



GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES  
LANSING



DANIEL EICHINGER  
DIRECTOR

Bruce Harris  
Ingham Township Supervisor  
1420 Johnson St, PO Box 238  
Dansville, MI 48819-0238  
11/1/22

Dear Mr. Harris,

I am writing to inform the Township of the DNR's plan to conduct habitat improvements via a timber sale at the Dansville State Game Area (SGA). The sale is split into five separate areas near Dexter Trail Rd. and Potter Rd. The total sale area encompasses 62 acres with about 35 of those acres adjacent to the Hewes Lake Trail. We understand that a lot of residents have developed an appreciation for this area and that trail, specifically. With that in mind, we wanted to make you aware of our plans and provide some background on how the plans were developed in case you get inquiries from your constituents. The work is scheduled to happen anytime from late this fall through March 1, 2023. The exact dates are not yet known and will depend on the logging company that is awarded the contract. During the work, the gate for Hewes Lake Trail will temporarily be closed to vehicle traffic.

There will likely be some concerns from area users about the change in the aesthetics of the habitat adjacent to the Hewes Lake Trail. One of the main complaints we get after forest management activities occur is how bad the site looks after the work is completed. Many of the trees are removed and there will be logs and brush (tops of trees) left scattered across the area where the work is being conducted. Leaving some logs and treetops scattered or piled after the trees are cut provides habitat for a lot of wildlife including reptiles/amphibians, small mammals, and things like rabbits and squirrels. Leaving the old treetops on the ground also allows new trees to sprout and grow to a sapling stage while being protected from over browsing by a high deer population. Over the next few years, much of that brush will break down, new trees will grow, and the area will become thick with new forest growth providing a young forest habitat component this area is currently lacking.

Often residents are unaware of the DNR's plans when it comes to habitat improvements, especially forestry practices. Concerns and rumors often start circulating as to what is going on. Is the state clearing the land to sell it to a developer? Are they putting up solar panels? Are they just trying to make money? These are some of the first reactions we hear. Local elected officials are often the first contact by a concerned resident to inform you of what is going on. We're hoping by informing your office that you will be aware of this work ahead of time and can address some of the concerns up front and/or send any questions our way to be addressed by our staff. Often once someone knows there is a long-term plan in place that led to these activities, it eases their concern to some extent. They may not agree with our strategies, but hopefully they will see we care about the area and want it to be an asset to the community for decades to come.

The Dansville SGA is nearly 5,000 acres in size with 56% of it being forested. There has been very little forest management here for the last several decades, so less than 20% of the forest stands are less than 40 years old and none of them are less than 20 years old.

The current Dansville SGA master plan was written in 2016 and is available here: [https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/dansville\\_sga\\_mp\\_527801\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/dansville_sga_mp_527801_7.pdf). It was available for public review for a month at the time it was written. The plan lays out our habitat management plans which included focusing "future management on forestry practices that will help to balance the age class of the forests while also ensuring adequate regeneration of important key species such as oak" (last paragraph on page 3). Table three on page five also specifically mentions decreasing planted pines as one of the future habitat management directions. So, this work is being done after thoughtful planning and is part of the DNR's effort to continue providing quality wildlife habitat on the SGA for years to come.

During this timber sale, the planted pines will be reduced for these reasons:

- While it's visually appealing to see and walk-through tall trees, these pines have reached their maximum age-limit (60-70 years) and are no longer providing quality habitat for wildlife.
- Because these trees are older, many of them are susceptible to crowding, disease, and insect infestation. This is causing the trees to die, break, and tip over.
- Removing the trees now will open up the tree canopy to allow sunlight into the forest floor to allow for regeneration of new trees and shrubs.

This will not be a clearcut. The plan will be to leave most white pines, oaks, hickory, hemlock, and beech trees. Opening up the canopy to allow more sunlight to reach the forest floor will provide new trees and vegetation an opportunity to grow and provide better wildlife habitat.

We appreciate that residents have a connection to this area and have concerns when they see things being changed. However, our job is to manage the area for wildlife and wildlife-related recreation for current and future generations. Our predecessors had the foresight to plant many of these forests to provide valuable wildlife habitat for decades to come. As I mentioned that value - from a wildlife standpoint - has drastically diminished with the age and health of the trees. We feel it's time to conduct some forest management to ensure there are forests around the area for the next generations of users as well.

Thanks for your time and consideration if you receive any questions about this project once it gets started. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns yourself. Questions from the public can be directed to our office number below.

Sincerely,



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