
BUREAU OF FORESTRY

February 21, 2012

Dear Pennsylvania Vulnerable Plant dealers and American ginseng harvesters,

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) has been working on the changes to the American ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) harvest regulations over the past few years. The change to the ginseng harvest season start date from August 1 to September 1 continues to move forward. Any changes to the regulation, Title 17, Chapter 45 Conservation of Pennsylvania Native Wild Plants, must undergo a lengthy and vigorous review through many Pennsylvania government offices. Until now, the regulatory change was also linked to several changes to listings of Rare, Threatened and Endangered (R, T & E) plants. This year DCNR has made the decision to work towards expediting the ginseng harvest date regulation by separating it from the R, T&E wild plant changes in an effort to have the American ginseng harvest start date of September 1st go into effect by the 2012 harvest season.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) supports the harvest date change because it will better ensure the long-term sustainability of American ginseng. It also better aligns Pennsylvania with surrounding states, all of which have a start date of August 20 (Maryland) or September 1 (New York, Ohio and West Virginia). A harvest start date of September 1st would allow the fruits to be fully red and ensure the planting of those fruits in the vicinity of the collection site to be successful. USFWS is requesting this harvest start date change for them to further justify a non-detriment finding for the export of American ginseng from Pennsylvania. We are working closely with USFWS through this regulatory update process.

Because the regulatory update process has begun and the exact date it will be finalized this summer is not clear, DCNR will be treating the proposed harvest date of September 1st as the actual start date for this field season in 2012. This would ensure that all harvesters and dealers would be in compliance in the regulations were to change in August. Therefore, DCNR will only be certifying ginseng collected between September 1st and November 30th.

DCNR will keep you apprised of the change to the harvest season start date as it gets closer to being finalized through the Regulatory Review process. We will update you via mail, email or the web. Please regularly visit DCNR's Ginseng website at <http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us/forestry/plants/vulnerableplants/ginseng/index.htm> for information regarding the harvest season date change.

As always feel free to email me at cfirestone@pa.gov or call at 570-724-8149 with concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Chris Firestone
Wild Plant Program Manager