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Forest Service

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Hoosier NF Highlights

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Early Successional Habitat on the Hoosier



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The Hoosier National Forest manages portions of the forest to provide early successional habitat to benefit wildlife species, add visual variety and provide habitat for native plant communities, and recreation opportunities such as photography and wildflower/wildlife viewing. These areas also offer unique hunting opportunities. Early successional habitat is defined as young forest or shrubland habitat less than 10 years old.

Of the Hoosier's 202,000+ acres, up to 3 percent of the land could function as early successional habitat. Currently the Forest is working to enhance this program using new methods of management, as well as updating the mapping of these areas and gathering site-specific field data.

New management tools used to create and maintain early successional habitat, may include strip-disking, using herbicides, root raking, chain saw work, and using controlled fire. These tools allow for better conversion to high quality habitat. Not only will the habitat quality benefit wildlife, but the potential for harvesting native seed in these areas will increase. This seed can then be used in other areas.

Partner agencies help the Hoosier create and manage early successional habitat projects. These partners include the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources. For the last two years, the Hoosier and the NWTF has offered an internship to develop better wildlife habitat in southern Indiana. This is an

excellent opportunity for students to gain wildlife experience, perform wildlife projects, and learn about the US Forest Service and NWTF.

In 2013, the interns seeded areas, created habitat piles, harrowed wildlife openings, performed surveys, maintained wildlife opening signs and enhanced vernal pools. With support from the Indiana State Chapter of the NWTF, this internship program truly enhanced the area making it more appealing for turkey populations. They also accomplished 162 acres of habitat improvement. Other local wildlife such as bats, American woodcock, ruffed grouse, pollinators, and quail benefited from their projects.

This year, interns have been working in Forest wetlands, performing pre-work for contractors, and conducting surveys. The interns for this year are Megan Smith from Salem and Peyton Phelps from Mitchell.

For more information on early successional habitat on the Hoosier National Forest contact Steve Harriss at 812-276-4759 or scharriss@fs.fed.us.



2013 NWTF interns Maggie Fleener, Stewart Hamilton, and Holly Walker at a job site.

Megan and Peyton at Paw Paw Marsh

