

2019 Forest Management Update

Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge

Spring Tree Thinning Project

Starting February 4th, a refuge contractor will be thinning trees along the Wildlife Loop and Service Road. All trails will remain open, however visitors may hear loud noises such as chainsaw cutting throughout the spring. Your safety is important to us - please remain on trails at all times. Thank you for your patience during this time.



Locations of 2 sites for forest thinning

FAQs

What are the markings on the trees?

Flagging and/or painting on trees in the project area indicate “reserve pines.” These are the trees, spaced every 30 feet, that will be kept alive.

Why are some dead trees left standing?

Some pine trees will be left standing dead. These snags provide important habitat for a variety of wildlife. Cavities make great nest sites for birds, while insects, fungi, and other plants feast on the wood.

What will you do with felled trees?

Fallen dead trees are an essential part of a healthy forest. The decaying wood hosts its own little ecosystem, providing food and shelter to a multitude of insects, birds and mammals. The fungi, plants and animals that eat the tree help to decompose it, slowly transforming the wood into soil.

Where are the beetles now?

The southern pine beetle is a native insect, so there are always some on the refuge. “Infestations” occur when the population swells to epidemic proportions. These events can last 3-4 years, but eventually temperature extremes, environmental factors, and/or natural predators will cause a population collapse. This is a naturally occurring, cyclical characteristic of the forest ecosystem.

Low Density Stands Contribute to a Healthier Forest

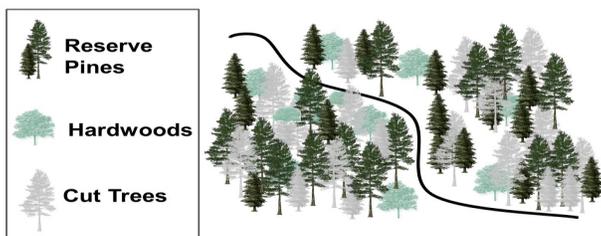


Diagram of thinned forest

Maintaining “low density” stands (fewer trees per acre) is part of the Refuge’s ongoing plan to manage our forests. Combined with tree diversity (hardwood & softwood, young & old), low density encourages a healthier forest ecosystem. The

result? Healthier trees, improved wildlife habitat and an increased resistance to future southern pine beetle infestations.

Our longtime visitors will recognize that the Wildlife Loop site is the same area that was impacted by a southern pine beetle infestation in the 1990’s. After this infestation, hundreds of native hardwood trees were planted to create a more diverse forest. The current thinning project will be focused on pine stands, allowing oaks and other hardwoods to continue to thrive.

Learn More

Southern pine beetles

www.fs.fed.us/foresthealth

Low density stands

www.dof.virginia.gov/manage/pine/loblolly-low-density.htm