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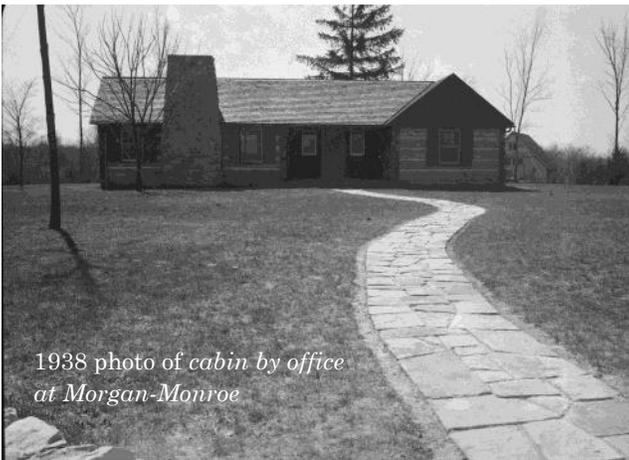
# The Rattler



The Official Newsletter of Yellowwood / Morgan-Monroe State Forests

Volume 14, 2016

## Welcome to the 2016 Newsletter



1938 photo of cabin by office at Morgan-Monroe

Welcome to the 2016 edition of the Rattler. In this edition are some articles about our management and other activities at the property. A few changes in our staffing have occurred in the past year. Our resource supervisor, Dave Vadas, retired and now Mike Spalding has been promoted to that position. Derrick Potts has moved into the position Mike vacated, coming to us from Jackson-Washington SF. Earl Wrightsman, laborer, retired and the position filled by Jake Parsons a long term intermittent employee. Jack Bessire, laborer, took another position and his job remains vacant.

Our open house is scheduled for Saturday, April 9, 2016 at the Training Center located in Morgan-Monroe State Forest from 10 AM to 2 PM. We will have information on all our upcoming management activities, some old property photos, information regarding the schedule for improvements to Yellowwood Road, recreation information and staff to answer questions. I hope you can join us and look forward to seeing you then. Jim Allen, Property Manager

## From Humble Beginnings to Vibrant Ecosystems, How Our State Forests Have Changed by Mike Spalding, Resource Supervisor

Our State Forests in Indiana came from rather humble beginnings. While nearly all of the National Forests in the



1932 eroded hillside Morgan-Monroe State Forest

Western US have always been in government ownership, Indiana's State Forests were once privately-owned lands that were farmed, heavily grazed, cut over, and saw uncontrolled wildfires on a routine basis. Once the State of Indiana acquired these lands, the early forest management focused almost entirely on forest restoration and

re-establishment. Some erosion control measures were implemented, but the primary tool for this was reforestation tree plantings using non-native pine species. The abandoned farm fields were generally



Recovered eroded area

so eroded that hardwood trees could not survive on these hot, dry, and nutrient-poor sites. Because much of the forested acreage had been grazed, burned, and cut over leaving little harvestable timber, the only management usually prescribed was to let it grow.

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## Yellowwood Lake Road update by Jim Allen

Our focus of the open house last year was Yellowwood Lake Road improvements. We currently have some time tables for the project. The design calls for paving from Highway 46 to the north end of Yellowwood Lake (South Project). From the north end of the lake to

Lanam Ridge the road will remain gravel (North Project). Work will begin on clearing a few trees along two culvert locations in the South Project area this spring with plans to replace the culverts this fall. The majority of the South Project will be done in 2017 including replace-

ment of the Salt Creek Bridge. The major work timeline will be after Memorial Day with completion by October 1. Some preliminary work will begin on the North Project near the end of 2017 but the the majority of the North Project will then be completed in 2018.

## Why Regeneration Openings? by Phil Jones, Resource Specialist

One of the main forest management objectives on our state forests is to produce/maintain healthy, vigorous native hardwood forests with a diversity of habitat conditions across all age classes. Most of the State Forests have matured at the same rate, with little diversity among age classes and habitat types. Recognizing this, foresters and managers have been emphasizing more early successional habitat through regeneration harvesting. As of last year, roughly 10% of the total acres harvested on State Forests consisted of regeneration openings. While the number of regeneration openings has increased in recent years, it only accounts for 0.3% of the total state forest land.

The importance of early successional forest habitat has been documented for an increasing number of wildlife species, particularly ruffed grouse. They rely on these openings within the forest for escape cover, diverse food resources for foraging, nesting, drumming, and brood rearing.

While some of these broad considerations are understood and at the

forefront of the overall planning process, the decision to regenerate a particular area is based primarily on the composition and condition of the existing trees. Adverse considerations such as insect epidemics, fire, and decadent stand conditions are all situations in which a forester might consider regenerating an area. Recent examples include areas of excessive yellow-poplar mortality due to the tulip tree scale epidemic coupled with the drought of 2012. The emerald ash borer is another example.

Areas dominated with ash trees are and/or will be suffering excessive mortality. Other situations may include conversion of non-native pine to native hardwoods.

Regeneration in openings in the Central Hardwood Region is nearly always prompt and numerous, usually resulting in thousands of tree seedlings per acre within a few years. Such areas can seem unsightly for a few years, and although brush species, blackberries, and vines may appear to dominate, hardwood tree species are



numerous and well distributed. By year 5, the new timber stand is becoming apparent and by year 10, it is clearly evident.

Regeneration openings are one of the many techniques that professional foresters use to help create and improve the various forest resource benefits. Next time you see one of these areas take the time and have a closer look. You'll be surprised at all the tree seedlings that are present, growing straight and tall, competing for sunlight with all the other vegetation in this newly crowded environment. Listen to all the song birds you can hear that are drawn in by the surge of insects in this area. This young, developing forest is full of life.

## From Humble Beginnings to Vibrant Ecosystems, How Our State Forest Have Changed

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While some timber was harvested in the 1930's for building projects, records for managed timber harvests do not begin appearing until the 1950's and 60's.

Timber harvesting levels have fluctuated throughout the decades, but the amount of standing timber on the State Forests has been increasing at a much higher level than has been harvested. While timber harvesting on State Forests has always focused on improving the forest, our management of today focuses on ecological enhancement as well as maintenance of our forest. The

old eroded fields of yesterday are now dense stands of planted pine with some volunteer hardwoods mixed throughout. The soils have stabilized and recovered to the point where our native hardwoods can grow. We focus on converting most of these areas through our timber harvests. By cutting the pine, we create early successional forest habitat that is seriously lacking on our public lands and at the same time restore these areas to native hardwood forest that begins to grow from the seed and seedling bank already present. The old cut-

over, burned, and grazed forests of yesterday have recovered to the point where now we are focusing on attempting to maintain and regenerate oak-hickory forests. This aspect of our ecological forestry focuses on retaining the healthiest trees while removing other competing trees. Our management continues to evolve with science as new information emerges. While our State Forests originated from a history of abused lands, they have a bright future with continued active management.

### Bike/Hike Trail by Jon Roales, Assistant Property Manager

A common question to our office at Morgan Monroe State Forest lately has been along the lines of "What is going on along Forest Road?" We are pleased to say that we are currently doing the base work for constructing a multi-use trail that will shadow the South side of Main Forest Road. This trail has been in the development phase for several years and has taken in consideration the health and safety of our visitors as well as preserving our historic sites and visual appeal of the forest.

The multi-use trail will be approximately an 8 foot wide paved path that will run from Bryant Creek Shelter house to the Fire Tower located beside Mason Ridge Campgrounds. Other points of interests that the trail will go by in-



clude Low Gap, Mason Ridge, Three Lakes, Tree ID trail and Rock Shelter trails. It will also pass by one of our Hardwood Ecosystem Experiment (HEE) research sites and where the former Civilian Conservation Corps camp and stone quarry were located. There will be several parking areas located along the route that will be provided for people to start and stop seeing different sections at a time. The path will also pass right by our office, under renovation at this

time, to provide for any literature or information to visitors. One end of the trail begins next to our campgrounds and will provide another opportunity for campers to start their day of hiking, or riding, without having to move their car from the campsite. The trail is designed in a way that it can be used by a wide range of visitors including road bicycles, parents with strollers, people with disabilities and just about anyone who would like a safe paved surface to enjoy our natural resources.

Adding another trail and increasing our ability to share Morgan Monroe State Forest with the public is an exciting opportunity for us. So please excuse our mess during construction and keep a look out for our progress.

Yellowwood State Forest  
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Nashville, IN 47448  
(812) 988-7945

## OPEN HOUSE

We will be hosting an open house at Training Center in Morgan-Monroe State Forest on April 9, from 10 AM to 2 PM. Light refreshments will be served.

### **Directions to open house;**

#### **From Martinsville**

**Take Highway 37 south 4.5 miles from where Hwy 39 joins Hwy 37 on south edge of Martinsville to the Highway sign for Morgan-Monroe State Forest. Turn left and follow road for about ½ mile where you T into Old 37, turn right and follow for 2 miles to the wood and stone sign for Morgan-Monroe State Forest. Turn left into property travel 5 miles to property office under construction and then take the next road to the left .**

#### **From Bloomington**

**Take Hwy 37 going north for about 12 miles from the junction of Hwy 46 to Highway sign for Morgan-Monroe State Forest. Follow road for about ½ mile where you T into Old 37, turn right and follow for 2 miles to the wood and stone sign for Morgan-Monroe State Forest. Turn left into property travel 5 miles to property office under construction and then take the next road to the left.**