

Washburn County Forest 2021 Annual Report



Forest Administrator

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Amy Morales

Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff

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Forestry Parks and Recreation Committee

Sandy Johnson - Chair
Hank Graber – Vice Chair
Jerry Smith
Mark Radzak
Paul Johnson

2021 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 2021.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

The timber sale program generated \$2,380,133 which was a much higher revenue than expected given the shutdown of the Verso paper mill in 2020. Hardwood and pine markets continued to be hit hard by the mill closure. Aspen markets were good and the Forestry Department switched to harvesting more aspen and more sawlog timber sales in order to provide for viable sales to be offered to contractors.

We began to see a significant backlog in the amount of timber sale contracts harvested, especially given the drastic drop in delivered pricing for pulpwood products. The Committee began offering contract extensions with no penalty in hopes that markets would rebound enough allowing these older sales to be harvested.

Aspen bid rates increased slightly and hardwood rates dropped significantly for the second consecutive year. Pine bid rates dropped significantly as well

The Committee and County Board support an investment into a mill cooperative aimed at purchasing and restoring operations of the Verso paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids. \$100,000 in ARPA funds were dedicated but the cooperative project did not come to fruition and the funds were not invested.

RECREATION

The increased use of our recreational trails and facilities continued through and after the pandemic. Trails and facilities were heavily used throughout 2021. Staff continue to make significant efforts in maintaining these facilities to provide for public use.

ATV

Traffic on the Washburn County ATV Trail continues to be very heavy, likely a result of people picking up the sport during Covid.

We continue to manage the system with 116.4 miles of summer ATV/UTV trails and 18.1 miles of hybrid (Troute) trails, and 146.3 miles of winter ATV 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). Hybrid trails are County Forest Roads designated as connecting routes and are funded at a rate of approximately \$264 per mile (annually funded at \$600 less the pro-rated per mile gas tax rate collected). These funds are critical to maintain our trail systems.

In 2021, \$95,120 were awarded for summer ATV; \$19,230 for winter ATV; and \$4,778 for hybrid (TROUTE) trails. A majority of the \$119,128 in total maintenance program funding was distributed to local ATV clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

In addition to annual maintenance funding, there were numerous outstanding grants outstanding that were not completed, primarily due to other work needs associated with Covid. These grants, and progress towards completion at the end of 2021, are itemized below;

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Grant Award</u>	<u>Percentage Complete in 2021</u>
Fenander Rest Stop	Development	\$38,790	0%
Hay Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$61,268	0%*
Wild River Trail	Relocation	\$63,115	40%
Tranus Lake	Rehabilitation	\$166,430	80%
Bypass Gates	Rehabilitation	\$24,689	0%

*The Hay Creek Bridge deck is a complicated project. There are 3 inch thick dimensional treated pine cross members beneath the decking that are integral to the structure's stability. It has been difficult to locate replacement material.

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

Most snowmobile trails were open as of January 1, 2021 and all trails were open by January 4. Trails were closed on March 8. Trail conditions were excellent through the 21 season. Trails open on December 31 for the 21/22 riding season.

Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department. In 2021, maintenance was awarded at a rate of \$300/mile for snowmobile trail maintenance. \$72,990 was awarded and used to maintain trails. Snowmobile trail maintenance costs exceeded contract values and supplement funds of \$32,884.32 were awarded by the State of Wisconsin for overages.

Campgrounds

Campground were again very busy throughout the year. Totogatic Park, including the expansion area was fully open for use and in high demand. Washburn County, again, saw a record recreation program revenue.

Revenues from Totogatic were approximately \$238,665, which is about \$8,500 than in 2020. The campground was full nearly the entire summer, although we do see some vacancies in the new loop. Sawmill Campground revenues were \$10,156, which is about the same a prior year.

2021 was the 9th 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 Committee created policy in late 2021 to make all campsites at Totogatic reservable, effective for the 2022 camping season.

The Totogatic Park expansion project was substantially completed in 2021 and camping was opened during mid-summer. The only remaining component was the maintenance building, which will be bid out in 2022

The Parks program, excluding grant funded systems, took in a total revenue of \$259,823 (\$253,284 in 2020).

Other trails and facilities

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. Club members began grooming the single track trails for winter fat tire bike use late in 2015.

Both ski trails had good snow conditions from January 1 through late February and no grooming conducted late in the year.

A complaint was made by a private citizen to DATCP about the status of the Leisure Lake Youth Camp. DATCP staff consulted with our Department about licensing needs and the Committee elected to close the facility until remodeling could be completed and a proper license secured.

FACILITIES/ EQUIPMENT/ACQUISITIONS

The Department purchased a replacement ½ ton 4 x 4 pickup and a new equipment trailer. A replacement zero-turn mower was purchased for the parks systems.

PERSONNEL

The Committee approved a restructuring proposal for recreation staff. Under the prior organizational plan, the Assistant Recreation Administrator was residing at Totogatic Park during the summer months. This was resulting in excessive hours worked as well as the position being unavailable for other recreational duties. In addition, the Department's communication between staff suffered because of it.

A position of Totogatic Campground Manager was created and approved. This position was designed as a limited term (summer) professional position. It was intended to manage the park as well as other seasonal staff. This allows the Assistant Recreation Manager to run the larger program instead of one Park. The new staff person will be hired in 2022.

CARBON MARKETS

In 2021, Washburn County staff began investigating the feasibility of selling portions of stored carbon on the forest to carbon credit marketing firms. A private consultant was contracted to help guide the process of investigating sale and after hundreds of hours of research and deliberation. The markets appear viable and a good fit for our management. More work and a final decision will likely occur in 2022.

OTHER

The 2021-2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan was completed by staff, reviewed by Committee and approved by County Board late in 2021. This effort began in 2019 with a pause during the worst of the pandemic. Efforts were halted mid-way through drafting and approval due to the difficulty accepting public input during Covid. This Plan is the operating "manual" for the Forestry Department and County Forest lands.

Washburn County Forestry continues forest certification under both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) certification programs. The FSC program is currently undergoing draft revisions and Washburn County will need to analyze the potential impacts of additional requirements and evaluate the benefit of continued FSC certification.

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 2021

I. Reforestation

A.	Acres newly planted:	215	acres
B.	Acres replanted:	0	acres
C.	Acres seeded (jack pine):	0	acres
D.	Jack pine regeneration – scarified	0	acres
E.	Oak regeneration - scarified	0	acres
F.	White birch regeneration – scarified	5	acres
G.	Swamp conifer mowing	0	acres
H.	Northern hardwood regeneration – mowing	160	acres
I.	Northern hardwood regeneration – scarified	11	acres
J.	Site Prep (mechanical)	2	acres
K.	Site Prep (chemical)	0	acres
L.	Prescribed burning (oak regeneration)	0	acres

II. Timber stand improvement

A.	Red pine release (herbicide):	0	acres
B.	Pine release (prison crew):	0	acres
C.	Invasive – Buckthorn herbicide treatment	0	acres
D.	Oak wilt control	5	acres

III. Timber Sale Statistics

A.	Timber value contracted	\$2,464,747 (\$2,994,684 in 2020)
B.	Acres established:	3,004 acres (2,585 acres in 2020)
C.	Acres sold:	2,954 acres (2,653 acres in 2020)
D.	Acres closed out:	2,975 acres (2,196 acres in 2020)
E.	Volumes removed:	total cord equivalent = 50,215 (46,304 in 2020)
1.	Pulpwood total:	44,996
a.	Aspen pulpwood	13,085 cords
b.	Mixed hardwood pulpwood	22,762 cords
c.	Pine pulpwood	8,332 cords
d.	Spruce/fir pulpwood	817 cords
2.	Sawtimber total:	2,319 mbf (thousand board feet)

VI. Recreation Facilities

A.	Totogatic Park	
1.	Total Gross Revenue - \$258,222	(\$230,991 in 2020)
2.	Camping Registrations - \$220,913	(\$198,734 in 2020)
3.	Shower revenue from bathhouse - \$2,470	(\$1,565 in 2020)
4.	Firewood revenue – \$10,160	(\$10,540 in 2020)
5.	Ice, Day Use, Dump Station, etc. - \$5,122	(\$2,409 in 2020)
6.	Reservation system fees - \$19,557	(\$17,352 in 2020)
B.	Sawmill Park Revenue - \$10,156	(\$11,445 in 2020)
C.	Harmon / Dugan Equestrian Trails / Other	
1.	Horse Trail/Camping Revenue – \$3,723	(\$3,754 in 2020)
2.	Trail Donations - \$1,444	(\$1,029 in 2020)
D.	Leisure Lake Youth Camp - \$5,475	(\$5,725 in 2020)

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST: ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOUNTS 2021

I. RECEIPT AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY OF FORESTRY AND PARKS ACCOUNTS

<u>A. Timber revenues received by County:</u>		
Gross timber sale receipts		\$2,380,133.15
Damages, interest, other misc. income		\$ 23,517.80
Gathering permits (firewood, boughs, Christmas trees)		\$ 934.54
<u>TOTAL FOREST PRODUCTS REVENUE - \$2,404,585.49</u>		
 <u>Recreation revenues received by County:</u>		
Totogatic Park	\$	238,665.01
Sawmill Park	\$	10,156.49
Leisure Lake	\$	5,475.00
Misc. Recreation Revenue	\$	5,526.90
<u>TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAM REVENUE - \$ 259,823.40</u>		
 <u>Misc. revenues received by County</u>		
Forestry Aid Loan from State	\$	74,737.18
Sustainable Forestry Grant	\$	0.00
ATV/Snowmobile Law Enforcement Grants	\$	25,422.84
County Forest Administrator Grant (inc. WCFA dues reimb.)	\$	64,616.15
Private Grants	\$.00
Equipment Sales	\$.00
Misc.	\$.00
<u>TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE - \$ 164,776.17</u>		
 Total Revenues		 \$2,829,185.06
 <u>B. Expenditures by County:</u>		
Firelanes (53410)	\$	2,156.65
Forestry Aid fund (56930)	\$	90,803.39
County Forest Land Development (56100)		\$737,198.40
Building Loan (56105)	\$	56,659.87
15% statutory timber sale revenue to towns		\$405,604.53
Forestry Aid Loan Repayment	\$	74,737.18
Parks Expenditures (55200)		\$189,926.50
<u>TOTAL NON-GRANT EXPENDITURES - \$ 1,557,086.52</u>		
 <u>C. Net Revenue to County</u>		 \$1,272,098.54
<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>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
B. <u>Habitat Development - 56961</u>	\$ 7,015.43	\$ 290.58
C. <u>Snow Trails - 55440</u>	\$ 73,004.28	\$ 71,6564.45
D. <u>Land Acquisition - 56110</u>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
E. <u>County Forest Roads - 56125</u>	\$ 33,623.59	\$ 28,6936.94
F. <u>ATV Trails - 55310</u>	\$ 315,054.10	\$ 292,022.80

III. Fund Balances on non-lapsing accounts as of 12/31/21 **subject to final reconciliation and audit*

A. Forestry Aid (State loan funds)	\$ 17,604
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B. Wildlife Habitat (State grant funds)	\$ 6,354
C. County Forest Roads (State grant fund)	\$114,825
D. Land Acquisition	\$ 6,159

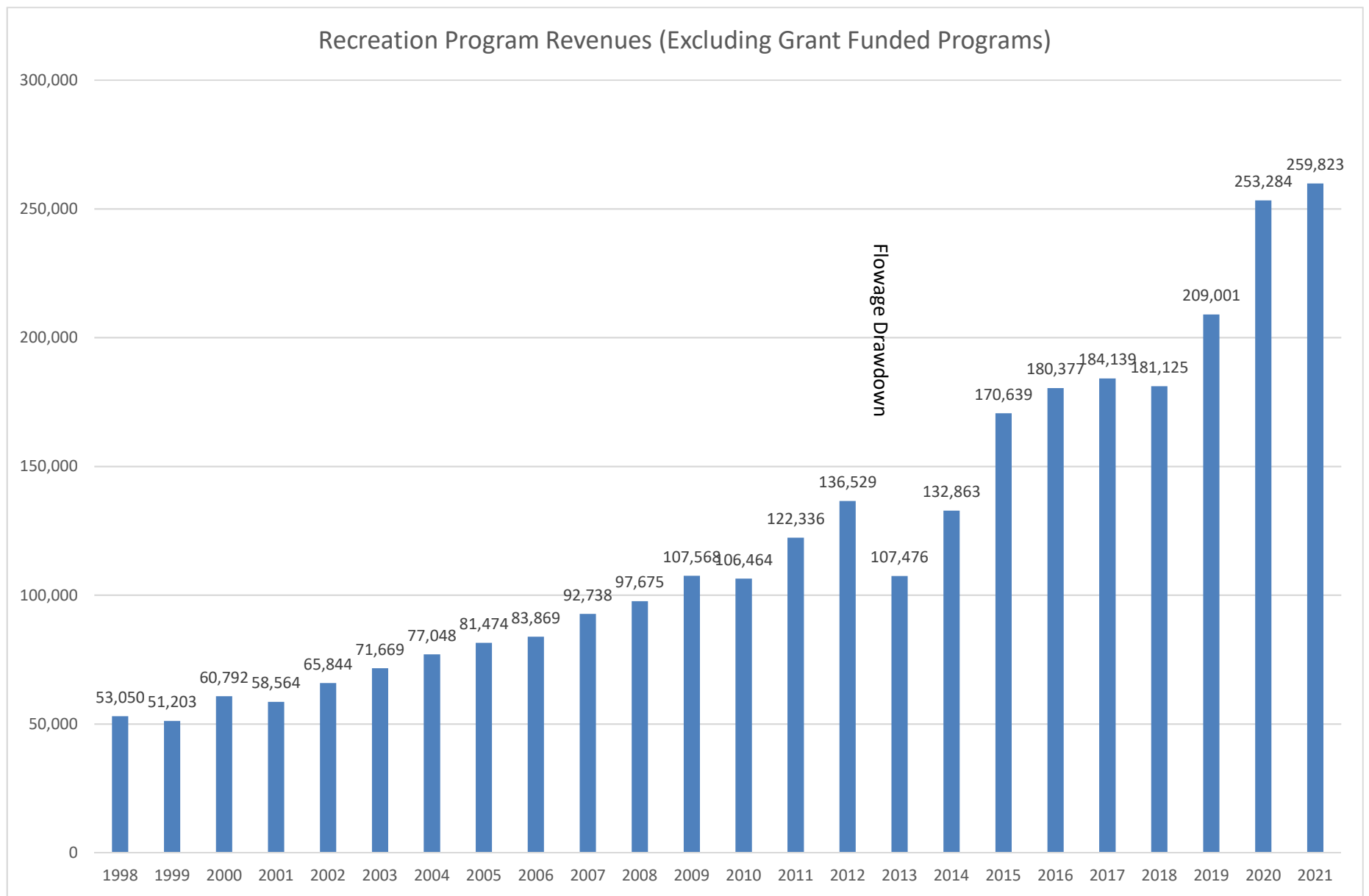
IV.

Money received by Towns:

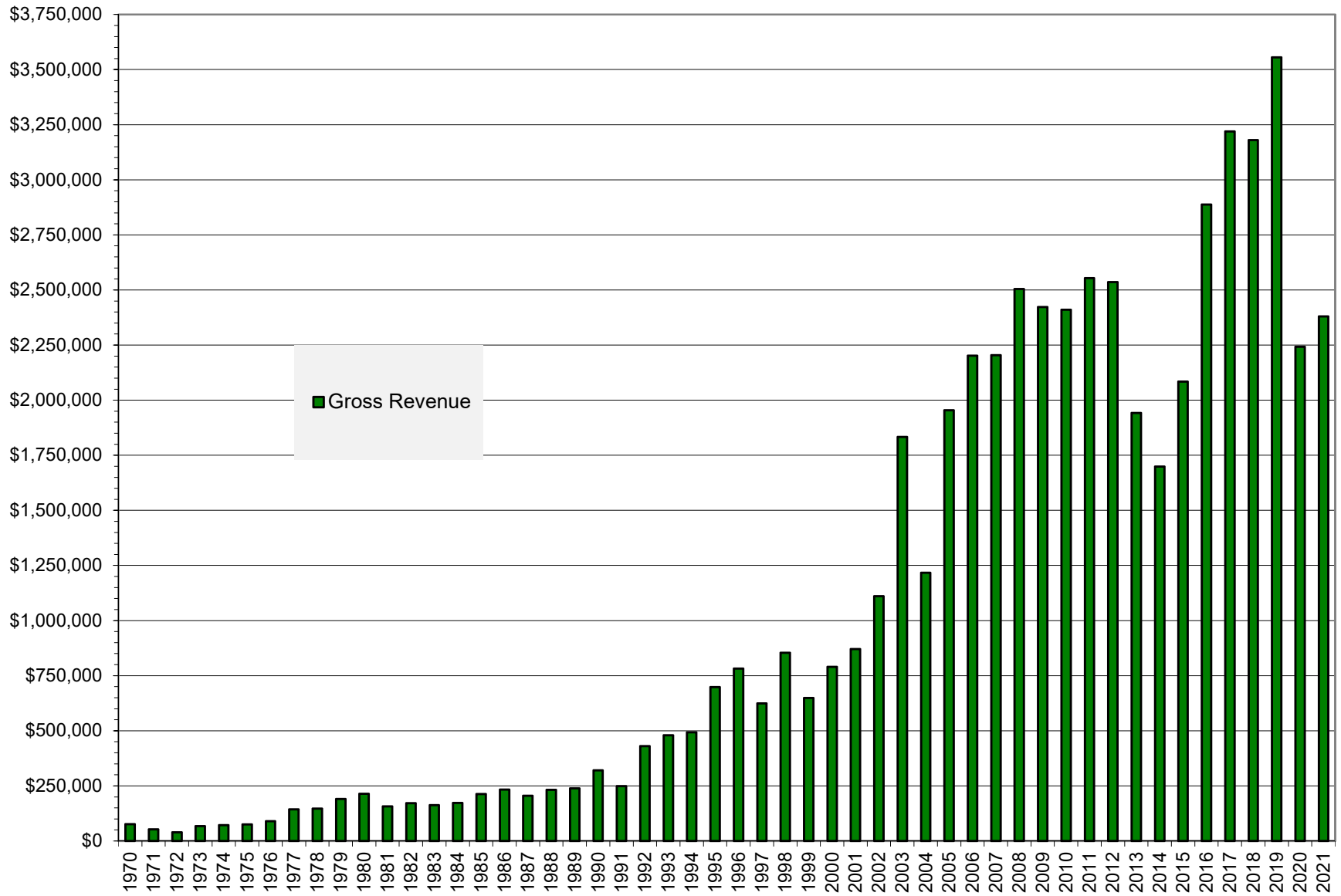
State payment (\$.30/acre on 150,196.03 acres)	\$ 45,058.81
10% timber sale revenue (statutory requirement)	\$ 270,403.02
5% timber sale revenue (additional paid by Washburn County)	\$ 135,201.51
TOTAL	\$ 450,663.30

Total monies received by Towns – 2021 (paid in 2022):

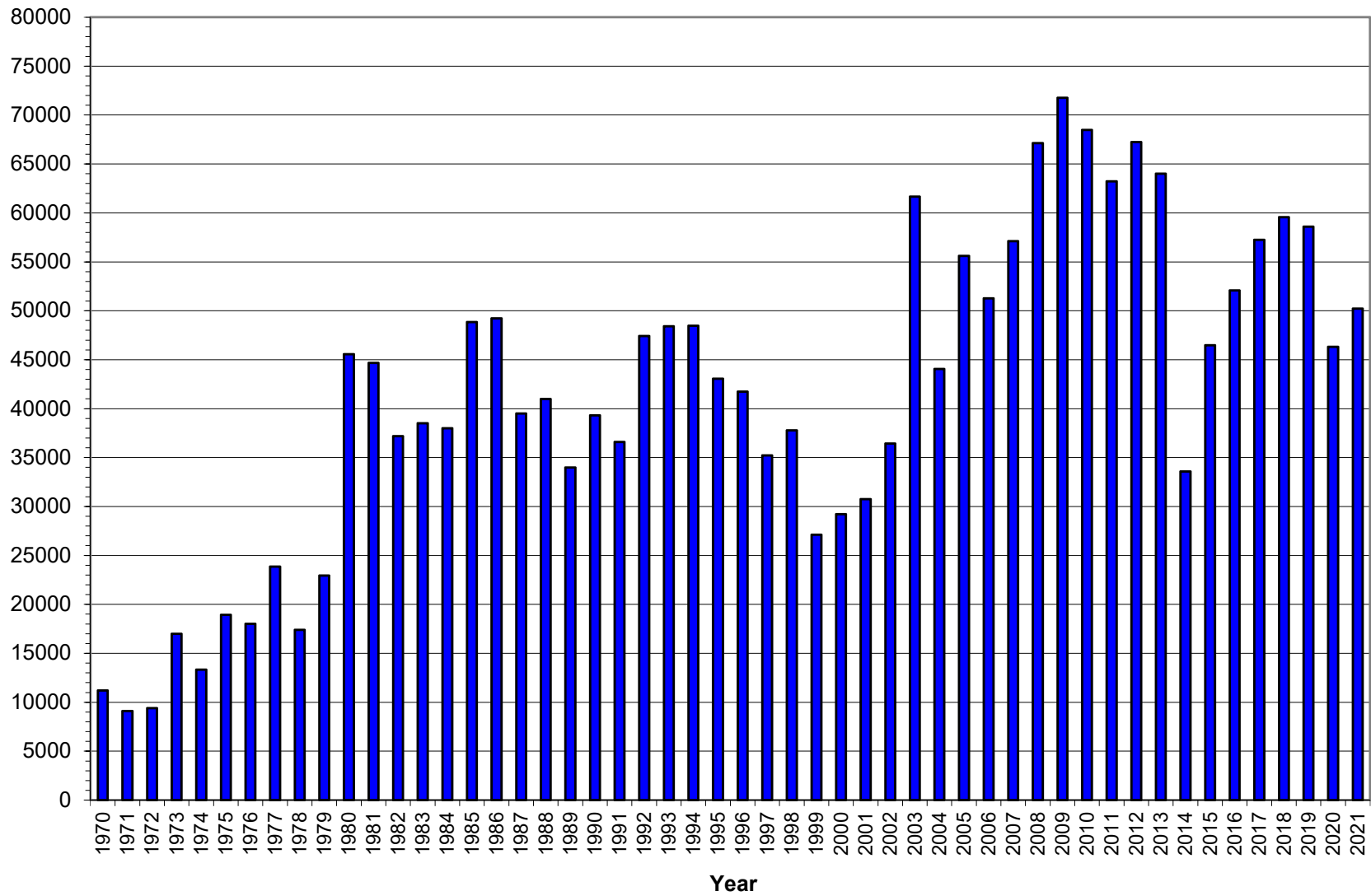
Barronett	\$13,556.52	(5,020 ac)	Frog Creek	\$95,282.18	(35,283 ac)
Bass Lake	\$8,378.98	(3,103 ac)	Gull Lake	\$38,182.11	(14,431 ac)
Beaverbrook	\$8,058.14	(2,984 ac)	Madge	\$9,584.03	(3,549 ac)
Birchwood	\$53,663.51	(19,872 ac)	Minong	\$21,706.33	(8,038 ac)
Brooklyn	\$15,565.07	(5,764 ac)	Sarona	\$5,713.35	(2,116 ac)
Casey	\$23,132.03	(8,566 ac)	Springbrook	\$21,125.51	(7,823 ac)
Chicog	\$24,785.28	(9,178 ac)	Stinnett	\$38,970.89	(14,431 ac)
Crystal	\$10,029.79	(3,714 ac)	Stone Lake	\$16,608.29	(6,150 ac)
			Trego	\$1,282.52	(475 ac)



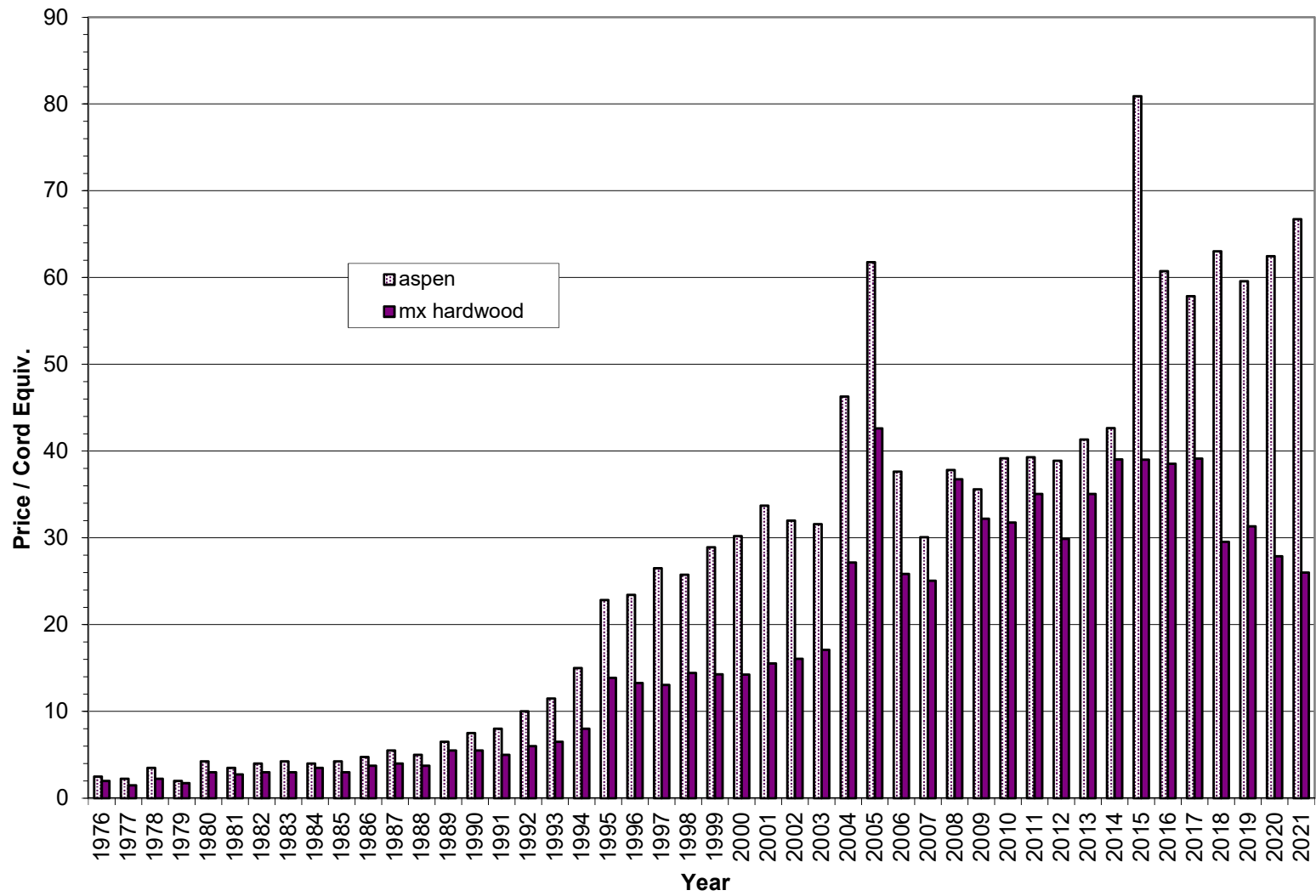
Gross Timber Sale Revenue



Total Cords Removed



Aspen & Mixed Hardwood Average Stumpage Price



Red Pine & Jack Pine Average Stumpage Price

