

NEW PUBLICATION ABOUT WOODLOTS AT GETTYSBURG

The results of inventories of the woods at Gettysburg National Military Park have recently been published by Penn State University's College of Agricultural Sciences in a booklet called "Woodlots and Landscape Features at Gettysburg National Military Park: A Pictorial Record and Management Perspective from the 1990s." This booklet records, with an abundance of photos, the vegetation in six woodlots at the park for the purpose of providing a baseline from which managers can develop goals for restoring the woodlands to their late 19th century state and maintain the forests' ecological integrity.

The park commemorates the famous Civil War battle and the landscape in which it was fought. In southeastern Pennsylvania, the park encompasses about 5,733 acres (2,320 hectares). Approximately two-thirds of the park is open agricultural fields and pastures, and one-third is woods and a small area in orchard and developed spaces. Civil War era photos of forests at the park show oaks, hickories, ash, and red cedar, with white oak being the most abundant of the oaks. These species are still well represented.

Important to re-creating the landscape of the battle is the restoration of an uneven-aged forest dominated by oaks. Natural and human disturbances in the 20th century have resulted in a low regeneration of oaks, indicating that their dominance in the overstory may be replaced by ash, cherry, and maple. The current ratio of large ash, cherry, and maple saplings to that of oak saplings was found to be much greater than the current ratio of mature ash, cherry, and maples to mature oaks.

The historical species composition of the woods is threatened by exotic invasives; foraging small mammals such as squirrels, mice and voles; and especially deer that prefer to feed on native oaks rather than exotics such as Japanese barberry. Faster-growing ash and cherry have a better chance of reaching the sapling stage of growth, beyond the reach of deer, than do the slower-growing oak seedlings. A deer management program at the park is expected to control the size of the deer herd and thus encourage the development of the oak seedlings.

This publication is available from the Resource Management Office of Gettysburg National Military Park, 97 Taneytown Road, Gettysburg, PA 17325.