



WV Woods

Volume 12
Number 6
Spring
2011



Photo by: H. Clay Smith

Oil and Gas Exploration in West Virginia: A Primer for Wildlife Considerations

(Article contributed by Sheldon Owen)

Oil and gas exploration will bring about many changes to the landscape in West Virginia. The construction of well pads and pipeline right-of-ways can have effects that are both beneficial and detrimental to forest lands and the wildlife species they contain.

In the wildlife world there will be both winners and losers. The construction of well pads and pipeline right-of-ways will produce early successional habitats. Early successional habitats are those that naturally occur following a significant disturbance or large tree removal that are characterized by grasses, shrubs and saplings. Wildlife species that are habitat generalists, such as white-tailed deer and wild turkey will fare fine following exploration, because they can survive in a variety of habitats.

Species like the Cerulean Warbler songbird that requires large expanses of similar habitat are at risk due to habitat disruption caused by the construction of well pads, roads, and right-of-ways that may create barriers, especially for smaller species such as amphibians and reptiles. These barriers could cut off wildlife migration paths or separate them from a necessary food or water source.

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Additionally, these smaller species sometimes rely on smaller environments, such as vernal pools, that can be completely lost due to disturbance. While exploration will not cause the loss of all wildlife it will likely cause shifts in the wildlife species found on your property, depending on the level of disturbance.

So what can a landowner do? First of all, educate yourself. Know what you have on your property. Identify any critical habitats or rare wildlife that may be affected by oil and gas exploration. There are many resources available to help you in determining what habitats and wildlife your property supports. Contact your local natural resource professional for assistance.

Second, work with the oil and gas companies to ensure every step is taken to minimize disturbance and its negative consequences. Negotiate your lease agreement to identify procedures that minimize habitat and wildlife impacts during the disturbance and implement practices that benefit wildlife during the restoration and re-vegetation processes.

Remember that oil and gas exploration does not have to be incompatible with wildlife and habitat management. It will, however, require first that you develop a plan to address how you want to reclaim the site to best benefit the wildlife and habitats of interest.

For more information contact Sheldon Owen, WVU Wildlife Extension Specialist by phone at (304) 293-2990, or by e-mailing: Sheldon.Owen@mail.wvu.edu



REMINDER!

Spring Forest Fire Season in West Virginia begins on March 1st and continues to May 31st, 2011. During this time period, it is unlawful to burn anything outdoors between the hours of 7 AM until 4 PM EST. During the hours it is legal to burn, you must have 10-foot safety strip scraped down to the bare mineral soil completely around the burning area. Someone must stay with the fire the entire time the fire is active!


For more information go to the website: <http://www.wvforestry.com>

Oil and Gas Exploration & Development in West Virginia's Forests: Minimizing Effects and Maximizing Benefits through Reforestation

(Article contributed by Jon Pomp, WV Registered Forester)

The Mountain State represents one of the most active areas in the country for oil and gas exploration and development. It goes without saying that this industry contributes greatly to the economy of the state, providing numerous employment, business, and cash flow opportunities while supplying energy needs to the nation. As lands across the state are bombarded with new wells and Right-of-Ways (ROWs), the forests that we love are experiencing changes. In order to prevent erosion/sedimentation and maintain water quality, oil and gas companies are required to plant vegetation on disturbed areas.

Unfortunately, scientific research regarding the effects on forest from oil and gas exploration, until recently, has been lacking. Although the results are yet to be released, research is currently underway at both West Virginia (WV) and Penn State Universities examining habitat and bird population changes associated with oil and gas operations. Although all of the answers are not yet known, it is obvious that as a portion of a contiguous forest is lost due to oil and gas activities, so too are some of the wildlife habitat features that the areas provided. Though it is not currently required through industry regulation, both landowners and oil and gas companies can help to minimize any negative consequences (i.e. forest and wildlife habitat losses, forest fragmentation, and reduction in ecosystem services) by including reforestation practices as part of the reclamation and re-vegetation process. Because trees and shrubs yield a host of benefits beyond those provided by the grasses and legumes that are typically used for reclamation, they will be adding future value to your property while also



See Jon Pomp and Sheldon Owen at the upcoming WOA meeting in Marion County!

Photo of a Wildlife Food Plot

helping to sustain and conserve WV's forested land base. Planting a variety of native shrubs that produce fruit and nuts at early ages will provide a more diverse source of food that is available for a variety of wildlife at different times. Planting these species will also complement the food crops produced by trees of the surrounding undisturbed forest. Reclamation plantings also provide areas of early successional habitat.

If reforestation is not included in the reclamation and construction plan for the well(s) on your property, request it today! You can talk with your operator(s) about the potential to modify the re-vegetation plan(s) to include beneficial tree and shrub plantings. You can also request reforestation as part of your comments (under grounds number two) to the Chief of the WV Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)'s Office of Oil and Gas (note that after receiving the well work permit application for a new well, you have a period of 15 days to submit your comments; the comment period for plugging permits is only five days).

For more information contact: Jon Pomp by phone at (304) 872-0645, or by e-mailing: japwfa@frontier.com

Natural Gas Exploration: A Landowners Guide to Financial Management

If you are a property owner, there's a chance that you are leasing your property, or considering leasing your property, for natural gas exploration and drilling. But while all the activity surrounding natural gas reserves can be exciting, it can also be confusing for landowners.

Financial issues play a large part in the decision. Land use, or how gas exploration will affect your property, plays a part as well. An attorney who specializes in natural gas leasing can help greatly with this process.

To obtain this 16-page publication in its entirety go to the Penn State Extension website: <http://pubs.eas.psu.edu/FreePubs/pdfs/ui394.pdf>

Or call: (814) 865-6713

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is offering the same cost-share and technical assistance for conducting forestry practices in 2011 as was offered in 2010.

For more information, contact Barb McWhorter by phone at (304) 284-7576 or by e-mailing: Barbara.McWhorter@wv.usda.gov.

Morel Mushrooms in West Virginia

In parts of West Virginia, Black Morels Mushrooms are known as "molly moochers" and are hunted every spring usually in late April and in May, which are the best months in West Virginia to find morels. Black-Morels are often found in dead and dying apple orchards and places where forest fire has burned trees. These areas support the heaviest concentrations of edible morels, especially if limestone is exposed above ground. They can be hidden in deep leaf litter of poplar, maples, ash, oak, pine, cottonwood and aspen trees and grow best under dead elm logs. Black morels may grow abundantly in damp habitats and in areas that have been scorched by a forest fire. Why this happens is unknown. Where fire suppression is practiced morels often grow in small amounts in the same spot year after year. If these areas are overrun by wildfire they often produce a bumper crop of black morels the following spring.

True Black Morel Mushrooms are edible consisting of a completely hollow stem and caps with distinct ridges. Like all mushrooms, true morels are fungi. Their caps contain spores, and when the spores fall to the ground, they germinate and enable reproduction. However, do not confuse true morel mushrooms with false morels. There are several recognizable differences. False morel mushrooms are generally darker and larger than the true morels, and have brain-like lobes and chambered stems containing a cotton-ball looking substance, and they often grow under white pine trees.



Photo of a Black Morel Mushroom

Warning! False morel mushrooms are poisonous, and eating them may make you very ill or even kill you! Only true morels are edible!

Information for this article was summarized from articles written by:

Suzanne Richmond 2010 *Ideal Conditions for Morel Mushrooms in WV*

Julie Thomas-Zucker 2010 *Where Can You Find Morel Mushrooms in WV?*

Both Articles found at: [Ideal Conditions for Morel Mushrooms in West Virginia / eHow.com](#)

Forestry officials raise warning of Asian beetle

Article Date:
 Wednesday,
 July 21, 2010

Forestry officials are warning of a wood-munching beetle that can wipe out massive swaths of trees and cost a fortune to eradicate. The Asian longhorned beetle, a zebra-striped insect that often hitches a ride on firewood, was found in six trees in Boston, Mass. earlier in July, 2010.

The discovery came after a larger infestation in Worcester, MA that affected 74 square miles and required 24,000 trees to be chopped down. The eradication effort is ongoing and has topped \$250 million.

 Written by:
 Jason Claffey

To read this document in its entirety, email: Jclaffy@fosters.com

Upcoming Woodland-Related Educational Opportunities**Winter tree identification –**

March 28: **Wayne County**; contact Carl Marcum (Wayne County Extension Agent; 304-272-6839).

Wood anatomy and identification –

March 30: **Pocahontas County**; contact Greg Hamons (Pocahontas Extension Agent.; 304-799-4852).

Wildlife and Forestry on gas wells, ROWs, and access roads –

You are invited to come out to hear how sites that have been “disturbed” by gas exploration, road construction, and even general powerline right-of-ways can be rehabilitated to encourage wildlife and promote scenic beauty.

April 11: **Marion County**; contact John Murray (Marion Extension Agent; 304-367-2772).

This seminar qualifies for 2.0 Category 1, SAF Continuing Forestry Education Credits.

Shiitake Mushroom Cultivation –

April 13: **Pleasants County**; contact Claude Marra (Pleasants Extension Agent; 304-684-2328).

Mountain Roots –

April 18: **Hampshire County**; contact Jerry Leather (Hampshire Extension Agent; 304-822-5013).

April 20: **Pocahontas County**; contact Greg Hamons (Pocahontas Extension Agent; 304-799-4852).

April 27: **Lincoln County**; contact April Roach (Lincoln Extension Agent; 304-824-7911).

For more information and other woodland related workshops go to: <http://wvstewards.ning.com>

Statement to current WV WOA members: As was brought up at the WV WOA annual meeting on September 25, 2010; by Darrell Pendris of the NWOA, an association becomes stronger as more and more members get actively involved attending meetings and educational events, association elections, membership drives, and association business affairs. And when members become more active in their respective WOAs they become more knowledgeable on how to manage their woodlands, and have a stronger voice in government affairs and decisions that affect them.

WVU Forestry Flix DVD Program:
Go to the Forestry Flix website to obtain free DVDs covering a variety of forestry and wildlife topics at:
<http://www.forestryflix.com>



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