



FACT SHEET



United States Department of Agriculture
Web: <http://www.usda.gov>

United States Department of Interior
Web: <http://www.doi.gov>

Healthy Forests Initiative Forest At Risk—Wayne National Forest



In February 2003, the Wayne National Forest in southeast Ohio suffered tremendous damage as a result of an ice storm. During the President’s Day storm, the Ironton District was covered by two inches of ice, which caused many trees to fall and branches to break. The storm area was declared a state and federal disaster.

Immediately after the storm, the ranger district closed all roads maintained by the Forest Service and developed recreation sites on the Ironton District, including campgrounds and trails at the Lake Vesuvius Recreation Area, Hanging Rock, and Pine Creek. The closures allowed the Forest Service to safely remove downed trees and limbs

that now blocked roads and trails across the District.

The Wayne National Forest initially followed a triage method of treating ice-damaged areas, making sure that the protection of human life and private structures was given priority. The storm left large amounts of debris, often six to seven feet in depth providing an increased level of flammable materials on the forest floor. Various methods of reducing these hazardous fuel levels were used.

The Wayne operated under the provisions of two recently implemented Categorical Exclusions (CE), a new procedure provided under NEPA as part of the President Bush’s Healthy Forests Initiative. The CE’s allowed the Forest to quickly reduce fuels on 550 acres located in an urban interface by reducing the layers of unnecessary red tape and procedural delay that normally prevent the agency from acting rapidly to protect communities and our natural resources from devastating wildfires.

Though the paperwork is minimized, the environment is still protected. For example, before any ground disturbing activities took place, sites were surveyed for the two federally listed endangered plant species and known heritage sites were identified on the ground. Also, special precautions were taken to protect bat roosting trees. Areas were seeded and/or mulched after use.

Because of the large infestations of invasive, non-native species, the Forest was careful to retain native vegetation in and around project activities and to minimize soil disturbance as much as possible.

The Wayne is now studying the remaining damaged areas and determining various alternative treatments that will protect wildlife and the forest to ensure a healthy, safe forest.

For more information on the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the Healthy Forests Initiative, visit <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/> or <http://www.doi.gov/hfi/newhfi/>

