



Forest Service News Release

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TIMBER HARVEST TO BEGIN ON FINGER LAKES NATIONAL FOREST

Hector, NY (January 23, 2022)—Timber harvest operations are set to begin on the Finger Lakes National Forest this month as part of the [Finger Lakes Invasive Pest Strategy](#) (FLIPS) Project. Work will be done through a stewardship agreement with the [National Wild Turkey Federation](#) (NWTF) and will improve overall forest health conditions, restore native plant communities, and create diverse wildlife habitats.

Nearly 250 acres in the areas of Townsend Road, Warner Corners Road, Burnt Hill Road, and Mark Smith Road will see some mix of timber activity. Work is expected to begin on Burnt Hill Road, south of Picnic Area Road over the winter and may continue north of Townsend Road, near Butcher Hill. Operations are not expected to interfere heavily with recreational use, however there are likely to be some closures on the Ravine and Interloken trails as work progresses. Harvest will likely continue during the drier months of the summer. Although the Forest is expecting minimal disruption to users and community members, District Ranger Jodie Vanselow hopes to avoid surprising users with the coming change in landscape.

“It’s been a while since we’ve seen a timber harvest here on the Finger Lakes National Forest,” said Vanselow. “It may come as a surprise to see some stands cleared or thinned, but it will make a big long-term difference in the health of the forest, and it is a project we’ve developed thoughtfully over the past few years.”

The harvest is intended to improve forest health conditions on the Finger Lakes by reducing forest densities to improve individual tree and stand vigor, and to reduce the potential impact from threats such as Emerald Ash Borer. Harvests are also intended to restore more diverse native plant communities and create diverse wildlife habitat.

Most of the harvest is focused in areas that were planted in the 1940s, after a long history of agricultural use. These areas were planted with tree species that are not native to New York or would not normally grow in these locations. While these plantations played a valuable role in helping soils recover from agricultural use, most are now overcrowded and declining in health and vigor. Many of the planted species are not well adapted to local sites and are at risk from insect and disease. Some of these non-native plantations will be [thinned](#) or removed to establish native tree species and improve wildlife habitat. In other areas, hardwood stands that are becoming overstocked, increasing the susceptibility to a range of forest health threats such as root rot, bark diseases, defoliators, and general species decline will also be thinned.

Patch cuts and groups of trees will be harvested to promote development of oak/ hickory forest and to create diverse wildlife habitat. [Patch and group cuts](#) will improve wildlife habitat by creating early successional habitat and by increasing the diversity in the age, sizes and species of trees on the landscape. Early successional habitat consists of young forest with vigorously growing grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. This type of habitat is declining in the region and is critical for a myriad of birds, mammals, reptiles and insects, many of which are also in decline.

Areas of aspen, a relatively short-lived tree that sprouts vigorously from root systems after disturbance, were targeted for patch cuts. As aspen resprouts after disturbance, it creates a dense young forest that provides high value habitat. Disturbance from harvest also helps to perpetuate the species by reinvigorating the root system and replacing older declining trees with young vigorous ones.

The Forest Service has a long history of conservation and public service through partnerships, including work with the NWTF through the Making Tracks Program. This program aligns with NWTFs “Save the Habitat. Save the Hunt.” program which focuses on habitat restoration and public access. The Forest Service and the NWTF agreed to share resources on this project to meet the shared goals of maintaining and enhancing wildlife habitat. Through this agreement, timber revenue received from harvesting will be used to achieve reforestation and habitat objectives on the ground, such as preparing sites for regeneration and planting, as well as non-native invasive plant control.

The FLIPS Project is a forest health initiative that involves timber harvest, timber stand improvement, and associated forest restoration work on approximately 700 acres of the Finger Lakes National Forest. The Project was proposed in 2016, with an opportunity for interested publics to seek additional information and provide feedback on suggested proposed actions.

The public may contact Matthew Lark at (607) 546-4470 x 3316 or matthew.lark@usda.gov for more information regarding the timber activities.

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