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Subject: FAN - Southern Appalachian Mountains

Forest Action Network **Southern Appalachian Mountains** **Update**



Picture: Students at the PA Drummers event get familiar with the innards of grouse under the direction of Dr. Walt Cottrell, a veterinarian with the PA Game Commission. Campers learned about all things grouse inside and out at the 5-day camp administered by the PA Institute for Conservation Education – Wildlife Leadership Academy.

Society's 50th Anniversary Coming Up – 1961 – 2011

The Society will celebrate its 50th Anniversary in 2011. The Society was founded in the small town of Monterey in the mountains of western Virginia. Among other activities to commemorate the milestone, the Society will be offering a Browning BPS pump shotgun with 50th Anniversary engraving, a special 50th Anniversary bronze grouse sculpture, and a case knife. There will also be a one-time, 50th Anniversary publication.

George Washington National Forest Planning Back on Track...Again

The George Washington National Forest in northwestern VA is once again moving forward with its draft forest management plan that will guide activities for the next 15 years. The Forest offers a summary on its website of the various management alternatives. As a starting point, "Alternative D" seems to be an

appropriate blend of management activities that will create young forest habitat and meet other needs for recreation and wildlife. It is pasted below. For comparison, you can find the other alternatives for comparison at www.fs.fed.us/gwjnf. Click on "George Washington Forest Plan Revision" in the upper right corner of the home page and then click on "key documents". You can e-mail comments or write a letter anytime, but comments will be particularly important when the draft plan comes out sometime in the coming months.

ALTERNATIVE D KEY CONCEPTS:

In this alternative, restoration and maintenance of natural ecological systems would use practices that also produce a higher level of commodities and offers amenities that enhance tourism for local communities that benefit economically from forest visitors and forest products. **This alternative would have the highest level of timber production.** A mixture of timber outputs would be focused on species/product combinations with strong demand. Mineral leasing decisions would respond to public need and maximize benefits to local communities. Mitigation measures for the effects of climate change could be met through providing opportunities for alternative energy, such as wind power, natural gas, timber and biomass. Public access (travelways, use corridors, waterways, trails - including off-highway vehicles) would be increased in high-use areas and/or improved to provide for more opportunities for recreation and other forest uses to occur when compatible with other resources. Public access could be increased, or improved on existing roads, to support tourism opportunities, such as watchable wildlife, hunting and fishing access, developed recreation, trailhead access, and access to water-based activities. Additional roads may be needed to support the production of wood products and natural gas development. Highways and roads in the forests, trail and river corridors, and recreation-use areas would have forest stands with few, if any, broken views to support enhancements in tourism and local, rural economies. Roads would still be analyzed for decommissioning but opportunities for using unneeded roads for trail access would be preferable. **Habitats would be provided for game species, species with high public interest, species with demanding habitat requirement, species that are ecological indicators and keystone species.** Roadless areas adjacent, or in close proximity, to wilderness areas that are high-use areas would be recommended for wilderness designation. Management direction would support special use requests for facilities or developments that enhance economic development for local communities, such as communications towers or non-commercial wind towers. **This alternative responds to public desires for more accessibility to and use of national forest lands.**

Ohio Identifying Landscapes for Targeted Grouse Management

The Cincinnati Chapter of RGS held an evening dinner and seminar on July 21 at Sycamore Gun Club (great facility) to discuss opportunities to target efforts for habitat management. OH Division of Wildlife Biologist Mike Reynolds provided an update of grouse population data collected from hunters and drumming counts. Grouse populations continue to decline in Ohio. More perplexing is the lack of birds even where habitat appears to be good to very good. Reynolds identified several landscapes where grouse populations are strongest and challenged the group to focus their energies on these areas. Nathan Jester, an OH Division of Forestry Forester at Shawnee State Forest, gave a presentation on habitat work and the results of the ice storm at Shawnee. Shawnee is a very good place for targeted management since the ice storm provided unexpectedly wide-spread habitat. Many thanks to the Cincinnati chapter for an enjoyable and educational evening.

Southern Appalachians Grouse Book Nearing Completion

A switch in publishers delayed the publishing of the book based on the Appalachian Cooperative Grouse Research Project, but that process is nearing completion and the book should be out for sale in the near future. Keep your eye on the RGS website and other information about how and where to purchase a copy. The book will describe in detail most aspects of grouse ecology in the southern Appalachian Mountains Region.

PA Chapters Meet at Raystown Lake

Pennsylvania is in the process of organizing its chapter leaders and other volunteers and professionals into the PA Statewide Habitat Objectives Team (SHOT). The group met for the first time on July 10 at the Raystown Lake Visitor Center in Huntingdon County. About 15 chapters were represented ranging from Washington and Erie to Reading and Lancaster. The group's objectives are to share knowledge and experience among chapters for working cooperatively with state agencies, prioritizing habitat initiatives and opportunities, channeling info back to chapters, and making decisions about using Drummer Funds in the future, among many other potential goals. SHOT also hopes to emphasize the many benefits the Society's efforts provide for songbirds and other species. The hi-lite of the meeting was probably having members of many chapters meet each other. Raystown Lake Project Biologist Jeff Krause gave a great presentation about the landscape level project he has been leading with RGS' help on Corps of Engineer lands around the lake. John Cave, Chapter Chairman for the Reading Chapter, gave a brief history of the 33 year-old chapter and updates on the many functions the chapter provides, including Mark Mummert, previously of our York chapter, but now transplanted to Warren, offered some good ideas on how to work cooperatively with the gas industry, where he is now employed.

First Cooperative Timber Sale on CONSOL Energy Lands

The Ruffed Grouse Society has sent out for bid the initial timber sale on CONSOL Energy timberlands. This first sale is about 40 acres in size. The timber is being managed on behalf of RGS by Consulting Forester Bernie Braun. Braun has several more timber sales in various stages of readiness. The Society's cooperative agreement with CONSOL includes about 7,000 acres in Greene and Washington Counties. The main goal of the partnership is to distribute young forest wildlife habitat across a landscape in southwest PA where grouse, woodcock and young forest songbird populations have struggled lately. All of the CONSOL land being managed is open to public hunting.

Report Ohio Grouse Broods

The general public can report grouse (and turkey) brood sightings to the Ohio Division of Wildlife at www.dnr.state.oh.us/wildlife/turkeysurvey/. Grouse and turkey brood sightings can be reported on the same page. A grouse "brood" is a group of chicks, usually accompanied by a hen. The number of broods sighted annually, when considered over many years, can help indicate the direction of grouse populations over time. If you have seen some young grouse in Ohio, please visit the website to report your sighting.

RGS 2011 National Raffle

Remington Model 1100 F-Grade RGS 50th Anniversary Edition (Retail Value: \$9,000)

Caesar Guerini RGS 50th Commemorative APEX (Retail Value: \$7,850)

Kimber Valier Grade II (Retail Value: \$5,000)

Three winners to be drawn on June 30, 2011. Tickets can be purchased on-line or from any RGS staff person.

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