Ohio Department of Natural Resources

Division of Forestry

Annual Work Plan

For

Gifford State Forest

For the Period of

Fiscal Year **2012**
(July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012)

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OHIO DIVISION OF FORESTRY

I. STRATEGIC PLAN (*Effective 2008)*

Our Vision: Ohio's state forests will be the best managed forest lands in the country, and will be widely recognized as such.

To fulfill this vision, the Ohio Division of Forestry commits to meeting five objectives. We will:

- Manage forests to ensure the health and sustainability of forest systems
- Produce high-quality forest products that contribute to local communities
- Provide recreational opportunities that require a large forest land base
- Provide unique forestry education sites and promote outreach and long-term research
- Maintain a highly trained and well equipped work force

To fulfill these objectives, the Division of Forestry will develop and implement strategies and plans that allow us to accomplish the following goals by 2011:

- Manage forests to ensure the health and sustainability of forest systems
  - *Implement a proven, verifiable approach to sustainable management*
  - *Manage for site-appropriate, native forest systems and species*
  - *Maintain long-term forest productivity through conservation of soil, water, and forest resources*
  - *Retain or promote stand and landscape level wildlife habitat*
  - *Assess the distribution and impact of non-native invasive species*
- Produce high-quality forest products that contribute to local communities
  - *Base State Forest harvest volumes on the goals and guidelines for each forest system, current stand and forest-wide inventories, and science-based silviculture*
  - *Develop marketing strategies to capture the maximum value of forest products*
- Provide recreational opportunities that are compatible with sustainable forest management
  - *Develop a comprehensive recreation plan for the state forest system*
  - *Build recognition for unique and varied recreation opportunities on state forests*
- Provide unique forestry education sites and promote outreach and long-term research
  - *Support forest research with an emphasis on sustainable forest management (silvicultural, prescribed fire, native systems, etc.)*
  - *Develop opportunities to showcase forest management practices to the general public, private landowners, and forest industry*
- Maintain a highly trained and well equipped work force
  - *Develop a training, continuing education, and/or certification standard for all division staff*
  - *Inventory and evaluate equipment and facilities and develop maintenance and replacement schedules*
  - *Develop equipment and facilities budgets based on current and projected needs*
  - *Ensure all staff have appropriate health and safety training*

II. Summary of Strategic Plan Actions

- Manage Gifford State Forest under the multiple use concept promoting land management, forest sustainability, and back country recreation.
- Implement policies in the revised Land Management Manual that will maintain third party certification.
- Continue to develop employee skills and abilities through training thereby improving productivity and efficiency.

III. Forest Overview

History & Description: Prior to ownership by the Division of Forestry, this tract of land was a typical southern Ohio farm. Consisting of 320 acres, it was donated to the Ohio Division of Forestry in 1959 by William Gifford Shelby, under the conditions that it be used for experimentation and research. It was named after Virginia Gifford and her family. The old farmhouse and barn have long been gone and the area where the buildings once stood has been turned into a picnic/fishing area. A hiking trail starts where the barn once stood. Gifford State Forest is managed by the Division of Forestry primarily as a seed production and seed orchard facility. The existing plantations are composed of genetically superior trees. These plantations are managed to produce seed for use in nurseries for the production of superior planting stock. Seed production from Gifford State Forest is some of the best seed in Ohio. Plantation species at Gifford include: white pine, red oak, black walnut, and pitlolly pine (a pitch pine/loblolly pine hybrid).

IV. Resource Management

Silvicultural Practices (Scheduled Harvests, Cruising, Marking, TSI, etc.): There is one timber sale under contract currently. No additional sales are planned in FY 2012.

Merchandising: No merchandizing activity will take place at Gifford State Forest

Minerals: The mineral rights of Gifford State Forest were severed from the surface rights prior to state ownership. One gas well is located on the forest. The Division receives no royalties from this well.

Invasives: Gifford State Forest has a heavy infestation of Autumn Olive. The Division of Forestry received a grant from the US Forest Service to implement the Ohio Woodland Job Corps for the control of invasive plants within the state forest system. From this grant one (1) crew of three (3) people will be employed, temporarily, to work on invasive plant control and timber stand improvement while receiving job-training skills. Division staff will identify areas to control throughout the year through the project proposal process. This crew will be

based at Zaleski State Forest. Potential activities for this crew include retreatment of invasive species previously treated last year.

Boundary: Boundary maintenance is an important function in the management of the forest. Properly maintained boundaries prevent encroachment from neighboring properties and from state activities encroaching onto neighboring properties. To accomplish this task, Gifford State Forest conforms to the Division's boundary maintenance policies. The entire forest boundary is painted every four years due to the small size of the forest. The forest boundary will not be painted during the period of this work plan.

Licenses/Leases: The office and maintenance facility at Gifford State Forest is currently leased to the Bern Township Trustees as their maintenance garage and office.

Insects & Disease: The Ohio Department of Agriculture has a formal procedure for monitoring gypsy moth populations through the "Slow the Spread" program. Division staff informally monitor for forest pests including gypsy moth, emerald ash borer, Asian long-horned beetle, and many other native and exotic pests.

Utilization & Marketing: Forest products will continue to be offered for sale through both the traditional state forest timber sales (stumpage) and merchandising sales. Additionally, firewood permits will be available for sale to the public.

Research: No new research is occurring at Gifford. However, past tree improvement plantations continue to be managed and maintained. Research is encouraged, interested parties must follow the special-use permit process.

Summary (2-3 year projects): Continue monitoring for insect/disease infestations and control of invasives.

V. <u>Maintenance</u>

Buildings: Bern Township, as part of a lease agreement, maintains the buildings.

Infrastructure (water, wastewater, utilities): The infrastructure will be the responsibility of the Bern Township Trustees.

Vehicles/Equipment: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Roads: There is less than one (1) mile of public roads at Gifford, which consist of the driveway to the service center and one access road to the picnic/parking area. All roads are inspected for safety and overall condition minimum of twice per year and after major weather events. Repairs and maintenance will be performed as needed.

In addition to public roads, all forest access roads will be formally inventoried, mapped, and an inspection report will be completed. The results of the inspection report will guide the maintenance efforts of the forest staff.

Signage: Wooden signs for trails are replaced and re-painted as needed.

Residences: None

Dams: None

Capitals Projects: None

Summary (2-3 year future projects): Maintain buildings under proposed lease as required.

VI. Recreation

Trails (bridle, backpack, etc.): Four (4) miles of hiking trails exist at Gifford State Forest. Trails will be brushed back and re-marked as time and resources allow. Trails are inspected for safety and overall condition a minimum of twice per year and after major weather events. Repairs and maintenance will be performed as needed.

Campgrounds: None

ATV Areas: None

Shooting Ranges: None

Grants: None

Summary (2-3 year future projects): Maintain trails.

VII. Wildland Fire

Suppression: See Zaleski Forest plan.

Prevention: See Zaleski Forest plan.

Prescribed Fire: Traditionally the white pine seed orchard is burned to control cone beetle. With the closing of the nursery, the future of seed collection is unclear. However, if there is a need for this seed the eight (8)-acre seed orchard will receive a prescribed fire.

Inter-Agency Fire Crew: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Training: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Fire Department Contacts: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

FireWise: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

FEPP/FFP: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Grants: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Summary (2-3 year future projects): Continue prescribed burning seed orchards as needed for insect control.

VIII. Law Enforcement

Philosophy/Purpose: State Forests currently have eight (8) commissioned law enforcement officers and two (2) commissioned managers. The purposed of the positions is to enforce the forest rules depicted in the Ohio Revised Code. One very important aspect of the program is resource protection. Forest Officers protect property boundaries from encroachment, recreation resources from undesignated uses, guard against timber theft and watch for watershed degradation. Specific law enforcement polices and procedures are delineated in the Division's Law Enforcement Manual.

Training: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Equipment: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Patrol Priorities: Priorities for patrol will be established utilizing the following criteria:

1. Responding to emergencies and help requests with jurisdiction
2. Protect and assist visitors through routine patrol of all facilities and incident investigation
3. Issue warnings and citations for violations
4. Investigate and assign wildfire reports for violations
5. Assist in special projects with other forests and agencies

The Zaleski Forest Officer will patrol Gifford State Forest at least once a week.

Special Projects: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Other Duties (VFD's, FEPP, court, boundary, etc.): The Forest Officer will visit each county court system and prosecutors office once per year. These visits will be used to update information on bond schedules, court dates, prosecutor and

judge information. An updated information sheet will be submitted to the Forest Manager after each visit.

Summary (2-3 year future projects): Continue special projects on an as needed basis identified by the Forest Officer and approved by the Forest Manager.

IV. Employee Development

Employee List/Vacancies/Table of Organization: See Zaleski – Gifford State Forest is staffed from Zaleski State Forest

Training (tuition reimbursement, etc): See Zaleski State Forest plan.

Safety: Forest employees participate in monthly training sessions and many other safety oriented discussions in the field. The Division also participates in the Public Employment Risk Reduction Program and will continue to repair minor infractions that resulted from these inspections. Division Staff is also required to attend the Annual Division of Forestry Safety Training. Other safety trainings will be utilized as opportunities arise.

A safety plan is currently being developed for each State Forest and will be included in future Annual Work Plans. Division staff will be conducting internal hazard and safety assessments and will provide mitigating practices to eliminate or reduce the risk. Forest Staff will also utilize the policies and guidelines contained within the Division Safety Manual to further improve the agency's safety culture.

Any type of emergency (medical, fire, police, etc.) will be acted upon by staff member(s) consistent with their training, experience and ability to act.

Other Employee Development: See Zaleski State Forest plan.

X. Public Information/Outreach

Planned Events: Contact or personally meet with the Athens County Commissioners and Bern Township Trustees at least once per year. Gifford State Forest will be represented at the Open Houses at Athens-ODNR Headquarters and Shawnee State Forest in July of 2011.

Partnerships: Township trustees, National Wild Turkey Federation, Division of Wildlife.

Volunteers: None

Interpretive Programs: None at this time.

Summary (2-3 year future projects): Make new partnerships with volunteer groups for trail maintenance.

XI. Budget

Operational Budget (personnel, maintenance): Budget is captured in the Zaleski State Forest budget.

Revenue: Revenue from Gifford State Forest is generated from timber sales, firewood permits, and special use permit applications. A percentage of this income is returned to the local township, county, and local school district thru the Trees to Textbooks Program.

Summary (2-3 year projected budget): Future budgets cannot be anticipated since the State of Ohio budget for the next two fiscal years has not been passed by the General Assembly.