

**Resource Management Guides**  
**Pike State Forest**  
**30-day Public Comment Period (January 20 – February 18, 2026)**

The Indiana State Forest system consists of approximately 160,251 acres of primarily forested land distributed across the state. These lands are managed under the principle that we're stewards of this land for the future. This work is guided through legislation and comprehensive scientific national and international forest certification standards which are independently audited to help insure long-term forest health, resiliency, and sustainability.

Resource management guides (RMGs) are developed to provide long-term, scientific forest management planning tailored to each forest compartment (300-1,000 acres in size) and tract (10 - 300 acres in size). There are 1,590 tracts across the state forest system statewide. Annually, 50-100 tracts are reviewed, and these guides are developed based on current assessments. Through science-based management practices, we prescribe management actions on select tracts every 15-25 year, diversifying the forested landscape and sustaining ecosystems.

The RMGs listed below and contained in this document are part of the properties annually scheduled forest inventories under review for Pike State Forest.

**Prescribed Fire RMG – Compartment 9 Tracts 1**

**To submit a comment on this document, go to:**

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/state-forest-management/public-comment/submit/>

You must indicate the State Forest Name, Compartment number and Tract number in the “subject or file reference” line to ensure that your comment receives appropriate consideration. Comments received within 30 days of posting will be considered and review posted at:

<https://www.in.gov/dnr/forestry/state-forest-management/public-comment/>

Note: Some graphics may distort due to compression.

**Indiana Department of Natural Resources**  
**Division of Forestry**  
**Prescribed Fire**  
**Resource Management Guide**

Pike State Forest  
Forester: Rusty Ahrndt

Compartment: 9  
Date: November 25, 2025

Tract: 1  
Acres: 96.8

### **Overview**

The prevalence of fire on the landscape of southern Indiana has varied over time. It is known Native Americans used fire on the landscape for reasons including agriculture, hunting, and ease of travel. As early settlers moved into the area, fire was viewed as something to be suppressed whenever it occurred due to damage to crops and homes.

In recent years, the lack of fire on the landscape was determined to cause other negative effects such as increased fuel load leading to excessively intense wildfires, but more directly impacting this area is the oak regeneration problem. When fire is removed, oaks and hickories lose some of their competitive edge against other more shade tolerant species. There are several reasons for this which will be described below. With the lack of fire, other species become predominant in the understory. Typically, this includes a large component of American beech and sugar maple or red maple.

Oak and hickory are fire adapted with features such as thicker bark, hypogea germination, large root systems, prolific sprouting, and the ability to compartmentalize scars. Oak leaf litter is specially adapted to carry fire through the woods versus leaf litter of other more shade tolerant hardwoods in the forest. Prescribed fire can reduce the component of shade in the understory to allow a moderate light condition that is conducive to oak establishment. Too little or too much light will affect the species able to establish in the understory and midstory.

In addition to the appropriate light conditions, fire also reduces existing leaf litter to provide a better seedbed for natural seed source as well as increasing the layer of herbaceous vegetation. Fires release nutrients held in dead plant matter and lower fuel loads to help reduce the chances of uncontrolled wildfire.

### **Location**

The proposed prescribed burn area is in Marion township of Pike County, Indiana, Section 2, T2S, R7W. The location is approximately 2.5 miles east of Winslow and 3 miles west of Velpen, Indiana.

### **General Description**

The prescribed burn will include a portion of the tract north of the railroad tracks. The tract consists of a combination of 36 acres purchased in 1934, and 60.8 acres purchased in 1935. The last timber harvest took place in 2017 and was mostly in the eastern portion of the tract. It is accessible via fire lane 14 from County Road 650 E. which delineates the eastern boundary. The tributary of the Patoka River, known as Lick Creek, runs north to south through the western portion of the tract. Railroad tracks cross the southern portion of the tract from east to west.

The tract adjoins the Patoka River and is mostly bottomland with some higher ground in the east along the county road. Most of the tract would be classified as bottomland hardwood forest with some upland species occurring in the east. The dominant species are sweetgum, pin oak, red maple, silver maple and sycamore.

### **General Discussion and Prescription**

This burn will be scheduled for the spring of 2026 in cooperation with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service - Patoka River National Wildlife Refuge. The tract would be included as part of a larger burn on the neighboring refuge land. Forest conditions in tract 1 are like the neighboring properties. Therefore, including portions of this tract will benefit the state forest as well. There are additional logistical benefits such as natural fire breaks, that can be used as well by including this tract.

Both agencies will follow detailed burn plans, and parameters of those plans will determine suitable weather conditions the burn can occur under. These plans take into consideration several factors including environmental and public health concerns.

There are currently no records of prescribed fires conducted within tract 1. It lies outside of the main block of Pike State Forest and is not highly trafficked but is used for hunting.

The two most common soil types are Belknap silt loam (around 39 acres) and Steff silt loam (around 28 acres) both of which are frequently flooded. In these areas, fire may not be as beneficial as it could be to the higher ground to the east but should be included to take advantage of existing landscape features for fire breaks. The upper more dry slopes to the east are going to generally be the preferred locations for oak and hickory regeneration and as such they should see the most benefit from prescribed fire.

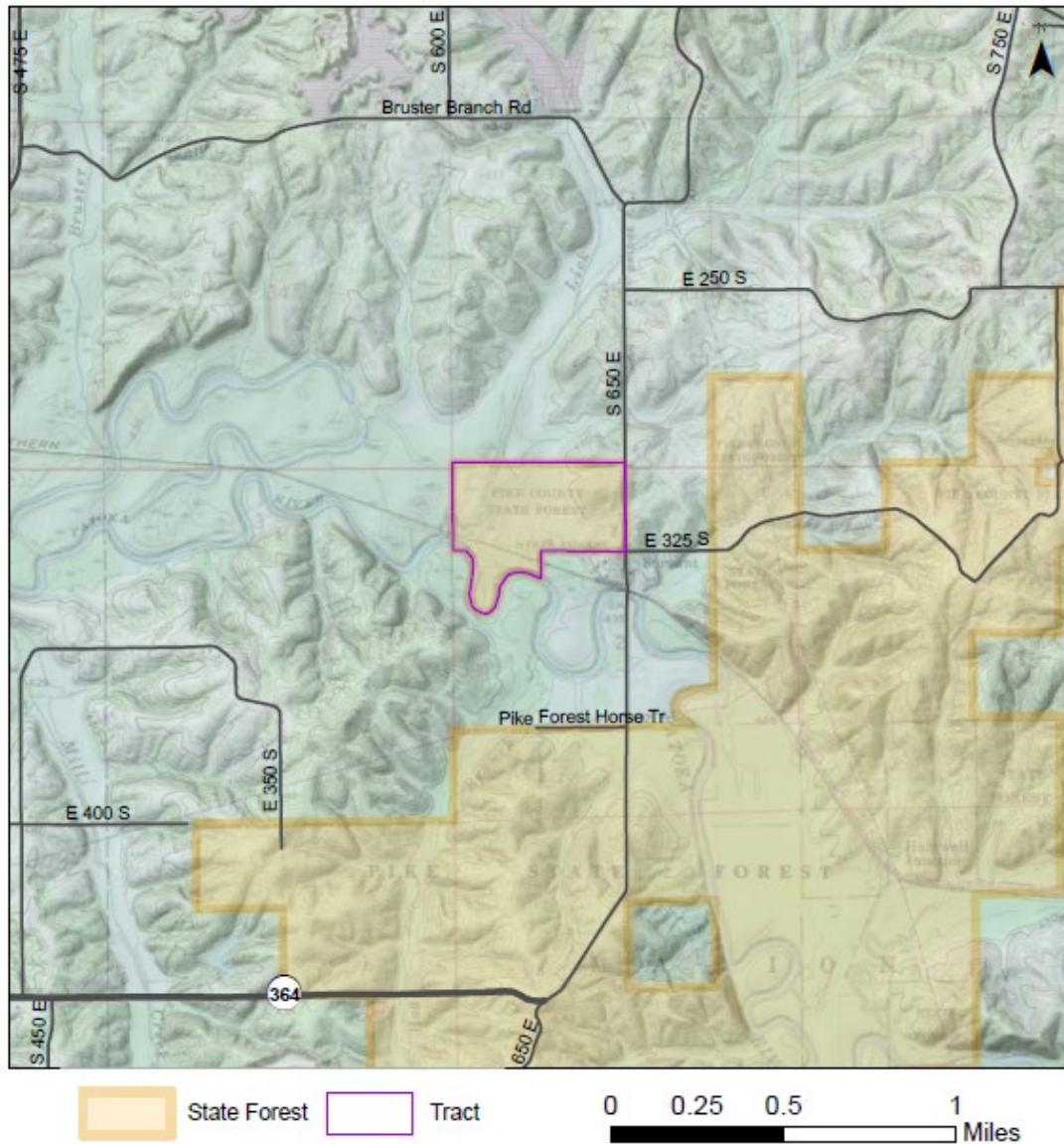
### **Other Considerations**

The eastern half of the southern border adjoins private land, and the property line bisects the access road.

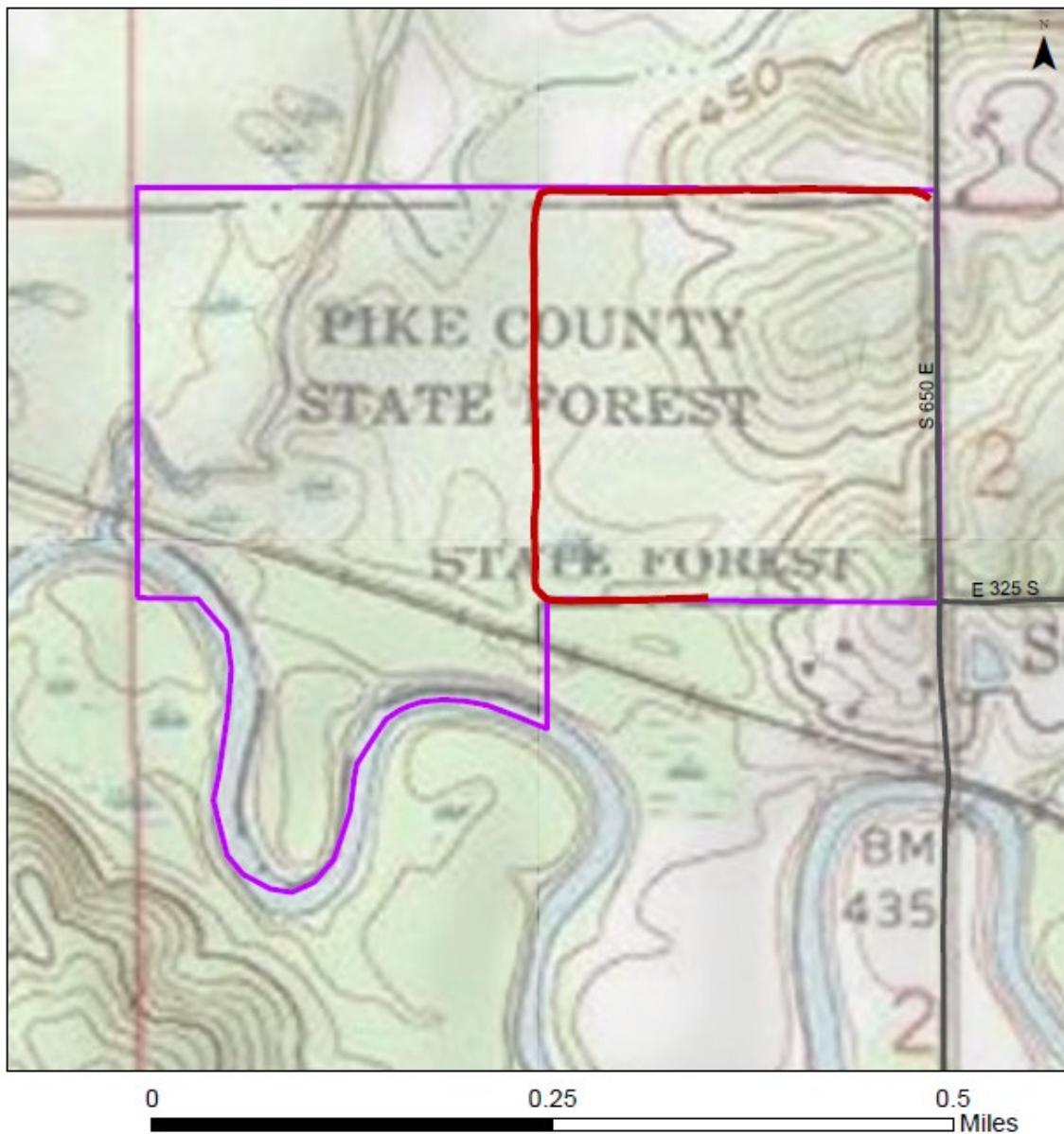
Cultural resources may be present, but their location(s) are protected. Adverse impacts to significant cultural resources will be avoided during any activities.

A formal ecological review process, which includes a search of Indiana's Natural Heritage Database, is part of the management planning process. If rare, threatened, or endangered species were found to be associated with this area, the activities prescribed in this guide will be conducted in a manner that will not threaten the population viability of those species or communities.

Pike State Forest  
Location Map  
Compartment 9 Tract 1



Pike State Forest  
Compartment 9 Tract 1  
Tract Map



- Wildlife Pond
- Fire Lane
- Tract boundary