

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2015

TO: THE HONORABLE WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Following is the proposed Washburn County Forest work plan for the year 2015. The plan gives direction and meaning to the proposed County Forest budget. The plan further defines and supplements the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and emphasizes the current needs of the County Forest and Recreational System.

I. TIMBER HARVEST

Timber harvests are not only important for the economic well being of Washburn County, but also for the health and vigor of the forest. This includes all aspects of the forest including wildlife, watershed protection, air quality, recreation, and many other noncommercial values. Professional implementation of proper forest management and harvest techniques is essential. The timber management goal is to produce sustained yields of forest products by scheduling timber sales as close as possible to achieve the average annual allowable cut. Compartment reconnaissance information from the Wisconsin Forest Reconnaissance System (WisFIRS) will be used to determine stands where timber cutting is needed. Washburn County Forest plans to offer for sale approximately 3,030* acres of new timber sales (excluding salvage operations due to unknown occurrences and re-advertising of defaulted timber sale contracts) in the following timber types in 2015:**

Aspen	<u>900</u> acres
Jack Pine	<u>50</u> acres
Red Pine	<u>600</u> acres
Northern Hardwoods	<u>600</u> acres
Red Oak	<u>600</u> acres
Red Oak – Regeneration	<u>50</u> acres
White Spruce & Balsam Fir	<u>80</u> acres
Swamp Hardwood	<u>50</u> acres
White Birch	<u>50</u> acres
Other	<u>50</u> acres

* Acreage will likely be adjusted to account for salvage of timber resulting from a September 2014 windstorm. Final numbers of acreage impacted were not available at the time of the drafting of this Work plan.

** Timber sale establishment will exceed these acreages in order to build a timber sale “bank”

Information about what timber sale establishment activities are occurring at a specific time may be obtained by contacting the Washburn County Forestry Office, 850 W BeaverBrook Ave, Spooner, WI. 54801; phone (715) 635-4490.

II. REFORESTATION

- A. Scarification of Soil (preparation of seed bed for natural regeneration):
 - 1. Pre-harvest 300 acres (jack pine, birch, hardwood)
 - 2. Post-harvest 0 acres
- B. Site preparation (site preparation for planting):
 - 1. Mechanical (Bracke) 0 acres
 - 2. Mechanical (disk trench) 0 acres
 - 3. Chemical 0 acres
- C. Direct Seeding 50 acres
- D. Plantings 0 acres
- E. Replanting 0 acres
- F. Prescribed burning 50 acres

III. TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

- A. Release (removal of competition around young plantations):
 - 1. Hand 50 acres
 - 2. Chemical 0 acres
- B. Pre-Commercial Thinning 0 acres
- C. Ironwood Control (mowing) 50 acres

IV. COUNTY FOREST ROADS

- A. Evaluate need for annual mowing of all roads. Prioritize needs and grade approximately 50 miles.
- B. Gravel portions of gas tax roads as needed.
- C. Grade and gravel other fire lanes and roads not entered into the County Forest Road system.
- D. Mow 10 miles of County Forest Roads.
- E. Continue legislative efforts to eliminate gas tax program pro-rates and to increase per mile funding rate.

V. TIMBER ACCESS TRAILS

- A. Continue to implement the Road and Access Plan.
- B. Continue to plan all roads and access to keep them to a minimum.
- C. Continue road inventory project using GPS and collect information regarding use, work needs, and future use needs.
- D. Attempt to collaborate with Sheriff's Department to provide for law enforcement efforts towards reducing illegal motorized use.

VI. LAND ACQUISITION

- A. Follow direction of County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and as approved by Forestry Committee.
 - 1. Evaluate land trades as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.
 - 2. Evaluate land purchases as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.
 - 3. Pursue grant funding sources for any approved acquisition project.
 - 4. Complete 2nd half payment to Washburn County Lakes and Rivers.
 - 5. Develop a proposal to acquire industrial forest lands that may be available for purchase that are beneficial to Washburn County for both protection and enhancement of recreational programs and provide for long term timber management returns.

VII. SURVEYING

- A. Present to committee problem areas for certified survey or remonumentation efforts. Surveys generally needed to prevent trespass or to clarify boundaries in order to continue management.

- B. Utilize Trimble GPS unit to locate interior property corners where section corners are available.

VIII. FOREST PROTECTION

- A. Continue cooperation with Wi. Dept. of Natural Resources by:
 - 1. Improving and maintaining fire lanes.
 - 2. Continue annual meeting to evaluate Forest operations facilitated by D.N.R. Liaison.
 - 3. Consult with DNR Rangers during periods of higher fire danger in order to modify timber sale activity when needed to reduce wildfire risk.
 - 3. Support DNR fire suppression efforts when and where needed. Continue to ensure that staff is current in fire suppression training. Any assistance with fire suppression will be focused primarily on protecting Washburn County Forest resources, with a secondary goal of providing assistance on other lands within Washburn County. Staff resources will be allocated for assistance outside of Washburn County only in cases of large project wildfires or in support of suppression on neighboring County Forests.
 - 4. Develop and implement management strategies to minimize risk of losses due to emerald ash borer, oak wilt or other pests/pathogens with a potential to create losses to the timber program.
 - 5. Re-sign fire lanes utilizing DNR fire mitigation funds.

IX. MULTIPLE USE AND ECOSYSTEM-BASED PROJECTS

- A. Continue efforts to regenerate jack pine, white birch, balsam, red oak, and other intolerant timber types, through planting, scarification, prescribed burning, and other silvicultural harvest methods.
- B. Attempt to secure special burning permits for prescribed burning of oak regeneration sites.
- C. Initiate larger scale site preparation/shelterwood, or other silvicultural methods to address northern hardwood sites where regeneration has proven problematic. Utilize Hardwood Fund grant monies if available. Consider even aged management within specific criteria and adjust allowable harvest data accordingly.
- D. Continue to maintain road and access plan
- E. Continue to monitor for invasive species, buckthorn in particular, and conduct eradication projects where feasible and when funding is available.

X. GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) / COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY

- A. Continue to operate and maintain currency of GIS system and GIS data.
- B. Utilize the web based GIS / forest reconnaissance WisFIRS system (web based GIS editing system)
- C. Continue GPS logging trail inventory (complete at least 4 additional IRM unit)
- D. Investigate ways to share data and collaborate with the Land Information Department to create efficiencies.

XI. INTRODUCTION OF PRESCRIBED/CONTROLLED BURNING

- A. Continue to conduct prescribed burns as fire weather allows.
- B. Concentrate prescribed burning efforts in conjunction with shelterwood harvest in red oak and on maintenance of native pine stands.
- C. Evaluate effectiveness of prescribed burning for regenerating red oak, native pine, and for controlling competing vegetation.
- D. Cooperate with D.N.R. forestry and fire control to conduct burns in a safe and effective manner, and also in a way that does not require extensive DNR field staff support.

XII. RECREATION AREAS

- A. Snowmobile trails
 - 1. Investigate re-route opportunities for trail 140, north from trail 4 to Trego, which has been

closed due to easement loss.

2. Attempt to secure funding to reroute trail 26 around a lost trail easement near Spider Lake.
3. Apply for annual maintenance grant funding for un-funded trail segments
4. Apply for grant funding for any necessary bridge repairs or replacements, and other trail improvements.
5. Construct re-route around wetland area on Trail 8, east of the Waggoner Road. This area is a deep wetland that is very difficult to freeze.
6. Rehabilitate portions of trail 8, near Webb Creek Drive, that are extremely washed and rutted.
7. Install 911 marker signs.
8. Continue legislative efforts to increase revenues into the snowmobile grant program.

B. Ski Trails

1. Continue to groom Nordic and Totogatic ski trails
2. Continue to try to recruit club labor to assist with trail maintenance using labor and equipment reimbursement with ATC annual impact funds.
3. Establish aspen timber sale along Nordic Woods Trail while accommodating shade and aesthetic needs. Widen outer trail loops as part of timber sale to accommodate grooming for free-style (skate) skiing.

C. ATV trails

1. Continue to operate and maintain the Wild River, Beaverbrook, Stony Brook, Spider Lake, Trail 39, and Harmon Lake trails using County and ATV club labor.
2. Continue to maintain bathroom and parking facilities in Trego, Sarona, Berry Road and Hall Road.
3. Maintenance funding was increased from \$450 to \$600 per mile. Retain the additional \$150 per mile to help fund maintenance work done with County equipment and labor. Allocate any remaining funds to repair problem trail areas.
4. Investigate options for connecting Shell Lake to Barronett in order to connect to Barron County trail systems.
5. Work towards finalizing a land acquisition project, which will protect snow trail 39 and allow for the trail to be upgraded to dual ATV/Snowmobile; use.
6. Rehabilitate ATV trail 25 from County D to Dalen Road; Berry road to Elbow Lake; and County T to Thayer Road using awarded grant funds. Evaluate other trails for work needs and apply for trail rehabilitation grants from ATV funds where necessary.
7. Construct the Crystal Point re-route to the Spider Lake Loop ATV trail, which was closed due to a lost easement.
8. Rehabilitate/gravel portions of the Wild River Trail using awarded grant funds.
9. Attempt to secure grant funding to repair/rehabilitate portions of the Stony Brook Trail that were damaged by heavy rains in September 2014.
10. Investigate trail connections, working with local ATV clubs, on public and private lands in the following areas:
 - Minong west to Burnett Co., minimizing County Highway ROW or town road routes.
 - Wild River Trail from either Spooner or Trego to connect with Casey Township.
11. Continue to participate in the new permanent UTV program established in 2012.
12. Continue to pursue taking over maintenance of the Tuscobia State Trail section in Washburn County. The trail is currently under DNR management.

D. Other recreation trails:

1. Assist with maintenance on the Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail in Beaverbrook Township.
2. Attempt to develop a club, or “friends of” group to assist with maintenance of the

3. Dugan Run Horse Trail.
Utilize annual impact fees from powerline funds to reimburse local clubs for labor, materials and equipment on non-motorized trails.
- E. Parks & Campgrounds:
1. Totogatic Park (75 units).
 - a. Restore storage building.
 - b. Construct remaining walkways and access points to water in the areas of rip rap and shoreline restoration done in 2013.
 - c. Continue gravelling and leveling on entrances to sites. Utilize budgeted funds allocated to repair campground roads/sites damaged by the heavy rains in September 2014.
 - d. Continue the tree planting program. Consider renting a tree spade attachment for the Posi-track to move trees from the nursery area.
 - e. Continue the online reservation system.
 - f. Designate remote campsites and implement camping policy on old cabin permit sites as approved by the Committee
 - g. Maintain and operate facilities.
 2. Leisure Lake Youth Camp:
 - a. Continue to operate and maintain facilities.
 - b. Replace deteriorating roofs on the main lodge and buildings.
 3. Sawmill Lake Campground
 - a. Replace/repair broken hand pump. Consider options for solar or propane powered pump system.
 - b. Continue to operate and maintain facility.
 4. Dugan and Harmon Equestrian Campsites
 - a. Continue to operate facilities
 - b. Evaluate Harmon Lake for addition of sanitary dump station, which will also serve for Sawmill Park.
- F. Other:
1. Increase maintenance levels of County Forest boat landings.
 2. Implement recreation recommendations as per the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
- G. Hallstrom Woods
1. Continue to maintain facility and mow trails
 2. Suspend aerator system operations on the lake due to excessive electrical costs.
 3. Evaluate trail system for ski trail grooming opportunities
- H. Rifle Range
1. Develop a plan for upgrades and improvements and apply for any available grant funds.
 2. Continue to operate and maintain facility.

XIII. BUILDINGS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES:

- A. Forestry Department facilities**
3. Forestry Shop – continue to operate and maintain facility.
 4. Totogatic Park Ranger Residence - continue to operate and maintain facility.
- B. Equipment**
1. Continue compact road grader lease
 2. Replace dozer

3. Replace 6 x 6 ATV
4. Continue to operate and maintain existing Forestry equipment pool.
5. Continue efforts to define equipment sharing policy with Highway Department under lean government proposal.

C. Wildlife Flowages

1. Collaborate with Highway Department to develop proposal for removal of Black Brook Dam and to create a wetland mitigation bank by restoring the wetland characteristics.
2. Evaluate feasibility of continued existence of Conroy Dam if any engineering requirements are mandated by DNR in 2015.
3. Complete any necessary engineering required by DNR for the Davis Flowage Dam
4. Taylor Lake Flowage was determined to be owned by WDNR Wildlife. Assist DNR, where feasible, with removal of this structure.

XIV. SPECIAL PROJECTS, GRANTS AND FUNDING

A. Wildlife grant (\$.05 per acre grant for wildlife habitat)

1. Maintain intolerant timber types (scarification for jack pine, white birch, oak, and balsam; prescribed burning for red oak and pine).
2. Purchase Spike herbicide for DNR treatment of wildlife openings.
3. Fund other projects as approved in the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

B. Sustainable Forestry Grant – The Forestry Department received a grant of \$20,000 to provide funding for buckthorn eradication. The project will focus on infestations in the Stinnett and Frog Creek Townships.

XV. Staff / Personnel

- A.** Investigate opportunities to provide law enforcement for forestry, parks and trails after the 2011 decision by the Sheriff to pull the Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff onto road duty.
- B.** Hire a summer intern position to assist with timber sale establishment.
- C.** Utilize the Gordon prison crew where feasible, especially with Parks projects and conifer hand release.
- D.** Push for re-evaluation of the Forester and Administrative Assistant positions to adjust compensation to more appropriately reflect job duties.

XVI. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Time Standards

- A.** Coordinate with Washburn Team Leader and other Division of Forestry staff to consolidate as many time standards hours as possible into a minimum number of staff in order to create efficiencies.
- B.** Focus time primarily on timber sale establishment. The Liaison Forester or County Forest Foresters will act as lead forester on these projects. DNR staff will work under the direction of these lead foresters while conducting marking duties.
- C.** Heavy equipment hours on scarification and other site prep duties will be conducted at the discretion of the County Forest Administrator.
- D.** Look for opportunities to develop longer range and better plans for the use of the time standard hours. In addition, Washburn County Forestry will be requesting detailed reports on which staff have allocated hours to the County and what work duties they performed.

XVI. Forest Certification – Continue to participate in SFI and FSC forest certification programs. Monitor standards for compliance. Continue efforts to prevent measurement standards from becoming too restrictive.