

# WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

## ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2022

TO: THE HONORABLE WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Following is the proposed Washburn County Forest work plan for the year 2022. 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. FOREST MANAGEMENT / SILVICULTURE

#### A. TIMBER SALES

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 2,935 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 2022:\*

	<i>Annual Goal</i>	<i>Carry Over</i>	<i>Total</i>
Aspen	900 acres	0 acres	<u>900 acres</u>
Jack Pine	150 acres	115 acres	<u>265 acres</u>
Red Pine	400 acres	-47 acres	<u>353 acres</u>
Red Pine – Regeneration	50 acres	17 acres	<u>67 acres</u>
Northern Hardwoods	450 acres	13 acres	<u>469 acres</u>
Northern Hardwoods – Regeneration	50 acres	11 acres	<u>61 acres</u>
Red Oak	600 acres	2 acres	<u>602 acres</u>
Red Oak – Regeneration	50 acres	-112 acres	<u>-62 acres</u>
White Spruce & Balsam Fir	80 acres	0 acres	<u>80 acres</u>
Swamp Hardwood	100 acres	0 acres	<u>100 acres</u>
White Birch	50 acres	0 acres	<u>50 acres</u>
Other	50 acres	0 acres	<u>50 acres</u>

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

## B. REFORESTATION

1. As markets permit, attempt to sell jack pine sales associated with the 1980 Oak Lake Fire. As part of this, look for opportunities to post sale scarify approximately 50 acres of jack pine to promote regeneration.
2. Evaluate jack pine regeneration sites. Supplemental seed up to 50 acres as necessary.
3. There will be 113 acres of red pine rotations sites ready to be replanted. Contract these areas for chemical and mechanical site preparation. These sites are to be planted in 2023.
4. Evaluate oak regeneration sites and conduct prescribed burns, as weather permits, on approximately 50 acres to release young oak from competition.

## C. TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

1. Depending on the availability of the Gordon Prison Crew, release up to 50 acres of young red pine plantation by hand cutting competing vegetation.
2. Evaluate northern hardwood sites for regeneration issues and mow up to 50 acres to reduce ironwood competition and promote hardwood regeneration.
3. Contract 40 acres of chemical release within young red pine plantations.

## D. HABITAT/ECOSYSTEM PROJECTS

1. Continue efforts to establish difficult to regenerate forest types. Focus on regenerating jack pine, white birch, balsam, red oak, and other intolerant timber types, through planting, scarification, prescribed burning, and other silvicultural harvest methods. These forest types are declining across the region and a focused effort to retain them on the County Forest is important.
2. Attempt to increase levels of prescribed burning, with a focus on releasing oak seedlings from competition on oak regeneration sites.
3. Continue to finalize, modify and adapt the northern hardwood management matrix to aid in decisions on silvicultural prescriptions on sites where traditional methods have failed. Establish even aged harvests, in conjunction with site preparation where necessary, to regenerate hardwood on sites with poor quality timber.
4. Continue evaluating 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.
5. Refine annual allowable harvest projections for northern hardwood and red pine sites to adjust for even aged management and site regenerations.
6. Maintain procedure for entering aspen stands with second rotation harvest as part of annual allowable allotment for the species.

# II. FOREST RESOURCE PROTECTION

## A. FOREST FIRE PROTECTION

1. Maintain and improve fire lane system (gas tax roads)
2. Conduct annual partnership meetings to evaluate planning and operations
3. Consult with DNR during periods of high fire danger in order to modify timber sale activity during certain periods to reduce risk of ignition.
4. Support DNR wildfire suppression efforts where needed and in accordance with the Fire Control MOU. Assistance will be focused primarily on protecting Washburn County Forest, and adjacent resources, with a secondary goal of providing assistance to other lands within the County. Staff resources will be allocated outside of the County only in cases of large project fires or in support of suppression on neighboring County Forest.
5. Continue focus of using Forestry Technicians as heavy equipment operators within DNR fire suppression operations.
6. Continue spring ATV closure

## B. INSECTS AND DISEASE

#### 1. Oak Wilt

- 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.
- Aggressively treat any infestations with “frill/girdle” method using chemical and subsequent removal of infected trees and healthy trees within the buffer zone.
- Document all chemical application for compliance with certification.
- Continue to assist private landowners, where practical, in treating and removing oak wilt infections that have the potential to impact County Forest. As oak wilt continues to move across the county, efforts should be focused on lands directly adjacent to county forest.
- Aerial surveys in 2021 resulted in widespread suspected oak wilt infections across the central and southern portions of the forest. While the areas showed classic oak wilt symptoms, lab testing show mixed results. Evaluate these areas to monitor for oak wilt spread and document observed symptoms versus lab results.

#### 2. Emerald Ash Borer

- Attempt to increase levels of black ash management as markets and weather conditions dictate. Focus on trying to convert primary stand types to swamp hardwood species other than ash.
- Work to include white ash as a high priority of removal when managing northern hardwood stands. The goal is not to remove all ash, but rather pre-salvage as many high value trees as possible. Retain pole timber and small sawlog sized ash that are of good quality and vigorous in a way that are scattered across the stand.
- Monitor for possible infestations.

#### 3. Other – continue to monitor for jack pine budworm, two-lined chestnut borer, and other potential pathogens and evaluate for management response.

### C. INVASIVE SPECIES

#### 1. Buckthorn

- Continue to look for buckthorn infestations
- Aggressively treat smaller patches, with internal staff using hand sprayers
- Staff will carry chemical and sprayers in their vehicles during the time of year when basal stem treatment is effective and spot treat scattered patches/individuals when they are found.
- The location and boundaries of larger patches will be submitted to the Forest Administrator for consideration of contract applications.
- Continue to search for outside funding sources.

#### 2. Honeysuckle – scattered patches are present and they will be treated in a similar manner as buckthorn.

#### 3. Garlic mustard – there are no known infestations but monitoring will continue.

#### 4. Document all chemical applications for compliance with forest certification

## III. RECREATION

### A. PARKS AND CAMPGROUNDS

#### 1. Totogatic Park

- Complete any remaining construction components of the park expansion project, including boat launch parking area
- Continue to fine tune the newly upgraded reservation system.
- Adapt registration policies and registration booth to reflect new reservation policies.
- Improve customer outreach to inform users of new policies.
- Upgrade electrical service in the southeast portion of the park.
- Continue to allocate time from the Natural Resources Technician position during summer camping season to assist with parks operation and maintenance.

- Recruit and train the new Campground Manager position.
  - Restructure Assistant Recreation Administrator's position/time to focus on management of the recreation program year round instead of operational management of Totogatic Park during summer months.
2. Sawmill Park
    - Replace/repair broken hand pumps
    - Seek funding sources to replace pavilion
    - Seek funding sources to replace dock system
    - Continue to operate and maintain facility
  3. Leisure Lake Youth Camp
    - Work with DATCAP to secure an appropriate license for facility operation.
    - Begin facility improvements based on plans developed in 2021
    - Continue facility closure until license is secured and renovations completed.
    - Continue to operate and maintain facility
  4. Dugan and Harmon Equestrian Campsites
    - Evaluate Harmon Lake for sanitary dump station
    - Repair electrical service at Harmon
    - Consider eliminating camping at the Dugan Run facility and converting to day-use only.
    - Continue to monitor use by campers not associated with horse trail riding and consider additional restrictions as need arises.

## B. MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

1. Snowmobile Trail System
  - Continue to maintain snow trails program using maintenance grant program,
  - Apply for grant funding for any necessary bridge repairs/replacements and other trail improvements
  - Continue evaluating all bridges within the system with a goal of upgrading older bridges with engineer designed bridges.
2. ATV Trail System
  - Continue to operate and maintain the official ATV/UTV trail system using maintenance grant programs.
  - Continue to operate and maintain bathroom and parking facilities at Trego, Sarona, Berry Road, and Hall Road.
  - Grade the entire trail system at least once during the season with County staff and equipment, including those sections of County Forest Roads that are trail connectors.
  - Re-deck the Hay Creek Bridge if treated timber materials are readily available and at a reasonable cost.
  - Construct the Casey Loop Rest Area project
  - Complete remaining trail rehabilitation work on Trail 39N and Stony Brook Trail east using grant funding
  - Install new bypass gates using awarded grant funds.
  - Apply for grant funding for any necessary bridge repairs/replacements and other trail improvements
  - Continue evaluating all bridges within the system with a goal of upgrading older bridges with engineer designed bridges.
  - Continue to work legislatively to push DNR to resume the state ATV/UTV trail standards project.
  - Continue to work legislatively to resolve conflicting program goals on trail rehabilitation and development standards that exist between county forest trail managers and the Off-Road Vehicle Advisory Council. The moratorium on new trail miles shall remain in place until a more collaborative relationship can be established.

- Participate in legislative efforts to increase maintenance funding to help accommodate the influx of larger UTV's
- Participate in legislative efforts to increase funding into ATV trail enforcement aids
- Participate in legislative efforts to prevent increasing statutory width definitions of UTV's
- Make efforts to resolve the statutory issues with the proximity of the Tuscobia Trail to State Highway 48. If this issue is resolved, the option of the county acquiring an easement from DNR to operate and maintain that portion of the Tuscobia Trail in Washburn County should be revisited.

#### C. NON-MOTORIZED RECREATION TRAILS

1. Ski Trails
  - Look for opportunities to recruit volunteer labor, likely through the formation of a local club, to assist with trail maintenance.
  - Continue to groom and maintain trails.
2. Wildcat Bike Trails
  - Continue to facilitate local volunteer efforts to operate and maintain trail. Look for specific opportunities to partner with and assist the newly formed Rails on Trails club.
  - Apply for DOT directional signage on Highway 70
  - Plan for adding a bathroom, shelter and other amenities at the trailhead if funding is available.
  - Continue to push DNR for approval of the bike trail proposal running adjacent to the Wild River Trail from Spooner to the Beaverbrook ATV trail. Assist the club in construction efforts where needed.
3. Dugan Run Horse Trails
  - Look for opportunities to recruit volunteer labor, likely through the formation of a local club, to assist with trail maintenance.
  - Evaluate usage to determine feasibility of long term operations
  - Mow trail system annually in late summer or early fall.
  - Monitor trail areas for invasive species
4. Ice Age Trail – Continue to work with statewide Ice Age Trail representatives to develop long range plans for the trail connection.

#### D. OTHER RECREATION

1. Continue to operate and maintain Minong Rifle Range
2. Seek funding to repair Big McKenzie Lake boat landing

### IV. WILDLIFE RELATED PROJECTS

#### A. FLOWAGES

1. Continue planning efforts to remove/restore Black Brook Flowage. Discussions with DNR wildlife and DNR engineers in 2020 led to potential options to remove the structure without requiring intensive engineering plans. Continue discussions and develop a plan for removal in 2022. Seek grant funding, and as part of this, research options for creating a wetland mitigation bank.
2. Vandalism/tampering of the structure at Casey Creek Flowage resulted in significant damage to the spillway structure. Discussions with DNR staff have led to a general agreement that the best option is to remove the structure. As with Black Brook, look for opportunities to remove the structure in the most cost effective manner possible.
3. Continue efforts to develop a wetland mitigation bank as part of the Wolf Springs Dam #4 removal. This project was initiated in 2020 and it appears promising that conversion from open water habitat, back to wetland could provide for a wetland bank. Transfer the project to the Highway Department at such point as it appears to be a viable project.
4. As part of the Wolf Springs Dam #4 removal, and potential wetland bank, look for funding options to bring Dam #3 into compliance.

5. Complete any necessary inspections or engineering on the Davis Flowage Structure.
- B. WILDLIFE OPENINGS
  1. Work with DNR Wildlife to evaluate the wildlife openings program. Priorities these openings and eliminate those with minimal benefit.
  2. Purchase herbicide for wildlife openings treatment
  3. Assist DNR with mowing where feasible.
- C. OTHER WILDLIFE HABITAT RELATED PROJECTS
  1. Continue to promote jack pine habitats
  2. Continue to promote red oak, white birch and other declining species
  3. Maintain gates
  4. Seed logging trails where necessary.

## **V. FOREST ROADS**

- A. COUNTY FOREST ROADS
  1. Grade entire 94 mile system and evaluate/repair trouble spots.
  2. Prioritize mowing needs, mow approximately 10 miles.
  3. Gravel north half of Shingle Camp Fire Lane
  4. Use any remaining funds to begin gravelling those roads in used for ATV connections as part of the Casey Loop ATV Trail.
- B. FOREST/LOGGING ROADS
  1. Continue to implement Road and Access Plan
  2. Plan all road expansions to minimize road density
  3. Monitor for illegal use.

## **VI. FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT, STAFF/PERSONNEL**

- A. FACILITIES
  1. Continue to operate and maintain shop facility
  2. Replace at least one overhead door in the shop.
  3. Continue to operate park model mobile home at Totogatic but consider transitioning from residence use to office.
  4. Complete remaining landscaping at the new Forestry Office.
- B. EQUIPMENT
  1. Continue to operate and maintain existing fleet
  2. Purchase replacement skid steer.
  3. Purchase drone using Sustainable Forestry Grant award.
- C. PERSONNEL
  1. Provide training opportunities to the newer employees (Technicians)
  2. Continue to utilize Recreation Officer
  3. Replace any positions if they become vacant.
  4. Restructure campground operations at Totogatic Park with the development of the new Campground Manager position.
- D. Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Time Standards
  1. Coordinate with Washburn Team Leader to consolidate as many time standard hours into a minimum number of DNR staff in order to create efficiencies.
  2. Focus time standards hours primarily on timber sale establishment. The Liaison Forester or County Forest staff will act as lead forester on these projects.
  3. Heavy equipment hours on scarification and other site preparation duties will be conducted at the discretion of the County Forest Administrator

## **VII. OTHER**

- A. LAW ENFORCEMENT
  1. Continue to fund and utilize Recreation Officer Position

2. Continue to focus law enforcement efforts on ATV/UTV, permanent deer stands, and violations of Road and Access Plan and other violations of Chapter 50 of the Washburn County Municipal Code.
3. Continue to utilize ATV and Snowmobile Law Enforcement grant aids.

B. LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

1. Work with Wisconsin County Forest Association via the Legislative/Certification Committee in engaging the state legislature and other offices to help protect forestry funding in the upcoming budget.
2. Engage in legislative efforts to enhance and protect the county forest programs as opportunities arise.

D. TIMBER MARKETS

1. Continue to monitor market conditions and offer annual allowable harvest acreage as planned, while attempting to offer sales with higher likelihood of sale (older versus younger red pine, sales with aspen, etc.)
2. Look for opportunities to start discussions with county economic development staff to attempt to promote local value added industries.
3. Remain involved with “multi-stakeholder cooperative” efforts focused either on purchasing or developing paper mill operations in Wisconsin.

E. FOREST CERTIFICATION

1. Continue to participate in SFI and FSC forest certification programs
2. Continue to evaluate cost/benefit of participation
3. The U.S. FSC standard is currently under revision to incorporate what are called International Generic Indicators. The draft of these revisions includes numerous changes that have potential to require much more intensive workload to remain certified, as well as significant acreage removed from the active management. Remain involved in efforts to prevent standards revisions as drafted. Numerous state agencies are involved in this effort as well. If the new standards are adopted as drafted, it will likely become too burdensome to remain certified under the FSC program.

F. LAND ACQUISITION

1. Follow the direction of the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan
2. Evaluate land trades and/or purchases presented to the Committee for possible County Board approval
3. Seek grant funding options for any proposals that the Committee approves pursuing.
4. There are no specific projects planned for 2022.