United States Department of Agriculture

SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST
A Year of Shawnee Successes 2014

Allen Nicholas
Forest Supervisor

Tim Pohlman
District Ranger

Amanda Patrick
Public Affairs Officer

Greetings from the Forest Supervisor,

If you have ever visited the Shawnee National Forest (NF) you probably noticed what a unique and special place it truly is. As the largest public land entity in Illinois, the Shawnee NF has some of the best scenery and recreation opportunities found in the midwest. However as it is with many things, there is much more here than meets the eye. This is where our annual Year of Successes newsletter comes in. Through this newsletter, I hope to enlighten readers to the many interesting projects and happenings taking place within Shawnee National Forest.

As I write this greeting, spring is fast approaching but before we get too far along in 2015 I always like to pause and reflect on all that has been accomplished across the Shawnee NF and most importantly celebrate the many successes. If I were to use one word to sum up the Shawnee NF's 2014 accomplishments, it would be "unique". As you read the stories within this publication, you'll notice that during 2014 we experienced a lot of "first-times" in many areas. Last year was the first year that electricity was installed at Pounds Hollow-Pine Ridge Campground, when K9 Officer, Samio, was welcomed onto the law enforcement team and the year that Oakwood Bottoms celebrated its 50th-year anniversary. The Forest also branched out with many firsts' in our ever-growing conservation education program, with Naturalist in the Classroom, on-site mobile tours and science technology topics. We also continued to grow and strengthen many other program areas, like using a helicopter to ignite prescribed burns, working in partnership to closely monitor bat populations, and by offering unique volunteer opportunities by hosting the Leave No Trace Hot Spot Crew.

Of course, so much of what was accomplished would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of our partners and volunteers. The vitality and success of many of our projects are possible because of the diversity our partnerships bring to the Shawnee NF. So much so that the simple words of "thank-you" seem inadequate.

So before you turn the page, I recommend heading outdoors, settle under a shade tree and kick back while you enjoy reading the 2014 Year of Successes newsletter.

Allen Nicholas
Forest Supervisor

Forest Service

Shawnee National Forest
50 Highway 145 South
Harrisburg, Illinois 62946
Voice: 618-253-7114

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Recognizing Accomplishment

Shawnee National Forest Presented Beacon Award during Partners Outdoors 2014 Conference

A new mobile interpretive tour pilot led by the Shawnee National Forest (Forest) has earned national honors as the Forest was recognized as a 2014 Beacon Award recipient by the American Recreation Coalition (ARC) during the Partners Outdoors 2014 meeting held in Washington, D.C.

The award was presented for the Shawnee National Forest's work to create mobile access to interpretive tours of the Forest and associated opportunities on cell phones, smartphones or tablets. An interdisciplinary team led by the Forest assembled visitor information which can be managed and revised quickly and cost-effectively to reflect fire danger, severe weather events, and forest and road closures. The tour also complies with 508 standards for video and web content accessibility. The platform has the capability to upload JPEGs, PNGs and GIFs, as well as hotlink to partner websites for volunteering and e-commerce opportunities.

Design support was provided by the Rocky Mountain Region's Center for Design and Interpretation to establish an agency "brand" for adoption nationally. Partners websites are linked to the tour to cross-promote additional visitor opportunities both on and off the national forest. The mobile tours also feature a map showing other visitor information sources and services. The first "installment" of the Shawnee's interpretive mobile tour can be viewed at: http://myoncell.mobi/shawneenf. Because of its potential for broader use across the agency, the innovative tour initially began on the Shawnee but soon became a larger coordinated project comprised of personnel from different professions and forests, making it broader in its initial reach.

A total of seven federal efforts garnered Beacon Awards in 2014 from the ARC for outstanding successes in harnessing the power of technology to improve public recreation experiences and federal recreation program management. Winners were selected from efforts of four federal agencies and the Office of the Secretary of the Interior.

Beacon Awards were first presented by the American Recreation Coalition in 2005. Nominations are made by federal agencies and are judged against the award criteria, which are:

1) Innovative use of technology for visitor services or recreation management;
2) Use of partnerships with for-profit and nonprofit organizations;
3) Efforts to share news of creative solutions within the agency; and
4) Community support for the work of this initiative.

Pictured in photo from left to right: Doug Crandall, President, American Recreation Coalition, Allen Nicholas, Forest Supervisor, Shawnee National Forest, Amanda Patrick, Public Affairs Officer, Shawnee National Forest, Mary Wagner, Associate Chief, U.S. Forest Service, and Mark Schaefer, Assistant Secretary of Commerce and Deputy Administrator, NOAA.

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS ISAM AWARDS:

Regional Awards Recognize Individual Excellence in Invasive Species Control

On Friday, May 9th, 2014, as the kick-off to the 2014 Cache River Nature Fest, and to celebrate the Governor's proclamation of May as "Invasive Species Awareness Month" (ISAM), a Regional Awards Ceremony was hosted by Shawnee Resource Conservation and Development Area, Inc. (RC&D) and the River to River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA), in order to recognize 15 individuals highly dedicated to invasive plant species control work in southern Illinois.

These individuals were made up of conservation professionals, dedicated community leaders, and experienced volunteers. One of the biggest challenges facing conservation today is the widespread problem of non-native invasive species, which invade or destroy habitat for native plants and animals. The award recipients have all taken their knowledge of invasive species one step further, acting with responsibility to create a positive impact on the diversity of habitats in southern Illinois. Several CWMA partnering organizations and Steering Committee members were present to support the recipients and their work. The RC&D, CWMA, and all contributing partners truly appreciate the efforts and successes of these individuals to further our regional invasive species control efforts.

Pictured from left to right: (back row) Gary Swisher—Landowner, Bruce Henry—SIUC Fire Dawgs, Sonja Lallemand—Volunteer Master Naturalist, Dr. Andrew West—Volunteer, Tharran Hobson—The Nature Conservancy, Caleb Grantham—The Nature Conservancy, Chris Long—Green Earth Volunteer, Ryan Pankau—NRCS, Richard Blume-Weaver—US Forest Service, (front row) Mike Long—Green Earth Volunteer, Kathy Renfro—Carbondale Park District, Chris Midden—Unity Point School. Not pictured: Sharon Swisher—Landowner, Bob Lindsay—IDNR, Nick Seaton—The Nature Conservancy, and State Representative Brandon Phelps.

Shawnee National Forest: Working with Partners

Ducks Unlimited includes Shawnee NF in Big Rivers Initiative

Oakwood Bottoms located in the Mississippi River floodplain is a remarkable area for wildlife. Flooded timber provides cover and food for migrating and breeding waterfowl, especially wood ducks. The history of the support from Ducks Unlimited (DU) at Oakwood Bottoms is long, and as Oakwood Bottoms celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2014 DU was working again in partnership with the US Forest Service through DU's Big Rivers Initiative, which will be supported by a $1 million North American Wetlands Conservation Act grant.

The Big Rivers Initiative adds a whole new meaning to "flyover states." The rivers here support millions of waterfowl between the wintering and breeding grounds. Diverse habitats impacted by this initiative include bottomland forest, shrub-scrub, and emergent wetlands; mudflats; and submerged aquatic beds, as well as the rivers themselves. The quality of these habitats is critical to bird condition during migration, and the Big Rivers Initiative seeks to "set the table" for the waterfowl as they sweep north and south year after year. The floodplains of the Mississippi River and its network of tributaries historically provided breeding, migration, and wintering habitat for millions of waterfowl. However, the grand passages of waterfowl once seen in this area have been replaced by increasingly scarce numbers of most waterfowl species, and simultaneous declines in waterfowl hunters.

In partnership with Ducks Unlimited, the Shawnee National Forest and a local farmer completed a 113 acre wetland restoration project near the Big Muddy River in Jackson County. This is the first project completed under the recent Bottomlands of the Great Rivers - North American Wetland Conservation Act Grant.

Managing Openlands in the Shawnee National Forest

There are twelve areas across the Shawnee National Forest that are designated as openland areas and are actively managed as such. These places are characterized by open grassland/shrub habitat and comprise a total of about 2,640 acres. Managing for this habitat type is important because open grassland and prairie habitats are one of the most rapidly declining wildlife habitats throughout the nation. Bird species such as northern bobwhite quail, Henslow's sparrow, Bachman's sparrow, grasshopper sparrow and bobolink have experienced drastic population declines due to the loss of open savannah and grassland habitat throughout the eastern United States.

In recent years, a large amount of work has been put into the restoration of these areas in the Shawnee National Forest. What was once covered with invasive shrubs and trees like bush honeysuckle, autumn olive and black locust have now been cleared and converted to native warm season grasses and wildflowers. This effort was largely supported by partners like local power-utility companies, local, state, and national chapters of the National Wild Turkey Federation, local and state chapters of Quail Unlimited, local, state, and national chapters of Pheasants Forever/ Quail forever, and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

Maintenance of the openland areas are dependent upon prescribed burning. Every year, the Forest burns a portion of these grasslands on a 2 to 3-year rotational basis to ensure the open and grassy characteristics are maintained.

Oakwood Bottoms Celebrates 50 Years of Wetland Management

One of the most significant sites within the Shawnee National Forest is Oakwood Bottoms Greentree Reservoir located near Grand Tower, Illinois. For 50 years, Oakwood Bottoms has served as a critical waterfowl migration stopover and wintering place in the Mississippi Flyway. With only 20% of the original bottomland hardwood forests in the lower Mississippi floodplain remaining, areas like Oakwood Bottoms provide vital resting and feeding areas for tens of thousands of waterfowl.

In 1964, the SNF and its partners were in the forefront of wetland restoration and management as the original wetland system at Oakwood Bottoms was constructed with 12 flood units and 4 pumps. Today, this 3,600 acre bottomland hardwood forest consists of 34 separate flood units, 30 miles of levee and ditches, nearly 100 water control structures and 9 deep well pumps. The site provides significant wetland habitat to migratory waterfowl and songbirds as well as other wetland dependent plants and animals. Besides attracting a variety of waterfowl hunters, the area is also popular for nature viewing and deer hunting.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of this unique and significant wetland, the Forest Service partnered with Ducks Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation and the Illinois Audubon Society to hold a special event on September 27th, 2014. The event was held at the Oakwood Bottoms Interpretive Site, located south of Murphysboro near State Highway 3. There were a variety of family-friendly activities, including information booths, site tours and children's games. Site experts were on-hand, and participants learned the latest development plans for improvements for the area. The celebration was a huge success.

2014 Invasive Species Accomplishments

The Shawnee National Forest treated over 700 acres of three invasive plant species over the 2014 fiscal year: garlic mustard, autumn olive, and Nepalese browntop. Most of the acres were infested with garlic mustard and were treated by a combination of prescribed burning, hand pulling, and limited herbicide application. Autumn olive was treated by bulldozing, while Nepalese browntop was treated by hand pulling. Almost half of the infestations were located in designated Natural Areas and Wilderness sites within the Shawnee National Forest. About 300 acres of garlic mustard was treated by prescribed fire in two of the designated Natural Areas. About 6 acres of garlic mustard and 8 acres of Nepalese browntop were hand pulled by volunteers and staff at three Wilderness areas.

The Shawnee National Forest's Invasive Species Management Environmental Assessment was signed during the latter half of the fiscal year. This document enabled the Forest to use herbicide to treat four priority invasive species: garlic mustard, Chinese yam, kudzu, and Amur honeysuckle across the Forest. It also will allow the treatment of the known invasive plants in 23 designated Natural Areas. Since the document was signed relatively late in the season, only a few garlic mustard sites were treated with herbicide.

Monarch Joint Venture

Pollinator gardens were completed in 2014 at the Jonesboro and Vienna administrative sites with an emphasis to plant species that encourage monarch butterflies to visit. Hundreds of plants, including numerous milkweeds, were transplanted into our gardens from a Forest Service office that recently closed. Numerous flowering plants were purchased from local nurseries, and hand tools and equipment (mower, weed eater, leaf blower) were also obtained to help with garden and native woodland maintenance. Visits from monarch butterflies have reduced visibly in numbers, but we are hopeful that our additional colorful display and new food sources will once again bring back these rare beauties.

This project is an extension of the "Partners and Pollinator Gardens" educational project that was initiated in 2009 as a participating agreement with 7 partners. A bike path was constructed by the city of Vienna that leads riders, walkers, and joggers to the Hidden Springs Ranger District administrative site where they can explore the pollinator gardens. Plants have been labeled so that visitors can recognize different species during any season. A beautiful native sandstone border has been placed around two gardens and "Pollinator Garden" and "Monarch Butterfly" interpretive signs have been erected catching the eye of nearly every visitor.

FIRE...FIRE…FIRE…

The Shawnee National Forest employs 10 full-time firefighters, 11 seasonal firefighters and manages a permanent interagency dispatch center. Many other Shawnee National Forest employees are cross-trained as firefighters as well.

The Shawnee Fire Program has three wildland fire engines and a firefighting bulldozer that are staffed and ready to respond to wildfires from October through April each year. On average, the Shawnee National Forest has approximately 30 wildfires a year, and most of them average in size between 1 and 20 acres; however, on dry windy days, they can get much larger. In 2010, the Grassy Knob fire near Grand Tower, Illinois grew to over 400 acres and took several days to control.

The Shawnee National Forest, unlike many of the western national forests, does not have large contiguous blocks of forested lands. In fact, much of its land base consists of small tracts of land intermingled with state and privately owned lands. Wildland fires often burn on multiple ownerships and in multiple jurisdictions with Shawnee firefighters working alongside many of the local fire departments in southern Illinois when fighting wildfires. The Shawnee Fire Program has established 30 mutual aid agreements with neighboring fire departments in order to facilitate better coordination when responding to wildland fires. Annually, the Shawnee National Forest provides mutual aid assistance to local fire departments on an additional 15 to 30 wildland fires.

During the summer months, Shawnee National Forest personnel participate in wildland fires and all risk incidents throughout the country and sometimes abroad. Some of the largest wildland fires in U.S. history have resulted in Forest employees assisting in anything from firefighting operations, to planning and logistics, to dispatching. Many of the Shawnee's seasonal firefighters work summer firefighting jobs in the western states where they gain a wide variety of experience that is brought back to the Forest during the fall, winter and spring months. This dual season gives seasonal employees the opportunity to work year-round, gain additional skills and qualifications, and gives them the opportunity to meet and network with a number of fire personnel with numerous years of experience.

One of the goals of the Shawnee National Forest is to restore and improve the quality of forested and non-forested habitats by maintaining and/or increasing biodiversity; restoring fire regimes found prior to modification in the early 20th century; and maintain the oak-dominated ecosystem. The Shawnee does this, in part, with managed prescribed fire activities. They conduct prescribed burns on 5,000 to 10,000 acres annually. Last year, a helicopter joined the firefighting program in March of 2014 to assist with prescribed burning and wildland firefighting operations. When the Shawnee National Forest entered into the winter months, fire personnel were busy with prescribed fire activities in the Oakwood Bottoms Area with almost 2,000 acres being completed since the beginning of October and many more projects planned between November 2014 and April 2015. The Shawnee National Forest completed a total of 8650 prescribed acres burned, and suppress 24 wildland fires in 2014.

Connecting with the Past...

The 2014 Revival Tour of the Shawnee National Forest and Southern Illinois

Iron Furnace Historic Site

The Shawnee National Forest and Illinois Ozarks Tourism hosted the second annual Illinois Ozark Revival Tour. Participants departed on Saturday morning, October 25th in furnished buses for sites such as the Shawneetown Bank and John Crenshawn's Hickory Hill mansion with guided interpretation at each of the sites. The Tour continued on to Equality, Potts Tavern and many other interesting sites. The evening closed with a catfish supper on the lawn of the Rose Hotel followed by a campfire at the Iron Furnace Historic Site.

Heritage Presentations:

⇒ History of the Shawnee National Forest was presented at the Wilderness Awareness Workshop, which was held in partnership with the Arthur Carhart National Wilderness Training Institute.

⇒ Prehistoric Native American Cultigens of southern Illinois at the 2014 Illinois Indigenous Plant Symposium.

⇒ Lost and Found: Amos Worthen's Figure House Rock Site presentation at the Eastern States Rock Art Research Conference and Workshop.

Millstone Bluff Petroglyph

Special Emphasis Program Management

Shawnee National Forest personnel attended a job fair with a contingent of 200 retiring Army personnel at Fort Knox, KY. Through a program called Operation Warfighter, federal agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service have the ability to take on retiring military personnel as interns in a job training program.

Shawnee National Forest personnel also attended a job fair at John A. Logan Community College, informing students of the opportunities available with the Forest Service.

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Shawnee National Forest Bat Surveys Ensure Vital Protection

The Shawnee National Forest (Forest) is home to several species of bats, including the endangered Indiana bat and the northern long-eared bat, which is proposed for listing as threatened or endangered. Although the Forest is rich in habitat for these and other species of bats, Forest staff make no assumptions about the effects of the management activities on the bats or their habitat. I n order to determine the effects of management, the Forest conducts surveys associated with the environmental analyses of proposals as well as surveys of known bat hibernacula—usually caves or abandoned mines—and maternity colonies.

The Forest surveys for bats when and where they are expected to appear: at night, along streams and rivers where they forage for food and in and near the caves and mines they are known to use. The most common method employed is called "mist-netting." As the name suggests, this involves the placement of a fine net across the bats' anticipated flyways to capture individuals in flight. Many bats of differing species can be caught in one place. The captured bats are examined, identified, weighed, tagged and released.

During the winter, surveys are made of the hibernacula in which bats hibernate. Not all bat species gather in caves or mines to overwinter. Some bats seek shelter in rock outcroppings or similar places to spend the winter alone. If possible, biologists enter a hibernaculum in order to count the bats that are overwintering. Bats found in hibernacula over the winter include the Indiana bat, gray bat and northern long-eared bat. For projects that require the removal of trees, surveys are required to determine the presence or absence of bats in the area immediately surrounding the planned removal. They may also be required to determine the presence or absence of bats in trees that will be removed.

Until recently, Forest surveys indicated no harm was being done to the bats on the Shawnee National Forest and that steady populations were being maintained. However in February 2013 the fungus *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* was discovered in several caves in Illinois. This fungus is responsible for the so-called "white-nose syndrome" infection and subsequent deaths of bats that overwinter in caves and mines (the name "white nose" arose from the appearance of the white fungus on the muzzles and wings of affected bats). Since appearing in upstate New York in 2008, the white-nose syndrome has spread throughout the eastern United States, causing the death of millions of bats and leading to an 80-percent decline in overall bat populations.

2014 winter surveys indicated that the white-nose syndrome is affecting hibernating bats on the Shawnee National Forest with some flying out their hibernaculum during hard freezes when no water or food was available, and many lying dead on the ground near their hibernaculum. On the Hoosier National Forest, which discovered the *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* fungus in 2011, bat surveys this winter confirmed the mortality of the disease. At locations where an abundance of northern long-eared bats was netted in 2010-2011, none were caught.

While this scenario could indicate a similar outcome on the Shawnee National Forest, surveys of bats and their habitats will continue. If southern Illinois should experience some milder winters during which streams don't freeze, and bats would then be able to locate drinking water, bat populations might survive the *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* fungus much better than elsewhere. The findings of surveys will enable us to understand better the effects of white-nose syndrome on our local bat populations.

Winter roosting near entrance of a local cave.

Sharing the Great Outdoors:
Education and Outreach Efforts on the Shawnee National Forest

Sharing Science and Cultivating Careers
Shawnee National Forest Connect with Students Through Science and Technology

Last fall, the Shawnee National Forest was eager to bring a new environmental education program to the Harrisburg Library's Next Generation Science and Technology Club, which consists of local middle school students. To help in the endeavor, the Forest's GIS team delivered by developing a fun and interactive GIS educational program. Team members Jeremy Vaughn and Kris Twardowski, GIS Specialists, and Kimberly Lilly, AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) Volunteer, developed and led the new program to eight 5th graders as part of their weekly Science and Technology Club meeting. Although this seems like a very small audience, the pay-off was big considering the interest and enthusiasm from the students after being taught such an in-depth topic like that of the fundamentals of geospatial technology and its applications.

Changing things up, the Shawnee personnel also took the students to the local park, rather than their usual library meeting location, to engage them in what makes GIS work out in the field. To begin the program, the team covered a brief introduction of the history of GIS satellites and their uses followed by an explanation on how the various points and information are collected using GPS units. To demonstrate and help the students visualize the layers of GIS data that make up a map, Shawnee GIS specialists used a multi-layered flipchart. Data layers in the flipchart were printed on clear acetate, so as the students were introduced to building maps with data layers the team was able to bring this complex concept across without the use of a computer or ArcGIS software.

Then the real fun started. The group was broken down into small groups and given instructions on how to use actual GPS receivers, the same ones that professionals use to collect data in the field. The team then guided the students in using the GPS receiver to find predetermined points throughout the park.

By the end of the lesson the students were introduced to the concept of GIS and how the U.S. Forest Service uses the technology. They were able to recall information about how many satellites are in orbit, why they are in orbit and who put them into orbit. The students left with a concrete knowledge and understanding of how GIS works as well as how a map is created from the information gathered via satellite. There were even a few future agency GIS specialists in the group after the hands on experience.

- Smokey Bear's 70th birthday! With parties held at the Shawnee Headquarters at Harrisburg, Illinois, and Lincoln Memorial Picnic Area at Jonesboro, Illinois.

- Kids Fishing Derbies were held at Lake Glendale and Oakwood Bottoms Recreation Areas.

- Dirt Detectives – The Heritage Program's conservation education program was enjoyed by 522 southern Illinois youngsters. Students learned about archaeology and the information found in archaeological excavations through hands-on pretend archaeological site situation activities.

- The Shawnee National Forest hosted a Project Underground Workshop on March 8th, 2014. Participants enjoyed a myriad of cave and karst related activities, including "Bat Echoes" (see photo on right).

Education and Outreach Efforts on the Shawnee National Forest continued…

- "Fish Tales" was held at Pounds Hollow Recreation Area and Lincoln Memorial Picnic Area. "Fish Tales" is a fishing program designed to involve children from underserved communities in an environmental education program that introduces environmentally healthy habits to last them for a lifetime, while enjoying the outdoor experience. To the left is a student, Hunter Howell, posing in one of the Forest new cut outs.

- "Arborwild" was held in Harrisburg and Carbondale. This year's activity stations included fishing, wildland firefighters, crafts, Dirt Detectives, creepy crawlers, nature sounds and water wonders.

- The Forest launched a new mobile-based interpretive tour designed to better connect visitors with national forest lands. With the concept of traditional communication methods and new technology merging, visitors are now able to either dial-in using a cell phone or scan a smartphone-friendly QR code to gain instant, on-site information while touring the Shawnee National Forest. There are approximately 30 sites across the Forest featured in the new mobile tour. Areas highlighted via the tour include recreation areas like Garden of the Gods and Lake Glendale, historical sites including Rim Rock and natural resource management locations like Oakwood Bottoms, LaRue-Pine Hills and more. The goal in the first few years of the program is to get feedback from the public, especially in determining which tour stops are being utilized the most, along with other sites that the public would like to be included in the future. Each location in the tour has signage with the phone number and a QR code. To access the tour using your mobile phone, dial 618-219-7032, follow the prompts and enter the specific stop number to hear the recorded interpretive message for that particular site. The tour stop's QR code takes you to mobile content using your smartphone, including text, videos and even multimedia slideshows. The mobile tour can be accessed by visiting the website: http://myoncell.mobi/shawneenf. The Shawnee joins two other pilot forests, the Arapaho-Roosevelt National Forests in Colorado and the Wayne National Forest in Ohio, as the agency's pilot locations for this new mobile-centric interpretive platform.

- The Shawnee National Forest launched a new school program in 2014 called Naturalist in the Classroom. Naturalist in the Classroom (NITC) is a combination of classroom programs followed by a field trip to the Shawnee National Forest; all guided by natural resource professionals. All the lessons align with Illinois Common Core Learning Standards, and through the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, teachers can also apply for grant funding to help cover costs associated with transportation needs of the fieldtrip. The areas which the Shawnee National Forest focused its outreach to schools included some of the highest underserved populations in southern Illinois with high unemployment rates. The goals for NITC are three-fold: to strengthen and expand the Shawnee's environmental education program, to get kids in the outdoors, and to assist local educators in meeting Illinois Common Core Learning Standards. During this pilot year of the program, efforts focused on offering NITC to 3rd through 5th grade students in the choice of two program themes: forest ecology and wetland ecology. NITC continues being offered in 2015.

2014 Recreational Highlights...

Shawnee National Forest Gets Help from Golconda Job Corps and Accomplishes Pounds Hollow Campground Electrification Work

At the Golconda Job Corps, students receive the skills needed to succeed in today's workforce. Job Corps is a no-cost education and career technical training program administered by the U.S. Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training. The Job Corps program is authorized by Title I-C of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. At Job Corps Centers, they support the Job Corps program's mission of teaching eligible young people the skills they need to become employable and independent and placing them in meaningful jobs or further education.

The Pounds Hollow electrification job was coordinated between the Golconda Job Corps and the engineering staff of the Shawnee National Forest. Several of the Job Corps Center trade shops and their instructors were involved including Shane Barker (Construction Craft Labor), Jim Marshall and Trent Commer (Urban Forestry) and Jeremy Sargent (Electrical). First the Golconda Job Corps students tackled clearing several trees so that a trencher could dig a ditch for placement of the electrical conduit. This was a large task which took several hours for the students and Forest Service personnel. Once all the trees and debris were hauled off, the task of trenching several hundred feet began. However this wasn't an easy task either and took several days due to the hard ground, rough terrain and tree roots that were encountered.

As soon the trench was a few hundred feet, the students started laying conduit, connecting it together and placing it in the trench. The entire job took several days. Enough inactive conduit slack was left out of the ground to allow a certified electrical contractor to finish the job and place electrical pedestals at each campsite.

This job was one of the most educational that the Golconda Job Corps has ever worked on. While it was not an easy task, in the end, it was a great learning experience and gave a wonderful sense of pride after completing such a large job. The experience was a great opportunity for everyone involved, and the Golconda Job Corps is looking forward to helping the Shawnee National Forest with other future projects.

- District team members worked together to clear out several scenic overlooks along the Pine Hills Road. This area within LaRue Pine Hills provides gorgeous vistas, especially during the fall color season. The photo on the right was taken of the team after a busy day of working on the project.

- The boat dock at Johnson Creek was replaced in the spring of 2014 with a new floating dock and repairs were made to the concrete approach to improve access.

- Johnson Creek well drilling and construction of the pump house was completed in April 2014. Potable water tests and training on operation of the system was completed by June and the system was open for public use in July 2014.

- Lusk Creek Wilderness trails were cleared with the assistance of the fire personnel helping the trails crews. The project encompassed over 80 miles of trail maintenance.

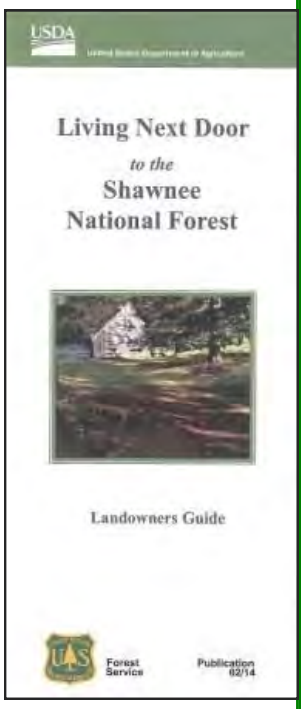
2014-Great Year For Safety on the Shawnee

* First up was an in-depth facility safety inspection in which several issues were discovered and quickly corrected with the help of everyone on the Shawnee National Forest (Forest).
* The Forest also started periodic clean-up days in which employees consolidate records and gather stuff to be turned stored electronically or recycled. This has resulted in freeing up much needed storage space in our facilities.
* The Forest Safety Committee developed several programs that have been forwarded to the Regional Office for consideration and continues to look after the safety of the employees and ways to build upon the Forest safety program.

Eddyville Warehouse

New Landowners Guide for the Shawnee

The Shawnee launched a new brochure that focuses on topics encountered when living next door to national forest land in southern Illinois. The informational pamphlet covers a wide variety of topics, ranging from boundary management and landlines, to permits, recreation, and roads. It is designed to provide helpful information to those individuals who live or own land adjacent to the Shawnee National Forest. The brochure is entitled "*Living Next Door to the Shawnee National Forest-Landowners Guide*."



Supporting the Shawnee: Overview of Volunteer Efforts in 2014

The Shawnee National Forest hosted 499 volunteers is 2014. Volunteers contributed 12,797 hours (7.11 person years) for an appraised value of $288,583.00! Contributions from volunteers were appreciated in several different programs areas of the Shawnee National Forest including heritage, conservation education, botany, developed recreation, wildlife, wilderness, customer service and trails.

Shawnee National Forest Hosts Leave No Trace Hot Spot Crew

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics selected the Shawnee National Forest as one of its eight endangered "Hot Spots" in the nation and hosted events to help raise awareness and provide education to visitors during a special weekend-long event around the Garden of the Gods Recreation Area.

The Subaru/Leave No Trace Traveling Trainers team visit included: presenting LNT to 245 middle school students from Pope and Hardin County and to 12 graduate level college students at Southern Illinois University-Carbondale; assisting with a "trash bash"; conducting wilderness monitoring in the Garden of the Gods Wilderness; and staffing a LNT booth at the Garden of the Gods Observation Trail, reaching 150 local, national and international visitors.

The "Hot Spot" weekend wrapped up with a multi-agency and partner Leave No Trace Workshop at SIU-C Touch of Nature Environmental Center.

Garden of the Gods Trailhead

Youth Conservation Corps

Eight high school students in the YCC program spent a week working on a project related to an original road segment that was used during the Historic Cherokee Trail of Tears. The Shawnee National Forest has received a grant for $100,000 from the National Park Service for trail improvements and interpretive signing at Hamburg Hill.

New Faces on the Forest...

- Amanda Kunzmann – Deputy District Ranger - Vienna
- Andi Wallis – Forestry Technician – Jonesboro
- Leonard Pitcher – Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist - Vienna
- Nate Hein – Fire Operations Specialist - Vienna
- Steven Harris-Lands and Recreation Program Manager-Harrisburg
- Whit Jiter – Lead Fire Engine Operator - Vienna

Shawnee National Forest LE&I Gain New K9 Team Member

The Shawnee National Forest and Law Enforcement and Investigation (LE&I) have a new member of the LE&I team, Samio, a 3 year old German Shepherd. K9 Samio is certified in patrol and narcotics work and is assigned to LE&I Officer Joan Rizkallah. Officer Rizkallah and K9 Samio spent 6 weeks together in training as K9 Samio began his formal LE&I training in September 2014, then officially began duty on the Shawnee National Forest in November. K9 Samio is looking forward to being of service in his LE&I duties as the Shawnee National Forest and LE&I personnel seek to make sure our national forest lands are protected, ensuring the safety of visitors and safeguard of our public lands.

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