

Spring 2013



MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Frederick Municipal Watershed

The Frederick Municipal Watershed is a 7,022 acre property owned by the City of Frederick. The property is located on the east side of Catoctin Mountain, 6 miles northwest of the City of Frederick. It is managed as a cooperative wildlife management area with MD DNR—Wildlife. Forest management activities are under the direction of the MD DNR—Forest Service.

Silvicultural Management

The variable retention harvest mentioned in the fall newsletter south of the Stoner Road parking lot has been completed. Landings and skid trails have been seeded with a mix of clover, rye grass and orchard grass. During the harvest operation (pictured below) protective mats were used to prevent rutting in the landing and keep mud and debris from

being carried onto the road-way.

The next silvicultural activity will take place near the intersection of Gambrill Park and Delauter Roads. The prescription for this stand is for a timber stand improvement harvest.

This stand is over-crowded with trees (at 125 square ft. basal area per

acre). In order to provide better growing conditions, high quality crop trees were selected throughout the stand. Crop trees are those trees of desirable species and form that will be left in the stand. Approximately half of the trees (those of either undesirable species or quality) will be removed to allow better growth of the remainder of the stand.

This sale has been marked and put out for bid. It was also purchased by Red Rock, LLC. Work is expected to begin in the fall of 2013.

Revenue generated by forest harvest operations is used to support other aspects of managing the watershed property, including invasive species control, boundary painting, and other maintenance.



Invasive Species Management

Forestry staff have completed an inventory of invasive plant “hotspots” throughout the Frederick Municipal Watershed over the last several months. Over 30 individual locations with invasive plants have been identified for treatment.

Over the summer months, forestry staff will work to treat several of these hotspots. If you have a volunteer group who would be interested in assisting with the control of invasive plants on the watershed property, please contact the MD Forest Service at 301-791-4010.

Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), shown to the right, is a prolific invader throughout Maryland. Key charac-

teristics to identify this invasive plant include smooth stems, large compound leaves with smooth edges, and a distinguishable pungent nut-like odor.

Be careful not to confuse native shrubs and trees with ailanthus. Native sumacs and other trees such as ash, hickory, black walnut, and butter-

nut can be distinguished from tree-of-heaven by having completely serrated (toothed) leaf margins, rather than smooth. Tree of Heaven produces a flat, winged seed in late summer to early fall. Some trees are male, while others are female, so not all individual trees will produce seed. As the seed matures, it is carried by wind or birds to new locations.



The Allegheny Woodrat

Contributed By: Dan Feller, MD DNR Wildlife & Heritage Service

Nearly 200,000 years ago when glaciers had advanced far to the south, saber-toothed tigers, mastodons, and cave bears roamed western Maryland. And while those species and many others of the Pleistocene epoch are long gone, a secretive creature survived the many climatic and landscape changes that followed, only to become endangered in modern times. Found in the most remote and rugged locales in the mountains of Maryland, the Allegheny woodrat (*Neotoma magister*), a gray squirrel sized rodent, is a true symbol of wilderness and one of its last holdouts is within the City of Frederick Watershed.

Not related to disease carrying black rat and Norway rats introduced by early European colonists, the Allegheny woodrat is a true American native at home in caves, and in the deep fissures and crevices of cliffs and large boulder strewn slopes. Woodrats are also known as “packrats” due to their signature behavior of collecting and caching odd objects in piles called middens. Curiosities found in woodrat middens include shotgun shells, sunglasses, various skulls and bones, but it’s the strategic food stash within that sustains woodrats through winter.

Research has revealed several factors at work in the decline of this species, including direct habitat loss or degradation due to development, forest fragmentation, and the loss of mature mast bearing trees in and near the woodrats rocky habitats. Possibly the greatest loss is that of the American Chestnut, a preferred food. Indirectly, increases in raccoon populations have been a major factor, exposing woodrats and other forest wildlife to a deadly parasite it carries, the raccoon roundworm.

Restoration of habitat and control of parasite infected raccoons has been shown to be an effective technique in the recovery of this species. Management in the Frederick Watershed is protecting mast trees near woodrat habitat and promoting large wolf trees for raccoon den sites as an alternative to rock outcrops – distancing the two species and reducing transmission of the fatal parasite to woodrats. Control of parasite levels in raccoons has not been initiated in Maryland as the technique is still under development, but it may be a cost effective management tool in the near future. While woodrats still inhabit small colonies in the Frederick Watershed



Photo Credit: Al Hicks

and adjacent areas of Cunningham Falls State Park, it remains to be seen if this area is sufficiently remote and large enough to support this species over time.

Conservation of the many natural habitats in Frederick Watershed not only protects water quality for the citizens of the City of Frederick, but also supports many state rare, threatened and endangered species.

Recreation

Over the winter, mountain bikers on the property have found “trail sabotage” items on multiple occasions. Boards with razor blades have been responsible for puncturing the tires of some bikes. These could be very dangerous for all users of the watershed property.

Should you come across any such items on the watershed property, please do not remove them as it is important that Police are able to see them as they were found. **If you find such items, please call Frederick City Police at 301-600-2100 or Frederick County Sheriff’s office at 301-600-1046 immediately. If there is an emergency, call 911.**



One of the “trail sabotage” items found on the property

FREDERICK MUNICIPAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT UPDATE

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