

# Discover a state forest — Pennyrile



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**P**ennyrile State Forest and Pennyrile State Resort Park—located mostly in Christian County near the city of Dawson Springs, was originally settled by John Thompson in the early 1800s. The area was a farming and logging community until the Great Depression in the 1930s. In 1932, the U.S. Department of Agriculture Resettlement Administration bought 15,331 acres and helped to relocate many of the original families. During the next five years, the Works Progress Administration (WPA) rehabilitated 14,000 acres of eroded farm land and cut-over timber. The WPA also planted 2 million seedlings (mostly pine), built a lodge, cabins and the Pennyrile Lake Dam. In 1946, the Kentucky Division of Forestry (KDF) obtained rights to the forest and began managing timber for

resource utilization. A portion of the property was deeded to the Kentucky Department of Parks, and Pennyrile State Resort Park officially opened to the public in 1954. Today, the state forest and state park encompass 16,399 acres.

Despite a long history of practicing forest stewardship at Pennyrile, there have been many challenges in achieving overall health of the forest. Disease, insects, storm damage, drought and other forest health impacts have taken a toll over the years. In 2001, an infestation of southern pine beetle heavily impacted the pine forest leaving dead and dying trees. As a result, KDF began harvesting the pines in an effort to convert the low-quality pine stands to native hardwoods. KDF foresters found that a complete removal—or regeneration harvest—

was the most effective course in converting the non-native pine to hardwoods, while allowing higher-quality southern yellow pine to regenerate as a mixed oak/pine stand.

Ecosystem management goals for Pennyrile are to maintain biodiversity, promote wildlife habitat and provide recreational opportunities while maintaining a sustainable forest resource. These goals are achieved using forest management techniques, including harvests, thinnings, mid-story removal and other types of timber stand practices.

Pennyrile State Forest is also home to Clifty Creek Natural Area, a combination of five separate sites that in 2006 were designated as “natural areas” due to their ecological significance. The combined sites cover about 75 acres. They are clustered in a

1-square-mile area south and southeast of Pennyrile Lake and west of Clifty Creek in Christian County.

The Clifty Creek sites include rare natural communities, including limestone barrens and prairie remnants, and support two species considered threatened in Kentucky—the Swamp metalmark butterfly and Carolina larkspur, a flowering plant. The sites also are home to a variety of more common plants and animals. Expanded protection of the sites will ensure critical habitat for plants and animals but also continued recreation such as hiking, hunting and bird watching for visitors.

The general public can enjoy many recreational opportunities at Pennyrile State Forest, including more than 50 miles of trails. There are specific trails for horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking. Several miles of the forest share a shoreline with Lake Beshear.

The Kentucky Division of Forestry owns and manages 10 state forests with a combined total of nearly 48,000 acres. They are working forests and each contains an educational demonstration area. The state forests are open to the public for hiking, wildlife viewing, picnicking and other activities. Primitive camping, horseback riding and regulated hunting and fishing are also permitted on specified state forest properties. Off-road vehicles, including ATVs are prohibited on all state forests.



*ABOVE (left and right): Pennyrile State Forest is home to Pennyrile Lake and a mixed stand of oak and pine. KDF photos*