

OCONTO COUNTY
FORESTRY & PARKS

OCONTO COUNTY



FOREST-PARKS-RECREATION

2009 ANNUAL REPORT

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FORESTRY AND PARKS DIVISION 2009 ANNUAL REPORT

COUNTY FORESTRY

Mission Statement

Natural resources, such as those provided by the County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the Oconto County Forest is to manage, conserve and protect these resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable forest management practices.

The Oconto County Forest is comprised of 43,581 acres divided into six management units in the central and east central portions of the County. Following is a breakdown by Township:

Abrams	5,618.66	Morgan	2,200.00
Bagley	10,380.19	Oconto	1,405.31
Brazeau	12,538.20	Pensaukee	544.32
Breed	6,936.42	Stiles	934.54
How	400.00	Underhill	35.39
Little River	2,560.36	Maple Valley	27.94

In 2009, major accomplishments include: 1) Continued Forest Certification with both the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI), 2) Implement Year 2009 of 15 Year Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2006-2020).

Forest Certification

The forest products industry is increasingly requiring their suppliers to verify that the raw materials being supplied have originated from well-managed forest lands. Third-party certification of forest lands is becoming the norm for objectively evaluating the sustainable management of forest lands. To that end, Oconto County has committed to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) in the management of the Oconto County Forest. These certification standards fit within the framework of the County Forest Law program (s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.). The Department of Natural Resources is the group certification manager and is responsible for overall administration of the certification effort in both the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification groups.

Oconto County's Commitment

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Oconto County will implement forestry practices that promote forest sustainability and multiple use of the forest. In the management of the Forest that will include the sustainable harvest of forest products, the protection of special sites, wildlife, plants, water quality and aesthetics. Oconto County is committed to the following:

1. **Sustainable Forestry Principles** – To practice sustainable forestry to meet the present needs of society without sacrificing the ability of future generations to meet their anticipated needs. In doing so, Oconto County will integrate the reforestation, managing, growing and harvesting of trees for forest products with the conservation of air and water quality, soil, ecosystem diversity, wildlife, recreation and aesthetics.
2. **Responsible Practices** – To employ practices that are economically, environmentally and socially responsible in the management of the Oconto County Forest and to also encourage other forest owners to do the same.
3. **Forest Health & Productivity** – To work cooperatively with the DNR and other agencies in protecting our forests from pests, diseases, wildfire and other damaging agents in order to improve long-term productivity and forest health.
4. **Unique Sites** – To manage areas of special biological, geographical, cultural or historical significance in such a way as to preserve their unique qualities.
5. **Legal Compliance** – To comply with applicable local, state and federal laws and regulations in the management of the Oconto County Forest.
6. **Monitoring and Continuous Improvement** – To continually seek improvement in the management of the Oconto County Forest and to monitor, assess and report performance towards the objective of sustainable forestry.

15 Year Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2006-2020

The goal of the plan is to administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“...to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public right, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”

Year 2008 was implemented and no updates were done.

2009 Timber Sales Sold

The Forest & Parks Division holds 2 timber sales per year, spring and fall sales totaled \$371,418.70, consisting of 8,726 cords and 90 mbf. The following is a break down of species sold: 1,187 cds Aspen, 3,685 cds of Mixed Hardwood, 800 cds N. Pin Oak, 99 cords Jack Pine, 213 cds Balsam Fir, 20 cds Hemlock, 10 cds White Pine, 1,947 cds Red Pine, 445 cds White Spruce, and 320 cds of Fuelwood. Sawlogs: 4 mbf Mixed Hardwoods, 59 mbf Red Maple, 9 mbf White Birch, 18 mbf Ash. These 20 sales totaled 724 acres. County Forest Work Plan for 2009 identified 737 acres to be marked for harvest.

2009 Timber Sale Revenues

The 2009 timber sales fell from 2008 due to the economic time. Timber revenues in 2009 were \$287,927.47 compared to \$457,719.98 in 2008.

County Sustainable Forest Grants

Oconto County applied and received a County Forest Sustainable Grant for \$9,500.00 to do oak regeneration release on 84 acres.

Plantations

A 40 acre Red Pine Plantation that was struggling, was hit by a forest fire in 2008. This site was mulched and totally replanted in 2009.

Roads

Oconto County Forestry & Parks Division maintains 36 miles of forestry roads, these roads meet minimum standards of 16 foot surface width and a 20 foot roadway width. In 2008, Oconto County received \$12,126.24 to maintain these roads from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. These funds are deposited into a non-lapsing account used for maintenance of these County Forest Roads. Currently this fund balance is approximately \$13,663.23. In 2009, \$11,530.41 was the expense for maintaining these roads and purchasing equipment.

Machickanee Shooting Range

In 2003, Oconto County developed and opened a shooting range on the County Forest in the Township of Morgan. Shooting range use continues to improve, revenues total \$9,481.44 and expenses were \$4,425.54. Current non-lapsing fund balance is approximately \$16,459.00.

Wildlife Management

Forest Wildlife (Dime-an-Acre) Habitat Grant Program received \$4,356 for Wildlife Projects from the WI DNR. Projects are identified in cooperation with the DNR Liaison Forester, DNR Wildlife Management and the Forest & Parks Committee. Identified projects include access control, mapping, Weso Flowage Control Structure Repair, and Ruffed Grouse Project. Oconto County has been working with the NE Chapter of Ruffed Grouse Society and the Breed Sportsman Club on improving and designating the South Branch Unit of the county forest as a Ruffed Grouse Management Area. This non-lapsing account has an approximate balance of \$15,327.65, expending \$1,660.64 in 2009.

Forest Reconnaissance

In 2007, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources developed a new program for Forest Reconnaissance called Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WISFIRS). Oconto County integrated with this system in the Fall of 2007 and Spring of 2008. Oconto County Forest Reconnaissance is within 20 year parameter. Annual updates are done by both Oconto County Forest and Wisconsin DNR Staff.

Conservation Aids

Oconto County received two Conservation Aid Grants in 2007, parking lot improvement for the County Forest in the How and South Bay Shore Unit (\$12,950) and Anderson Lake Boat Landing Improvement (\$56,100). The Anderson Lake Boat Landing Grant was completed in 2009. The Parking lot improvements should be completed in 2010. In 2008, Oconto County received a Conservation Aid Grant to mark County Forest boundaries for \$5,512.00. This project was completed in 2009. In 2008, Oconto County applied for and received a Conservation Aid Grant to repair Weso Flowage (CC-5032) for \$5,512.00. This work was completed in 2009.

Gypsy Moth Suppression Program

Forestry Department coordinates the State Gypsy Moth Suppression Program for Oconto County, which provides financial assistance to private/public land owners. In 2009, there was no spraying, but there were requests to apply for the spray program in 2010. Oconto County submitted a grant application to spray 8 blocks, approximately 500 acres, at the property owner's request.

Land Acquisition

Lands within the County Forest blocking boundaries or areas possessing special or unique values are evaluated for acquisition when they become available. In 2009, Oconto County applied for funding to purchase 80 acres along the Peshtigo Brook in the Town of Brazeau, which is adjacent to the Oconto County Forest.

Encroachments

Oconto County actively investigates all suspected cases of encroachments on the County Forest when reported or discovered through surveys. In 2009, Oconto County withdrew approximately 2 acres from the County Forest System that was being used for a ball diamond by a local township. This property was then conveyed to the Township.

PARKS

There are 15 designated park areas controlled by the Forestry & Parks Division. These include Pioneer Memorial Park, Patzer Park, North Bay Shore Recreation Area, Chute Pond Park (Fisher Memorial Park), Gillett Riverside (BB), D.E. Hall, North River Road Boat Access, Iron Bridge Access, Anderson Lake, Machickanee Flowage Access, Grange Park, Coulliardville Park, Ranch Lake Beach Area, Pensaukee

Landing, and the Recreation Trail. In 2009, Oconto County conveyed what was known as the Townsend Dam Park to the Town of Townsend. The Town had maintained this property for many years.

Recreational Plan

This plan provides guidelines for 2006-2011 for park and recreational improvements.

Chute Pond

Chute Pond Park and Campground has had a contracted caretaker for several years, the caretakers contract will end on November 30, 2011 (renewed in 2009 for two years). Chute Pond Park and Campground Park usage is increasing along with a favorable quality experience. Revenues totaled \$100,662.98 in 2009 as compared to \$89,036.96 in 2008.

North Bay Shore Recreation Area

In 2009, revenues totaled \$59,281.29 as compared to \$46,582.82 in 2008. In the Fall of 2009, Oconto County launched an on-line camping reservation system for North Bay Shore, primitive campsites, seasonal boat launch, and shooting range passes.

Boat Landings

Oconto County charges a user fee at the County owned boat landings. These fees are placed in a non-lapsing account for maintenance of these properties.

In 2009 the total collected was \$33,288.84 as compared to \$24,790.12 in 2008

- Machickanee Boat Launch - \$7,138.28 (2,506 envelopes)
- Chute Pond Boat Launch - \$3,606.30 (1,256 envelopes)
- North Bay Shore Boat Launch - \$6,797.20 (2,365 envelopes)
- Annual Boat Launch Stickers purchased - \$9,571.39 (380 stickers)
- Riverside (BB) Boat Launch - \$61.43 (20 envelopes)

- Pensaukee Boat Launch - \$3,956.48 (1,363 envelopes)
- Patzer Park (Hintz) Boat Launch - \$191.86 (69 envelopes)
- Boat Launch late fees and other violations - \$1,082.50

At the end of 2009, this account has a balance of \$125,932.82.

RECREATION

State Recreational Trails

Oconto County manages 2 State Recreational Trails. The Oconto River and the Nicolet State Recreational Trail. These trails are owned by the WI DNR, in which Oconto County has a 20 year easement to maintain these trails. Majority of maintenance on these trails are accomplished by the Snowmobile and ATV Program. Encroachments on the Recreational Trail is starting to become evident. In 2009, the Nicolet State Recreational Trail was extended to connect to Forest County.

ATV Trail

The Oconto County ATV program is funded by the State WI DNR. In 2008, Oconto County had 69 miles of state funded ATV Trails at \$450.00 per mile. Oconto County in turn has agreements with local ATV Clubs to maintain these trails. Three ATV clubs currently have funding with Oconto County, Gillett Rail Runners ATV Club, Dusty Trails ATV Club, and Red Arrow Snowmobile/ATV Club. Without these local clubs, Oconto County probably would not have ATV Trails. Following are the ATV grants received in 2009:

- ATV-1915 – ATV Trail Maintenance – Total Cost \$31,950.00 – Fund Support 100%.
- ATV-1915 Amendment – Add 13.32 miles to Maintenance – Total Project \$5,984 – Fund Support 100%

- ATV-1957 – Nicolet Trail Surface Rehabilitation – Total Cost \$29,500 – Fund Support 100%
- ATV-1979 – New ATV Trail Development – Total Cost \$82,260 – Fund Support 100%

Following are the ATV Grants that were completed in 2008:

- ATV-1720 – ATV Trail Head Project – Total cost \$408,576 – Fund Support 100%
- ATV-1710 – Nicolet Trail Extension – Total Cost \$116,200 – Fund Support 100%
- ATV-1707 – ATV Bridge Rehabilitation – Total Cost \$30,000 – Fund Support 100%
- RTA-352 – Trailhead Project-Total Cost \$49,059 – Fund Support 100%

Snowmobile Trails

The Oconto County snowmobile program is funded by the WI DNR. Oconto County in turn has maintenance agreements with local clubs to maintain these trails. In 2009, Oconto County started with 421.00 miles of funded trails at \$250.00 per mile, and 31.20 miles of non-funded club trails. Without these local clubs, Oconto County probably would not have snowmobile trails. The following snowmobile grants were received in 2009:

- S-3735 – Trail Maintenance 2008-2009 – Total Cost \$105,250.00 – Fund Support 100%
- S-3827 – Bridge Replacement – Total Cost \$30,000.00 – Fund Support 100%

The following snowmobile grants were completed in 2008:

- S-3593 – Trail Maintenance 2008-2009 – Total Cost \$105,250.00 – Fund Support 100% Supplemental funding of \$111,085.27

- S-3549 – Oconto River Bridge Replacement (Stiles) – Total Cost \$211,500.00 – Fund Support 100%

Recreational Officer

In 2003, Oconto County created a full time Recreational Officer position with the County's Sheriff's Department. This position was filled in 2004 and had great success since. The public is very supportive and pleased with this position. This position utilizes state funding from ATV/Snowmobile/Boating Law Enforcement Programs. The Forest, Parks, & Recreation Department approved budget for the recreation officer, the amount transferred to the Sheriff Department's budget in 2009 was \$21,400.00.

County Owned Dams

In 2007, the Wisconsin DNR inspected the 4 major County owned dams: Chute Pond, Reservoir, Wheeler and Leigh Lake. All four dams need some repair with Chute Pond being the most extensive. Engineering the 4 dams was awarded to Becher-Hoppe Associates of Wausau, WI for \$20,200.00. Oconto County received a one time environmental impact fee from a transmission line project of \$188,299.00 that will be used for the repairs. In 2008, the repair of the Dams was awarded to United Construction, Abrams, WI. Clearing, grubbing, seeding was taken out of contract, this work was done by Forestry & Parks Department. All work was completed in 2008 with the exception of 1-2 weeks for United at Wheeler Dam and about 2-3 weeks for Forestry & Parks. This work was all completed in 2009. In 2008, the Wisconsin DNR inspected Weso Flowage Dam. The control structure and earthen embankment needed repairs. Oconto County received a County Conservation Aids Grant (CC-5032) and completed this project in 2009.

2009 FINANCIALS

REVENUE

S/A National Forest Income	\$ 254,463.00
S/A National Forest Title III	\$ 14,968.00
S/A Snowmobile	\$ 278,267.37
S/A ATV	\$ 82,575.00
S/A Conservation	\$ 22,481.44
S/A Recreational Aids	\$ 0.00
S/A Wildlife	\$ 4,355.58
S/A Forest Roads	\$ 14,876.24
S/A Forest (Admin Grant)	\$ 47,727.00
S/A Forest-WCFA Grant	\$ 2,517.27
S/A Gypsy Moth	\$ 0.00
Parks	
Chute Pond	\$100,662.98
NBS	\$ 59,281.29
Boat Landing	\$ 33,288.94
Shooting Range	\$ 9,481.44
County Forest	
Forest Permits	\$ 2,782.91
County Forest	
Timber Sales	\$ 287,927.47
Penalty Assessment	\$ 1,360.91
Payment to Towns	(\$31,008.93)
Private Tree Planting	\$ 1,070.69
Sale Tax Transfers	<u>\$ 36,513.79</u>
Total	\$1,223,592.69

EXPENSES

S/A National Forest(Towns)	\$ 254,462.00
S/A National Forest Title III	\$ 4,750.00
S/A Snowmobile	\$ 232,136.82
S/A ATV	\$ 465,637.68
S/A Conservation	\$ 5,927.33
S/A Recreational Aids	\$ 49,059.00
S/A Wildlife	\$ 1,660.64
S/A Forest Roads	\$ 11,530.41
Local Park Aid	\$ 0.00
S/A Forest-Sustainable Grant	\$ 0.00
S/A Gypsy Moth	\$ 0.00
Parks	\$ 260,803.21
Boat Landing	\$ 16,053.00
Shooting Range	\$ 8,475.15
County Forest	\$ 276,751.53
Program Reimbursement	\$ (-192.25)
Land Acquisition	\$ 500.00
County Dams	\$ 11,689.15
Truck & Trailer	<u>\$ 36,513.79</u>
Total	\$1,636,141.96