

# Washburn County Forest 2014 Annual Report



## *Totogatic Park – New Basketball Court & Playground Equipment*

### **Forest Administrator**

Mike Peterson

### **Department Employees**

Buck Pettingill

Mark Heil

Duran Bjorklund

Jeremy Erickson

Josh Buckridge

Barb Norton

### **WDNR Liaison Forester**

Amy Morales

### **Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff**

Vacant ó Re-assigned by Sheriff

### **Forestry Parks and Recreation Committee**

#### ***January - March***

L.H. öSkipö Fiedler - Chair

James Dohm ó Vice Chair

Steven Waggoner

Anthony Baier

Terry Leckel, Sr.

#### ***April - December***

L.H. öSkipö Fiedler - Chair

James Dohm ó Vice Chair

Anthony Baier

Romaine Quinn

Robert Lester



## 2014 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 2014.

### TIMBER MANAGEMENT

The timber sale program took in a lower than normal revenue of **\$1,700,442**. The lower revenue was due primarily to weather conditions and the adjustments to our annual allowable harvest compensating for salvage of wind damaged timber.

Deep snow in early 2014, wetter than normal conditions during the summer months, and early heavy snows in late 2014 all contributed to lower than normal harvest activity on Washburn County sales. Wood prices were high and markets fairly good throughout the year. Revenues were approximately 25% lower than an expected average year while volumes removed were approximately 40% lower than normal, which points to good markets but less wood harvested. We are expecting contract extension requests and more wood to be harvested in 2015.

A windstorm in the Frog Creek area in September of 2014 also impacted harvesting operations. All of the remaining allowable harvest acres normally scheduled for the fall bid opening was re-allocated to salvage acres. Adjustments will also be needed to balance out these acres in 2015.

Oak wilt is a fungal disease that spreads readily through stands of red oak, especially when trees have open wounds or bark missing. Because of this, it is critical to suspend logging operations in stands with red oak during times of the year that sap is flowing and bark is loose and also at times when the fungus is active. Oak wilt was discovered in Washburn County in late 2013 and to help prevent spread into oak on the county forest, oak sales were restricted to harvesting between July 1 to April 1; or October 1 to April 1, depending on proximity to known infestations.

The Forestry Department contracted a fairly large reforestation project in 2014. The windstorm of 2011 resulted in numerous timber salvage sales in pine habitats. Many of these sites required replanting efforts to ensure regeneration and 350 acres were planted to jack and red pine.

### 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. As part of managing recreational uses, the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee adopted an updated County Forest Recreation Plan for the years 2014-2018.

### ATV

Washburn County's ATV Trail system consists of 103.3 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. It is important to note that as a result of a great deal of effort by Washburn

County, the Wisconsin County Forests Association and the Wisconsin ATV Association, the State Legislature increased the annual per mile maintenance rate from \$450/mile to \$600/mile. These additional funds have been very important in maintaining our trail systems.

In 2014, trail maintenance grants were awarded at a rate of \$600/mile for summer trails and an additional \$100/mile for winter ATV trails. In addition, the new UTV (side by side) program, enacted in 2012, allowed for an additional \$100/mile on all trails open to UTV use. These programs created a total grant award of \$89,840 for maintaining trails. A majority of these funds are distributed to local ATV clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

Washburn County was awarded grant funds in 2012 to construct a recreation trail bridge over the Canadian National Rail Line near Hwy 77. The bridge was constructed to remove ATV and Snowmobile traffic from the Hwy 77 bridge deck. A majority of the bridge construction was completed in 2013; however the contractor dissolved their business before completing the contract. Washburn County was forced to take action against their construction bond and hire an additional contractor to complete the project in 2014.

A project and grant to rehabilitate the Stony Brook trail was completed in 2014, as well as partial completion of a project to repair trails damaged from heavy rainfall during the September 2014 storm.

The Department applied for and received six ATV project grants, totaling \$291,460 in 2014. These grants will be allocated to the 2015 work year and budget. We also assisted the City of Spooner in securing ATV grants to build a trailhead and parking area adjacent to the Wild River Trail and also worked with the City of Shell Lake in securing additional grant funds towards the construction of an ATV campground.

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 disbursed by the State of Wisconsin.

The vacancy in the Park Ranger / Deputy Sheriff position has a large impact on our trail systems. We have little direct access to any trail patrol work or enforcement. Law enforcement is a critical factor in protecting trail systems during periods of closure and also to help protect user safety. The position had spent a great deal of time patrolling these trails for enforcement which has provided a great deal of protection to the investment that has been made in the ATV trail systems in Washburn County. In April of 2011, however, this position was pulled from Forestry Department duties by the Washburn County Sheriff. We have seen several lost ATV trail easements/agreements on private lands with landowners citing lack of enforcement as a primary reason for not allowing trail use to continue.

### **Snowmobile**

The County had very good snow conditions in the 2013/2014 season and trail conditions were excellent. Conditions were marginal during the 2014/2015 winter and trail systems were closed at least twice during the season.

Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department. In 2014, maintenance was awarded at a rate of \$250/mile for snowmobile trail maintenance. A total of \$62,700 was

used to maintain trails and was primarily distributed to local Snowmobile clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

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. This ten mile section of trail will remain closed until a viable re-route option can be found. This will be a work project for 2015.

In addition, another landowner closed a short section of trail 26 near Spider Lake. We were forced to close all of trail 26, which is a main artery into Sawyer County. Forestry Staff were able to find a re-route, located entirely on County Forest lands. Snowmobile trail aids under the Mandatory Trail Relocation category will be applied for in 2015.

## **Campgrounds**

Totogatic Park showed a marked increase in camping and usage in 2014, primarily due to restored water levels after the 2013 drawdown. Revenues were up significantly from average and the campground was full on nearly every weekend of the summer. Part of the increase in revenue was due to increased use and part due to a \$2 increase in camping fees that was adopted by the Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee.

The Forestry Department completed numerous walkways and stairs leading from campsites to the water along the shoreline. The project is intended to reduce erosion issues along the banks and also to provide access to the water over areas where rock riprap was installed in 2013.

The 2013 drawdown appears to have impacted trees in the park and we saw dramatic tree mortality. Forestry staff and the Gordon Prison Crew spent several weeks in 2014 cutting and removing dead trees from the park. The September 2014 storm also caused severe washing and damage to park roadways. Funds were requested in the 2015 budget to repair these areas.

2014 was the 3<sup>rd</sup> season using the web based reservation system. The service is very popular and has attracted many new customers to our parks systems. The newly constructed Minong ATV Campground, owned by the Village of Minong and operated by the Minong ATV Club, was incorporated into the online reservation system.

Sawmill Campground saw an increase in revenue and campers. We suspect the increased use was due to visitors finding the park through the online reservation system.

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

## **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 ōfat tireö 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.

Snow conditions on the ski trails were excellent through the 2013/2014 snow season and the ski trails saw a great deal of use. 2014/2015 brought marginal conditions. The Forestry Department continues to undertake grooming duties at both ski trails.

Trail signs were upgraded/replaced, along with new trail maps, at the Wildcat Bike, Dugan Horse, Nordic, and Totogatic Ski Trails.

### **FACILITIES/ EQUIPMENT/ACQUISITIONS**

The Department leased a Noram Compact Road Grader under a 4 year municipal lease. The lease payment will be paid for through reimbursement under ATV grants and County Forest Road Aids. This grader unit is the ideal size to help with ATV trail maintenance.

In addition, the Department purchased a replacement 1 ton pickup, ½ ton pickup, and a new ATV for forestry work. 2 older pickups were sold through a public auction service. We also purchased a replacement zero-turn radius riding lawnmower for the parks system and an auger attachment for the Terex skid-steer.

The Washburn County Lakes and Rivers Association offered to sell 125 acres in Crystal Township at a sharply discounted value. The property had an appraised value of \$159,000 and we purchased the parcel for \$25,000. WCLRA intended to donate the parcel to the County in exchange for a donation to their organization, but the Committee elected to structure the payment as a purchase price instead. We intend to use the appraised value of this property as matching value towards Stewardship land acquisition grants on Meteor Timberland properties in 2015.

The Forestry Department was approached by the Highway Department with a request to place a rock quarry centrally located to the County M and County G construction projects. Significant volumes of rock will be needed for these projects and little material is available locally. A quarry site near Highway 77 and County M was approved by the Committee, which should significantly reduce project costs.

A project was initiated to re-align lake lots around Beaver Lake in Bass Lake Township. A strip of county forest land lies between the edge of the lake lots and the town road along the south and east side of the lake developments. These slivers of property essentially ðland-lockö the cabins and houses on that side of the lake. The Forestry Committee approved a proposal to withdraw these parcels from the County Forest Law, create lot extensions, and offer sale of parcels to adjoining landowners at a fair market appraised value. This project will likely be completed in 2015.

### **OTHER**

The Committee and County Board approved a project to designate lands adjacent to the Northwood School under the School Forest Program. This designation does not conflict with County Forest Law and should provide funding opportunities for outdoor education for the school. Forestry and DNR staff will be working with teachers to incorporate forest management activities into school curriculum.

There appears to be a growing trend of private landowners cancelling agreements that allow recreation trails on their properties. Some of these landowners cite lack of law enforcement

presence on trails as a primary reason. It appears evident that the Department needs to work towards a collaborative working relationship with the Sheriff's Department and work together to create consistent law enforcement efforts on our trails.

Washburn County continued to participate in the Northern Trail Advisory Committee (NorTAC) that was formed from the dissolved Wild River Trail Commission. This Committee is made up of 10 member counties with 2 appointed representatives from each County. The intent of the group was to create a forum for the discussion of regional motorized trail issues, including planning, connectivity, and legislative issues. Skip Fiedler and Jim Dohm were appointed to the Committee as Washburn County's representatives. This forum allowed us to interact with other counties and regions to assure motorized trail connectivity and also policy consistency across the region.

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

Washburn County secured funds from the Sustainable Forestry Grant program under two separate grants. \$24,000 was awarded to help offset costs associated with reforestation of 2011 storm damaged sites. An additional \$5,139 was re-allocated from leftover grant funds from 2013 for planting costs. A grant in the amount of \$5,635 was secured from the Arbor Day Foundation to help cover remaining unreimbursed planting costs.

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 2014

I.	<u>Reforestation</u>		
A.	Acres newly planted:	350	acres
B.	Acres replanted:	0	acres
C.	Acres seeded (jack pine):	19	acres
D.	Jack pine regeneration ó scarified	125	acres
E.	Oak regeneration - scarified	0	acres
F.	White birch regeneration ó scarified	8	acres
G.	Swamp conifer mowing	0	acres
H.	Northern hardwood regeneration ó mowing	0	acres
I.	Northern hardwood regeneration ó scarified	75	acres
J.	Site Prep (mechanical)	6	acres
K.	Site Prep (chemical)	0	acres
II.	<u>Timber stand improvement</u>		
A.	Red pine release (herbicide):	0	acres
B.	Pine release (hand):	34	acres
C.	Aspen sale residual removal:	0	acres
D.	Prescribed burning	0	acres
E.	Invasive ó Buckthorn herbicide treatment	0	acres
III.	<u>Miscellaneous</u>		
A.	Christmas trees sold:	63	(63 in 2013)
B.	Firewood permits issued:	224	(253 in 2013)
C.	Bough permits issued:	12	(20 in 2013)
VI.	<u>Timber Sale Statistics</u>		
A.	Timber value contracted	\$2,584,580	(\$1,719,445 in 2013)
B.	Acres established:	3,020 acres	(3,198 acres in 2013)
C.	Acres sold (goal of 3400 acres):	2,956 acres	(3,467 acres in 2013)
D.	Acres closed out:	2,477 acres	(2,930 acres in 2013)
E.	Volumes removed:	total cord equivalent = 33,581	(63,997 in 2013)
	1. Pulpwood total:	31,609	
	a. Aspen pulpwood	6,102 cords	
	b. Mixed hardwood pulpwood	16,527 cords	
	c. Pine pulpwood	8,734 cords	
	d. Spruce/fir pulpwood	246 cords	
	2. Sawtimber total:	789 mbf (thousand board feet)	
F.	Road projects		
	1. Graded 20 miles of County Forest Roads		
	2. Graded 5 miles of Firelane and other trails.		
VII	<u>Recreation Facilities</u>		
A.	Totogatic Park		
	1. Total Gross Revenue - \$108,952.42		(\$81,118.76 in 2013)
	2. Camping Registrations - \$95,866.84		
	3. Shower revenue from bathhouse - \$1,831.26		(\$1,484.11 in 2013)
	4. Firewood revenue ó \$6,837.50		(\$3,778.00 in 2013)
	5. Boat Launch Fee - \$2,158.00		(\$1,161.23 in 2013)
	6. Ice, Day Use, Dump Station, etc. - \$2,258.82		(\$1,480.42 in 2013)
	7. Reservation system ó 37% revenue collected through reservation system (68% of sites are reservable)		
B.	Sawmill Park		
	1. Revenue - \$7,262.00		(\$6,777.00 in 2013)
	2. Reservation system - 24% revenue collected through reservation system		

- C. Harmon / Dugan Equestrian Trails / Other
  - 1. Horse Trail/Camping Revenue ó \$2,789 (\$1,591.00 in 2013)
  - 2. Dispersed Camping Permits - \$410.00
  
- D. Leisure Lake Youth Camp
  - 1. Revenue - \$6,595.20 (\$5,750.00 in 2013)
  - 2. Number of Groups = 25
  - 3. 32% use by youth groups
  - 4. 26% use by other non-profit groups
  - 5. 42% use by private parties

**WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST: ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOUNTS 2014**

**I. RECEIPT AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY OF C.F.L.D. AND FORESTRY AID**

<b>A. <u>Money received by County:</u></b>	
Gross timber sale receipts	\$1,698,396.78
Damages and other misc. income	\$ 0.00
Gathering permits (firewood, boughs, Christmas trees)	\$ 2,045.46
<b>TOTAL FOREST PRODUCTS REVENUE</b>	<b>\$1,700,442.24</b>
Forestry Aid Loan from State	\$ 74,171.09
Fund Balance Applied	\$ .00
Sustainable Forestry Grant	\$ 29,139.80
County Forest Administrator Grant (inc. WCFA dues reimb.)	\$ 49,326.25
Private Grants	\$ 5,635.00
Equipment Sales	\$ 9,403.25
Labor Reimbursement of Snowmobile/ATV Grants	\$ 15,881.31**
<b>TOTAL FORESTRY REVENUE ACCOUNTS</b>	<b>\$1,883,998.94</b>
<b>B. <u>Expenditures by County:</u></b>	
Forestry Aid fund #56930	\$117,360.45
County Forest Land Development (56100)	\$542,201.95
10% statutory timber sale revenue to towns	\$169,839.68
5% additional timber sale revenue allocated by County	\$ 84,919.84
<b>C. Net Revenue to County</b>	<b>\$969,677.02*</b>
*Other recreation program costs not included in this figure. <i>May not reflect actual audit figure due to adjustments.</i>	
** Offsets recreation program expenditures.	

**II. Other Accounts:**

	<u>Receipts</u>	<u>Expenditures</u>
A. <u>County Recreation Program (parks)</u>	\$ 137,696.95	\$147,337.31*
B. <u>Fish and Game Projects</u>	\$ 8,027.86	\$ 13,571.01**
C. <u>Habitat Development</u>	\$ 8,080.72	\$ 15,306.12
D. <u>Snow Trails</u>	\$102,482.10	\$102,289.66
E. <u>Land Acquisition</u>	\$ 0.00	\$ 14,138.03
F. <u>County Forest Roads</u>	\$ 30,086.37	\$ 20,627.94
G. <u>ATV Trails</u>	\$101,894.64	\$ 95,190.02

\*expenditure data includes funds allocated from special project accounts / non-lapsing funds (ATC monies). *Also, wages and fringe of Parks staff are included in expenditures. Actual workload in parks is about 50%, balance spent in other areas.*

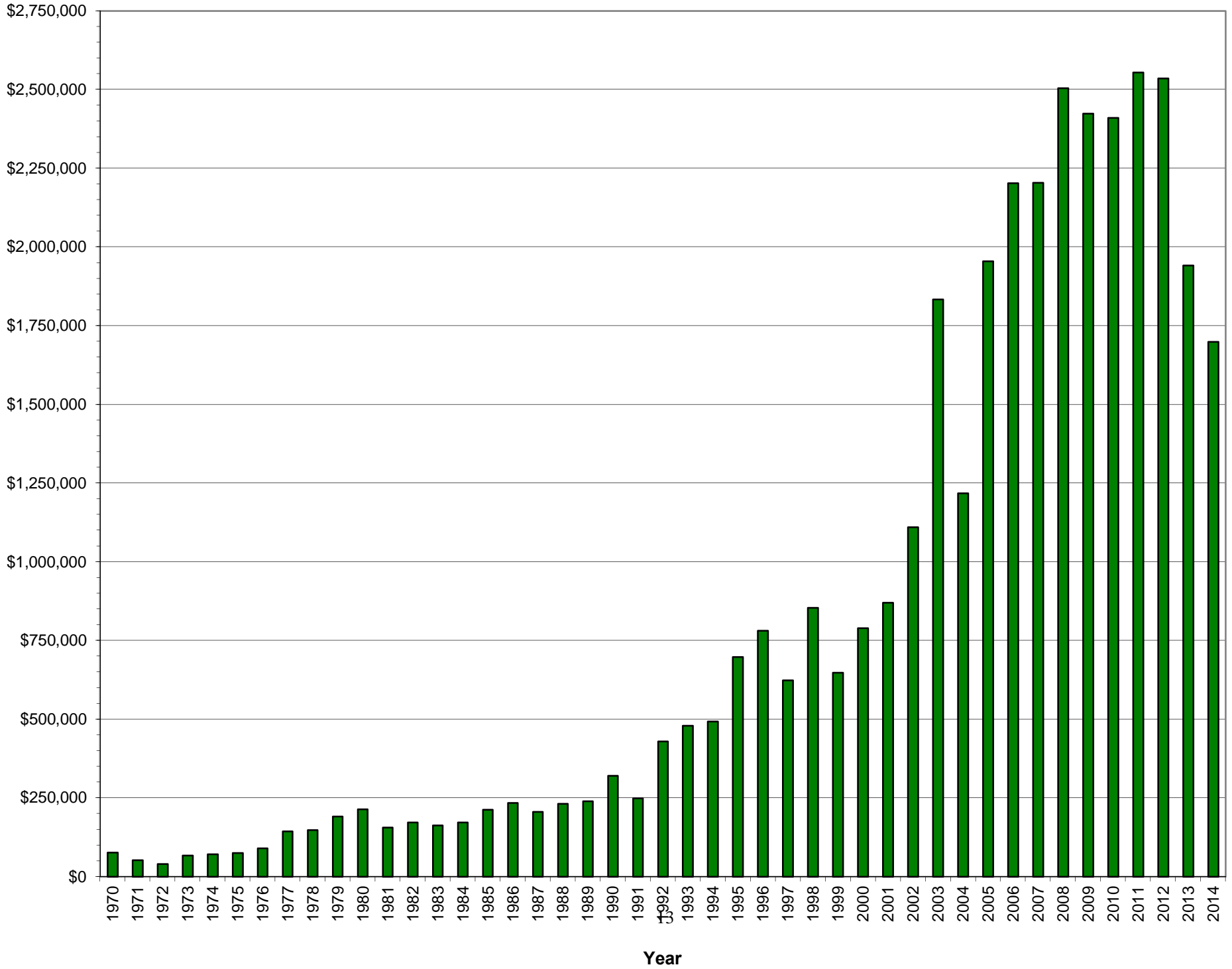
\*\*expenditure includes matching grant funds allocated from parks expenditures.

**III. Fund Balances on non-lapsing accounts as of 12/31/14 \*subject to final reconciliation and audit**

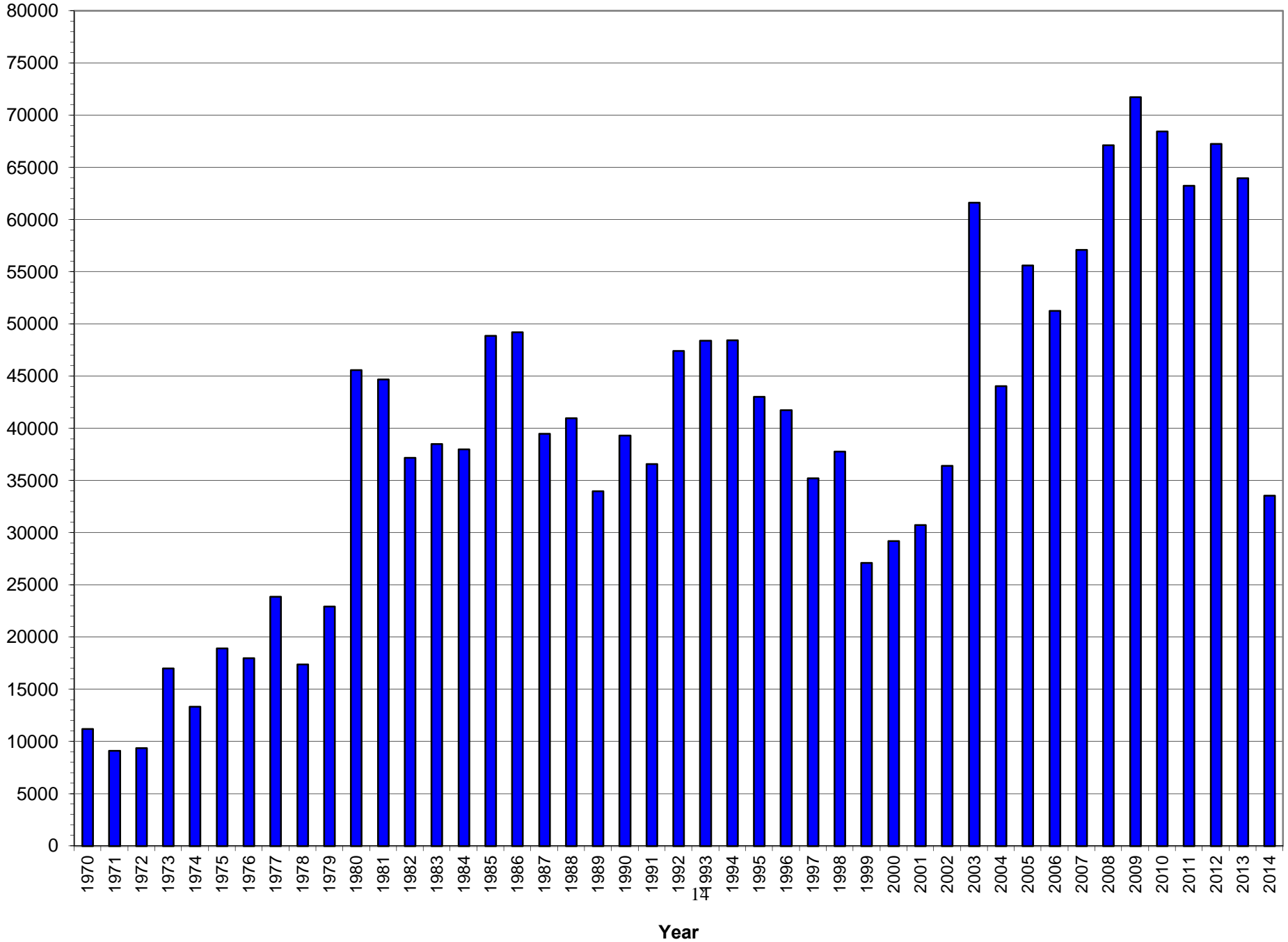
A. Forestry Aid (State loan funds)	\$ 24,085
B. Wildlife Habitat (State grant funds)	\$ -1,470
C. County Forest Roads (State grant fund)	\$ 76,243
D. Land Acquisition	\$ 35,395
E. ATC Recreational Development Fund	\$ 56,368
F. Enbridge Recreational Development Fund	\$ 38,151

IV.	<u>Money received by Towns:</u>				
		State payment (\$.30/acre on 148,998.79 acres)		\$	44,699.64
		10% timber sale revenue (statutory requirement)		\$	169,839.68
		5% timber sale revenue (additional paid by Washburn County)		\$	84,919.84
		<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$</b>	<b>299,459.16</b>
	Total monies received by Towns ó 2014 (paid in 2015):				
	<b>Barronett</b>	\$8,579.49	(5,020 ac)	<b>Frog Creek</b>	\$59,951.24 (35,078 ac)
	<b>Bass Lake</b>	\$5,354.39	(3,133 ac)	<b>Gull Lake</b>	\$24,151.59 (14,431 ac)
	<b>Beaverbrook</b>	\$5,099.77	(2,984 ac)	<b>Madge</b>	\$6,065.55 (3,549 ac)
	<b>Birchwood</b>	\$33,961.88	(19,872 ac)	<b>Minong</b>	\$13,719.89 (8,028 ac)
	<b>Brooklyn</b>	\$9,850.54	(5,764 ac)	<b>Sarona</b>	\$3,615.85 (2,116 ac)
	<b>Casey</b>	\$14,639.63	(8,566 ac)	<b>Springbrook</b>	\$12,775.57 (7,475 ac)
	<b>Chicog</b>	\$15,685.74	(9,178 ac)	<b>Stinnett</b>	\$24,663.52 (14,431 ac)
	<b>Crystal</b>	\$6,133.83	(3,589 ac)	<b>Stone Lake</b>	\$10,510.99 (6,150 ac)

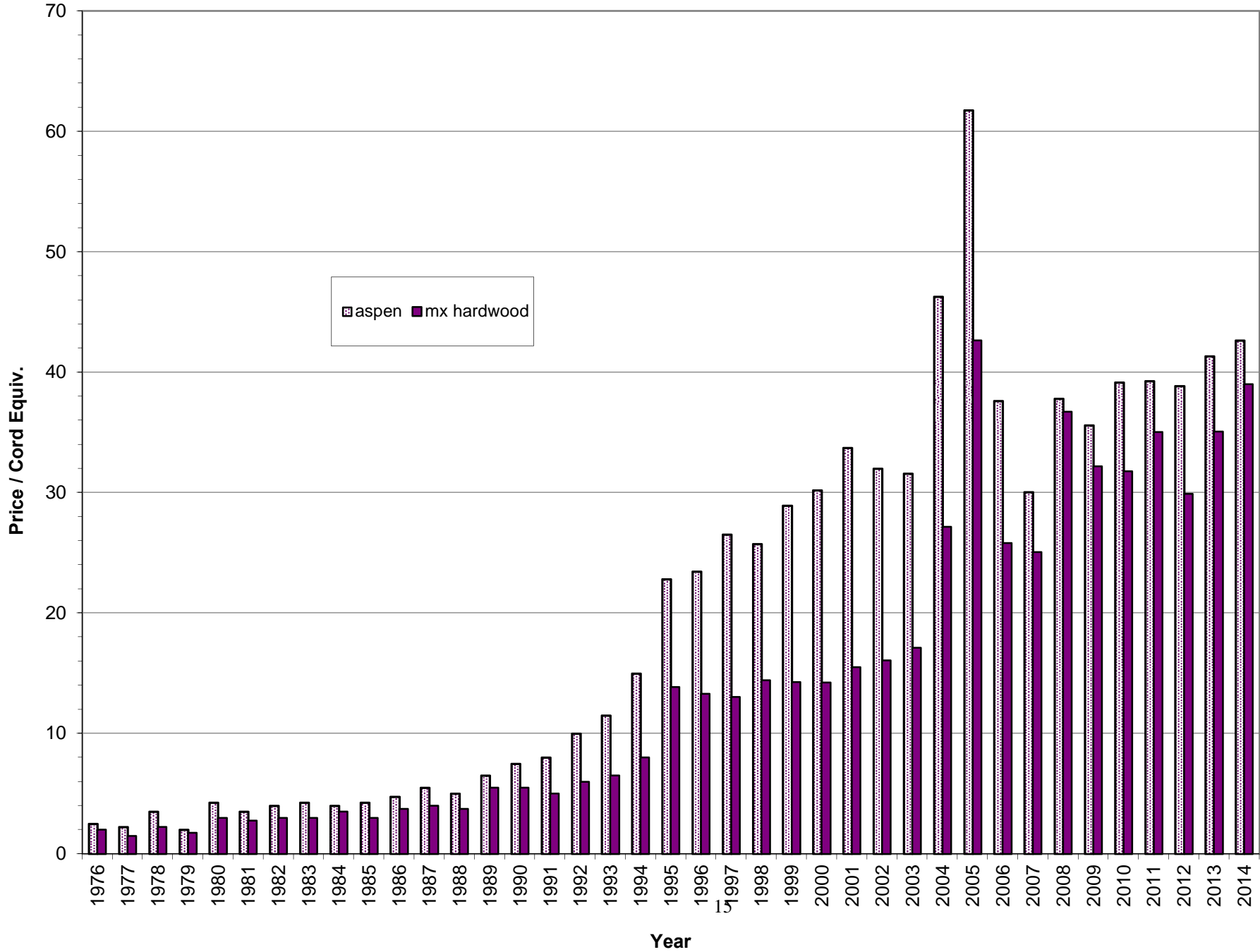
# Gross Timber Sale Revenue



# Total Cords Removed



# Aspen & Mixed Hardwood Average Stumpage Price



# Red Pine & Jack Pine Average Stumpage Price

