

Hunt Club Works Forest Despite Cold, Budget Cuts

By T.A. Crerand

WESTFALL — Members of the Matamoras Rod & Gun Club braved near zero temperatures Sunday morning to conduct a browse cut on Delaware State Forest land to help wildlife through the harshest winter months when snow and ice typically cover their food source and habitat.

Club members originally started browse cuts back in the early 1960s and later state Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources (DCNR) foresters supported and coordinated browse cuts on state forestland with the club for over 30 years. Member Chris Wood said the club was recently notified that due to budget constraints, DCNR Bureau of Forestry personnel could not work on the project this year.

Wood explained that the area club members cut this year was approximately 10 acres just southwest of the Cummins Hill and Oberwagger Road intersection. That same area was cut years ago as part of a Bureau of Forestry program, but oaks grow more slowly and black birch needs to be removed to give oaks a fair chance to grow and produce mast. Allowing sunlight to reach the forest floor also generates new growth.

Browse cuts also provide a nutritional food source of buds and tender twigs from small felled trees for deer at a critical time in winter. Brush piles benefit smaller animals like rabbits, fox, opossums and grouse with cover and shelter. Removing undesirable species, mainly black birch, from crowding out more desirable species such as

red oak and white oak allows the oaks to mature. Acorns can then sprout and grow without undue competition.

Working as conservation volunteers for DCNR were Jim Briengel, Bill Clark, William D. Clark, Bob Everle, Bill Loosemore, Lee Mott, Sal Pinzone, George Segnini, Bill Vealey, Ray Wagner and Chris Wood. Youth helping out were brothers Joey and Jacob Barth, and good friends Nick Briengel and Will Vealey.

Will Vealey told the Pike County Dispatch this was his third year to participate in the project. This ambitious 9-year-old already attends meetings at the clubhouse with his father and helps at fundraising activities. He also plans to submit a membership application to the club this year.

Longtime members Bill Clark and Wagner, both chainsaw users over the years who served terms as past president, recalled the early years of browse cuts.

Forty Years Of Service

Wagner joined the club back in 1962 and recalled browse cuts started at least 40 years ago when they met with members of Lost Camp located down the road a little further just off Cummins Hill Road. The two groups worked together and typically cut 2 to 3 acres each year.

He said it all depends on how many guys can help. “We got a pretty good crowd today,” said Wagner. On the day of this browse cut, Jan. 31, he stayed at the clubhouse to make lunch of hot dogs, baked beans and plenty of hot coffee.

Bill Clark moved to the area in 1961 and joined the club in the late 1960s. He recalled first starting to do browse cuts when his son was 10 years old. That was 40 years ago. Clark was an advocate and originally coordinated browse cuts with the Pike County Federation of Sportsmen’s Clubs in conjunction with the club. “The first browse cuts were down in Bushkill,” he said.

Wood recalled one year when the volunteers cut an astounding 15-acre area with 25 guys who showed up to work on the wildlife improvement project.

Exercising safety, they work in teams of two with one using a chainsaw to cut down small trees and the other pushing the tree down and away from them.

The youth used handsaws and also helped pile up brush.

The club was established in 1919 and their roster is dated 1945. Members regularly maintain the property and host various educational programs for youth and teach safe handling of firearms and safe hunting.

Upcoming public events on the grounds include a monthly Cowboy Action Shoot starting at 10 a.m. beginning April 18 and running through October, fundraisers of a spaghetti dinner on June 6, chicken barbeque on Aug. 8, and a steak bake on Sept. 19, all scheduled for 11 a.m.; and a National Wild Turkey Federation JAKES youth program on July 25.

Visit their website www.matamorasrodandguncub.org for more details. Look for press releases prior to scheduled public events.



(Photo by T.A. Crerand)

Members of the Matamoras Rod & Gun Club are pictured in front of the clubhouse just before leaving to conduct a browse cut on state forestland the frigid morning of Jan. 31.