

# WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

## ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2018

TO: THE HONORABLE WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Following is the proposed Washburn County Forest work plan for the year 2018. 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 2,780 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 2018.\*

Aspen	<u>900</u> acres
Jack Pine	<u>50</u> acres
Red Pine	<u>400</u> acres
Northern Hardwoods	<u>500</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>100</u> acres
White Birch	<u>50</u> acres
Other	<u>50</u> acres

\* 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  | <u>100</u> acres (jack pine, birch, hardwood) |
| 2. Post-harvest | <u>0</u> acres                                |
- B. Site preparation (site preparation for planting):
- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mechanical (Bracke)      | <u>0</u> acres   |
| 2. Mechanical (disk trench) | <u>200</u> acres |
| 3. Chemical                 | <u>200</u> 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     | <u>50</u> acres |
| 2. Chemical | <u>0</u> acres  |
- B. Pre-Commercial Thinning 0 acres
- C. Ironwood Control (mowing) 0 acres

## **IV. COUNTY FOREST ROADS**

- A. Grade entire system as follow up to 2017 FEMA related repairs. Evaluate/repair any remaining trouble spots.
- B. Evaluate need for annual mowing of all roads. Prioritize needs and mow 10 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. 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. Allocate a portion of the newly reinstated recreation offer to monitoring/enforcement of illegal motorized use.

## **VI. LAND ACQUISITION**

- A. Follow direction of County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and as approved by Forestry Committee.
- |   |
|---|
| 1. Continue efforts towards acquisition of 2 parcels currently under negotiations, utilizing Stewardship grant funding sources. |
| 2. Evaluate land trades as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.                                  |
| 3. Evaluate land purchases as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.                               |

## **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. Fire**

1. Improve and maintain fire lanes
2. Continue annual meeting to evaluate forest operations, facilitated by DNR 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
4. Support DNR fire suppression efforts when and where needed. Continue to ensure that staff is current in fire suppression training. Assistance to DNR will be focused primarily on protecting Washburn County Forest resources, with a secondary goal of providing assistance on other lands within the County. Staff resources will be allocated outside of the County only in cases of large project wildfires or in support of suppression on neighboring County Forests.
5. Continue spring ATV closure and investigate means of enforcing ordinance language.

### **B. Oak Wilt**

1. Contract with DNR to conduct monitoring flights at least once during late summer to attempt to detect new oak wilt infestations. Consider multiple flights as needed to provide coverage over all oak resources on the County Forest.
2. Aggressively treat any infestations with “frill/girdle” method using chemical and subsequent removal of infected trees and healthy trees within the buffer zone.
3. Coordinate with the Treasurer’s Office and town boards to develop an oak wilt informational sheet to be distributed with all property tax statements.
4. Continue to assist private landowners, where practical, in treating and removing oak wilt infections that have the potential to impact County Forest

### **C. Emerald Ash Borer**

1. Increase levels of black ash management with a focus on trying to convert primary stand types to alternate swamp hardwood species.
2. Continue to reduce the density of white ash within northern hardwood stands.

### **D. Buckthorn**

1. Continue to seek grant funding for buckthorn control
2. Continue to treat known buckthorn infestations.

### **E. Firewood**

1. Develop further restrictions on outside firewood being brought into campgrounds
2. Develop restrictions on firewood permits during oak wilt transmission risk periods.

## **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 increase levels of prescribed burning with a focus on releasing oak seedlings from competition on oak regeneration management sites.
- C. Continue to modify and finalize northern hardwood management matrix to aid in decisions on prescriptions. Establish even aged regeneration (shelterwood) harvests, in combination with scarification where necessary, to regenerate hardwood on sites with poor quality timber.
- D. Continue to evaluate older red pine plantation growth rates and thinning response. Conduct final harvest on those older plantations where growth does not exceed mortality. Target these areas for site preparation and replanting after harvests are complete.
- E. Recalculate annual allowable harvest projects for northern hardwood and red pine sites to adjust for even aged management and site regeneration.
- F. Analyze aspen stand ages, species composition, growth, size in order to begin harvesting “second entry” stands as part of the annual allowable harvest.
- G. 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.
- E. Integrate new LIDAR data into forestry operations where appropriate.

**XI. 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. Continue to maintain snow trails program using maintenance grant program.
  - 2. Apply for annual maintenance grant funding for un-funded trail segments.
  - 3. Apply for grant funding for any necessary bridge repairs or replacements and other trail improvements. Begin evaluating all bridges within the system with a goal of replacing those bridges without a rate rating or engineer's design.
  - 4. Revisit the Snowmobile Trail 140 relocation project to try to find alternative routes for restoring this trail system. A key landowner on this project elected not to allow trail access after grant funds were awarded.
  - 5. Construct the Spring Creek Bridge utilizing grant funds awarded partially from the Snowmobile Trail Aids program.
- B. Ski Trails
  - 1. Re-open any remaining trail sections that are blocked with wind thrown trees from the 2017 windstorm.
  - 2. Restore/reconstruct trail segments impacted by timber salvage operations. As part of this, begin widening the outside loops to accommodate freestyle (skate) skiing.
  - 3. Continue to groom Nordic and Totogatic ski trails
  - 4. Continue to try to recruit club labor to assist with trail maintenance using labor and equipment reimbursement with ATC annual impact funds.
  - 5. Purchase replacement ski trail groomer.
- 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. Complete any remaining FEMA repairs that are left uncompleted in 2017.
  - 4. The entire trail system needs to be graded as soon as weather permits in early summer of 2018. Staff allocation to flooding repair projects during 2017 forced the department to defer trail maintenance projects.
  - 5. Complete all trail rehabilitation and development projects that were carried forward from the 2016 and 2017 budgets. There is a substantial backlog of grant projects that need to be

completed:

- a. Thayer Road Rehabilitation
  - b. Berry Road Rehabilitation
  - c. Crystal Point Relocation
  - d. Trail 25 Rehabilitation
  - e. Whalen Creek Development
  - f. Wild River Trail Rehabilitation projects 2 and 3
  - g. Casey Loop Development
6. Construct the Spring Creek Bridge utilizing grant funds awarded partially from the Snowmobile Trail Aids program.
  7. In addition to backlogged projects and the Spring Creek Bridge, Washburn County was also awarded grants for the Fenander Road rest area and Hall Road parking area. This projects will be constructed as time permits and if other remaining projects are substantially completed. These two projects may be carried forward to 2019.
  8. Continue to work legislatively to resolve conflicting program goals on trail rehabilitation and development standards that exists between county forest trail managers and the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council and Wisconsin ATV Association.
  9. Consider adopting a moratorium on any new trail development until a more collaborative relationship can be established between trail managers and the ORV Council/WATVA
  10. Postpone any decision on taking over maintenance of the Tuscobia State Trail section in Washburn County until legal issues with the proximity of the trail to Highway 48 (one way night time travel required) until a resolution between DNR and DOT can be reached. This 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 Dugan Run Horse Trail.
3. 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. Continue gravelling and leveling entrances to sites. Continue tree planning program and consider renting a tree spade attachment for the skid steer to move trees from the nursery area.
  - b. Continue the online reservation system
  - c. Allocate time from the newly created Natural Resources Technician position during summer camping season to assist with parks operation and maintenance.
  - d. Maintain and operate facilities.
  - e. Develop more stringent restrictions on imported firewood to help reduce risk of oak wilt and emerald ash borer infestations.
  - f. Contract with an electrician to find a way to split the power load within the campground to prevent overheating of the panels and subsequent outages during periods of high use.
  - g. Replace roofing on park model mobile home, shower building and playhouse.
  - h. Develop a strategy to phase in the Totogatic Park expansion project as a contingency in case partial grant funds are awarded for the project. Re-apply for grant funding in 2018, or apply for remaining funding if partial grants are awarded.
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. Attempt develop some method of vending firewood at the park and also prohibit import of firewood in to the facility by campers.
  - c. 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. Rifle Range
  - 1. Complete range improvements as identified in the federal grant funds secured for the project.
  - 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. Return Noram compact road grader to dealer at the lease expiration ending in late 2017. Execute a lease on a new grader under similar terms.
- 2. Replace a 4 x 4 ½ ton pickup for Assistant Recreation Administrator
- 3. Purchase a 4 x 4 ½ ton pickup for recreation officer.
- 4. Rebuild beaver tail deck on equipment trailer
- 5. Replace box on dump truck
- 6. Purchase new ski trail drag.
- 7. Continue to operate and maintain existing Forestry equipment pool

#### **C. Wildlife Flowages**

- 1. Continue to investigate options for removal and restoration of Black Brook Flowage area. This may require wild rice mitigation work and areas suitable for establishment of rice should be researched.
- 2. Evaluate feasibility of continued existence of Conroy Dam if any engineering requirements are mandated by DNR in 2018.
- 3. Complete any necessary engineering required by DNR for the Davis Flowage Dam
- 4. Assist DNR with the Taylor Lake Flowage removal project where appropriate.

### **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** – Apply for a grant to fund silvicultural trial on herbicide control of sedge on northern hardwood sites. There are numerous hardwood sites where regeneration has been difficult to achieve. One theory is that abundant mats of sedge impedes the ability of sugar maple to seed. Herbicide control is thought to be effective when done in conjunction with regeneration harvests.
- C. County Conservation Aids – Birch Lake Landing:** The Department received a grant of \$14,786 to repair the boat landing on Birch Lake. New concrete pads will be set into the landing to stabilize the launch site and eliminate problems with boat trailers dropping off the back side of the existing launch. This project was originally budgeted for 2017, but other work priorities prevented completion.
- D. Federal Sport Fish & Wildlife Restoration Funds – Minong Rifle Range:** Grant funds were awarded to upgrade the Minong Rifle Range. This project was originally budgeted in 2017, but storm damage repair work load prevented any work from being accomplished on this project. The upgrades are proposed for completion in 2018.

**XV. Staff / Personnel**

- A.** Develop an MOU between the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee and the Law Enforcement Committee that dictates the management of the replacement recreation officer position.
- B.** Assist law enforcement and personnel with position announcement, recruitment, interviews and candidate selection of replacement recreation officer position.
- C.** A new position of natural resources technician was approved by the County Board for 2018. In addition, an employee left one of the forestry technician positions in 2017. This vacancy was filled with a new hire. In 2018, seek approval to transfer the new hire into the natural resources technician position and recruit/hire a replacement forestry technician.
- D.** The summer LTE forester position has been eliminated, as well as one of the two parks groundskeeper positions have been eliminated as part of the new natural resources technician proposal. One groundskeeper and two park caretakers remain in the 2018 budget.

**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.

**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.