select the top three threats they perceive for Pinchot State Forest. The figure below displays the responses from those that took the Pinchot DSFRMP survey. It shows that forest loss due to development and coal, natural gas, and mineral extraction are rated as the top threats amongst survey respondents.

Regarding forest loss due to development:

All forests, public and private, provide many benefits and services to citizens of Pennsylvania, visitors, and the businesses and industry of the Commonwealth. Pennsylvania forests offer wood products, watershed values, recreation opportunities, plant and wildlife habitat, and a variety of other values. However, as forested lands are fragmented and disappear, so do the benefits they provide. To meet its mission of ensuring the long-term health, viability, and productivity of the Commonwealth’s forests, one of the foundational challenges is to keep forests as forests. This aim can be very complex to achieve with the 12 million acres of privately own forest land in Pennsylvania that are receiving ever increasing land use change pressure.
Measures and activities that the Bureau undertakes to address forest loss include:

- 35 Service Foresters stationed throughout the state to provide guidance to private forest landowners;
- Assistance to municipalities with land use planning;
- Partnering with Penn State Center for Private Forests on Forest Landowner Legacy that focuses on forest ownership succession planning;
- Administering the U.S. Forest Service Forest Legacy Program that provides funding for forest acquisitions and easements;
- Development of a working forest easement program;
- Pursuing key forest acquisitions to add to the state forest system;
- Supporting many different conservancies and the Pennsylvania Land Trust Association; and
- Promoting forestry and the knowledge of forests by educating and assisting other government agencies, communities, landowners, forest industry, and the general public in forest stewardship and value of forest resources.

Regarding coal, natural gas, and mineral extraction:

The Bureau of Forestry’s mission statement identifies the environmentlly sound utilization of mineral resources, which includes coal, natural gas, and other minerals extraction, as a key component of state forest management. There is presently an Executive Order prohibiting additional oil and gas leasing of state forest land, subject to future advice and recommendations made by DCNR. Management decisions related to currently permissible extraction activities are guided by many sources of information including: applicable laws and regulations; the 2016 State Forest Resource Management Plan; leases and contracts; and guidelines and procedures, such as the Guidelines for Administering Oil and Gas Activity on State Forest Lands. The Bureau’s approach for managing negative effects of extraction activities is “avoid, minimize, mitigate, and monitor.”

The Bureau of Forestry established a shale gas monitoring program in 2011 that consists of an integrated monitoring team, on-the-ground management activities, and research and external partner collaborations. The program monitors a suite of forest values to identify the effects of oil and gas development on state forest land, inform management decisions, and develop best management practices for administering oil and gas development. The shale gas monitoring program published its second comprehensive report in 2018. Information on the Bureau’s oil and gas management can be found at this web address:

[https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/NaturalGasDrillingImpact/Pages/default.aspx](https://www.dcnr.pa.gov/Conservation/ForestsAndTrees/NaturalGasDrillingImpact/Pages/default.aspx)

Pinchot Forest district is in the heart of the anthracite coal mining region and a significant amount of former coal mine lands comprise the state forest located on the Penobscot Ridge, Wilkes-Barre Mt. and Avondale landscapes. Although there are no current mine operations on state forest lands the legacy of the coal mine past is evident in the remnants of patch towns, mine shafts, pits, and culm banks. With time, nature will reclaim most of the landmarks to this industrial past. Currently the district is working with the Department of Environmental Protection, Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation, to identify
and reclaim some of these areas that present the most hazards to public safety and to reduce acid mine run off into the local watersheds.

Mineral rights to the coals reserves are still held by outside parties; however, current economics and uses for anthracite coal are greatly reduce and future anthracite mining on state forest lands is not anticipated. Future coal mining and its associated infrastructure is not considered as a high threat to state forest land.

Other Comments from Public

Regarding Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution:

Pinchot District received several comments regarding the DSFRMP and its relation to Article 1, Section 27 of the Pennsylvania Constitution.

Article 1, Section 27 of the Constitution, the Conservation and Natural Resources Act, the Wild Resource Conservation Act, and Penn’s Woods are all described in the 2016 state-wide SFRMP as “Planning Foundations” on which the SFRMP and all state forest management is based. The Preface to the District SFRMPs also acknowledges the importance of Article 1, Section 27 in defining the bureau’s stewardship responsibilities for state forest lands. The bureau recognizes the people’s right to “clean air, pure water, and to the preservation of natural, scenic, historic, and esthetic values of the environment.” The bureau carries out the constitutional mandate by implementing it in both our long-term planning and every-day actions as trustee. The priority goals of this District SFRMP, as well as the policies, goals, and objectives of the 2016 state-wide SFRMP, serve to conserve and maintain these rights and will help the bureau sustainably manage the state forest system for the benefit of all Commonwealth citizens, including generations yet to come. That sustainable management of state forest lands is verified every year by a third-party certification audit.

Regarding provision of bird habitat on Pinchot state forest lands:

Pinchot Forest District cooperates with PA Game Commission and other local conservation groups on the management of forest habitats and the monitoring of wildlife populations. The approach is to not manage for species-specific habitats, but rather to create healthy, biologically diverse forest habitats in various successional stages. These varied sites from early successional to closed canopy forests will provide habitat for a variety of birds and other wildlife species.

Regarding plans for State Forest Recreation Areas:

Since the public draft of the Pinchot DSFRMP, additional information has been added regarding the three State Forest Recreation Areas in Pinchot District: Moon Lake, Seven Tubs, and Manny Gordon. These areas experience higher recreational use than other areas of Pinchot State Forest, and as such special rules apply in these State Forest Recreation Areas. The management objective for these areas is to provide an opportunity for dispersed recreation while maintaining the wild character of the state forest. The bureau is developing long-term recreation management plans for each area. Some preliminary objectives of each plan are provided in the bullets below.
Moon Lake Recreation Area
- Provide for dispersed recreation
- Provide opportunity for rustic camping. Currently there are 12 camp sites and 1 group camping area.
- Construct an ADA accessible boat launch area
- Improve public access and parking
- Convert asphalt road system to Bureau of Forestry standard dirt and gravel road system

Seven Tubs Recreation Area
- Provide opportunity for dispersed recreation
- Improve hiking trails for pedestrian-only access to the Seven Tubs
- Improve the road system and public parking
- Historical and natural interpretation of the tubs area

Manny Gordon Recreation Area
- Provide for dispersed recreation
- Snowmobile parking and trail head
- 3 rustic camp sites
- Historical interpretative information of the Civilian Conservation Corps camp