



Environmental Stewardship

The Environmental Stewardship Department consists of the Wildlife, Timber, Fire, Soil and Water, and NEPA disciplines. These roles were created to fulfill the responsibilities identified under the Protection Act of 1998, and our consistent with other Forest Service units.

Wildlife: A few of our points of pride are our hunt program. We boast one of the most productive and well managed programs in both Tennessee and Kentucky. Another point of pride is our elk and bison herds. These herds have been a staple for our visitors for almost 3 decades, with average annual visitation at approximately 100,000.

Timber: Active timber sales have been missing from our suite of work since 2015. Active timber management was initiated in late December to manage the impacts of the EF-4 and EF-3 tornado touchdowns during the evening of December 10, 2021. Moderate, severe, and catastrophic impacts occurred with almost 5,000 acres on the northern part of LBL in Lyon County, KY (north end) and 3,400 acres on the southern end in Stewart County, TN indicating the most severe damage as “catastrophic”. The impact zones were 6.5 miles long and 1.0 miles wide on the north and 6.25 miles long and 1.0 miles wide on the south.

Fire: We have a philosophy of no target acres and follow the philosophy of “the right tool used at the right time for the right reason” to guide our fuels management efforts. The fire program is a significant tool that we use to lessen the potential impacts and effects of wildfire occurrences and to improve the overall resiliency of the land.

Invasive Species: Feral hogs were first reported in LBL in the early 2000’s. Sightings were sporadic until 2016, when sightings spiked. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is assisting the Forest Service in this effort.

Tenant Farm Leases: The farm lease program has been a tool used on the Unit since its creation. The lease holders are a critical tool in maintaining our required, managed, non-forested acres in wildlife friendly ecotypes.

Principle Goal

To provide public recreational opportunities; to conserve fish and wildlife and their habitat; and to provide for diversity of native and desirable non-native plants, animals, opportunities for hunting and fishing, and environmental education.

Strategy & Vision

The vision and strategy for the Environmental Stewardship Department is to provide short and long-term recreational opportunity for our users in both the consumptive and non-consumptive realms; provide ample opportunities to fish the waters of the states of Kentucky and Tennessee; provide birdwatching locations of native warm season grass plantings and scenic wildlife locations harboring hundreds of local and migrant bird populations; and engage the public on conservation education. Our vision is to actively encourage new hunters and birders in adjacent states to see us their sport destination.