



# SHAWNEE NATIONAL FOREST

## A Year of Shawnee Successes!

*Celebrating accomplishments Forest-wide for 2012!*

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### *Celebrating a Year of Successes....*

*"Take a moment to celebrate your accomplishments."*

The above mentioned words are something that I try to remind myself and others of often. Yes, amongst the crazy, fast paced days of reports, field work, conference calls, meetings and more, it is something that I and others forget to do as it is so easy to focus on what still needs to be done. But as 2012 has come to a close, and a new year begins, I realize the importance of celebrating the good work done across the Forest in 2012 all the more as our team has experienced a year quite like any other. Partnerships and volunteer related programs and projects have continued to flourish thanks to those who dedicated their time and economic support to improve the conditions and opportunities for everything from plants to people. Public relations efforts have increased as we have sought to be as proactive as possible in sharing our story with those we serve, the American people. Natural resource management work has garnered great results across many areas of flora, fauna and land. Our Heritage Program continues to connect the past to the present via a myriad of endeavors, and several personnel responded to fires across the country along with the devastation caused by Hurricane Sandy during 2012.

The U.S. Forest Service motto is "Caring for the land and serving people," During the previous year, I've seen our team strive to meet that goal. For this, I wish to thank all of my employees for a year of great achievements and successes. Whether through partnerships, cost saving measures or simply thinking outside the box, each member of the Shawnee National Forest (SNF) team has gone above and beyond to meet needs and be good stewards of the public land entrusted to us on behalf of the American people. We've also truly come together as a work family through the losses faced during the Leap Day 2012 storm. From helping fellow members of the community in cleanup efforts to rallying to each other's sides to share and heal, we've grown stronger and closer as a group.

And so, as we begin the new year ahead, I wish you and yours a joyous and prosperous start to the new year! We hope to see you on the Forest in the months ahead as well!

***Allen Nicholas***  
***Forest Supervisor***



# SAFETY FIRST!

## *Safety on the Shawnee*

*Learn More About Safety Related Accomplishments in 2012!*

- The Shawnee National Forest Safety Plan has been approved for 2013, helping to provide continued guidance for a greater level of overall safety.
- A Hearing Conservation Program has been approved for personnel.
- The Forest's Check-in/Check-out Plan has been updated, ensuring for greater accountability of all field going team members.
- A new Safety Newsletter has been created, which will be done in conjunction with the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie.
- The Forest has reestablished a Safety Committee with the group diligently at work to address safety related issues.
- Safety Grams continue to be created and shared with all Forests within the Region.
- Committees have been started to deal with issues brought up from the second part of the Safety Journey, an ongoing process designed to engage employees in creating and fostering a safe work environment.

## *Uncovering History at Illinois Iron Furnace*

During the summer of 2012, Passport in Time (PIT) volunteers arrived at the Shawnee National Forest to help locate activity areas in the hills surrounding the furnace related to the manufacture of iron. The volunteers, working alongside U.S. Forest Service (USFS) archaeologists and AmeriCorps VISTA



(Volunteers in Service to America), were able to relocate houses foundations, iron ore slope mines, and a cemetery; all of which were associated with the furnace operations. The also recorded prehistoric Native American sites in the area, including one that dated to the Late Archaic/Early Woodland period (3000-1100 B.P.).

With the help of the volunteers, the Forest was able to conduct a full archaeological inventory of about 100 acres in the hills surrounding the furnace.



## *Working Together to Control Invasive Species In Southern Illinois*

The River-to-River Cooperative Weed Management Area (CWMA) is a partnership between 12 federal and state agencies, organizations and universities aimed at addressing the threat of invasive plants in southern Illinois. Established in 2006, the CWMA targets terrestrial and aquatic invasive plant species with six areas of focus: education and public awareness; early detection and rapid response; prevention; control and management; and research.

The CWMA also includes support from the Southern Illinois Invasive Species Strike Team, a two-person crew founded by The Nature Conservancy that focuses on invasive species control and education year-round. Funding for this project is provided by the U.S. Forest Service, Northeastern Area, State and Private Forestry, Forest Health Protection Program and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. In the winter, the Strike Team concentrates on the control of woody invasive plants such as autumn olive and bush honeysuckle. Their focus switches to garlic mustard, Chinese yam and Japanese stiltgrass in the warmer months.



## *Wilderness Program Accomplishments Abound in 2012!*

Through the dedication of personnel and volunteers to "Keep Wilderness Wild," the SNF continued its work towards completing the Ten Year Wilderness Stewardship Challenge. The challenge, which will be completed in 2014, seeks to look at designated Wilderness Areas to recognize them as being managed to a minimum standard in ten different elements. The Shawnee encompasses seven designated Wilderness Areas, and with a minimum score of 60 needed for recognition, all seven of the Shawnee's sites scored well above the needed minimum.

In addition to the Wilderness Stewardship Challenge, six Wilderness Areas were also monitored for recreation impacts. These include Garden of the Gods, Burden Falls, Bay Creek, Bald Knob, Clear Springs and Panther Den. 145.4 miles of trail were hiked as well.

New information signs designed to provide a consistent wilderness message were installed at the Anvil Rock and Hitching Post Trailheads, located at the boundary of the Garden of the Gods Wilderness, along with Lusk Creek Trailhead for the Lusk Creek Wilderness. Additionally, portal signs were installed at Burden Falls Wilderness, Bay Creek Wilderness and Lusk Creek Wilderness.



## **Shawnee Outdoors Program Hits the Road!**

*Youth group attends outdoor leadership summit on behalf of the Shawnee National Forest...*

During the weekend of November 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012, a delegation of volunteers from the SNF, made up of Shawnee Volunteer Corps members and AmeriCorps Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), traveled to Emory University in Atlanta for outdoor leadership training through the Outdoor Nation, a subsidiary of the Outdoor Foundation. The Atlanta Summit was designed to help youth leaders, ages 16 through 28, grow and sustain community action plans and projects while also providing attendees with an opportunity to network with other outdoor enthusiasts and professionals throughout the weekend.

Through the event, 90 attendees were brought together to identify top outdoor issues, brainstorm ideas, and ultimately develop an action plan and resources to make it happen. As problems were identified amongst participants, the Shawnee delegates worked on defining projects that would help eliminate barriers that keep youth and their families from enjoying the great outdoors. The resulting project, tentatively titled the Shawnee Outdoor Family Fun Fest, was developed with team building and family bonding in mind.

The Shawnee delegation was honored to be a part of the outdoor nation youth summit. During the event, they presented one of the top five projects and were thrilled to be able to return home with funds to engage the local community with recreation opportunities available in the SNF. Each project was presented and evaluated by fellow attendees with the top five projects each receiving \$1,000 to help with implementation.

Focus wise, the group's project aims to encourage kids and their families to spend time together outside, maybe even for the first time. In order to accomplish the goal, the group will be hosting an outdoor family fun fest and optional camp out with the hope of fostering positive family and community relationships through team building and educational outdoor activities. These include a guided hike through the Forest, focusing on southern Illinois ecology and environmental education, to increase participants' knowledge and appreciation for the outdoors, knot tying exercises, and an introduction to camping and outdoor cooking. After participating in the event, families will have the courage and the desire to spend more time recreating outdoors in southern Illinois.

The summit was sponsored by a myriad of partners, and through generous supporters of the event, expenses for registration, meals, travel and lodging were covered for the Shawnee delegation.



## ***Volunteers and Partners Help to Ensure Positive Partnership Results in 2012***

From trail work to assisting with events, volunteers and partnerships are a most important and appreciated part of the SNF overall work. In any given year, the Forest accomplishes trail maintenance, wilderness stewardship, environmental education, wildlife management, removal of non-native invasive species and much more thanks to the generous donation of time, energy and support of others. In 2012, volunteers and partners contributed over 16,739 hours, equivalent to 9.3 full time employees, a savings to the forest of over \$500,000. As the Forest grows in partnerships, volunteers and hosted programs, the Shawnee will continue to celebrate old and new friends as all work together to improve the environment, provide quality recreation experiences, and outreach in environmental education.



## *Trails and Treks for 2012...*

Trail accomplishments on the Shawnee were a highlight in 2012, largely due to volunteers. Of the Forest's 388 miles of system trail, 188 miles (over half) received maintenance, and 13 miles were improved. This is largely due to a dedicated trails staff coupled with volunteer coordination and oversight provided by the VISTA team members. Additional trail support in 2012 was provided by the AmeriCorps Emergency Response Team out of St. Louis, AmeriCorps National Community Conservation Corps, Master Trail Steward volunteers, Trail Steward volunteers, adopt-a-trail volunteers, and the many other volunteers devoting time and energy to keeping trails on the Forest in good shape while also helping to protect resources. Your hard work is appreciated!



### *Heritage on the Shawnee*

It was a wonderful year of successes on the Shawnee for the Heritage Program. From programs to partnerships, 2012 brought with it some positive accomplishments. Highlights include the following:

- In July, a group of 31 teen volunteers from the state of Mississippi stopped by the Forest to help in a trail maintenance project at Millstone Bluff, an interpreted archaeological site. Just as the last bag of mulch was laid down on the trail, a group of 25 British amateur and professional archaeologists who were touring the eastern United States, visiting rock art sites and learning about prehistoric cultural landscapes, arrived by bus to explore the site.
- The Heritage Program been working closely with the National Park Service, Illinois Chapter of the Trail of Tears Association and the Center for Archaeological Investigations at Southern Illinois University (SIU), on a number of projects, including the identification of an existent original trail.
- The Shawnee hosted a group of urban school children and their parents from Chicago's Eden Place in August thanks to the development of a new partnership. The 39 campers enjoyed a variety of outdoor activities, including exploring, hiking, archery, campfire story telling and sleeping under the southern skies of the Shawnee National Forest during their three-day stay.
- The Heritage Program co-hosted a movie and pizza night with the Saline County Historical Society, inviting the public to view movies of the Forest taken during the 1930s as part of the Ozark Tours. These tours began in 1931 and continued for nearly 20 years as the brainchild of Colonel L.O. Trigg, a local newspaper editor and early Shawnee National Forest enthusiast. It was a rare treat to see the Forest as it first appeared during the 1930s, comparing it to how it looks today.
- In partnership with the Center for Archaeological Investigations at SIU at Carbondale, the Heritage Program began work to complete a 15,126 acre archaeological inventory in southern Pope County. Although analysis of the archaeological materials has only just started, at least 15 new archaeological sites were recorded with 125 previously recorded sites also being revisited. These types of inventories not only locate new sites that may need to be avoided during management activities but also serve to help gauge the state of preservation of the archaeological sites and other types of historic properties across the Forest.
- The Forest met with a number of representatives of the Shawnee (the Shawnee Tribe, the Eastern Shawnee Tribe, and the Absentee Shawnee Tribe), Delaware Tribe, and Osage Nation at a special tribal relations conference in Oklahoma. These are federally-recognized American Indian tribes that have indicated they are interested in consulting with the Shawnee National Forest on topics such as the preservation of human remains and other important archaeological sites, as well as other management activities. The Forest also routinely consults with the Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma.

## ***Shawnee National Forest Joins with Partners to Improve Bat Habitat***

During the summers of 2010 and 2012, Bat Conservation International (BCI) teamed up with the SNF to benefit the Indiana bat in southern Illinois by providing assistance in the construction of three bat gates at two caves – Rich’s Cave and Ellis Cave. Both caves serve as important hibernacula for the Indiana bat on the Shawnee. Wildlife personnel from the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests in Region 8 provided personnel to assist in the construction of these three gates. This project has national and regional significance in that both Rich’s Cave and Ellis Cave has a combined winter population of over 5,000-6,000 Indiana bats. Additionally, Ellis Cave winters the second highest number of Indiana bats in Illinois. For FY12, BCI contributed \$17,350 (labor and materials) to the endeavor, adding to the U.S. Forest Service’s contribution of \$26,000 (labor, materials and equipment).



## ***Working with Partners to Restore Wetland and Bottomland Forest Habitat in Southern Illinois***

With budgets ever tighter and resources far more scarce, the ability to partner together with other agencies and organizations to ensure the overall mission at hand is accomplished has become more vital than ever. With this premise in mind, the SNF is especially grateful for dedicated partners as successes continue in helping to restore wetland acreage in southern Illinois.

In 2009, a challenge cost share agreement between the Shawnee and Ducks Unlimited (DU) was executed, allotting both federal funding, coupled with matching dollars from DU, to support wetland restoration and habitat improvement projects along the floodplains of the Big Muddy River. Since that time, engineers, biologists and others have joined together to grow and develop this partnership, helping to survey wetland sites, collect data and put into place plans that have resulted in the restoration of approximately 680 acres of restored wetland habitat across four wetland areas. With the remaining funding, plans are currently in place to continue restoration work of one to two additional wetlands within the next year. Several more sites have been identified for restoration in the coming years, promoting healthy productive habitat and beautiful lands for generations to come.

In 2012, the SNF joined forces with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) in an effort to restore the bottomland oak woodlands of Oakwood Bottoms and throughout the Big Muddy River floodplain. “Project Pin Oak”, as it became known as, quickly grew to having a total of ten contributing partners, including the Arbor Day Foundation, American Forests Global ReLeaf, Plant-a-Tree, Middle Mississippi River Partnership, Illinois Natural History Survey, Forrest Keeling Nursery and Long Forestry Consultation. To date, this group accomplished 200 acres of timber stand improvements and 250 acres of tree plantings. This is in addition to the 1,633 acres previously improved/planted and over 1,500 acres of prescribed burning conducted by the U.S. Forest Service on this site since 2007.



With ample wildlife related recreational opportunities, ranging from hunting to bird watching, the Oakwood Bottoms area of the Shawnee National Forest is a unique site offering abundant activities for visitors. Because of the popularity of the area coupled with the positive partnership work being accomplished, Oakwood Bottoms has been featured in various publications, including three popular magazines this year; Ducks Unlimited, Illinois Outdoors and the National Wild Turkey Federation’s November/December 2012 edition of the organization’s national magazine, “Turkey Country.” For more information concerning Oakwood Bottoms, including access to flood maps and regulations, please visit the [Shawnee National Forest](#) website.

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

2012 was a great year of fun, hands on, engaging programming thanks to a multitude of Shawnee personnel, volunteers and partners as the Forest enjoyed a successful year of outreach and education related programming. From nature inspired events that had participants of all ages trekking to the outdoors for guided hikes, games, canoe trips, campfire programs and more to presenting programs teaching students about wildfires and how to prevent them, there is truly something for everyone through the myriad of outreach endeavors offered by the Shawnee annually.

The Forest launched its Young Trekkers series in April by inviting kids (1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>) grades to join after school adventures at Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds in Jonesboro. Each day included different activities, such as hiking and park exploration based on a myriad of different natural resource themes.



Also in April, three main outreach endeavors were held with the first offering participants guided field trips to see unique birds, wildflowers, reptiles, aquatic life, geological features, plant communities and more in the world-renowned LaRue-Pine Hills Research Natural Area during the annual LaRue-Pine Hills Appreciation Day. On Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, the outdoor focused fun continued as birding was the topic at hand as the Shawnee assisted the Middle Mississippi River Partnership in ensuring a successful “Birding the Bottomlands” day. During the day-long event, ten birding locations were staffed by expert birders while an additional two sites offered canoe birding adventures. In the afternoon, a birding themed festival was held, featuring many conservation related education and demonstration activities. Culminating with the end of the month, the final April outreach occasion was the Forest’s involvement as a key partner in Stewardship Week; a week-long outreach experience at the Dixon Springs Ag Center that allows hundreds of children from area schools to come out and enjoy learning about what it means to be a good steward of the earth and the great outdoors.

The fall programs conveniently kicked off on the autumnal equinox (September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2012) with Hunting and Fishing Days at John A. Logan College. Here hundreds of participants played a Wheel of Fortune style trivia game that put their knowledge of the outdoors to the test and gave Shawnee NF representatives a chance to promote responsible hunting, land stewardship and wildfire safety. Forest personnel also supported fellow partners as part of the annual DuQuion Conservation Fair on October 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012, proving to be a big hit with over 400 students ranging from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade in attendance.

The Shawnee’s renowned “Critter Night” on October 19th saw an increase in participation from last year. Approximately 160 kids and parents gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in Jonesboro, IL, spending hours at over a dozen booths, enjoying hands on crafts, learning more about different critter sounds, looking to the sky for lessons on astronomy and other night-themed nature activities as the setting sun provided a wonderful fall backdrop for the well-attended outreach endeavor.

With 1,800 people in attendance, the Shawnee lent a myriad of support to the 2012 Sustainable Living Expo on October 27<sup>th</sup>, helping to further sustainable thinking across the southern Illinois region. This is the third year that Forest personnel assisted with the event, and whether helping to staff a booth, leading sessions, working to present activities in the kid’s area or ensuring both Smokey Bear and Woodsy Owl were on hand to say hello, Shawnee staff were excited to be a part. The Forest’s Type 3 Team also provided assistance in helping to plan and coordinate the event.



With each program planned and presented, the SNF strives to connect the region’s youth with nature. All of these events served to get more kids outside and reinforced the U.S. Forest Service’s presence in the local communities during the 2012 year. Experiences like the ones gained at these programs are key to increasing youth’s enthusiasm and will be instrumental in getting them outside in the future.

## ***Community Engagement through Recreation and Tourism (CERT) in Southern Illinois***

An exciting new pilot program currently underway in southern Illinois has reached a milestone as the non-profit Friends of the Shawnee National Forest (NF), with partnership support from the University of Illinois Extension, continues to move forward, engaging community stakeholders and facilitating dialogue to work toward sustainable recreation and tourism in the region. The project (and pilot) kicked off in February 2012 through a series of four community engagement meetings. The gatherings were well attended by local community leaders and members, including elected officials, representatives from various groups and organizations encompassing interests such as recreation, tourism, health care, etc, as well as many other land managing agencies, including both federal and state. Coming to the table as participants were also several personnel from the SNF.

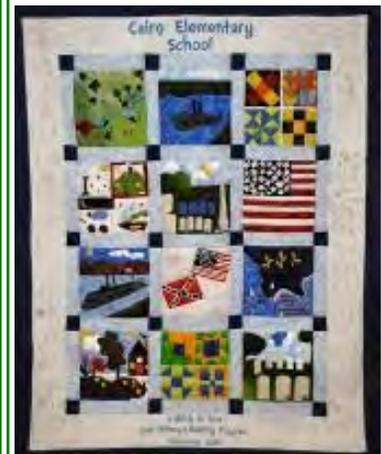
Based upon dialogue generated during the February meetings, a set of “guiding principles” was established to serve as a foundational platform for future ideas and discussions. Major findings include the mutual desire for greater information sharing about recreational opportunities; a stronger emphasis on education as a key to long term sustainability; and better collaboration and coordination between partners and users in regards to the maintenance of assets as well as access needs.

Over the course of the next six months, discussions of ideas led to the formation of Communities of Interest (COIs) to begin discussions and to develop collective actions. Many participants gathered on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012 to develop a vision and also prioritize opportunities and projects on the horizon. For more information about getting involved and next steps ahead, contact the Friends of the SNF at the [Friend’s website](#).



*Participants exchange ideas and create story boards as part of a visioning exercise during the September 27<sup>th</sup> Community Engagement through Recreation and Tourism (CERT) meeting.*

## ***Shawnee National Forest Connects Students to Local Cultural Heritage***



In celebration of African American History Month, two AmeriCorps VISTAs, working with the SNF and University of Illinois Extension Office, organized a heritage celebration and art program with students at Cairo Elementary School.

The program was held over two days with the help of volunteers from the U.S. Forest Service as well as those from the local and regional community. Activities included living history reenactments and engaging, curriculum based lessons that not only focused on southern Illinois history but were also aligned to state teaching standards. Following the completion of these activities, the students returned to their classrooms and worked together to make a quilt block to showcase what they learned in their classrooms through the use of various symbols and shapes. Each classroom designed and created a block to be assembled into a 12-block quilt by volunteers from Cairo and Paducah. It will be displayed in the school as a reminder of what the students learned and to promote pride in their local community and history.

***Did You Know??? - For 2012, the Forest participated in over 80 outreach events, garnering over 14,000 participants!***

## News for YOU! - Highlights from Public Affairs

With the mission of effectively communicating the Forest's work with both internal and external audiences in an informative, engaging way at the forefront, 2012 proved to be a busy year for the Shawnee NF Public Affairs team. From working to review and update a variety of informational tools, to strengthening existing partnerships and creating new ones, the Public Affairs program enjoyed a busy year full of great work. Accomplishments for 2012 include the following:

- A new public newsletter, *Shawnee Successes*, was created and distributed beginning with the March 2012 edition. The quarterly publication seeks to highlight positive partnerships, programs, projects and people relating to work taking place on the Shawnee NF.

- The Forest's Intranet (for internal employee usage) website was heavily reviewed and edited for content with all information being assembled into a new template. The site also benefitted from the addition of five new pages, helping to ensure the overall effectiveness and complete array of information available for employees. A major review and edit of the Shawnee NF external website continued with the goal to provide the public the most up-to-date information that is available.

- Six Recreation Opportunity Guides (ROGs) were reviewed, updated and published to the Forest's external website for public access and usage. These publications have site information and maps to assist customers when they visit the Shawnee.

- A new "Connecting Families to the Forest" display was developed and implemented at the Forest Headquarters in Harrisburg, Illinois. With changing themes, the new informational kiosk will help provide free activity ideas and other resources to help families connect with the outdoors. The project has been shared at the District level with plans to expand and provide materials across the Shawnee for families too.

- In 2011, the SNF created an 8 x 10 floor display on the Weeks Act, and to help share this information with surrounding communities, the display traveled to the Harrisburg Public Library in Harrisburg, Illinois for display purposes in 2012. The exhibit continued its community circulation via setup at the Ohio River National Scenic Byway Visitor Center in Equality, Illinois followed by a



move to Southeastern Illinois College, helping to educate those in southern Illinois on the legislation and its overall role in the creation of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS).

- Work began on a new virtual tour of all developed recreational areas around the Forest in June and was completed by end of year. Currently, visitors can utilize the new tour by visiting any of the Shawnee's three offices, located in Harrisburg, Vienna and Jonesboro, and plans are underway for the virtual tour experience to also be posted to the Forest's external website for public access and usage. Once available, the tour will be available for viewing for both computers and

Smartphone users.

- Thanks to the help of both USFS personnel and community partners, the Shawnee began the creation of a new communication plan. A final draft was completed in 2012 with the new plan to be finalized and implemented in early 2013.

- Two frontliner meetings were coordinated (spring and fall) to help share and provide information for those who work at the different front desks across the Forest, welcoming visitors. These meetings are used to improve the communication internally and externally to better serve the public.

- Rebecca Williams joined the PA shop in 2012 having worked previously in Jonesboro. With less than one year with the PA team, Rebecca has been active in assisting with a variety of tasks, including the creation of a new brochure for the Forest entitled, *Living Next Door to a National Forest*.

## 2012 Awards for the Shawnee National Forest

### Kelly Pearson, Recipient of the 2011 National Volunteer Program Award

The Forest is proud to recognize Kelly Pearson, Volunteer and Trails Coordinator, as a recipient of the National Volunteer Program Award - Forest Service Employee, signifying her as the U.S. Forest Service Employee who advances and promotes the volunteer program.

Kelly received the award both regionally and also nationally.



### John DePuy Selected as Fellow in the Society of American Foresters



Congratulations to John DePuy, recognized and selected as a Fellow in the Society of American Foresters (SAF).

John, whose career encompasses 34 years within

the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service, joined the SAF in 1975 and has served as both a member and in various leadership roles within the organization.

### AmeriCorps VISTA Partnership Connects Citizens to the Land in Southern Illinois

Shawnee National Forest AmeriCorps VISTAs were recognized in 2012 with an *Eastern Region Honor Award* for their contributions in providing a wide variety of engaging, fun, outdoor inspired outreach programs to a myriad of individuals and audiences. Since the arrival of the first VISTAs in July 2010, up through August 2012, a total of eleven volunteers, each of whom have dedicated themselves for one full year of service, have donated a total of 13,500 hours, which is equivalent to six full time employees. In turn, each have recruited a total of 553 new volunteers and have also worked with more than 800 individuals in total, leveraging 8,460 volunteer hours. Program-wise, the VISTAs have developed over 46 new programs, which have provided contact opportunities with 379 teachers and over 5,762 students. Cumulatively, this group of talented young professionals has leveraged over \$2,000 in cash resources as well. All total, the monetary value of the contributions to southern Illinois through the VISTA program is equivalent to over \$500,000.

As Volunteers in Service to America, the VISTAs also contributed to recognized SNF's efforts through an *Eastern Region Volunteer Program Award for Community Service and Sustainable Recreation Programs*. VISTAs provided support by helping to create recreation and tourism programs, along with services, that benefit the environment and economy of places across the southern Illinois region. The total number of contributed volunteers, partners and hosted programs for 2012 was 16,739 hours, the equivalent of 9.3 full time employees (FTEs), which equates to a value of \$575,148. Compare this to 2006, with 1,227 volunteer hours, or 0.5 FTE's, valued at \$25,582. From this increase, it is apparent that the dedicated work of the VISTAs, the Shawnee Volunteer Corps, and other programs, such as Passport in Time, have added significantly to the Forest's potential for service learning, conservation education, and other outreach projects. As a result, Shawnee National Forest personnel and volunteers directly touched 17,669 individuals in southern Illinois, of which nearly half were students and another 347 were educators.



## ***Thinking Green on the Shawnee National Forest***

The SNF's Green Team is always looking to inspire others to think green across the Forest, and in 2012, team members worked hard to help share information with all personnel on a variety of topics, including recycling, sustainability and climate change, through a variety of activities and events. One program, the "Repurpose Challenge" dared employees to take what would normally be garbage and turn it into something useful. The Green Team also initiated a "Green Employee of the Month" award, which was created to recognize employees who exemplify above and beyond green thinking. In addition to developing programs, the Green Team also led presentations at safety meetings and sent out monthly green tips to all personnel. Ultimately, the team's goal is to show fellow employees and visitors that thinking green is not only good for the environment—It's fun and budget friendly, too.



### ***Get STARTed on a New Road to Health!***

The Forest partnered with the Southern Seven Health Department in 2012 to register the Lincoln Memorial Path, part of the larger Lincoln Memorial Recreation Area, as an official START Walking Path with the American Heart Association (AHA). START encourage people to get healthy by walking. For visitors, the route offers a wonderful opportunity to walk through a peaceful, nature-infused setting.



### ***Smokey Bear Throws First Pitch at Southern Illinois Miners Game***

Smokey Bear threw out the ceremonial first pitch at a Southern Illinois miners game in Marion, Illinois on July 20th. The crowd of 4,600 showered him with applause as he took the pitcher's mound. Forest employees, along with members of the Friends of the SNF staffed an information booth at the main entrance.



## ***Shawnee National Forest Participates in Annual Symposium on Child Abuse and Neglect***

The 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium on Child Abuse and Health is an event that connects medical professionals, social workers, educators and community members to discuss and address the issues of child negligence. A major theme at this year's symposium was childhood obesity and nutritional health, and with a greater disconnect between children and nature than ever before, a member of the SNF VISTA team, Patrick Mac-Meekin, participated as a speaker during the event to discuss how nature can be effective in helping children to be healthier.

Currently, the SNF, along with the Friends of the Shawnee, are partnering with other land management agencies and child care professionals to provide information and resources for local children to utilize public land for exploring, learning, experiencing new outdoor adventures and exercising. The program is still growing and parallel efforts on the Forest to get children involved with environmental stewardship are strengthening, like going into local schools with outdoor education programs.



### ***Land Additions to the Shawnee***

Did you know the Shawnee is now 38.2 acres larger than it was?

A total of 38.2 acres was purchased from the Illinois Audubon Society (Geick) in Pope County. The Forest was awarded funds in Land and Water Conservation Fund Critical Inholding to purchase the parcel of ecologically significant land. Within the acreage, the property contains important habitat for several imperiled bat species, numerous karst features, and frontage alongside Big Grand Pierre Creek—a candidate for Wild and Scenic River delegation.

## ***Welcome to the Shawnee!***



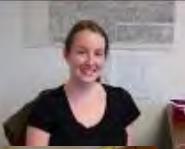
*Shannan Sharp, Botanist*  
Jonesboro



*Angela Kelley, Realty Specialist*  
Vienna



*Isaac Creek, AmeriCorps VISTA*  
*(Volunteer in Service to America)*  
Public Affairs/Conservation Education  
Harrisburg



*Paige Hawthorne, AmeriCorps VISTA*  
*(Volunteer in Service to America)*  
Heritage Program  
Harrisburg



*Brian Thietje, Forestry Technician*  
Jonesboro



*Laura Lecher,*  
*Recreation/Engineer/Lands*  
*Staff Officer*  
Harrisburg



*Joan Rizkallah, Law Enforcement*  
Harrisburg



*Chris Meyer, AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteer in*  
*Service to America)*



*Brent VanGundy, Fire Operations Specialist,*  
Vienna

**(No Photo)** *Patrick MacMeekin, AmeriCorps VISTA*  
*(Volunteer in Service to America)* Volunteer and Wilderness  
Programs Jonesboro

**(No Photo)** *Eric Stead, Forestry Technician (Wilderness),*  
Vienna

## ***Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center***

It was a busy year of activity for the Illinois Interagency Dispatch Center (ILC) in 2012. Perhaps one of the busiest time frames includes the center's move from Crab Orchard in Marion, Illinois to the Murphysboro Work Center. Incident wise, the dispatch center generated 362 incident actions in 2012 with the top 3 workload activities encompassing prescribed fire projects; Incident Resource Orders (incidents only, not individual resource orders associated with that incident); and wildland fire incidents (all agencies). The remainder were made up of law enforcement activities, search and rescue, smoke checks, medical aids, aircraft activities, vehicle incidents, and miscellaneous incidents (training, special weather announcements, etc).

Prescribed fire activity was busy at the start of 2012 as well. With early green up throughout the area, fire crews were able to complete prescribed burns on a good number of acres in the spring, an overall good result as summer's end/fall's arrival brought rain to the region, making conditions not favorable for fall prescribed burn season. All total, ILC reported a total of 12,374 accomplished acres for all agency programs.

Agencies participated in all aspects of the dispatch center. These include the following: Shawnee National Forest Service, Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie, Golconda Job Corps, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, and Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

### **Additional ILC stats for 2012:**

The SNF had 106 incidents for 2012 with 24 wildfires.



***National Visitor Use Monitoring Surveys  
Taking Place in 2012***



The National Visitor Use Monitoring Survey program got underway in the fall of 2012 as SNF personnel visited Wilderness trailheads, day use areas, campgrounds and general forest areas, gathering information from recreating visitors. Since that time, much local, out-of-state and even international visitor use has been captured, including visitors from England and New Zealand. The surveys will continue through late summer/early fall 2013, concluding at the end of September, when all the data will be compiled for use in local Forest planning, state planning, and even by Congress. This unique face-to-face situation also allows the Shawnee to capture real time information pertaining to specific trail conditions at a site, for instance, and sometimes even a little personal history as visitors share their experiences of visits to the Shawnee that have and will continue to span generations.

***In Memory of Donna M. Rann, Information Assistant***

***New Friends of the Shawnee National  
Forest Sales Outlet***

The Friends of the SNF began selling merchandise at the SNF office in Harrisburg. As a service, the Friends of the SNF are offering merchandise that will help your experience on the Shawnee be memorable and meaningful. You will find field guides, kids' books, t-shirts of all sizes, hats, bird houses and much more. The Friends of the SNF have a very clear purpose, which is to support the programs of the Shawnee in order to sustain the economic and environmental health of Southern Illinois. To learn more about the not-for-profit organization as well as the many projects the group is involved in, please visit the [Friends website](#).



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