

High Conservation Value Forest Proposal

Submitted by the Indiana Forest Alliance

HCVF Committee Members: Darren Bridges, Megan Crecelius, Scott Haulton, Brenda Huter, Andrew Reuter, Brad Schneck and Ralph Unversaw. Property assistance during field visit from Phil Jones.

Backcountry Area of Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood State Forest High Conservation Value Forest Committee Recommendation

The intent of High Conservation Value Forests according to the FCS-US Management Standard 2019 is to, “manage to protect and maintain their identified high conservation value attributes. In some cases, active management is consistent with these attributes, and in other cases (e.g., most old growth forests), active management is specifically precluded” (pg. 71). The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) introduced the concept of High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs) in 1999 to ensure identification and proper management of forest areas with exceptional conservation values (FSC 2019). In 2007 the Indiana Division of Forestry (DoF) designated an initial 15 areas as HCVF’s and from 2008-2018 the DoF added 10 more. Two more properties have met the HCVF requirements from 2018-present. All these initial HCVF areas besides one are now dedicated Nature Preserves.

The FSC-US Management Standard (2019, p. 109) identifies 6 categories of High Conservation Values (HCVs) that are used to justify the designation of High Conservation Value Forests. The proposal submitted for the Backcountry Area of Morgan-Monroe/Yellowwood State Forest High Conservation Value Forest indicated on page 2 that the area met the standard of HCVF based on HCV 2 classification. High Conservation Value 2 (HCV 2) includes, “forest areas containing globally, regionally, or nationally significant large **landscape level forests**, contained within, or containing the management unit, where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution abundance (emphasis in original text, FSC 2019, p. 109). Also, on page 2 of the proposal, the authors list 4 characteristics of the area that support its HCVF designation: “1) Opportunity to develop large tract of interior forest as type 2 Old Growth”, “2) Represents a high quality plant community”, “3) Habitat for state threatened and state endangered species”, and “4) Opportunity to enhance existing nature preserve.”

In its assessment of the proposal, the committee found itself returning to the definition of HCV 2, asking whether the proposed HCVF area met the condition of “globally, regionally or nationally significant

large landscape level forests.” Given its size and lack of any known national or global notoriety, the committee decided it was best to evaluate the area’s significance on a regional scale. In this context, it addressed the question of whether the proposed area was unique in its, “opportunity to develop a large tract of interior forest as Type 2 Old Growth” (proposal pg. 2). The area proposed for the HCVF falls within the Brown County Hills Section of the Highland Rim Natural Region (regions were defined by Homoya et. al. 1985), which also includes Brown County State Park and the Charles C. Deam Wilderness Area within the Hoosier National Forest. Both areas are significantly larger than the proposed HCVF (nearly 16,000 and 13,000 acres respectively) and feature similar mature forest conditions. Unlike the proposed HCVF, neither Brown County State Park nor the Charles C. Deam Wilderness Area has a recent history of active forest management. Given these facts, and that active forest management is unlikely to occur at either of these properties in the future, the committee concluded these properties were as likely (if not more) to develop into significant areas of Type 2 Old Growth as the proposed HCVF.

The proposal suggests the age of the proposed HCVF supports its assertion that the forest is uniquely positioned for “secondary old growth potential” (proposal, pg. 1). Stand age data provided by the Division of Forestry’s (DoF) Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) indicate the average age of the proposed HCVF area is currently 95 years old. In the proposal, the authors indicate, “the BCA of Morgan-Monroe State Forest to have an average stand age of 100 years” (proposal, pg. 1). This discrepancy is due to a difference in sampling. The estimate cited by the authors was from data collected in a northern portion of the proposed HCVF area (which includes a 320-acre Nature Preserve), while the committee estimated the average stand age using CFI plots from within the entire proposed HCVF area. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the difference in the northern and southern portions of the area as they relate to stand age. These 1939 aerial photographs indicate forest openings were present across much of the southern half of this area, while in the northern portion, openings appear less widely distributed, although sizable openings are clearly visible. These openings indicate significant portions of the proposed HCVF area, particularly in the

southern half, were either not forested in 1939 or very young forest at that time relative to the darker, more mature forested areas. Assuming an average current stand age of 95 years old, the proposed HCVF is not older than the state forest property that surrounds it; average stand age at Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forest are currently 93 and 96 years respectively.

Regarding the proposed HCVF's regional significance as a refugia for imperiled flora and fauna, the committee notes that all species of highest conservation concern noted by the authors of the proposal have been also documented in other portions of the two surrounding state forests. Three species of the highest conservation concern on the authors list (i.e., federally listed Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, state endangered cerulean warbler) have each been subject to over 15 years of intensive study on portions of these state forests designated for long-term, landscape-scale forest management research. Additionally, other species from the authors list are routinely observed at these research areas during annual population surveys, including Eastern red bat, hooded warbler, and worm-eating warbler. Eastern whip-poor-will, a subject of annual surveys at both Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood state forests are consistently heard across both properties. Like the fauna, the flora listed by the authors is found throughout the Highland Rim Natural Region including, large yellow lady's slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*), American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), and goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*). Since the proposal lists many species with a "watch list" state status, it is important to note that once a species is placed on the watch list, it never comes off that list even if it is now a common species.

During this review, the committee identified areas of significant commonality between what was proposed by the authors and what the DoF has previously identified as important considerations for this area. The proposal correctly states that the proposed HCVF has long been identified as a state forest Backcountry Area. Additionally, the DoF has designated all state forest Backcountry Areas to be maintained as a representative Late Seral Forest community in compliance with the FSC-US Management Standard (2019). State forest Backcountry Areas have historically been managed to promote development

of large areas of contiguous older forest canopy, providing a unique recreational experience for state forest visitors. Management in all state forest Backcountry Areas complies with this guidance from the Indiana State Forest Procedures Manual:

“In order to help backcountry area users experience a wilderness-type outing, forest management of backcountry areas will differ from other areas of the state forest. Existing canopy openings have been allowed to revert to forest or planted with native tree species to hasten reforestation. As has been the policy and approach since the first backcountry designation in 1979, timber management in backcountry areas can continue, but with modifications. Since the goal of these areas is to maintain a relatively contiguous canopy, regeneration openings and maintained wildlife openings will not be created. The only exception to this is for catastrophic situations, such as storm salvage. A goal will be to develop an older and more homogenous forest structure than is created through standard management. Therefore, selection of trees to be removed will be more conservative than standard. Trees should be selected in such a way as to have removals typically 30% to 40% less than would be selected under regular management. Management entry cycles will be lengthened from typical state forest tracts by up to 50% to reduce the amount of impact. The goal is to create stand conditions with reduced management visual impacts when compared to typical tracts and management, hence allowing for more natural mortality of medium and large diameter trees and a forest of a late seral structure” (IDNR 2020).

Given that the current DoF management guidance is designed to promote and maintain older forest conditions and intact, contiguous forest canopy across each Backcountry Area, the committee notes that many of the issues raised by the proposal are already being considered in the Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood Backcountry Area. This is even more apparent when one considers the proposed HCVF would include an existing 320-acre dedicated Nature Preserve that resides in the interior of the area.

In conclusion, based on a review of the proposal and the HCV criteria found in the FSC-US Management Standard (2019), the committee does not find the proposed HCVF designation warranted. As previously discussed, the committee did not find that the proposed HCVF area was uniquely positioned to attain old growth status. In fact, the committee identified two regional examples that are each significantly larger and equally likely (if not more likely) to develop old growth characteristics as soon, if not sooner, than the proposed HCVF. Additionally, the committee did not find that the area proposed for HCVF was uniquely old, in fact, inventory data from within the proposed area and across the state forest property that surrounds it indicates very similar stand ages. Finally, the committee did not find that the

proposal was convincing in its argument that the proposed area was unique in its assemblage of flora and fauna, nor was it uniquely positioned to serve as a refugia for imperiled flora or fauna.

Committee recommendations accepted

Committee recommendations rejected

John R. Seifert

Date

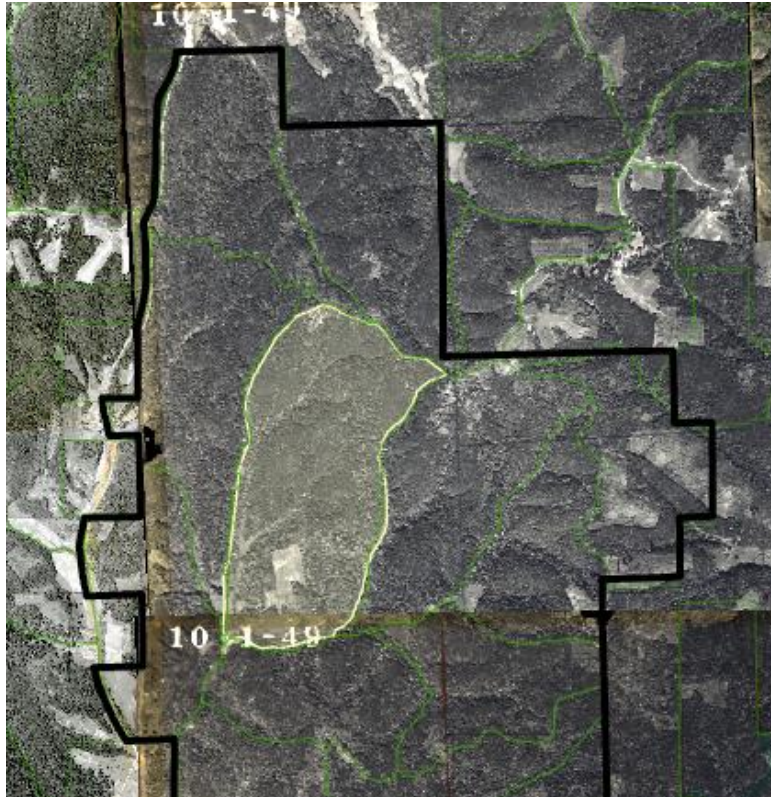


Figure 1. 1939 aerial photograph of the northern section of the proposed HCVF area with Low Gap Nature Preserve Highlighted in yellow.



Figure 2. 1939 aerial photograph of the southern section of the proposed HCVF area.

Response to Concerns in BCA HCVF Proposal

- 1. This area is developing “Old Growth Characteristics”, “Type 2 Old Growth Forest”, has been relatively undisturbed, the Division of Forestry (DoF) stated they would keep 10% of forest acreage in or developing into “old growth”.**

Directly from the Indiana Division of Forestry Strategic Plan- “Work toward a long-term balance in forest stand ages and structure with 10% of forest acreage in or developing older forest conditions (e.g. nature preserves and high conservation forests) as well as 10% in early successional, young forests (0-20 years old). Many areas within the state forests have been designated for the development of older forest conditions, such as nature preserves and research sites. A similar level of commitment to the equally important establishment of early successional habitat is not currently available on state forest properties” (pg. 5). The DoF procedures manual describes the special management prescriptions in place to ensure those areas are “developing older forest conditions”.

From the division of forestry’s continuous forest inventory (CFI) data, the average stand age of the proposed area is 95 years with the youngest stand age of 0 and the oldest at 130. This area is unique in that it already had a designation as a Backcountry rea. Due to this, it is managed to maintain a closed canopy (see response to question 2 for more details on BCA management). Actually, one of our oldest stand ages was found in an area that had been harvest in 2017 (124 years now).

- 2. This area can provide recreation for future generations, concerned about the heritage, tourism, hiking, birding, natural beauty, and healing powers of the area.**

The division of forestry provides and will continue to provide recreational opportunities to the public. “Recreational activities involving wildlife are major attractions to the state forests

and forest recreation areas. The state forests and forest recreation areas will allow hunting, fishing, and trapping to occur where appropriate, and under the statutes and regulations developed for these activities” (IDNR 2020, pg. 12).

From page 12 of the Indiana State Forest Procedures Manual in reference to the BCA– “Traditionally camping on state forests and forest recreation areas has only been allowed in designated, developed campgrounds. There was no opportunity for those wishing a more primitive backpack experience. Backcountry areas were created primarily to help fill this recreational void. Backcountry areas have trail systems where users can readily isolate themselves from regular human contact in an undeveloped setting. There are no facilities provided to support this camping experience, except parking facilities, trail systems and a few trailside shelters.”

“In order to help backcountry area users experience a wilderness-type outing, forest management of backcountry areas will differ from other areas of the state forest. Existing canopy openings have been allowed to revert to forest or planted with native tree species to hasten reforestation. Horse trails will not be in backcountry areas. As practical, existing horse trails will be relocated out of backcountry areas. As has been the policy and approach since the first backcountry designation in 1979, timber management in backcountry areas can continue, but with modifications. Since the goal of these areas is to maintain a relatively contiguous canopy, regeneration openings and maintained wildlife openings will not be created. The only exception to this is for catastrophic situations, such as storm salvage. A goal will be to develop an older and more homogenous forest structure than is created through standard management. Therefore, selection of trees to be removed will be more conservative than standard. Trees should be selected in such a way as to have removals typically 30% to 40% less than would be selected under regular management. Management entry cycles will be lengthened from typical

state forest tracts by up to 50% to reduce the amount of impact. The goal is to create stand conditions with reduced management visual impacts when compared to typical tracts and management, hence allowing for more natural mortality of medium and large diameter trees and a forest of a late seral structure” (IDNR 2020, pg. 13).

3. This site contains rare, threatened, and endangered species, concerned about maintaining biodiversity.

The submitted proposal does not identify uniquely rare species or communities that are not found elsewhere on these two state forest properties or in the surrounding landscape. The species reported in the BCA with relatively high conservation classifications (federal or state endangered) have been widely documented throughout Morgan Monroe, Yellowwood state forest and the surrounding landscape. Some of these species include Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, cerulean warbler, large yellow lady’s slipper orchid, goldenseal, and ginseng. The committee determined that without local comparisons, that there was not enough information to designate this area differently (than what it already is as a Backcountry Area) than other areas in this ecoregion.

Old growth forests are usually defined by tree age, an oversimplification that does not guarantee recognition of forests that will contain the highest biodiversity of species that are highly specialized to living in old forests (McMullin and Wiersma 2019). An ongoing study of the Pioneer Mothers Memorial Forest (Old-Growth) in southern Indiana found that tree species diversity has been declining for over 26 years, with an increasing importance (*I*) of shade tolerant species, such as *Acer saccharum* (sugar maple), and a decline in shade intolerant species like *Quercus* spp. (oaks) and *Carya* spp. (hickories) (Morrisey et al 2012).

- 4. This area can help with the mitigation of climate change, carbon sequestration, global warming, could manage for carbon credits.**

From DoF strategic plan- “In the area of climate change DoF will review tools available for forest managers to incorporate climate change considerations into decision making.

Including vulnerability assessments of the State Forest system, demonstration projects and possible participation in the Central Hardwoods Climate Change Partnership” (IDNR 2015, pgs. 5-6). Due to this area’s Backcountry designation, the current management guidance is to remain a mature, intact forest.

- 5. Indiana has some great parks; however, they are relatively new in terms of old growth forest and we need to preserve our state forests hardwoods as well.**

The mission of the Division of Forestry Properties Section is: To manage, protect and conserve the timber, water, wildlife, soil and related forest resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, and to demonstrate proper forest management to Indiana landowners (IDNR 2015, pg. 2). More information available here:

https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-State_Forest_Strategic_Plan_2015_2022.pdf

- 6. This area was previously not logged due to the difficulty in accessing the terrain without significant erosion into streams and waterways (comment #10)**

There have been several harvests (most recently in 2011, 2013 & 2017) in this area using alternative access routes and existing fire trails.

- 7. This area should not be logged, stop all logging, too much logging, no clearcutting, we need more trees not fewer, losing forests for development, have a net loss of trees**

According to our state continuous forest inventory (CFI) data, our State Forests continue to show an increase in the number of live trees. In 2016, there were 58.1 million live trees across our State Forest properties, and 61.3 million live trees in 2021.

8. Should be considered and HCV area / should be preserved

The Division of Forestry (DoF) has assembled a committee of both DoF and Division of Nature Preserves personnel to thoroughly review and examine the proposed HCVF area. Once the committee has reviewed, they will make a recommendation to the State Forester who will make the final decision.

9. Shocked to learn this place was marked for "deforestation"

“Deforestation” as defined by the Merriam-Webster dictionary is the action or process of clearing of forests. Deforestation will not occur on the Backcountry Area. The proposed HCVF area was designated a Backcountry Area in 1981. This designation still allows for timber management but with modifications. The goal of Backcountry Areas is to maintain a relatively contiguous canopy, while not creating regeneration or wildlife openings. The only exception to this is for catastrophic situations, such as storm salvage. When a harvest is planned for a Backcountry Area, trees will be selected in such a way as to have removals 30% to 40% less than would be selected under regular management. Management entry cycles are also lengthened by up to 50% to reduce the amount of impact.

10. Division of forestry is committed to setting aside HCVFs, meets requirement set by DoF for HCVF 1 & 2.

In 2007, the Division of Forestry (DoF) designated an initial 15 areas containing a total of 1,991.5 acres as HCVFs. All these initial areas were dedicated Nature Preserves. Dedicated Nature Preserves are a logical choice for designation at HCVFs since the attributes that make them Nature Preserve quality are the same biological or ecological attributes sought for in HCVFs. In 2008-2010 the Division of Forestry added 3 additional areas containing 500.7 acres. Seven HCVFs were identified and designated in 2017 and 2018 containing 953.5 acres (IDNR 2018). In 2019/2020 an additional 591 acres was classified as an HCVF for a current total of

4,202.57 acres. All but one (Yellowwood Conservation Area) have subsequently been dedicated as State Nature Preserves. The Division of Nature Preserves web page (dnr.in.gov) provides additional information on Dedicated Nature Preserves. Under FSC standards, designation of areas as HCVFs does not preclude management activities. Management of HCVFs will be directed toward maintenance or enhancement of the condition for which the HCVF was designated (IDNR 2018).

While the DoF will continue to nominate Dedicated Nature Preserves as designated HCVFs, it will also consider nominations of areas for HCVFs from interested, knowledgeable individuals. The DoF has a nomination process, public comment period, review process, and designation decision guidelines to follow before designating an HCVF (IDNR 2018). That process can be viewed in detail here: <https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/files/fo-HighConservationValueForests.pdf>

High Conservation Value Forest 1s are designated based on "significant concentrations of biodiversity values (e.g., endemism, endangered species, refugia)" (FSC 2019). The submitted proposal does not identify uniquely rare species that are not found elsewhere on these two state forest properties or in the surrounding landscape. The species reported in the BCA with relatively high conservation classifications (federal or state endangered) have been widely documented throughout Morgan Monroe, Yellowwood state forest and the surrounding landscape. Some of these species include Indiana bat, northern long-eared bat, cerulean warbler, yellow lady's slipper orchid, ginseng, and goldenseal.

High Conservation Value Forest 2s are "globally, regionally, or nationally significant large landscape level forests" (FSC 2019). Our committee found that in the Brown County Hills Natural Section it was not a unique forest, either in size or composition. The committee provided many other forested public properties that were of similar age, quality, and condition, including the

10'Clock Line Nature Preserve (3,335 acres) and HNF's Deam Wilderness Area (nearly 13,000 acres).

- 11. Concerned about oak regeneration, should manage to encourage oaks, shelterwood harvests, prescribed burns. Manage for forest health, wildlife habitat, and a mixture of timber species and age, mixed open canopy harvests to support ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat, concerned about lack of balance of age classes and structure and its negative impacts on wildlife and biodiversity. Imbalance of young forest is alarming and having obvious impacts on wildlife habitat and oak recruitment**

There have been several studies done to support the concerns listed including:

It has been noted in several studies that oak species are being replaced by other species in the central hardwoods region through forest succession (Abrams 1992; Dey and Guyette 2000; Lowney 2013; Pierce et al. 2006).

Oak species are long lived, therefore current conditions in oak dominated forests are likely due to past disturbance regimes (Dey 2002; Lowney 2013; Moser et al. 2006).

The combination of logging and fire favors oak species production since they are adapted to stress and disturbance (Dey 2002; Lowney 2013).

As a result of fire suppression and other disturbances, oak species abundance throughout the central hardwoods region has declined (Fei et al. 2011, Lowney 2013) and many forests are having an influx of maple and beech recruitment into the overstorey (McCune et al 1988; Dey and Geyette 2000; Lowney 2013). This is particularly true on mesic sites (Adams and Anderson 1980, Dey and Guyette 2000, Lowney 2013), such as those occupied by most of Indiana old-growth forests, where oak and hickory species are being outcompeted in the understory by shade tolerant maple species (Abrams 1992; Lowney 2013; McCarthy et al. 2001).

However, due to this area being designated as a Backcountry Area, management is more restricted. The Division of Forestry is limited in the management that can be done in the proposed area due to its designation as a Backcountry Area. "In order to help backcountry area users experience a wilderness-type outing, forest management of backcountry areas will differ from other areas of the state forest. Existing canopy openings have been allowed to revert to forest or planted with native tree species to hasten reforestation. Horse trails will not be in backcountry areas. As practical, existing horse trails will be relocated out of backcountry areas. As has been the policy and approach since the first backcountry designation in 1979, timber management in backcountry areas can continue, but with modifications. Since the goal of these areas is to maintain a relatively contiguous canopy, regeneration openings and maintained wildlife openings will not be created. The only exception to this is for catastrophic situations, such as storm salvage. A goal will be to develop an older and more homogenous forest structure than is created through standard management. Therefore, selection of trees to be removed will be more conservative than standard. Trees should be selected in such a way as to have removals typically 30% to 40% less than would be selected under regular management. Management entry cycles will be lengthened from typical state forest tracts by up to 50% to reduce the amount of impact. The goal is to create stand conditions with reduced management visual impacts when compared to typical tracts and management, hence allowing for more natural mortality of medium and large diameter trees and a forest of a late seral structure" (IDNR 2020).

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Appendix I : High Conservation Value Forest Committee Members

Darren Bridges began working for the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry in September of 1998 as an Assistant Property Manager at Martin State Forest. Darren moved to the position of Assistant State Fire Coordinator and then to State Fire Coordinator in 2008. He also became manager of Morgan-Monroe and Yellowwood State Forest in 2018. He Graduated from Ball State University with a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resources.

Megan Crecelius began working for the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry in February 2016 as an Inventory Forester and started as Forest Ecologist in late October 2022. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Biology (Ecology & Conservation emphasis) from Franklin College in 2014 and completed a Master of Science in Botany from Ball State University. During her time at Franklin, she completed and published an undergraduate study of the population ecology of the Puttyroot Orchid (*Aplectrum hyemale*) and tended to the college's greenhouse. At Ball State University, Megan performed a floristic inventory and Floristic Quality Assessment of Hayes Arboretum's constructed wetland and associated woodlands as her thesis project as well as assisting in other floristic inventories with her classmates and professor. During her time there she also taught Intro to Botany labs and worked in the university's herbarium.

Scott Haulton, Forestry Wildlife Specialist, Indiana DNR, Division of Forestry: Scott brings over 25 years of relevant professional experience to his role with the HCVF nomination review committee. Scott's professional experience spans the fields of forest management, public land management and natural area restoration, wildlife ecology research, and imperiled species impact assessment, particularly as it relates to forest management and community restoration. During his more than 15 years with the Indiana Division of Forestry, Scott's primary responsibilities have focused on managing the State Forest wildlife habitat management program and providing guidance to the DNR and the public on issues related to forest management and wildlife. Scott's academic training includes a Bachelor of Science in Environmental and Forest Biology from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry and a Master of Science in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from Virginia Tech. He is recognized as a Certified Wildlife Biologist by The Wildlife Society.

Brenda Huter attended Carroll College, now Carroll University, in Waukesha, Wisconsin majoring in Biology and Geography. She spent her summers doing hands-on resource management and environmental education for the Wisconsin Youth Conservation Corps program. In 1993, Brenda came to Indiana for graduate school at Indiana University where she obtained a Master of Environmental Science - Applied Ecology and a Master of Public Affairs – Environmental and Natural Resources Management. Brenda began her career with Indiana

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) – Division of Forestry as a GIS intern during graduate school. In 1997 she joined the DNR full time as a resource specialist at Yellowwood State Forest focusing on environmental education, recreation, watershed management, special species and cultural site management, GIS, and data management. In 2004, Brenda transferred to the Cooperative Forest Management staff where she manages programs that promote conservation of privately owned forests: Classified Forest & Wildlands Program, green certification, and the Forest Legacy Program.

Andrew Reuter received his Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Resource and Recreation Management at Indiana University in 2005. Throughout his undergraduate tenure, he worked seasonally for the US Forest Service - primarily within the Charles C. Deam Wilderness. Andrew began his IDNR career in the 2007-08 spring seasons as a seasonal firefighter, participating on nearly 100 prescribed and wildfires across Indiana in those two seasons alone. After a short duration working for Student Conservation Alliance and the National Park Service in Virginia, and beginning his Masters work at the University of Virginia Tech, he returned to start his fulltime career as a Wildfire Specialist with Division of Forestry. He successfully completed his Masters in Natural Resources through the University of Idaho, where he focused his studies on Fire and Forest Ecology. After three years with DoF, and a year as Natural Resources Coordinator at Camp Atterbury, he transitioned to DNR Division of Nature Preserves as the Central Region Ecologist. From 2014-2022 he spent his time managing State Dedicated Nature Preserves and natural areas across 26 counties. He engaged in multiple Threatened and Endangered species monitoring and enhancement efforts, plant and community inventories, natural areas registers, environmental site reviews and Potential Dedication assessments. He led multiple actions throughout the Central Region to maintain, protect, enhance, and restore natural communities, utilizing prescribed fire, invasive species controls, and forest stand management. He was recently promoted to Assistant Director for the DNR Division of Nature Preserves.

Brad Schneck began working for the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry in 1998 as a property Forester. He briefly left the division in 2022 to serve as -Conservation Director at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuver Training Center, before returning in 2007 as Property Manager at Jackson-Washington State Forest and Starve Hollow SRA. He became Assistant State Forester – Property Section in 2019. He received his Bachelor of Science in Forestry from Purdue University.

Ralph Unversaw began working for the Indiana DNR Division of Forestry in November 1983 as a Resource Specialist at Yellowwood State Forest. Then in November 1991 he started as District Forest serving Monroe and Owen Counties. He received her Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Management and Forestry from Purdue University in 1983.