

# DuPont State Recreational Forest Forest Supervisor's Report – October 2014

By Jason Guidry, Forest Supervisor



## Introduction

I recently passed my one-year mark as Forest Supervisor, taking the helm from David Brown. David's accomplishments are too numerous to recount here but under his direction the foundation was established for how the Forest is managed, protected, and promoted. I have been challenged, as never before in my career, to maintain David's high level of achievement while learning to operate one of the most popular State Forests in the country. I am grateful for what he has left for me to manage and build upon.



I am proud of what our staff has been able to maintain and accomplish, but will always be committed to becoming more efficient and seeking improvements pertaining to how we go out about work. The Forest staff has been exemplary in dealing with change and 2014's increase in visitation. Without the staff, roads are not maintained, facilities are not cleaned, Forest Rules are not enforced, the public is not informed, public safety is compromised, and the Forest resources are not protected. I worry that their work is so 'behind the scenes' that it does not get proper recognition. So, when you see one of our Rangers on the trail or in a parking area, where they are likely to be thinking about their next action that furthers our mission, give them a little thanks if you would.

I also want to thank you, the Friends of DuPont Forest, for your seemingly eternal support for the Forest. Trail maintenance, litter pickup, educational programming, staffing the Visitor Center, and construction projects are but a few of the examples of how the FODF assists the NC Forest Service. In keeping with the 'behind the scenes' theme, the FODF provides feedback about Forest operations that are vital to improving our approach to management. Please be assured that when you pull me to the side to give advice or point something out, it is received and followed up on to the extent possible, but, most of all, your interest and concern are appreciated.

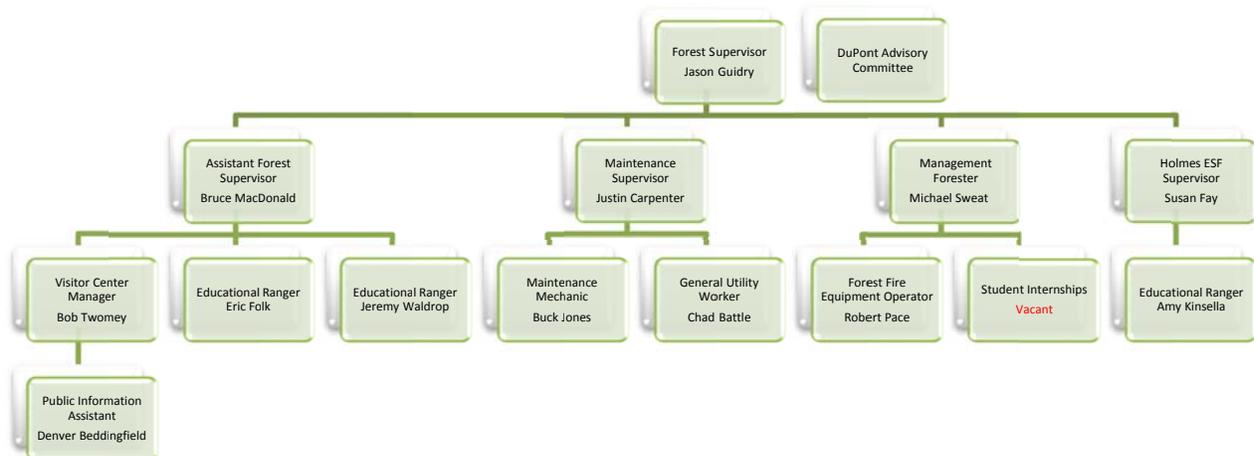
Your new president, Devin Gentry, has a very profound way to open FODF board meetings that I will borrow here. He asks the room to share what he calls, a "Mission Moment" in which they witnessed or participated in fulfilling the FODF mission statement. It's a wonderful tool to remind people of the purpose of enduring a long board meeting (as an example) and I have taken to asking my staff the same question from time to time. I am having a Mission Moment as I write this report and attempt to inform current and future FODF members about the aspects of managing a destination such as DuPont. If my report is only a short step towards keeping our respective missions compatible, as well as our achievements, then I will have at least done a good job on this day.

Regards, and now a report on DuPont State Recreational Forest:

## NCFS Personnel:

Justin Carpenter, who replaces Frank Cubero as the DSRF Maintenance Supervisor, started work on September 22. Justin is a Brevard native and has an extensive background in construction management, including being involved with the original construction of the log cabin that is now the Aleen Steinberg Center. The Maintenance Supervisor oversees the maintenance of DSRF's many buildings and structures, and is responsible for major repair and renovation projects.

Figure 1: Organizational Chart for the DSRF as of September, 2014



## Recreation/Visitation Services:

### Forest Visitation

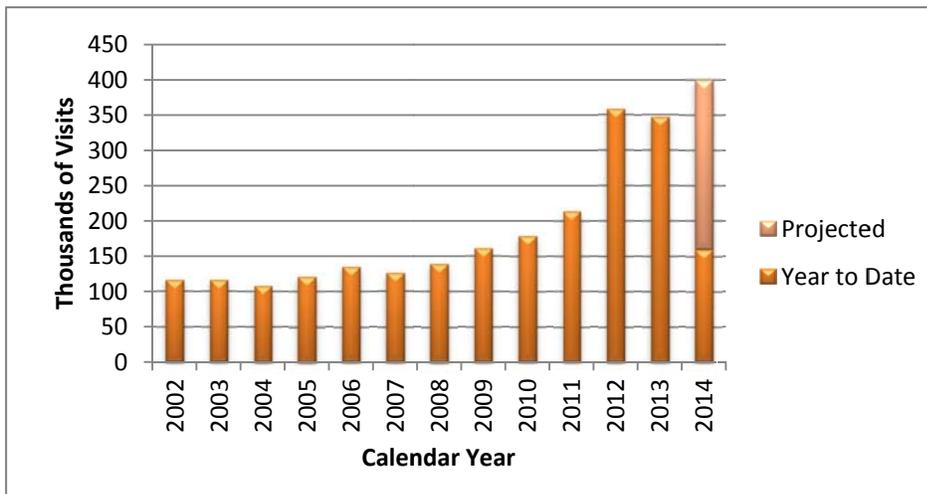
Visitation increased dramatically in late 2013 and into 2014, continuing a three-year trend of visits well above historical averages (See Figure 1 below). A number of factors may have contributed to this growth:

- Worldwide exposure of the DSRF through films such as *The Hunger Games*, produced on the Forest in 2011.
- Local and regional tourism development agencies touting the DSRF as a Western North Carolina destination.

- The emergence of social media and blogging networks that can spread and cultivate information well beyond North Carolina and the Southeastern U.S.
- The mountain biking communities' and Transylvania County's promotion of the DSRF trail system as "world class".

The waterfalls of the DSRF continue to be the main attraction, accounting for an estimated 70% of the visitors' reason for coming to the Forest.

Figure 2: Annual Visitation to the DSRF



The increased use of the Forest is a benefit to local economies, and offers a healthy social benefit to North Carolina's citizens. As with any growing endeavor, the responsibility to maintain a safe and clean environment at the Forest and protect the natural resources has increased proportionately with the Forest visitation. Some challenges the DSRF Staff encounters on a daily basis include:

- Littering (trash dumping and pervasive micro-litter)
- Vandalism (at shelters, trail signs, etc.)
- Alcohol use on Forest
- Restroom facilities beyond capacity
- Parking in unsafe areas (along Staton Road)
- Gridlock or illegal parking that affects emergency vehicle access
- Social trails created by users that destroy vegetation and accelerate erosion
- Increased Forest Rule Violations (rock climbing, swimming above waterfalls, etc.)

## Forest Protection

### *Hours of Operation*

The long awaited Hours of Operation remain a work in progress but have an anticipated implementation date of November 2, the end of Daylight Savings Time. As with any major change to the Forest that will affect a portion of users, the details matter. A press release is being developed to better inform the public of the Hours of Operation. An After-Hours Use Policy is being drafted to meet the intent of forest protection and public safety concerns during nighttime activities. An e-mail permitting system is being designed to be an effective and efficient method of providing after-hours access to legitimate users. The DSRF Staff is also working with local law enforcement to ensure that enforcement of the Hours of Operation is consistent and fair to the public.

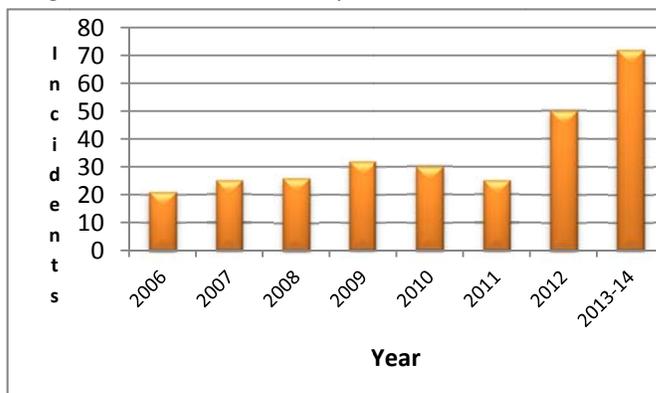
For an Administrative Rule (02 NC Administrative Code 60B .1031) that has been in existence since 2009 but never implemented, this has been a relatively long road to becoming an actuality. Our goal was to meet the intent of the law and continue to provide excellent customer service. A lesson learned is that it's not always as easy it may seem.

### *Incidents*

The number of incidents has increased as visitation has increased (See Figure 2). The DSRF Staff believes that the public's access to the new Visitor Center has improved the ability of visitors to quickly report incidents on the Forest, thereby increasing the number of incidents reported. A summary of incident types:

- Medical Response- 13
- Forest Rule Enforcement- 15
- Search and/or Rescue- 9
- Trauma/Severe Injury- 13
- Assists (e.g., transport of elderly, vehicle trouble, disabled visitors, etc.) -22

Figure 2- DSRF Incidents by Year



To ensure public safety and adequate emergency response the DSRF staff Rangers seven days per week, and have Rangers assume on-call schedules after normal working hours.

## **Vegetation and Wildlife Objectives**

### *Hemlock Woolly Adelgid Initiatives*

The DSRF recently issued a permit for the US Forest Service to develop experimental plots to study silvicultural practices needed to regenerate hemlocks in degraded stands. The plots will be 30 meters by 18 meters within which planted bare-root hemlocks will receive different levels of treatment involving weed control and fertilization. The goal is to determine an optimal strategy for establishing viable hemlock trees that can then be used in long-term strategies for species restoration and control of the woolly adelgid. As results are presented, we will report them in future newsletters.

### *Forest Management*

All forest management initiatives are in accordance with the DSRF's Land and Resource Management Plan that was developed in 2011 and is available on the DSRF website:

[http://ncforestservice.gov/Contacts/pdf/dsf/mgt\\_plan/DSRF\\_Land\\_Resource\\_Management\\_Plan.pdf](http://ncforestservice.gov/Contacts/pdf/dsf/mgt_plan/DSRF_Land_Resource_Management_Plan.pdf)

The next scheduled forest management activity will occur in three different locations. The target time frame will be the fall of 2014.

1. The Dry Branch watershed. Designated as primary area of the Nature Preserve, this ~100 acre area was targeted for restoration to a mixed-hardwood community. The DSRF plans to conduct a thinning of this area, which is primarily white pine plantation. The Natural Heritage Program has reviewed and approved the DSRF practice plan for the area.
2. The Joanna Mountain restoration area. This ~35 acre area is also located in the primary area and will be a shelterwood cut designed to promote hardwood tree species establishment and create strata within forest structure.
3. Lake Julia Road. Approximately 50 acres of mixed hardwood stand near the Ranger Office and Lake Julia. The objectives of this demonstration are to promote a new age-class of hardwood regeneration beneath mature timber. The US Forest Service's experimental plots will be located in this management unit.

### *Invasive/Exotic Species Control*

The DSRF staff recently received a \$2900 grant to chemically treat ~25 acres of *Miscanthus sinensis* (Chinese silvergrass), *Microstegium vimineum* (Nepalese browntop), and *Ligustrum sinense* (Chinese privet) on the DSRF and Holmes Educational State Forest. Work will be completed by Forest staff throughout the growing season of 2015.

(Note: This report reformatted from original content provided by Supervisor)