

Washburn County Forest 2017 Annual Report



Log-A-Load for Kids Event

Forest Administrator

Mike Peterson

Department Employees

Buck Pettingill

Mark Heil

Duran Bjorklund

Jeremy Erickson

Josh Buckridge/Brandon Shutt

Barb Hinkfuss

WDNR Liaison Forester

Amy Morales

Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff

Vacant

Forestry Parks and Recreation Committee

January - May

L.H. "Skip" Fiedler - Chair

James Dohm – Vice Chair

Hank Graber

Romaine Quinn

Del Stoll

June - September

L.H. "Skip" Fiedler - Chair

James Dohm – Vice Chair

Hank Graber

Romaine Quinn

Sandy Johnson

October – December

James Dohm – Chair

Romaine Quinn – Vice Chair

Hank Graber

Sandy Johnson

Lynn Hoeppner

2017 ANNUAL REPORT – WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

TO: The Honorable County Board of Supervisors
Washburn County, Wisconsin

Supervisors:

We submit for your approval and adoption, some of this department's highlights and activities during 2017.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

The timber sale program generated a record gross revenue of \$3,208,652. The Department still had a significant backlog of unharvested wood under contract and some of the receipts were from older sales. Harvesting conditions were poor throughout the summer months due to wet weather, but frozen ground conditions were very good through the winter months.

Wood markets appeared to be variable depending on species and product, but generally were improved from 2016. The pine pulp market seemed to improve, with contractors moving more product.

The average 2017 high bids on aspen were substantially lower than 2016, while hardwood was up slightly. Pine prices were significantly higher, but this is primarily due to older age classes and higher value products on our sales. Sawlog rates remained stable.

Oak wilt was first discovered on county forest lands in 2016. The Department has adopted a policy of aggressive treatment to attempt eradication when sites are discovered. One new infection was found in the Birchwood area, as well as a small outbreak on one of the sites treated in 2016. These sites were treated in early 2018. Site treatments entail girdling and chemically treating oak trees within a buffer area of each infected tree.

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan dictates an annual allowable harvest of 900 acres per year in our aspen forest types. Nearly all of our older, unmanaged, aspen stands have been harvested and a disproportionate amount of aspen is in a 35 to 50 year age class. This is due to accelerated harvests in aspen stands that were done when the LP plant moved into Hayward. In order to fully "regulate" aspen age classes, we needed to begin cutting the second harvests on younger age classes.

A windstorm hit portions of the county forest during the summer of 2017. This storm impacted areas in the town of Madge and Birchwood. Four salvage sales totaling 179 acres were established and sold in August.

RECREATION

The recreation program grew and expanded with several projects and funding sources. We continue to see increases in the number of people using the forest for numerous activities. Much of the growth of our recreation program is due to a concerted effort to provide more outdoor recreational opportunities for the public.

ATV

Washburn County's ATV Trail system consisted of 106.9 miles of funded summer trails and 139.3 miles of winter trails. Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department in the form of grants and are funded at a rate of \$600/mile for summer ATV trails and \$100/mile for winter use ATV Trails. Since 2014, the ATV fund also allocates an additional \$100/mile to provide for use by side by sides (UTV's). These funds are critical to maintain our trail systems.

In 2017, \$76,830 were awarded for summer ATV; \$13,980 for winter ATV; and \$1,910 for hybrid (TROUTE) trails. A majority of the \$92,673 in total maintenance program funding was distributed to local ATV clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

In addition to annual maintenance funding, Washburn County had numerous trail rehabilitation and development grants that have been awarded. Some of these grants were originally applied for in 2014, and were scheduled for completion during 2016 and 2017. The July 2016 flooding forced us to reallocate resources to repair damages on roads and trails. We anticipate make significant progress towards completing most of the backlog of ATV trail projects in 2018. These grants, and progress towards completion at the end of 2017, are itemized below;

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Grant Award</u>	<u>Percentage Complete in 2017</u>
Thayer Road	Rehabilitation	\$31,000	78%
Berry Road	Rehabilitation	\$40,500	11%
Crystal Point	Relocation	\$26,000	53%
Trail 25	Rehabilitation	\$75,360	27%
Whalen	Development	\$111,840	76%
Wild River 2	Rehabilitation	\$68,500	53%
Wild River 3	Rehabilitation	\$68,500	44%
Casey Loop	Development	\$204,730	0%
Spring Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$40,552	0%
FEMA ATV Share	Rehabilitation	\$16,193	52%

Washburn County applied for several ATV grants in 2017. Two projects, in addition to annual maintenance, were awarded. Grant contracts are generally available near the end of the year in which grant application was made. The Department normally budgets for these projects in the following calendar year. We secured \$38,790 to develop a bathroom/rest area on the Beaverbrook ATV Trail and also \$9,100 to develop a parking area adjacent to the Stony Brook Trail, near Hall Road.

All ATV rehabilitation projects were completed using county equipment and labor; contracted equipment and materials; and a tremendous amount of volunteer work from the local ATV clubs. The Birchwood Bobcats, Rolling Hills, and Minong Clubs invested a great deal of their personal time and club resources to make these projects a success and the Forestry Department and Committee applaud their efforts. All grant funds awarded to these projects are generated from registration stickers on ATV's and an allocation from Wisconsin's gas tax.

Snowmobile

The County had marginal snowmobile trail conditions in January and February of 2017. Trail systems were open from January 1 through January 23 and February 1 through February 17. We are able to open snowmobile trails much earlier than normal in late 2017, with most trails open by December 22nd. There were very good snowmobiling conditions through the remainder of 2017.

Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department. In 2017, maintenance was awarded at a rate of \$250/mile for snowmobile trail maintenance. A total of \$63,775 was used to maintain trails and was primarily distributed to local Snowmobile clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

In 2014, a private landowner cancelled a snowmobile trail use agreement in the Beaverbrook area, which resulted in the closure of Trail 140 from the Highway 70 area north to Trego. Forestry Department staff worked on several re-route options but we were unable to secure an alternate connection. Several promising options were found but a landowner decided to change his decision on allowing snowmobile trail access. This ten mile section of trail will remain closed until a viable re-route option can be found. Grant funding had been secured to fund the relocation, but we will likely cancel the grant and return the funding to the State.

The Department had one additional open snowmobile project grant for the trail 26 relocation. A landowner forced a trail closure in the Birchwood area in 2014. The trail has been re-routed but several components of the relocation grant remain to be done. This project was scheduled for completion in 2017, but flood damage repair has forced the project into 2018.

Campgrounds

Totogatic Park showed a significant increase in camping and usage in 2017. Revenues from the park were a record of \$192,021, which was significantly higher than revenues received in 2016. The campground was full nearly the entire summer and was operating on what we feel is the maximum capacity at the park. Sawmill Campground saw a slight decrease in revenue and campers.

2017 was the 5th season using the web based reservation system. The service is very popular and has attracted many new customers to our parks systems. The Minong ATV Campground, owned by the Village of Minong and operated by the Minong ATV Club, continues to use the online reservation system.

The Forestry Department began planning for an expansion at Totogatic Campground. An architect was hired to develop conceptual plans for up to 50 sites, including showers, electric, and sewer hookups. The plan allows the County to building in stages with an initial proposal of 25 to 30 additional sites. The Board of Supervisors allocated \$250,000 in timber revenues as a potential match against future grants awarded to the project. We applied for \$811,490 in Aid for Development of Local Parks grant funds (ADLP), which are 50% cost share. We were awarded a partial grant of \$165,104. The Department plans on splitting the project into phases and begin some parts of the construction in 2018. A grant application will also be made for the remainder of the project cost estimate in 2018.

The Harmon Lake Trailhead and the Dugan Run Equestrian Trail continue to see usage with continual increases in the number of campers. Both trailheads were used fairly frequently and received many favorable comments.

The Parks program, excluding grant funded systems, took in a total revenue of \$205,452.

Other trails

The Dugan Run Equestrian trail continues to have increased use, especially in the fall as insect activity drops and fall colors appear. The Department receives many compliments on this facility. We are still, however, struggling to promote the development of a local club that will help maintain the trail system. There are a few individuals that provide a great deal of help, but a

large portion of the trail inspection and maintenance work is being done by the Forestry Department.

The Wildcat Mountain Bike Trail sees a great deal of use. Local enthusiasts do a tremendous job of monitoring and maintaining the trail and little additional help is needed from the Department. More recently, we have seen increasing requests for winter use of trails by “fat tire” bikes. Initial requests were to be allowed access to winter use snowmobile trails. Given safety concerns, these requests were denied; but we began working with local biking enthusiasts to develop opportunities for winter use on the mountain bike trail system. Club members began grooming the single track trails for winter fat tire bike use late in 2015.

Snow conditions on the ski trails marginal in January through early March. Extensive storm damage in the Birchwood area forced the closure of Nordic Woods Ski Trail for the 2017/2018 winter season. Totogatic Ski Trail had very good conditions late in 2017.

Other recreation facilities

The Forestry Department has several, ongoing, open grants for various recreational facilities. Most of them were planned for completion in 2017, but flood damage repair efforts delayed the necessary work. At the end of 2017, grants funds and project work remained on the following:

- Minong Rifle Range improvements
- Birch Lake Dam repairs
- Wildcat Trails parking improvements

FLOOD DAMAGE / FEMA

On July 11, 2016, northern Washburn County was hit with a storm that dumped heavy rains across the region. Widespread flooding caused significant damage to the area, including fire lanes, recreation trails and parks. A disaster declaration was made and damage estimates were submitted to FEMA.

FEMA approved \$766,998 in disaster relief funds to Forestry Department roads, trails and facilities in 2016. These grants are issued on a cost share basis, with 75% funding from FEMA, 12.5% funding from Wisconsin Emergency Management and 12.5% sponsor share. Project awards and progress towards completion in 2017 are itemized below:

Project	Grant	2017 % Complete
1) Snowmobile Trails	\$60,952	100%
2) ATV Trails	\$129,546	52%
3) Casey-Chicog Firelanes	\$302,106	100%
4) Gull Lake-Stinnett-Frog Creek Firelanes	\$155,407	100%
5) Springbrook Firelanes	\$87,428	100%
6) Totogatic Park & Minong Range	\$14,252	100%
7) Canadian National Bridge	\$17,500	100%

Flood damage repair was done with a combination of internal staff and equipment, along with contract material hauling done both by the Highway Department and private contractors. Forestry staff resources were diverted away from normal work duties and onto FEMA projects for a majority of the summer and fall of 2017. All projects were completed, with the exception of ATV trail repair, which was delayed due to wet weather. Project closeouts were ready to submit for completed projects by the end of 2017.

FACILITIES/ EQUIPMENT/ACQUISITIONS

The Department leased a Noram Compact Road Grader under a 4 year municipal lease. 2017 was the last year under the lease agreement. Lease payments continued to be paid for using reimbursements under ATV grants and County Forest Road Aids. This grader unit is the ideal size to help with ATV trail maintenance. The Department began planning for the lease of a new unit in 2018.

Forestry purchased a replacement ½ ton 4 x 4 pickup for the Forester position; a new snowmobile and a replacement UTV for the Parks program. An older pickup, UTV and two snowmobiles were sent to an auction service for disposal/sale.

Two land acquisition proposals were presented to the Forestry Department in 2017. The Committee approved pursuing the projects and the Department began pursuing appraisals and grant applications. Both of these projects are expected to have successful grant awards and approval resolution presented to the County Board in 2018.

PERSONNEL

One summer forestry intern was hired, using timber revenues, and the position was used to mark timber and update forest reconnaissance data.

One of the Forestry Technician employees resigned from the position in the fall of 2017. Brandon Shutt, a current LTE with the Department, was hired as his replacement.

Due to increasing workloads in both the recreation and forestry program, we submitted a request for a Natural Resources Technician position. This position is a new addition and we intend to allocate 50% of the position to parks and recreation during the summer months and to timber sale establishment during the remainder of the year. This position request was approved by the Personnel Committee and County Board and the budget request was approved for 2018. Our intentions are to move Brandon Shutt into the new position early in 2018 and hire a replacement Forestry Technician.

The County Forest Administrator and Sheriff jointly developed a proposal to reinstate a recreation officer position.

OTHER

Washburn County had one open Sustainable Forestry Grant during 2017. A grant of \$20,000 was awarded in 2016 to fund the hiring of an LTE to assist with timber sale establishment. This forester was hired to “backfill” lost time from permanent staff working on FEMA projects. The grant was budgeted between 2016 and 2017. \$5,670 was spent during 2016 and \$9,621 in 2017. The balance of funds will be expended in 2018.

Washburn County Forestry continues forest certification under both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification programs. It appears as though the certification efforts by Washburn County, along with the other county forests and state lands have allowed our wood markets to remain viable through the economic downturn. Other areas of the United States experienced mill closures in areas without reliable supplies of certified forest products.

Washburn County continues to be a strong participant in the Wisconsin County Forest Association. This group does a great deal of work legislatively and with various DNR and other State agencies to protect the integrity of our timber and recreation programs. The County Forest Administrator has been the chair of the WCFA Legislative Committee since 1999.

COUNTY FOREST ACTIVITY STATISTICS 2017

I. Reforestation

A.	Acres newly planted:	0	acres
B.	Acres replanted:	0	acres
C.	Acres seeded (jack pine):	0	acres
D.	Jack pine regeneration – scarified	56	acres
E.	Oak regeneration - scarified	0	acres
F.	White birch regeneration – scarified	0	acres
G.	Swamp conifer mowing	0	acres
H.	Northern hardwood regeneration – mowing	15	acres
I.	Northern hardwood regeneration – scarified	41	acres
J.	Site Prep (mechanical)	0	acres
K.	Site Prep (chemical)	0	acres
L.	Prescribed burning (oak regeneration)	0	acres

II. Timber stand improvement

A.	Red pine release (herbicide):	72	acres
B.	Pine release (prison crew):	18	acres
C.	Invasive – Buckthorn herbicide treatment	0	acres
D.	Oak wilt control	15	acres

III. Timber Sale Statistics

A.	Timber value contracted	\$2,766,967 (\$2,651,797 in 2016)
B.	Acres established:	2,628 acres (2,362 acres in 2016)
C.	Acres sold (goal of 3400 acres):	3,522 acres (2,713 acres in 2016)
D.	Acres closed out:	2,288 acres (3,655 acres in 2016)
E.	Volumes removed:	total cord equivalent = 57,241 (52,070 in 2016)
1.	Pulpwood total:	53,916
a.	Aspen pulpwood	19,395 cords
b.	Mixed hardwood pulpwood	27,828 cords
c.	Pine pulpwood	6,142 cords
d.	Spruce/fir pulpwood	551 cords
2.	Sawtimber total:	3,325 mbf (thousand board feet)

VI. Recreation Facilities

A.	Totogatic Park	
1.	Total Gross Revenue - \$192,021	(\$163,121 in 2016)
2.	Camping Registrations - \$168,562	(\$139,232 in 2016)
3.	Shower revenue from bathhouse - \$1,943	(\$2,024 in 2016)
4.	Firewood revenue – \$8,147	(\$7,049 in 2016)
5.	Boat Launch Fee - \$2,446	(\$2,179 in 2016)
6.	Ice, Day Use, Dump Station, etc. - \$4,449	(\$2,661 in 2016)
7.	Reservation system fees - \$11,712	(\$9,976 in 2016)
B.	Sawmill Park Revenue - \$8,303	(\$8,971 in 2016)
C.	Harmon / Dugan Equestrian Trails / Other	
1.	Horse Trail/Camping Revenue – \$3,252	(\$2,509 in 2016)
2.	Dispersed Camping Permits - \$380	(\$300 in 2016)
3.	Trail Donations - \$210	(\$603 in 2016)
D.	Leisure Lake Youth Camp	
1.	Revenue - \$5,558	(\$5,175 in 2016)
2.	Number of Groups = 29	
3.	62% use by youth groups	
4.	5% use by other non-profit groups	

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST: ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOUNTS 2017

I. RECEIPT AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY OF FORESTRY AND PARKS ACCOUNTS

A. <u>Timber revenues received by County:</u>		
Gross timber sale receipts		\$3,196,370.27
Damages and other misc. income		\$ 11,576.33
Gathering permits (firewood, boughs, Christmas trees)		\$ 705.22
<u>TOTAL FOREST PRODUCTS REVENUE - \$3,208,651.82</u>		
 <u>Recreation revenues received by County:</u>		
Totogatic Park		\$ 192,021.07
Sawmill Park		\$ 8,303.00
Leisure Lake		\$ 5,175.00
Misc. Recreation Revenue		\$ 3,842.00
<u>TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAM REVENUE - \$ 209,341.07</u>		
 <u>Misc. revenues received by County</u>		
Forestry Aid Loan from State		\$ 74,632.32
Sustainable Forestry Grant		\$ 1,259.59
County Forest Administrator Grant (inc. WCFA dues reimb.)		\$ 54,137.52
Private Grants		\$.00
Equipment Sales		\$.00
<u>TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE - \$ 130,029.43</u>		
 Total Revenues		 \$3,548,022.32
 B. <u>Expenditures by County:</u>		
Forestry Aid fund (56930)		\$ 71,594.18
County Forest Land Development (56100)		\$488,167.84
10% statutory timber sale revenue to towns		\$319,269.21
5% additional timber sale revenue allocated by County		\$159,634.61
Forestry Aid Loan Repayment		\$ 74,632.32
Parks Expenditures (55200)		\$169,806.63
<u>TOTAL NON-GRANT EXPENDITURES - \$ 1,283,104.79</u>		
 C. Net Revenue to County		 \$2,264,917.53*
<i>* May not reflect actual audit figure due to adjustments.</i>		

II. Other Segregated Accounts:

	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
A. <u>Fish and Game Projects - 56960</u>	\$ 3,438.41	\$ 6,315.51
B. <u>Habitat Development - 56961</u>	\$ 7,033.60	\$ 3,159.39
C. <u>Snow Trails - 55440</u>	\$ 61,134.86	\$ 61,063.16
D. <u>Land Acquisition - 56110</u>	\$ 8,090.51	\$ 5,690.00
E. <u>County Forest Roads - 56125</u>	\$ 30,119.88	\$ 8,017.61
F. <u>ATV Trails - 55310</u>	\$ 165,886.94	\$ 151,449.79

III. Fund Balances on non-lapsing accounts as of 12/31/17 **subject to final reconciliation and audit*

A. Forestry Aid (State loan funds)	\$ 31,830
B. Wildlife Habitat (State grant funds)	\$ 14,636
C. County Forest Roads (State grant fund)	\$ 98,703
D. Land Acquisition	\$ 36,186

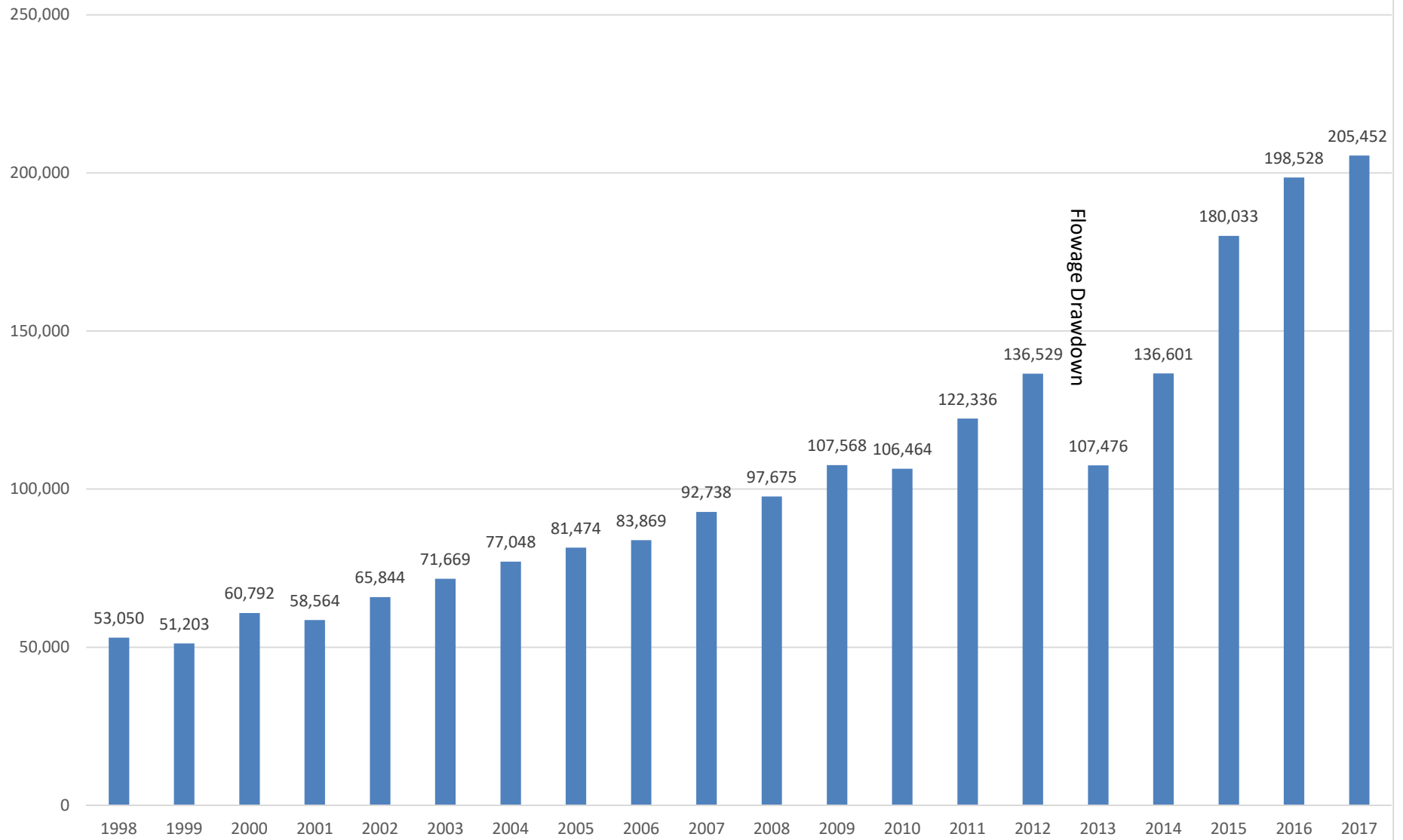
IV. Money received by Towns:

State payment (\$.30/acre on 149,956.03 acres)	\$ 44,986.81
10% timber sale revenue (statutory requirement)	\$ 319,269.21
5% timber sale revenue (additional paid by Washburn County)	\$ 159,634.61
TOTAL	\$ 523,890.63

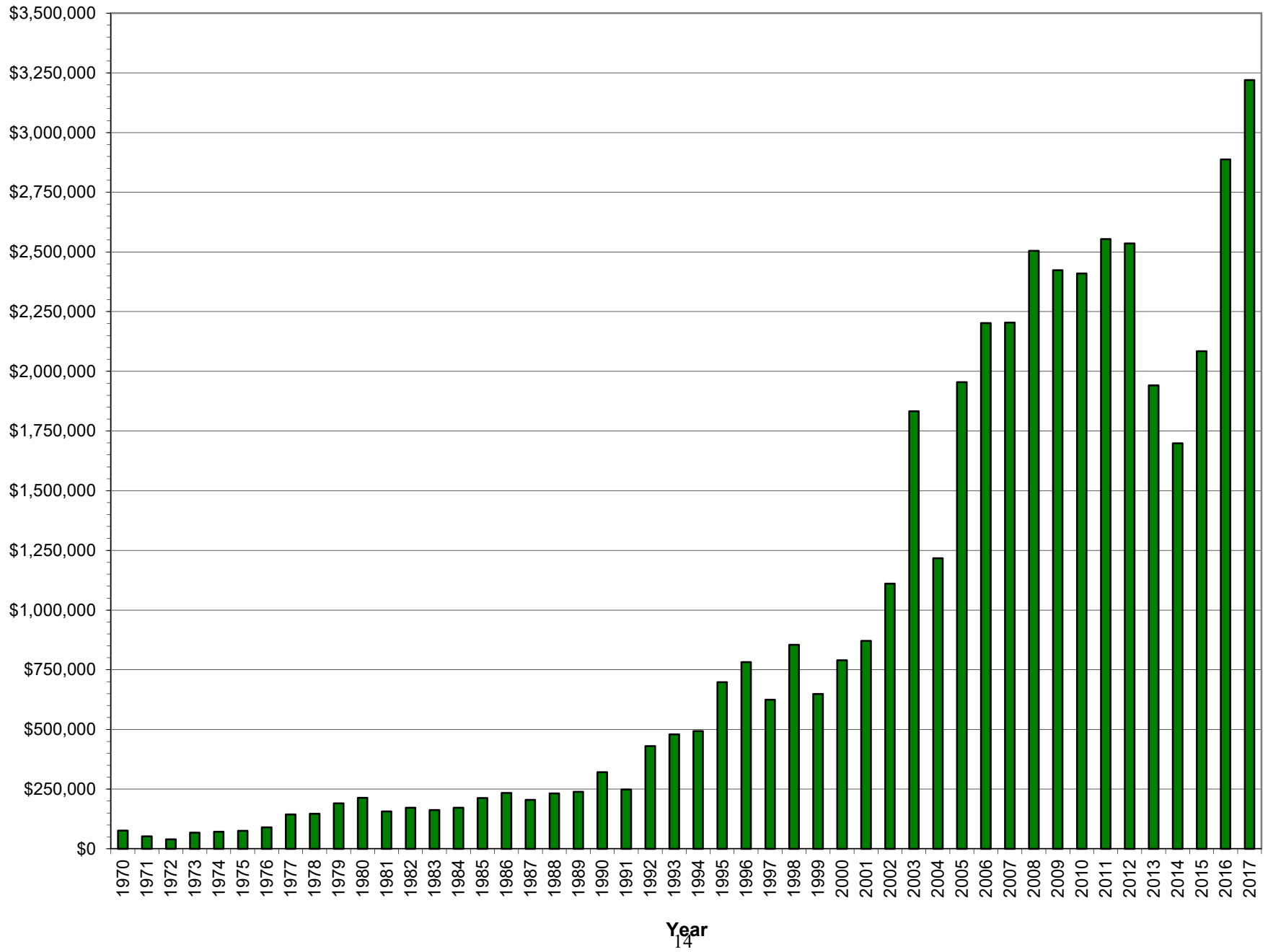
Total monies received by Towns – 2017 (paid in 2018):

Barronett	\$16,031.82	(5,020 ac)	Frog Creek	\$111,914.78	(35,078 ac)
Bass Lake	\$9,909.02	(3,103 ac)	Gull Lake	\$45,130.55	(14,431 ac)
Beaverbrook	\$9,529.73	(2,984 ac)	Madge	\$11,334.24	(3,549 ac)
Birchwood	\$63,462.55	(19,872 ac)	Minong	\$25,669.77	(8,037 ac)
Brooklyn	\$18,407.18	(5,764 ac)	Sarona	\$6,756.87	(2,116 ac)
Casey	\$27,356.48	(8,566 ac)	Springbrook	\$24,983.5	(7,823 ac)
Chicog	\$29,310.89	(9,178 ac)	Stinnett	\$46,087.40	(14,431 ac)
Crystal	\$11,861.03	(3,714 ac)	Stone Lake	\$19,641.32	(6,150 ac)
			Trego	\$1516.69	(475 ac)

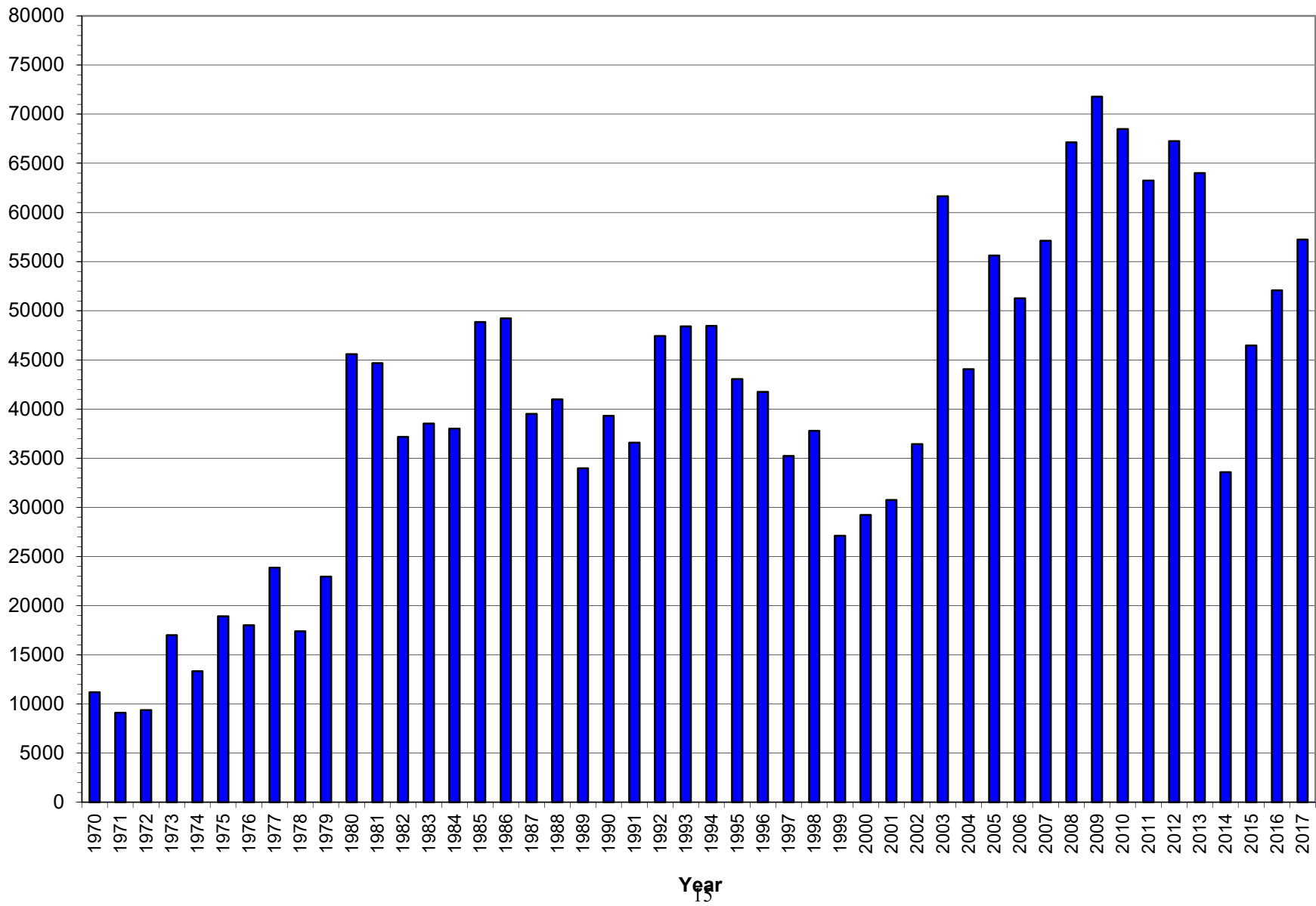
Recreation Program Revenues (Excluding Grant Funded Programs)



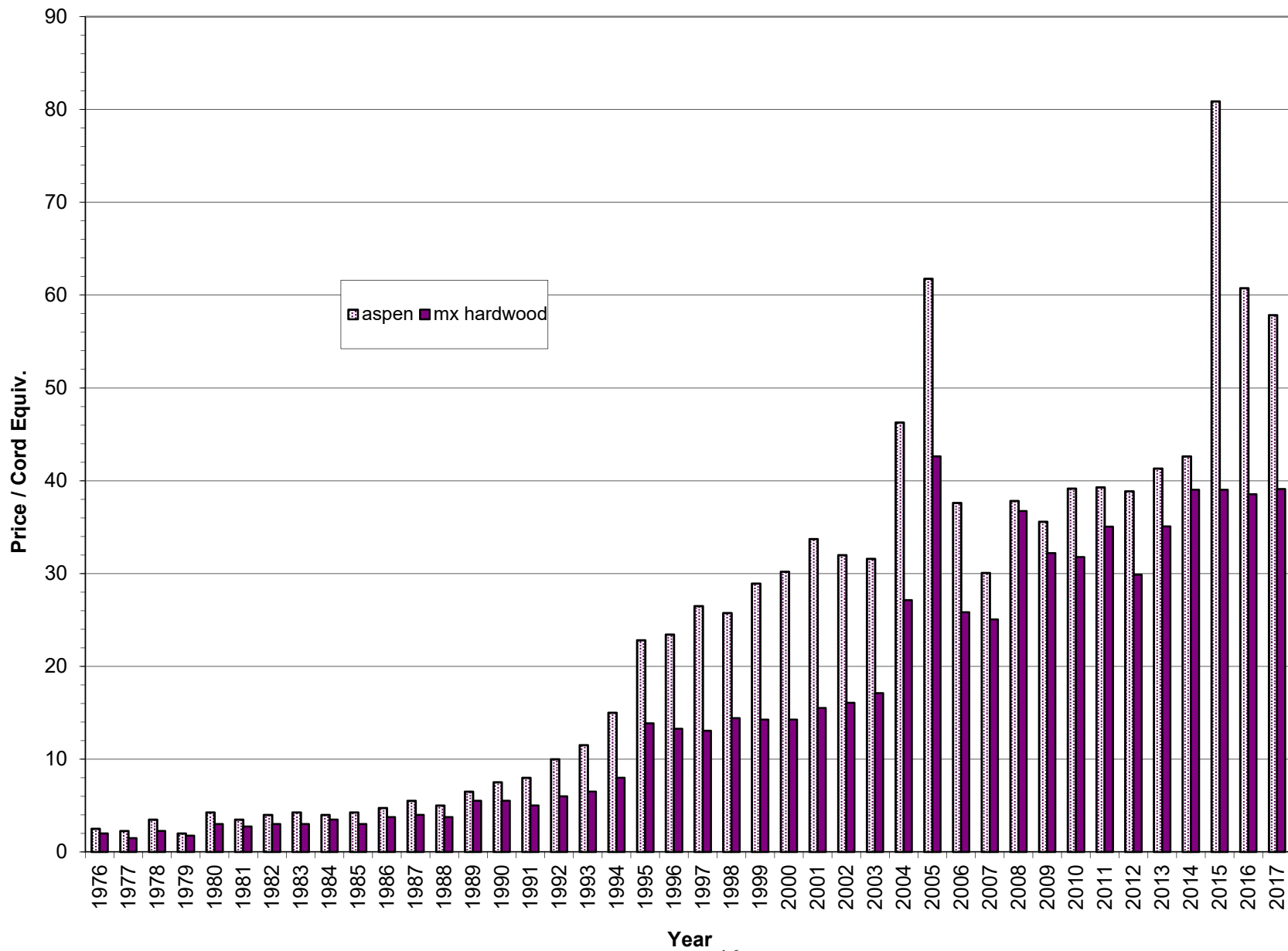
Gross Timber Sale Revenue



Total Cords Removed



Aspen & Mixed Hardwood Average Stumpage Price



Red Pine & Jack Pine Average Stumpage Price

