

Habitat Restoration in Michaux State Forest

Preliminary phases of a habitat restoration project at Michaux State Forest completed.

CAMP HILL, PENNSYLVANIA, THE UNITED STATES, December 19, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation](#), established in 1999 to inspire stewardship of Pennsylvania's state parks and forests, recently collaborated with the [Michaux State Forest District](#) on the Bunker Hill Learning Landscape Project.

This multi-organization effort seeks to not only remove invasive plant species while protecting the history of the Bunker Hill area but also seeks to restore habitat while bringing access to more people.

The Bunker Hill site is located in Cumberland County, Cooke Township along Michaux Rd., which is a quarter mile south of Pine Grove Furnace State Park.

The project aims to restore a 203-acre area filled with recreational, cultural, and historical potential. Birders, bikers, hikers, historians, hunters, and educators will all have something to celebrate.

Mike Rothrock, a Forester with the Michaux State Forest said, "The work being conducted is to engage the forest user on land stewardship ethics and to inform and transform the decision-making process for land managers that enhance natural and human community vitality and



resilience within the South Mountain physio-graphic region. The overarching goal for the project is to develop a site-based narrative around how cultural and environmental factors have interacted to shape landscape conditions and the relationship between landscape features and the mosaic of plants, animals, and people.”

The Bunker Hill site, also known as the “Camp Michaux” historical site, is steeped in history.

In the late eighteenth century, settlers claimed 200 acres of land creating Bunker Hill Farm. The Pine Grove iron complex acquired the farm in 1794.

Almost 150 years later, in 1933, the site became home to the first Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp in Pennsylvania on state-owned property. It was known as the Pine Grove Furnace CCC Camp, S-51, Company 329.



The CCC Camp remained up until 1942 when it was converted into a top-secret German, Italian, and Japanese prisoner-of-war camp. It was renamed Pine Grove Furnace POW Interrogation Camp. The camp was in operation until November 1945.

After World War Two, the United Presbyterian Church and the Evangelical and Reformed Church formed a coalition called “Camp Michaux” with the aim of running a youth summer camp. In 1972, after problems with deteriorating buildings the church camp closed.

Since the camp’s closing, foresters at Michaux State Forest have struggled with keeping invasive species at bay in this critical, cultural, and habitat-deprived landscape.

Enter the multiyear landscape-level habitat enhancement and restoration project.

The Michaux State Forest was able to partner with multiple organizations and funding sources including the National Wild Turkey Federation, Conococheague Audubon Society, South

Mountain Partnership, Cumberland County Historical Society, PA Parks and Forest Foundation, and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy for the restoration project.

First, the invasive species needed to be dealt with through herbicide treatment. Then, with funds pulled from a variety of sources, including a grant from the Giant Healthy Planet Grant, donations from Market Square Presbyterian Church, and a grant from Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, restoration began.

Over 40 native, climate-resilient tree and shrub species were planted with fencing to protect them from deer. More than 9000 plant plugs of more than 20 species were planted by volunteers, district foresters, and PPFF staff.

Market Square Presbyterian church helped supply funding for the plugs and volunteered to help them alongside volunteers from Merchology and the Friends of Michaux State Forest.

Debbie Olson, a church member, explains "For Advent 2020 and Easter 2021 during the pandemic, when we were not meeting in person, our church decided to give monetary gifts from the congregation, which are usually used to purchase poinsettias and lilies to decorate the sanctuary, as a donation to the PA Parks and Forestry Foundation."

Debbie adds, "Our involvement with the Bunker Hill project has been a positive one, and we will encourage members of MSPC to visit the site next year to see how it has changed and what is in the works going forward."

The aim of the plantings is to improve biological diversity in this section of the Michaux State Forest. The plant plugs provide a habitat for pollinators and a variety of native wildlife, such as the ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and American woodcock, which are species that are in decline due to habitat degradation.

The diversity of the habitat created throughout the project will provide viewing opportunities for a variety of both game and non-game wildlife.

To this end, two bird viewing/hunting blinds were constructed, as well. Including one ADA blind to accommodate diverse uses of the site. Funding for the blinds was provided by the Bass Pro Shops and Cabella's Outdoor Fund.

"Helping to secure funding for projects such as this is an important role that the Pennsylvania Parks and Forests Foundation plays," said Marci Mowery, President of PPFF. "Private philanthropy through donations, creative partnerships such as with the Market Square Presbyterian Church, and grants such as through Bass Pro Shops and Cabela's Outdoor Fund and Keep PA Beautiful all make a difference, not only in completing projects but in local economies by providing people healthy places to recreate and learn about Pennsylvania's history."

What will the next phase of the project look like? Currently, trails to the bird viewing/hunting blinds are under construction, awaiting additional funding.

Foresters will continue monitoring the site in order to keep invasives from creeping back and to measure the success of the plantings.

Additional native plant and shrub plantings will take place into 2023 and Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) Foresters will work towards providing an interpretation of the site's natural and historic value for visitors.

To find out more about this project and how you can get involved visit:

<https://ppff.app.neoncrm.com/np/clients/ppff/donation.jsp?campaign=437&>; Funding is still be raised for this project your financial help can close the final budget gap.

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