



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Independent Review Hails Management of Pennsylvania's State Forests

Harrisburg, PA - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn today released results of an independent review team's annual study of state forestlands, noting its findings continue to affirm Bureau of Forestry efforts to conserve these resources through sound management.

"Once again our state forests were deemed 'well-managed' in an official certification reflecting the pride we take in overseeing our state forest system for many values and uses, while maintaining its long-term health and viability," Dunn said. "Auditors were very pleased with our management and dedication of staff, and I extend thanks to districts involved in this year's audit for another job well done."

For the 17th consecutive year, since 1998 when a team of scientists first began reviewing management of the 2.2 million acres of state forestlands, researchers applauded Pennsylvania's commitment to its forests, and exemplary practices and innovation in managing forest resources.

"Forest management faces many threats and challenges, including fragmentation and disturbance, invasive plants, destructive exotic insects and challenges with regeneration," noted Dunn. "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 public expectations."

Ending Sept. 2, the three-day Annual Surveillance Audit was conducted by Scientific Certification Systems (SCS), an Emeryville, Calif.-based certification body accredited by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) to conduct forest management and resource evaluations.

An SCS project team consisting of two foresters specializing in wildlife biology, ecology, forestry management and socio-economic issues toured Rothrock, Bald Eagle, Weiser, and Pinchot state forest districts. They met with DCNR staff, scoring forests on timber-resource sustainability, forest-ecosystem maintenance, financial and socioeconomic considerations and other FSC indicators.

The audit team visited timber sales, recreational trailheads, research areas and a mine reclamation area. Auditors sought district input on effects of energy extraction; deer impact in the forests; forest regeneration; and bureau public input and education efforts. Their study focused on public involvement; timber harvests; chemical use; landscape considerations in timber sales; soil, wildlife and other ecological safeguards; and use of non-native species.

After evaluating sites and bureau policies and guidelines for conformance with standards for sustainable forest management, the auditors issued the bureau no Corrective Action Requests. Specifically, SCS applauded the Bureau of Forestry for:

- The districts' strong working relationships with external agencies; regional knowledge exhibited by their managers; and their ability to work closely with bureau headquarters in Harrisburg;
- Demonstrated ability and willingness to work with a core of well-trained, experienced loggers;
- A strong, active prescribed wildfire program;
- Its routine surveys for rare, threatened and endangered species;
- Clear vision for incorporating forest data into geographic information system for planning.

“In each of the four districts studied and at many sites visited, auditors also looked at the overall condition of our forests, roads, trails and infrastructure,” said Dunn. “Every bureau employee should feel proud of the work they have done to help us maintain this high standard.”

The audits are designed to evaluate the ecological, economic and social performance of the Bureau of Forestry according to forest management guidelines established by the Forest Stewardship Council. The council was formed in 1993 by environmental, social and forest-products industry representatives to establish guidelines for sustainable forest-management practices.

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.

Copies of state forest evaluations can be found at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/stateforestmanagemndex.htm>.

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