

# WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

## ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2019

TO: THE HONORABLE WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Following is the proposed Washburn County Forest work plan for the year 2019. 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 2019.\*

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 100 acres (jack pine, birch, hardwood)
  2. Post-harvest 0 acres
- B. Site preparation (site preparation for planting):
1. Mechanical (Bracke) 0 acres
  2. Mechanical (disk trench) 0 acres
  3. Chemical 0 acres
- C. Direct Seeding 50 acres
- D. Plantings 200 acres
- E. Replanting 0 acres
- F. Prescribed burning 50 acres

## III. TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

- A. Release (removal of competition around young plantations):
1. Hand 50 acres
  2. Chemical 0 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 2017/2018 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. Evaluate land trades as presented to Forestry Committee for possible County Board approval.
  2. 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. 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. Garlic Mustard
1. Continue to monitor for presence on the forest
  2. Consult with WDNR to assure that infestation on the Hemlocks Scientific Area is eradicated.
- F. 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. Continue to analyze aspen stands for “second entry” harvests as part of annual allowable harvests.
- 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. Investigate ways to share data and collaborate with the Land Information Department to create efficiencies.
- D. 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. Construct the Spring Creek Bridge utilizing grant funds awarded partially from the Snowmobile Trail Aids program, if not completed in 2018.
- 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 official ATV/UTV trail systems using County and ATV club labor.
  - 2. Continue to maintain bathroom and parking facilities in Trego, Sarona, Berry Road and Hall Road.
  - 3. The entire trail system needs to be graded as soon as weather permits in early summer of 2019. Staff allocation to flooding repair projects during 2017 and 2018 forced the department to defer trail maintenance projects.
  - 4. Complete the Casey Loop ATV development project and the Fenander Road Rest Area project.
  - 5. Complete any remaining older trail rehabilitation projects that carried over from 2018.
  - 6. Construct the Spring Creek Bridge utilizing grant funds awarded partially from the Snowmobile Trail Aids program, if project is not completed in 2018.
  - 7. 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.
  - 8. 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

9. 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. Park Expansion
  - a. Develop plan with Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee for constructing a portions or all of the Totogatic Park Campground expansion, which will be dependent on grant award values and grant award timing.
  - b. Contract with engineering firm to develop construction bidding documents to complete as much of the project as possible given any constraints with funding or timing of funding
  - c. Bid projects and complete as much of the construction phasing as feasible during 2019.
2. Totogatic Park (75 units).
  - a. Continue the online reservation system
  - b. Allocate time from the newly created Natural Resources Technician position during summer camping season to assist with parks operation and maintenance.
  - c. Develop more stringent restrictions on imported firewood to help reduce risk of oak wilt and emerald ash borer infestations.
  - d. 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.
  - e. Continue to increase wage rate for Groundskeeper position in order to attract more reliable and knowledgeable candidates.
  - f. Maintain and operate facilities.
2. Leisure Lake Youth Camp:
  - a. Continue to operate and maintain facilities.
  - b. Evaluate facilities for upgrades, especially cabins.
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.

E. 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**

1. Forestry Shop – continue to operate and maintain facility.
2. Totogatic Park Ranger Residence - continue to operate and maintain facility.
3. Finalize building plans, compile bidding documents, solicit contractor and construct forestry office building at the 1700 Roundhouse Road site.

#### **B. Equipment**

1. Continue to utilize Noram compact road grader (under lease) to maintain recreation trails and County Forest Roads (fire lanes).
2. Purchase replacement 4 x 4 ½ ton pickup.
3. Rebuild beaver tail deck on equipment trailer
4. Purchase replacement snowmobile
5. Purchase new ski trail drag.
6. 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 2019.
3. Complete any necessary engineering required by DNR for the Davis Flowage Dam
4. Apply for grant funding to remove northern most flowage on Wolf Springs Forest property.
5. Utilize Wildlife Habitat Grant fund balance monies to repair southern dike and dam structure on Wolf Springs Forest acquisition.
6. Secure necessary permits/approval to bring southern dike and dam on Wolf Springs Forest property into WDNR compliance.

### **XIV. SPECIAL PROJECTS, GRANTS AND FUNDING**

#### **A. Wildlife grant (\$.05 per acre grant for wildlife habitat)**

1. Repair southern dike and dam structure on Wolf Springs Forest acquisition.
2. Maintain intolerant timber types (scarification for jack pine, white birch, oak, and balsam; prescribed burning for red oak and pine).
3. Purchase Spike herbicide for DNR treatment of wildlife openings.
4. Fund other projects as approved in the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

**B. Sustainable Forestry Grant** – Determine an appropriate project for the August application deadline.

**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 2019.

**XV. Staff / Personnel**

- A. Continue to utilize Recreation Officer Position and work with incoming Sheriff to develop long term agreements for how the position is best utilized.
- B. Look for training opportunities for the new technician positions that were hired in 2018.
- C. Re-design the Parks Groundskeeper LTE position with a much higher hourly rate. Try to recruit qualified candidates that would be reliable and could possible handle some management duties in the parks system.

**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.