

Washburn County Forest 2019 Annual Report



New Forestry Office Construction – 1760 Roundhouse Road, Spooner

Forest Administrator
Mike Peterson

Department Employees
Buck Pettingill
Mark Heil
Duran Bjorklund
Jeremy Erickson
Brandon Shutt
Matt Graham
Barb Hinkfuss

WDNR Liaison Forester
Amy Morales

Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff
Brian Jilek

Forestry Parks and Recreation Committee
Romaine Quinn - Chair
Sandy Johnson – Vice Chair
James Dohm
Hank Graber
Jerry Smith

2019 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 2019.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

The timber sale program generated a gross revenue of \$3,555.106, which is the highest on record. The Department still had a significant backlog of unharvested wood under contract and some of the receipts were from older sales. Harvesting conditions were good throughout the year

Wood markets were generally very good with the exception of softwood (pine). The pine pulp market seemed to decline further and little wood was harvested from contracted pine sales.

The average bid rate on sold timber sales in 2019 dropped slightly from 2018 on nearly all species. This would appear to indicate a slight softening in market conditions although the decline was small. Contractors continue to bid good prices on red and jack pine despite complaints about poor or even non-existent markets. Sawlog rates remained stable.

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 accelerated harvests in aspen stands that were done when the LP plant moved into Hayward. In order to fully "regulate" aspen age classes, we began cutting the second harvests on younger age classes.

The Beaverbrook, Stone Lake and Birchwood areas were hit with a wind event but there was not enough widespread damage to warrant any salvage harvests.

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 2019, \$76,830 were awarded for summer ATV; \$13,980 for winter ATV; and \$1,913 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 worked on and completed 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. These grants, and progress towards completion at the end of 2019, are itemized below;

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Grant Award</u>	<u>Percentage Complete in 2019</u>
Thayer Road	Rehabilitation	\$31,000	100%
Berry Road	Rehabilitation	\$40,500	100%
Crystal Point	Relocation	\$26,000	100%
Trail 25	Rehabilitation	\$75,360	100%
Whalen	Development	\$111,840	100%
Wild River 2	Rehabilitation	\$68,500	100%
Wild River 3	Rehabilitation	\$68,500	20%
Casey Loop	Development	\$204,730	100%
Spring Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$40,552	100%
FEMA ATV Share	Rehabilitation	\$16,193	100%
Stony Brook Parking	Development	\$9,100	100%
Fenander Rest Stop	Development	\$38,790	0%
Hay Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$61,268	0%

Washburn County applied for a grant to replace the decking on Hay Creek Bridge, which is deteriorating substantially. The total bridge deck replacement cost estimate was \$45,951. Federal Recreation Trail Program funds were awarded for 50% of the project costs while the ATV and Snowmobile programs split the remaining 50% equally.

We applied for annual maintenance funding for summer ATV, winter ATV or hybrid trails, but did not seek funding for any other grants. We made a concerted effort to focus on closing out older grants before seeking additional rehabilitation or development

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

Snowmobile trails north of Highway 70 and west of Highway 53 opened on January 5, 2019. The remaining trails opened on January 8. Trail conditions were good to excellent through the winter and trails closed on March 20, 2019. We were able to open trails for the 2019/2020 season on December 13, 2019 and they remained open for the rest of the calendar year.

Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department. In 2019, maintenance was awarded at a rate of \$300/mile for snowmobile trail maintenance. \$76,530 was awarded and used to maintain trails. The County also received \$46,524.70 in supplemental maintenance grant funds to help cover grooming and other costs exceeding the \$300/mile

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 cancelled the grant and returned funding to the State.

The County also applied for and received a snowmobile bridge grant to assist with re-decking costs for the Hay Creek Bridge.

Campgrounds

Totogatic Park showed a significant increase in camping and use in 2019. Revenues from Totogatic were approximately \$191,346. 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 increase in revenue from prior year.

2019 was the 7th 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 in 2016. The County set aside the 50% matching funds necessary for an Aid for Development of Local Parks (ADLP) Grant. A grant in the amount of \$811,490 was submitted and a partial grant of \$330,208 was awarded in early 2018. A second application for the remaining funds was submitted mid-year 2018 and verbal confirmation of grant award in the amount of \$481,282 was received in late fall. Final grant awards were issued in early 2019 and the Committee began design and planning for bid openings in 2020.

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 \$206,370.

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.

The Nordic Ski Trail was closed in 2018 due to wind damage and subsequent salvage sales. The trail re-opened in 2019 and conditions were good here and at Totogatic.

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. Of the 7 projects, only the ATV trail repair project remained incomplete. Work was completed by mid-fall of 2018.

Final reimbursement for the remaining ATV trail project was received in 2019 and the FEMA projects were officially closed.

FACILITIES/ EQUIPMENT/ACQUISITIONS

The Department entered the 2nd year of a 4-year lease on a Noram Compact Road Grader. This is the second lease program on this for this type of machine. 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.

Forestry purchased a replacement ½ ton 4 x 4 pickup for the Natural Resources Technician. We also purchased a new 2018 snowmobile for forestry purposes.

The County began planning for a new government center, with initial plans to incorporate the Forestry offices into a new building in Shell Lake. The Forestry Committee submitted a proposal to construct a new office building at our shop site in Spooner as an alternative. This was accepted by Public Property and we contracted with Ayres and Associates to design a building in 2018. Bids were opened and construction complete for our new office building in 2019. Staff occupied the new building in November.

PERSONNEL

Due to increasing workloads in both the recreation and forestry program, we submitted a request for a Natural Resources Technician position. We allocated 50% of the position to parks and recreation during the summer months and to timber sale establishment during the remainder of the year. Brandon Shutt was transferred into this position in early 2018. This was the first full year with the new position and things went smoothly.

Will Fisher transferred out of the Recreation Officer position and was replaced by Brian Jilek.

OTHER

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 2019

I. Reforestation

A.	Acres newly planted:	99	acres
B.	Acres replanted:	0	acres
C.	Acres seeded (jack pine):	78	acres
D.	Jack pine regeneration – scarified	0	acres
E.	Oak regeneration - scarified	122	acres
F.	White birch regeneration – scarified	0	acres
G.	Swamp conifer mowing	0	acres
H.	Northern hardwood regeneration – mowing	0	acres
I.	Northern hardwood regeneration – scarified	0	acres
J.	Site Prep (mechanical)	0	acres
K.	Site Prep (chemical)	0	acres
L.	Prescribed burning (oak regeneration)	0	acres
M.	Other scarification (red pine/white pine)	12	acres

II. Timber stand improvement

A.	Red pine release (herbicide):	0	acres
B.	Pine release (prison crew):	23	acres
C.	Invasive – Buckthorn herbicide treatment	0	acres
D.	Oak wilt control	0	acres

III. Timber Sale Statistics

A.	Timber value contracted	\$2,523,153 (\$2,794,687 in 2018)
B.	Acres established:	2,597 acres (3,033 acres in 2018)
C.	Acres sold (goal of 3400 acres):	2,560 acres (2,724 acres in 2018)
D.	Acres closed out:	3,249 acres (1,246 acres in 2018)
E.	Volumes removed:	total cord equivalent = 58,604 (59,571 in 2018)
1.	Pulpwood total:	53,616
a.	Aspen pulpwood	14,679 cords
b.	Mixed hardwood pulpwood	29,785 cords
c.	Pine pulpwood	8,465 cords
d.	Spruce/fir pulpwood	687 cords
2.	Sawtimber total:	2,267 mbf (thousand board feet)

VI Recreation Facilities

A.	Totogatic Park	
1.	Total Gross Revenue - \$191,347	(\$168,339 in 2018)
2.	Camping Registrations - \$165,657	(\$141,873 in 2018)
3.	Shower revenue from bathhouse - \$1,887	(\$2,051 in 2018)
4.	Firewood revenue – \$8,645	(\$8,372 in 2018)
5.	Ice, Day Use, Dump Station, etc. - \$2,350	(\$2,615 in 2018)
6.	Reservation system fees - \$12,808	(\$11,224 in 2018)
B.	Sawmill Park Revenue - \$8,120	(\$7,630 in 2018)
C.	Harmon / Dugan Equestrian Trails / Other	
1.	Horse Trail/Camping Revenue – \$2,695	(\$2,338 in 2018)
2.	Dispersed Camping Permits - \$414	(\$180 in 2018)
3.	Trail Donations - \$504	(\$42 in 2018)
D.	Leisure Lake Youth Camp	
1.	Revenue - \$5,925	(\$5,188 in 2018)
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 2019

I. RECEIPT AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY OF FORESTRY AND PARKS ACCOUNTS

A. Timber revenues received by County:

Gross timber sale receipts	\$3,538,677.40
Damages, interest, other misc. income	\$ 16,428.46
Gathering permits (firewood, boughs, Christmas trees)	\$ 591.49
<u>TOTAL FOREST PRODUCTS REVENUE - \$3,555,697.35</u>	

Recreation revenues received by County:

Totogatic Park	\$ 191,346.73
Sawmill Park	\$ 8,120.00
Leisure Lake	\$ 5,925.00
Misc. Recreation Revenue	\$ 3,609.00
<u>TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAM REVENUE - \$ 209,000.73</u>	

Misc. revenues received by County

Forestry Aid Loan from State	\$ 74,617.18
Sustainable Forestry Grant	\$ 0.00
ATV/Snowmobile Law Enforcement Grants	\$ 8,483.05
County Forest Administrator Grant (inc. WCFA dues reimb.)	\$ 65,576.01
Private Grants	\$.00
Equipment Sales	\$.00
Forestry Building Loan	\$ 500,000.00
Scrap	\$ 470.05
<u>TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE - \$ 649,146.30</u>	

Total Revenues

\$4,418,617.52

B. Expenditures by County:

Firelanes (53410)	\$ 1,517.00
Forestry Aid fund (56930)	\$ 68,872.15
County Forest Land Development (56100)	\$679,658.12
10% statutory timber sale revenue to towns	\$343,515.37
5% additional timber sale revenue allocated by County	\$171,505.43
Forestry Aid Loan Repayment	\$ 74,617.18
Parks Expenditures (55200)	\$234,533.24*
Office Building Construction (56101)	\$517,781.60
<u>TOTAL NON-GRANT EXPENDITURES - \$ 2,092,000.09</u>	

**Parks Account funded \$50,000 to Shell Lake ATV Campground, intended to come from fund balance*

C. Net Revenue to County

\$2,326,617.43*

** May not reflect actual audit figure due to adjustments.*

II. Other Segregated Accounts:

	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
A. <u>Fish and Game Projects - 56960</u>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
B. <u>Habitat Development - 56961</u>	\$ 7,023.95	\$ 13,202.27
C. <u>Snow Trails - 55440</u>	\$ 111,159.98	\$ 102,116.50
D. <u>Land Acquisition - 56110</u>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
E. <u>County Forest Roads - 56125</u>	\$ 29,903.94	\$ 9,422.80
F. <u>ATV Trails - 55310</u>	\$ 167,401.74	\$ 330,186.43

III. Fund Balances on non-lapsing accounts as of 12/31/19 **subject to final reconciliation and audit*

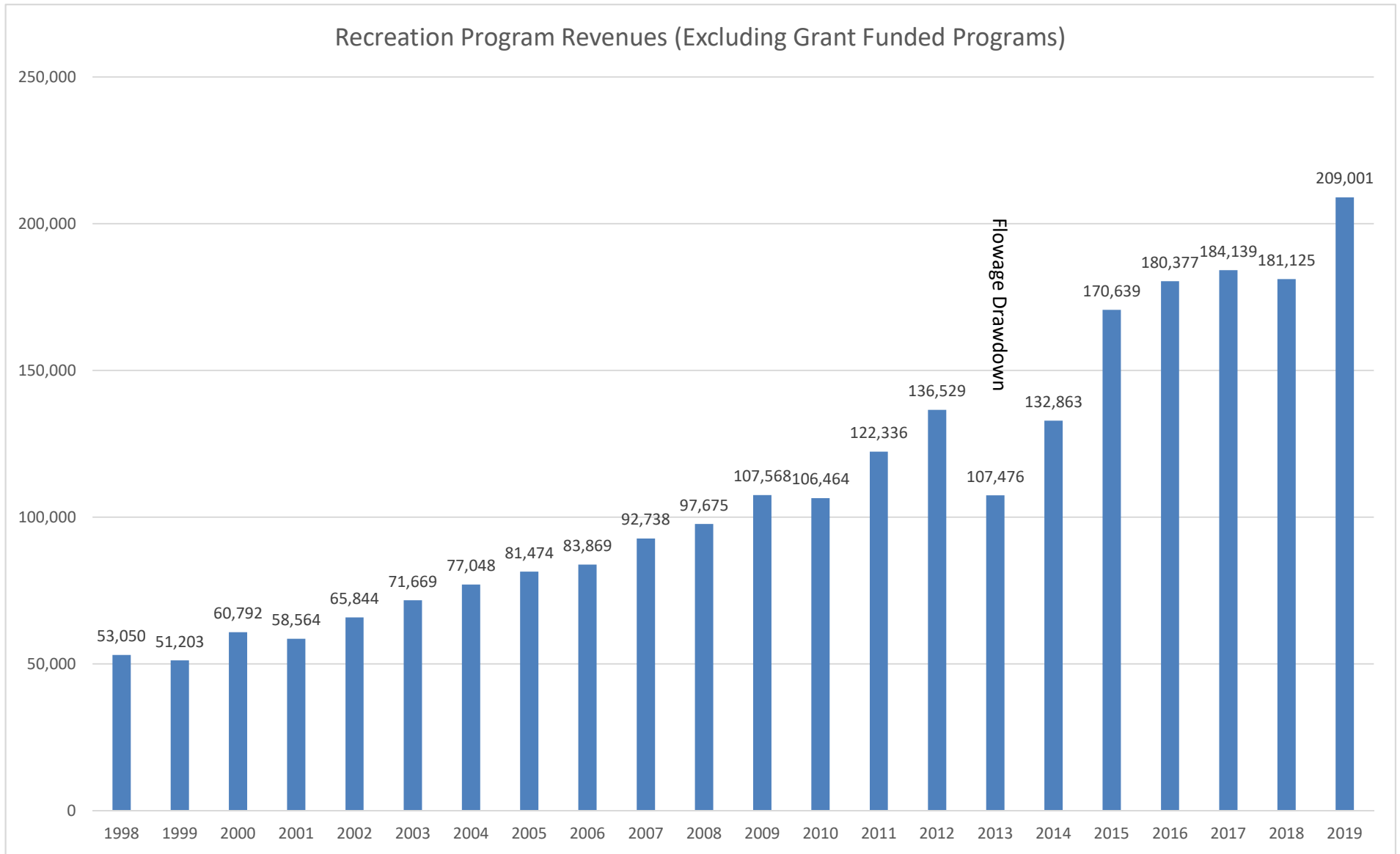
A. Forestry Aid (State loan funds)	\$ 15,108
B. Wildlife Habitat (State grant funds)	\$ 19,439
C. County Forest Roads (State grant fund)	\$ 95,940
D. Land Acquisition	\$ 9,186

IV. Money received by Towns:

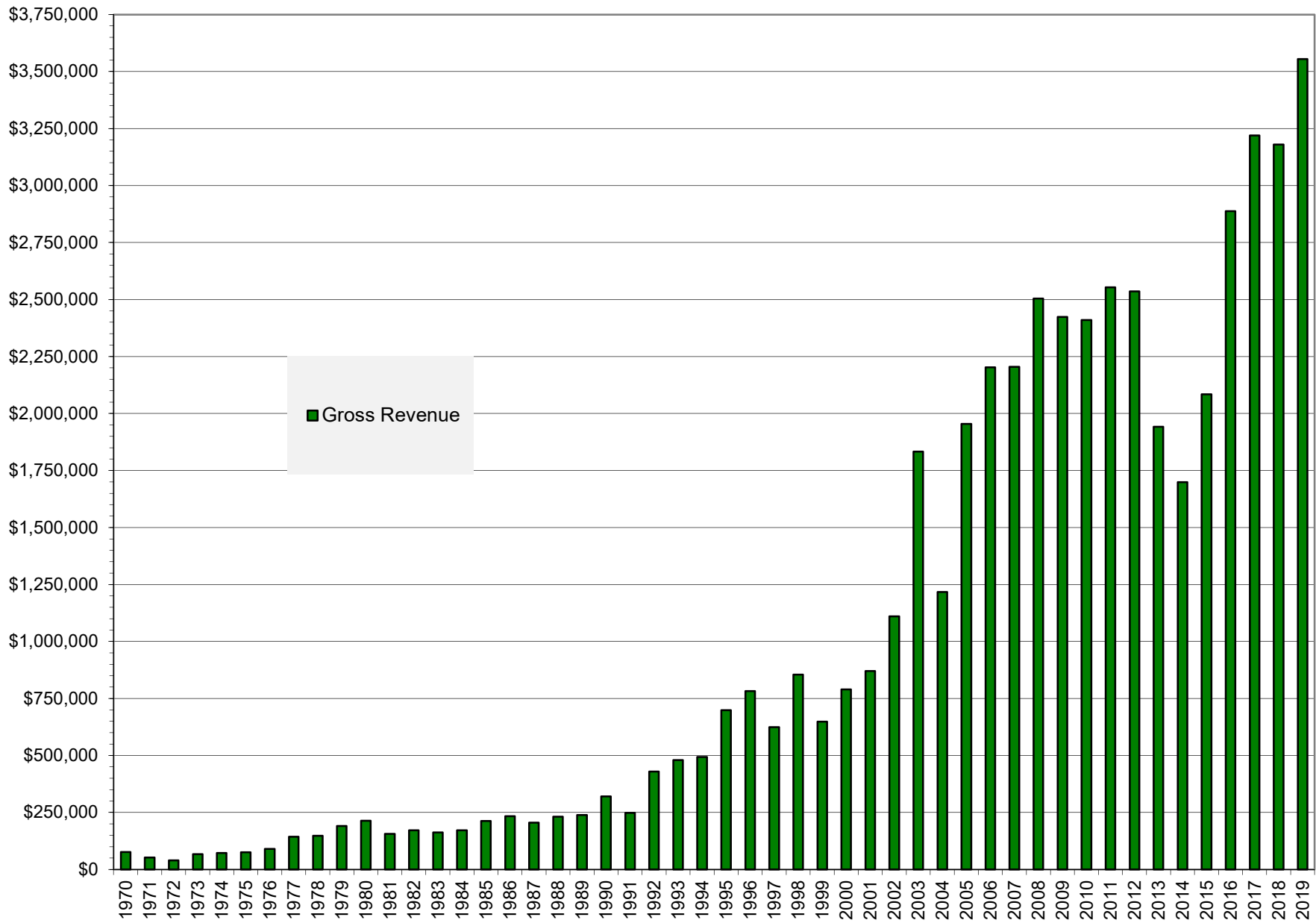
State payment (\$.30/acre on 150,196.03 acres)	\$ 45,058.81
10% timber sale revenue (statutory requirement)	\$ 343,515.37
5% timber sale revenue (additional paid by Washburn County)	\$ 171,505.43
TOTAL	\$ 560,079.61

Total monies received by Towns – 2019 (paid in 2020):

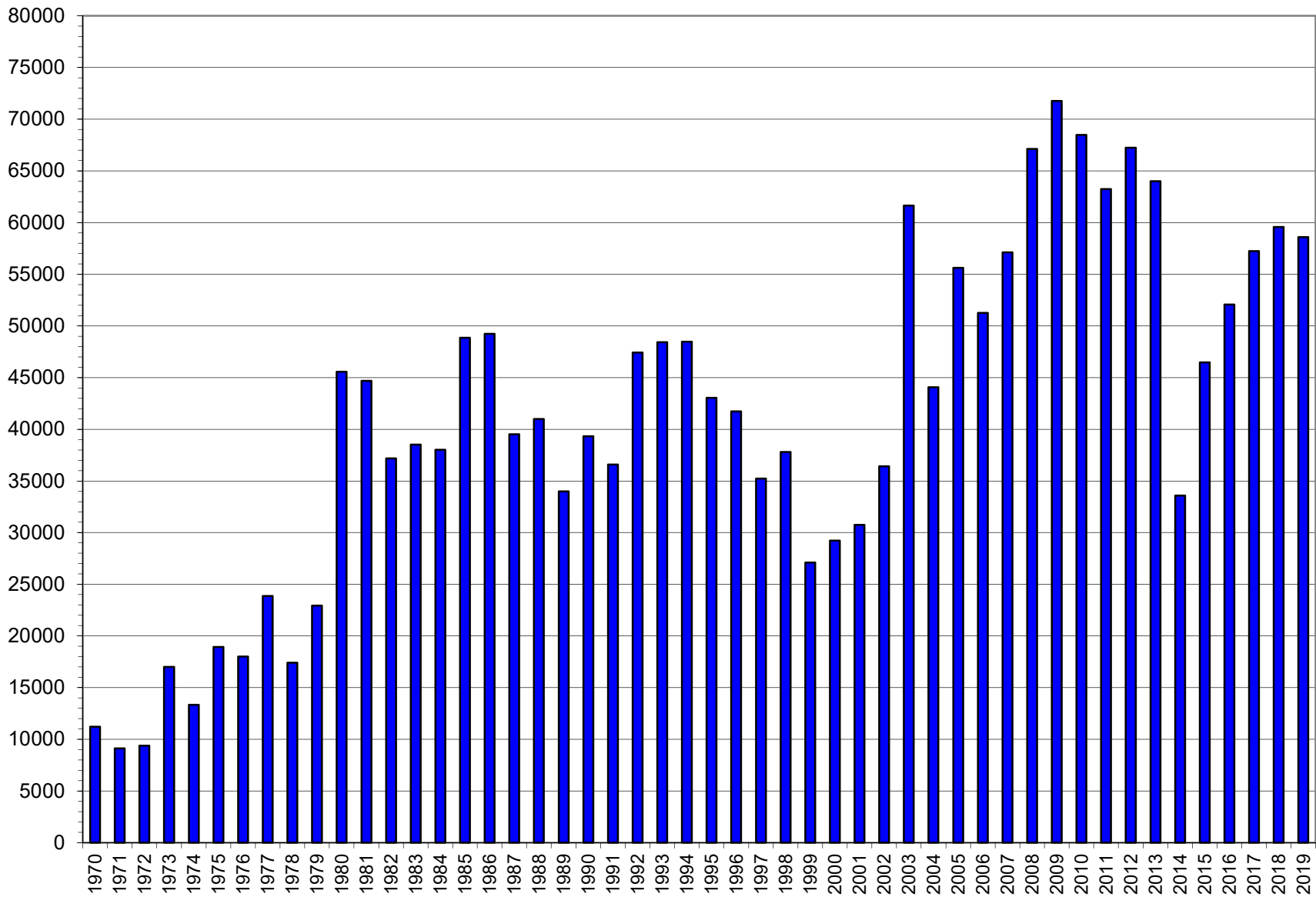
Barronett	\$17,213.54	(5,020 ac)	Frog Creek	\$120,985.60	(35,283 ac)
Bass Lake	\$10,639.30	(3,103 ac)	Gull Lake	\$48,456.76	(14,431 ac)
Beaverbrook	\$10,231.92	(2,984 ac)	Madge	\$12,169.43	(3,549 ac)
Birchwood	\$69,139.83	(19,872 ac)	Minong	\$27,561.85	(8,038 ac)
Brooklyn	\$19,763.92	(5,764 ac)	Sarona	\$7,254.58	(2,116 ac)
Casey	\$29,372.15	(8,566 ac)	Springbrook	\$26,824.34	(7,823 ac)
Chicog	\$31,471.38	(9,178 ac)	Stinnett	\$49,483.71	(14,431 ac)
Crystal	\$12,735.43	(3,714 ac)	Stone Lake	\$21,088.56	(6,150 ac)
			Trego	\$1,628.50	(475 ac)



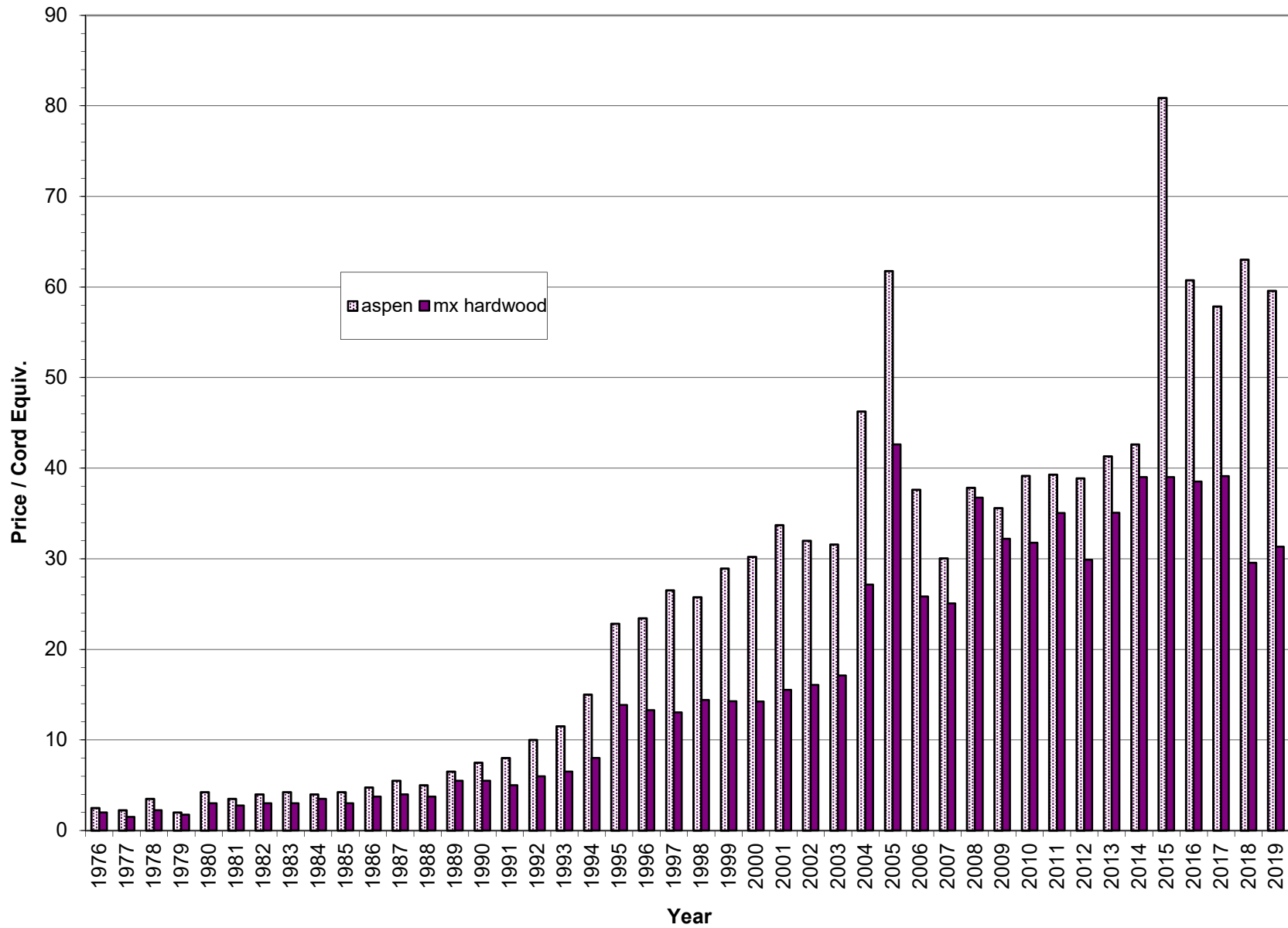
Gross Timber Sale Revenue



Total Cords Removed



Aspen & Mixed Hardwood Average Stumpage Price



Red Pine & Jack Pine Average Stumpage Price

