

## DCNR

### Bureau of Forestry Environmental Review Guidelines

On initiation of any project on state forest lands that may or will disrupt, alter, or otherwise change the environment, review and consider the environmental review items. Some projects, such as timber sales, have developed checklists to facilitate environmental reviews.

On initiation of any project in the following categories, a formal written project review, addressing the environmental review items, must be completed by the district forester (or designee) and approved by the state forester:

- Any wetlands encroachment
- In-stream alterations
- Disturbance activities in a natural area including insect and disease control
- Timber management in a wild area
- Right-of-way expansions or new construction (pipelines or major powerlines)
- Surface mining, oil and gas leases (excluding gas storage)
- Large-scale stone removals
- Subsurface disturbance to caves
- Addition of public-use roads to the state forest road system
- Land acquisitions/exchanges
- New trail construction
- Large blocks of artificial regeneration, i.e. monocultures (>10 acres)
- Other projects as determined by the state forester

Written environmental reviews will include a description of the project, justification for the project's need, a description of the project site, and a narrative consideration of each of the environmental review items. The narrative consideration must include an assessment of the project's probable impact on each factor and whether it is beneficial or adverse. Factors where an adverse impact is predicted require an explanation of the corrective measures that will be taken, or justification why none are planned.

The district forester will submit the original copy of the written environmental review to the Division of Resource Planning and Information for dissemination and review. The state forester will make final project approval/disapproval. The written environmental review will be made a permanent part of the project file.

#### **Project Review Items:**

1. **Promotion of Goals:** Every acre of state forest lands is included in an array of goals including ecoregional goals, landscape goals, and plan component goals (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Overview).
2. **Erosion and Sedimentation:** Soil losses and resultant water degradation can be greatly reduced or prevented for most activities (BMP Manuals, Timber Sale Manual, SFRMP Water, Soil, and Fauna Sections, or County Conservation District).
3. **Water Quality:** Potential sedimentary, thermal, and chemical pollution can be avoided for most activities. Existing pollution can be reduced or eliminated by certain practices or procedures (BMP Manuals, SFRMP Water, Soil, and Fauna Sections, the DEP Bureau of Water Quality Management or PA Fish & Boat Commission).

4. **Air Quality:** Potential dust, smoke, chemical, and other pollution can be avoided for most activities. Certain practices, like timing of the activity, can alleviate potential problems when the pollutant cannot be reduced or prevented (DEP Bureau of Air Quality).
5. **Water Quantity:** Certain practices in or adjacent to wetlands can affect the water level. Streams and bodies of water are also subject to manipulation of water levels. Practices should have an overall beneficial effect and not adversely affect water levels (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Water, DEP Bureau of Water Supply Management or PA Fish & Boat Commission).
6. **Groundwater:** Potential pollution of groundwater can be avoided for most activities (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Water, DCNR Bureau of Topographic & Geologic Survey, DEP Bureau of Water Quality Protection).
7. **Soils:** Potential problems such as erosion, stability, over-compaction and saturation should be anticipated and avoided (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Soils, SCS County Soil Survey, County Conservation District, or DEP Bureau of Water Quality Protection).
8. **Unique and Unusual Geologic Features:** Potential damage to or destruction of these features should be anticipated and avoided (State Forest Resource Management Plan and Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory for details of locations. Minerals Section, Bureau of Forestry or DCNR Bureau of Topographic and Geologic Survey for details of possible project effect on feature and preventive measures).
9. **Aesthetic Values:** Often projects can be blended into their surroundings, or the adverse impact of their appearance can be lessened by certain practices or procedures (Operating Management Manuals).
10. **Noise Levels:** Potential problems for the public, contractors, and employees should be anticipated and avoided. Certain practices or procedures such as timing of the activity and the use of buffer zones can alleviate potential problems.
11. **Archeological Sites and Historic Sites:** Potential damage to or destruction of these features should be anticipated and avoided. Discovery of new sites should be reported to the Division of Planning & Information (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Infrastructure, Historical and Museum Commission).
12. **Recreation Sites and Opportunities:** Potential damage to or degradation of existing or potential recreational sites should be anticipated and avoided. Certain practices such as timing of the activity and use of buffer zones can alleviate potential problems (Bureau of Forestry - Division of Operations & Recreation).
13. **Public Health and Safety:** Project design and administration must ensure that the public is protected at the project site from all potential hazards that could be associated with the project activities or result from the completed project (Bureau of Forestry - Division of Operations & Recreation, Bureau of Facility Design and Construction).
14. **Transportation:** Project design must ensure adequate ingress to and egress from the site and minimize disruption of public rights-of-way (Bureau of Forestry -Division of Operations & Recreation).
15. **Energy Needs/Use:** Energy resources fill domestic and commercial needs. Projects should also be designed to use energy wisely and ensure conservation (Minerals Section).
16. **Existing/Potential Land Use:** Project design should be compatible with current zoning for the site and planned future uses, if any. The project should conform to landscape goals and be consistent with adjoining lands strategy (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Overview).
17. **Protected Animals and Plants:** Certain animal and plant species have been listed and given protected status by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Pennsylvania Game Commission, the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation & Natural Resources. Projects that will have a potentially adverse effect on any of these species, or the habitats critical to their survival should be avoided. (For a listing of these species and guidelines for their protection, refer to the State Forest Resource Management Plan - Fauna, Flora and Ecological Considerations,

Bureau of Forestry - Ecological Services Section and Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory).

18. **Habitat Diversity and Interspersion:** Habitats are classified as either terrestrial, wetland, aquatic, riparian or cave. Management strategies, in most cases, should be designed to optimize diversity within and between these habitats, primarily by promoting various habitat components. When protecting, creating or developing habitat components, consideration should be given to the arrangement or interspersion of these components within a landscape. (State Forest Resource Management Plan - Fauna and Flora).
19. **Biological Productivity:** While it is the goal of the bureau to provide for and maintain a diversity of species, it is also striving to promote conditions favorable for maintaining viable populations of certain species, while still maintaining diversity. Management for productivity may be directed toward a particular species or group of species while not jeopardizing the overall species diversity of a particular landscape or ecological region (Bureau of Forestry - Ecological Services Section).
20. **Vegetation:** Many projects require the manipulation or disturbance of forest vegetation. Effects on the project on forest communities should be considered.
21. **Non-Native Invasive Species:** Some projects have the potential to either directly introduce non-native invasive species or create conditions favorable for the potential introduction of these species (Bureau of Forestry - Ecological Services Section).
22. **Other:** Consider other unique features that may be affected by the proposed project (e.g., scenic rivers, National Natural Landmarks).
23. **Permits:** Projects affecting or encroaching on wetlands require encroachment permits. New entrances to public roads, other than state forest roads, require occupancy permits. Certain other activities also require permits.