

Washburn County Forest 2020 Annual Report



Totogatic Park Campground Expansion

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

January – April

Romaine Quinn - Chair
Sandy Johnson – Vice Chair
James Dohm
Hank Graber
Jerry Smith

May –December

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

2020 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 2020.

TIMBER MANAGEMENT

The timber sale program generated \$2,241,914, which was over \$1.3 million less than in 2019. 2020 started with a great deal of harvesting activity and we were on pace to match another record year. In early June, Verso Corporation announced the closure of their paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids.

Wood markets declined almost immediately with drastically reduced wood contracts available to logging contractors. Hardwood and pine pulp were hit the hardest. Aspen markets remained good. Hardwood sawlog were in demand, but with limited pulpwood outlets, few sawlogs were manufactured for the market.

The Forestry Department switched to focus on offering aspen and hardwood sawlogs with a focus on summer ground. Despite drastic reductions in revenue streams, bid rates only dropped 10 to 15%, leading to an assumption that contractors were speculating on improved markets. Red pine bid rates increased, primarily due to offering older plantations with more utility pole products.

The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Committee began offering one year timber sale contract extensions with no penalties in hopes that markets will improve and sales will be harvested. Many new timber sale contracts were offered for 3 years rather than the traditional 2 year period.

RECREATION

The onset of Covid in 2020 result in a massive increase in recreational uses on the Forest. Recreation trails and facilities were heavily used and staff saw users in developed areas as well as some of the most remote areas of the forest. Demands of campgrounds resulted in unique challenges with public safety.

ATV

Traffic on the Washburn County ATV Trail system increased dramatically, likely a result of Covid and people wanting to recreate in remote settings. It appeared that the pandemic attracted many new riders to the sport.

The Washburn County ATV system, with the completion of the Casey Loop project, grew to 116.4 miles of summer ATV/UTV trails and 18.1 miles of hybrid (Trout) 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 2020, \$83,480 were awarded for summer ATV; \$14,360 for winter ATV; and \$4,778 for hybrid (TROUTE) trails. A majority of the \$102,888 in total maintenance program funding was distributed to local ATV clubs for equipment and material reimbursement.

In addition to annual maintenance funding, Washburn County completed one trail rehabilitation project on the Wild River Trail. 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 2020, are itemized below;

<u>Project Name</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Grant Award</u>	<u>Percentage Complete in 2020</u>
Wild River 3	Rehabilitation	\$68,500	100%
Hay Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$30,634	0%
Fenander Rest Stop	Development	\$38,790	0%
Hay Creek Bridge	Rehabilitation	\$61,268	0%
Wild River Trail	Relocation	\$23,382	0%
Tranus Lake	Rehabilitation	\$166,430	0%

In 2020, Washburn County received a grant to relocate the Wild River Trail, north of Spooner, to accommodate a re-alignment of the Great Northern Railroad Tracks (\$63,115). We also received a grant to rehabilitate 9.5 miles of Trail 39 North (\$166,435). These grant projects were in addition to the annual maintenance funding.

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

All snowmobile trails were open as of January 1, 2020 (trails opened December 20, 2019). Trails closed on March 9, 2020. Trail conditions were good to excellent through the winter. We did not receive enough snow to open trails prior to January 31

Annual maintenance contracts are awarded to the Forestry Department. In 2020, maintenance was awarded at a rate of \$300/mile for snowmobile trail maintenance. \$72,990 was awarded and used to maintain trails. There were no supplemental funds awarded in 2020.

In 2020, a private landowner in the Town of Barronett cancelled a snowmobile trail use agreement, resulting in a potential closure of Trail 39. County staff were able to secure an agreement with an owner to the south that connected into an existing logging road system on County Forest. The trail was relocated south and connected to Shingle Camp Fire Lane.

Campgrounds

When the pandemic started, the County adopted closures at our campgrounds and we did not open until after Memorial Weekend in 2020. Once opened, the playground, beach and other facilities were closed for public use. There appeared to be a huge increase in camping demand, likely due to people trying to "escape" urban areas and Covid. Despite the late start, Washburn County saw a record recreation program revenue.

Revenues from Totogatic were approximately \$230,991, nearly \$40,000 higher than the prior year. The campground was full nearly the entire summer (after the late opener) 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.

2020 was the 8th 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 the Totogatic Park expansion project utilizing \$811,490 in grant funds (50/50 cost share) awarded in 2018. The Committee bid out project components in early 2020. Cecil builders secured the contract for the shower building and pump house; McCabe Construction for the general construction; DMB Well for the well; and Hopkins Sand and Gravel for the septic.

A significant portion of the Totogatic expansion project was completed. The site was cleared and roadways and sites were cleared and graveled. The shower building, well, and service lines were constructed and installed. The remaining work items at the end of 2020 were final grading, shower building test, pump house, well, final site grading, blacktop and maintenance building.

The Parks program, excluding grant funded systems, took in a total revenue of \$253,284 (\$206,370 in 2019).

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.

Both ski trails had good snow conditions from January 1 through early March.

All trail systems saw a dramatic increase in usage, probably relating to the pandemic.

FACILITIES/ EQUIPMENT/ACQUISITIONS

The Department entered the 3rd 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 Assistant Forest Administrator.

Blinds were installed in the new office building and the Highway Department blacktopped the parking lot.

PERSONNEL

Our Department was able to re-allocate staff to assist with food delivers for Meals on Wheels, as well as other programs. We also provided equipment and vehicles to assist with Covid relief efforts.

We remained fully staffed but were not able to find a summer Groundskeeper to assist with recreation management. The Assistant Recreation Administrator, Natural Resources Technician and Campground Hosts did a phenomenal job managing the huge increase in demand for recreation programs.

Brian Jilek continued as the Recreation Officer and his efforts have been beneficial and appreciated. Having a law enforcement presence on the forest again was critical to our operations.

COUNTY FOREST PLAN

The Forestry, Parks and Recreation Department operates under the guidance of a County Forest Plan. The current 15 year Washburn County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan expired at the end of 2020 and staff began drafting new language early in 2020.

The Committee began reviewing draft chapters and approving release to the public for review. Once the pandemic started, the Committee elected to temporarily suspend Plan discussions until the public was able to interact with the Department and the Committee. Plan progress resumed in the fall and the final Plan approval is slated for early 2021.

OTHER

Approximately 3 miles of the Shingle Camp Firelane was upgraded with a new gravel surface.

Conroy Dam / Casey Creek Flowage removal/restoration was approved by the Committee and is planned for 2021/2022

The Highway Department requested a review of the Wolf Springs Forest property for a possible wetland mitigation bank. The structure on the north flowage (#4) is in poor repair and approval was granted by Committee to remove the structure and restore free flow conditions. The Army Corps. of Engineers has indicated that restoring flowage to its former wetland stand could be an eligible mitigation project. Investigation of this will continue in the future.

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 2020

I. Reforestation

A.	Acres newly planted:	0	acres
B.	Acres replanted:	0	acres
C.	Acres seeded (jack pine):	0	acres
D.	Jack pine regeneration – scarified	19	acres
E.	Oak regeneration - scarified	226	acres
F.	White birch regeneration – scarified	0	acres
G.	Swamp conifer mowing	0	acres
H.	Northern hardwood regeneration – mowing	50	acres
I.	Northern hardwood regeneration – scarified	25	acres
J.	Site Prep (mechanical)	213	acres
K.	Site Prep (chemical)	213	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	0	acres

III. Timber Sale Statistics

A.	Timber value contracted	\$2,994,684 (\$2,523,153 in 2019)
B.	Acres established:	2,585 acres (2,597 acres in 2019)
C.	Acres sold:	2,653 acres (2,560 acres in 2019)
D.	Acres closed out:	2,196 acres (3,249 acres in 2019)
E.	Volumes removed:	total cord equivalent = 46,304 (58,447 in 2019)
1.	Pulpwood total:	43,278
a.	Aspen pulpwood	15,485 cords
b.	Mixed hardwood pulpwood	19,737 cords
c.	Pine pulpwood	7,497 cords
d.	Spruce/fir pulpwood	558 cords
2.	Sawtimber total:	1,375 mbf (thousand board feet)

VI. Recreation Facilities

A.	Totogatic Park	
1.	Total Gross Revenue - \$230,991	(\$191,347 in 2019)
2.	Camping Registrations - \$198,734	(\$165,657 in 2019)
3.	Shower revenue from bathhouse - \$1,565	(\$1,887 in 2019)
4.	Firewood revenue – \$10,540	(\$8,645 in 2019)
5.	Ice, Day Use, Dump Station, etc. - \$2,409	(\$2,350 in 2019)
6.	Reservation system fees - \$17,352	(\$12,808 in 2019)
B.	Sawmill Park Revenue - \$11,445	(\$8,120 in 2019)
C.	Harmon / Dugan Equestrian Trails / Other	
1.	Horse Trail/Camping Revenue – \$3,754	(\$2,695 in 2019)
2.	Dispersed Camping Permits - \$340	(\$414 in 2019)
3.	Trail Donations - \$1,029	(\$504 in 2019)
D.	Leisure Lake Youth Camp - \$5,725	(\$5,295 in 2019)

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST: ANNUAL REPORT OF ACCOUNTS 2020

I. RECEIPT AND EXPENDITURE SUMMARY OF FORESTRY AND PARKS ACCOUNTS

A. <u>Timber revenues received by County:</u>		
Gross timber sale receipts		\$2,241,914.40
Damages, interest, other misc. income		\$ 11,667.62
Gathering permits (firewood, boughs, Christmas trees)		\$ 922.28
<u>TOTAL FOREST PRODUCTS REVENUE - \$2,254,504.30</u>		
 <u>Recreation revenues received by County:</u>		
Totogatic Park		\$ 230,991.49
Sawmill Park		\$ 11,445.00
Leisure Lake		\$ 5,725.00
Misc. Recreation Revenue		\$ 5,122.54
<u>TOTAL RECREATION PROGRAM REVENUE - \$ 253,284.03</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		\$ 21,162.39
County Forest Administrator Grant (inc. WCFA dues reimb.)		\$ 59,963.96
Private Grants		\$.00
Equipment Sales		\$.00
Misc.		\$ 7,905.99
<u>TOTAL MISCELLANEOUS REVENUE - \$ 163,769.52</u>		
 Total Revenues		 \$2,671,557.85
 B. <u>Expenditures by County:</u>		
Firelanes (53410)		\$ 3,180.79
Forestry Aid fund (56930)		\$ 66,173.50
County Forest Land Development (56100)		\$ 780,722.30
10% statutory timber sale revenue to towns		\$273,963.61
5% additional timber sale revenue allocated by County		\$136,916.26
Forestry Aid Loan Repayment		\$ 74,737.18
Parks Expenditures (55200)		\$150,088.98
<u>TOTAL NON-GRANT EXPENDITURES - \$ 1,485,782.62</u>		
 C. Net Revenue to County		 \$1,185,775.23*
		<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>	\$ 7,018.99	\$ 20,644.48
C. <u>Snow Trails - 55440</u>	\$ 127,229.45	\$ 127,229.45
D. <u>Land Acquisition - 56110</u>	\$ 0.00	\$ 0.00
E. <u>County Forest Roads - 56125</u>	\$ 33,671.43	\$,40,196.83
F. <u>ATV Trails - 55310</u>	\$ 120,705.22	\$ 120,705.22

III. Fund Balances on non-lapsing accounts as of 12/31/20 *subject to final reconciliation and audit

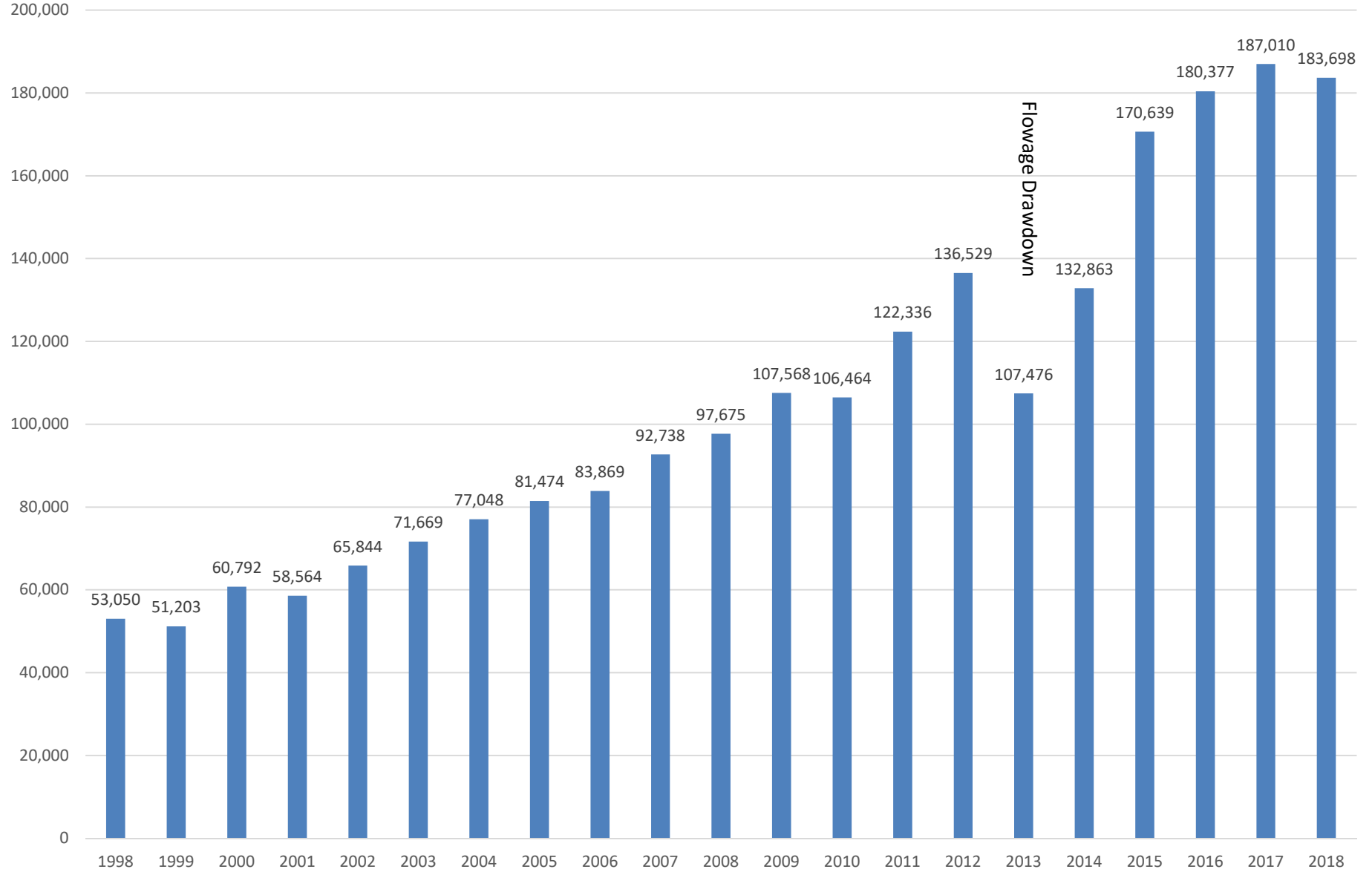
A. Forestry Aid (State loan funds)	\$ 33,670
B. Wildlife Habitat (State grant funds)	\$ -371
C. County Forest Roads (State grant fund)	\$ 109,896
D. Land Acquisition	\$ 8,984

IV.	<u>Money received by Towns:</u>		
	State payment (\$.30/acre on 150,196.03 acres)		\$ 45,058.81
	10% timber sale revenue (statutory requirement)		\$ 273,919.89
	5% timber sale revenue (additional paid by Washburn County)		\$ 136,959.98
	TOTAL		\$ 455,938.68

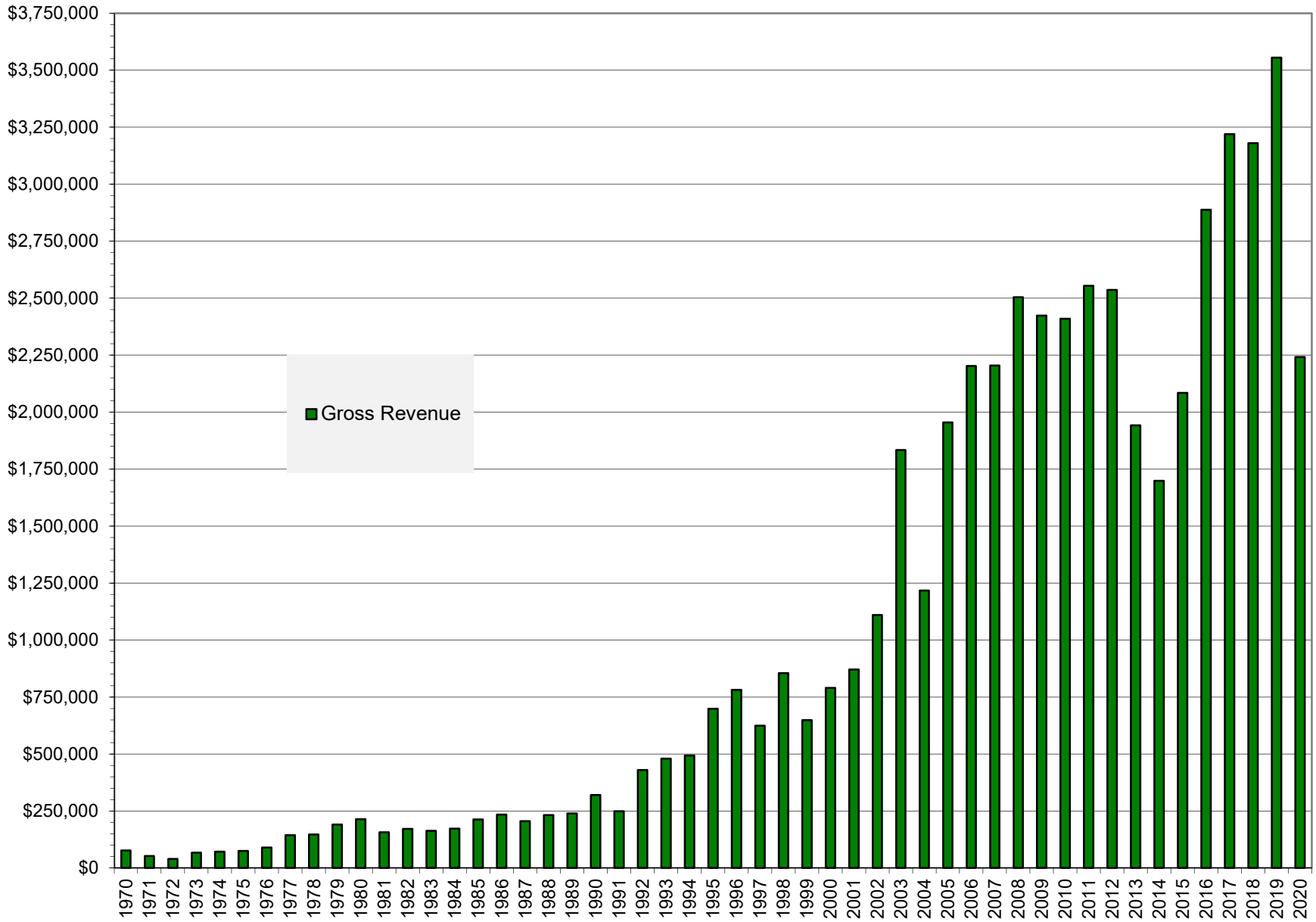
Total monies received by Towns – 2020 (paid in 2021):

Barronett	\$13,732.84	(5,020 ac)	Frog Creek	\$96,521.43	(35,283 ac)
Bass Lake	\$8,487.96	(3,103 ac)	Gull Lake	\$38,658.45	(14,431 ac)
Beaverbrook	\$8,162.95	(2,984 ac)	Madge	\$9,708.68	(3,549 ac)
Birchwood	\$54,361.46	(19,872 ac)	Minong	\$21,988.65	(8,038 ac)
Brooklyn	\$15,767.51	(5,764 ac)	Sarona	\$5,787.65	(2,116 ac)
Casey	\$23,432.89	(8,566 ac)	Springbrook	\$21,400.27	(7,823 ac)
Chicog	\$25,107.64	(9,178 ac)	Stinnett	\$39,447.75	(14,431 ac)
Crystal	\$10,160.24	(3,714 ac)	Stone Lake	\$16,824.30	(6,150 ac)
			Trego	\$1,299.20	(475 ac)

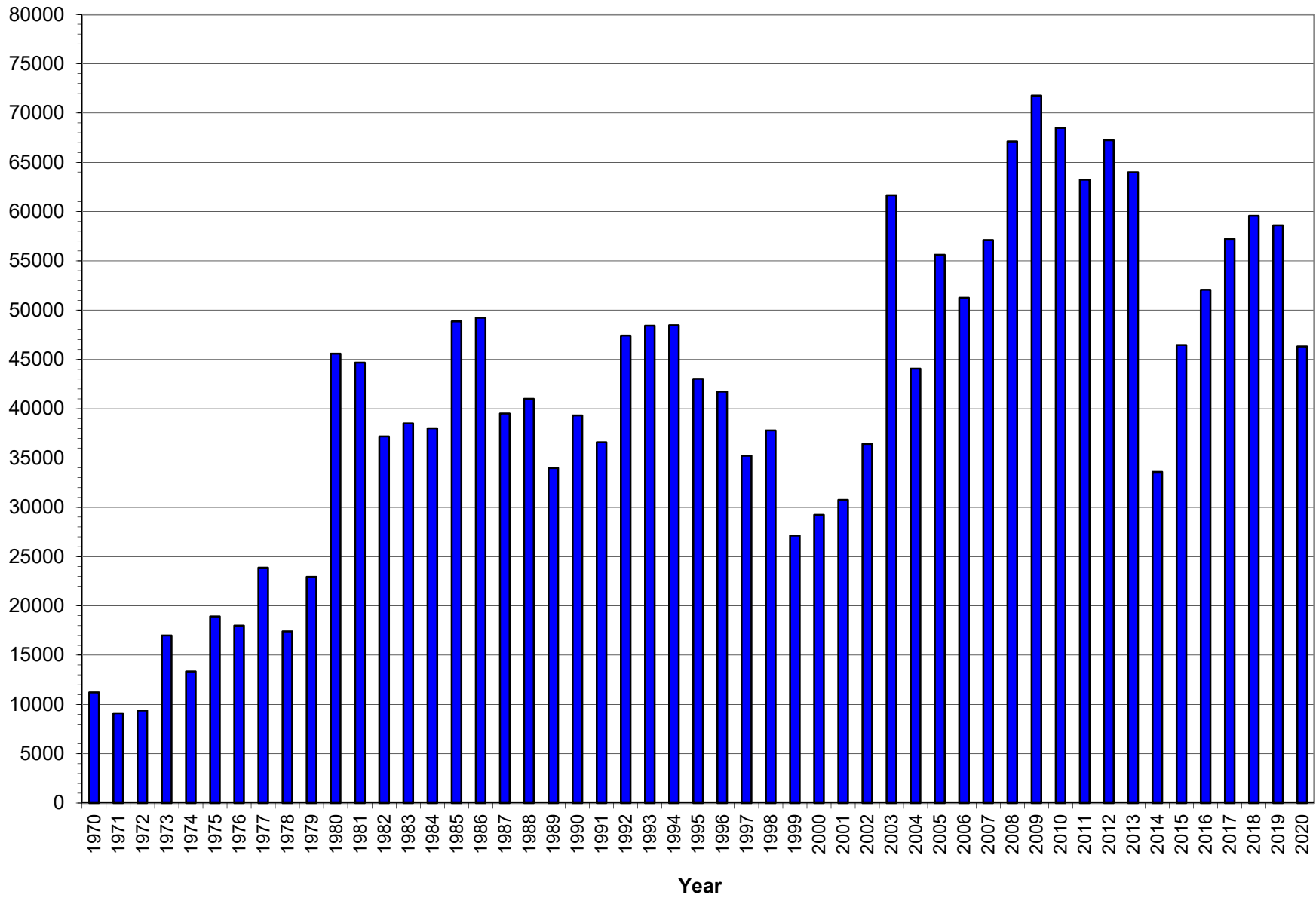
Recreation Program Revenues (Excluding Grant Funded Programs)



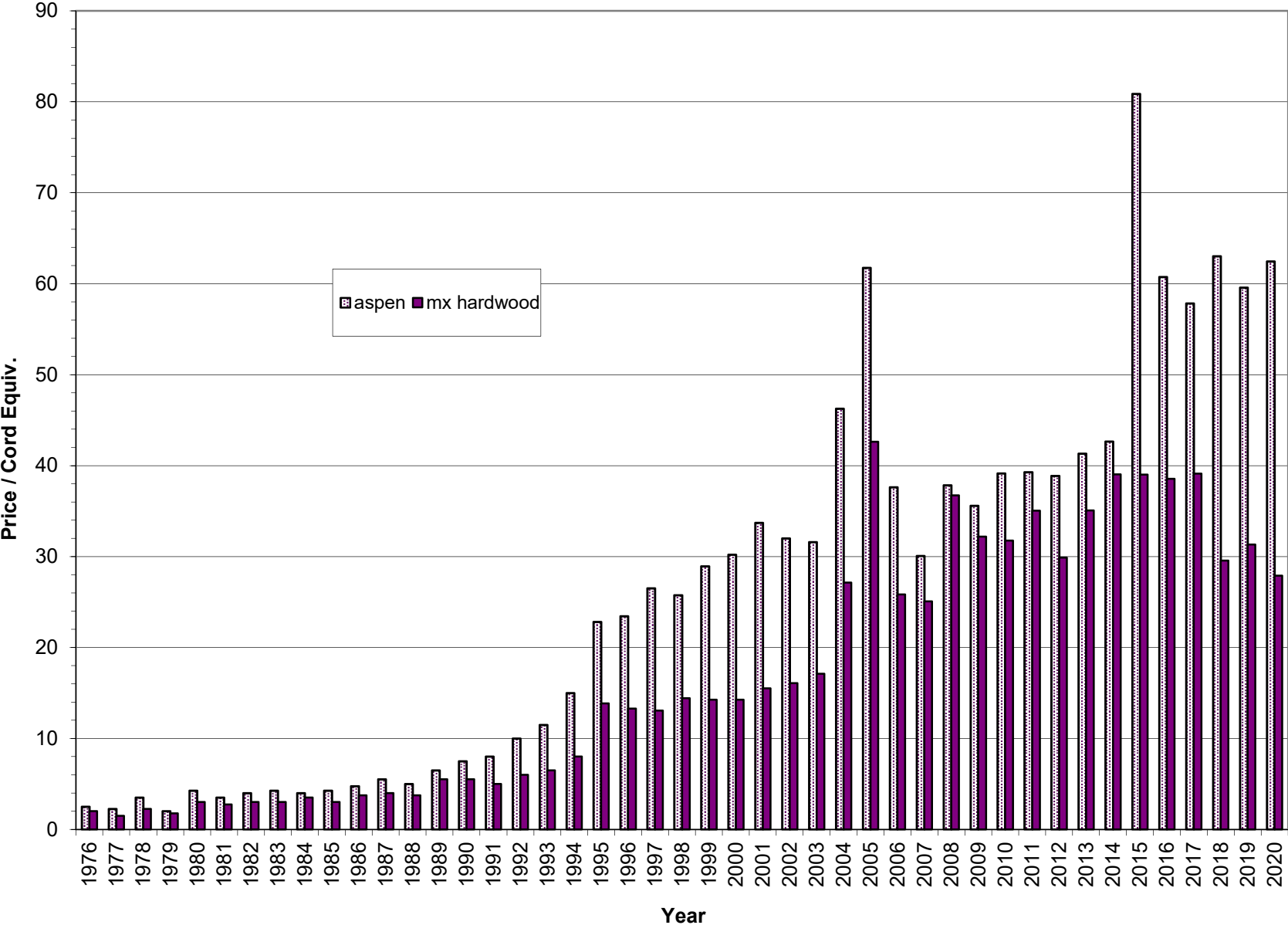
Gross Timber Sale Revenue



Total Cords Removed



Aspen & Mixed Hardwood Average Stumpage Price



Red Pine & Jack Pine Average Stumpage Price

