

# OCONTO COUNTY FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

## Report to County Board on 2014 Work Plan

### Harvesting

As identified in the Fifteen Year Comprehensive County Forest Plan the Forestry Department goals are to manage the following specific forest tracts as follows:

<u>Timber type</u>	<u>Size (acres)</u>
Aspen	322
Northern Hardwoods	123
Swamp Hardwoods	24
Red Pine	405
Tamarack	17
Swamp Conifer	<u>14</u>
Total	909

Generally yearly sale average about 800 acres. These sales will be adjusted as inspected and updated recon occurs.

Aspen – Aspen are shade intolerant species that will be managed through even-aged techniques with rotating periods of 40-50 years.

Northern Hardwoods - Northern Hardwood stands contain more than 50% hardwood species that are moderately to high shade tolerant, and managed through even-aged techniques including thinnings and shelter wood or clear cut harvest. Predominant species include sugar maple, basswood, red maple, white ash, yellow birch and American beach. Northern Minimum Basal Area stocking to conduct thinning will be 180 square feet per acre. Scheduling thinnings will be based on current basal area plus basal area growth of 8 square feet per acre per year.

Swamp Hardwoods – Swamp Hardwoods are relatively shade intolerant and managed through even-aged techniques including intermediate thinnings and shelter wood harvests. Stands with site index of less than 50 will have rotating age of 80 years if feasible. Shelter wood harvest will be done at stand age of 120 years or older if feasible.

Red Pine – Red Pine with a rotation period of 120 years will also be even age managed combined with the use of thinnings which will be conducted every ten years. While current Pine stands are now beginning middle age useable products such as pulp wood for the production of paper and paper products, cabin logs, landscape timbers, and small dimensional lumber can all utilize this otherwise lost volume of wood while increasing the growth on the remaining trees.

Swamp Conifer – Swamp Conifer will be managed through even-aged techniques. The managed objective for the specific site will be identified within an ecosystem framework, giving consideration to a variety of objectives within the local and regional land scopes. Management concerns of special importance for low land forest types include Best Management Practices (BMP's) for water quality, endangered resources, biodiversity, wildlife and aesthetics.

Tamarack will be managed through even-aged techniques. The managed objective for the specific site will be identified within an ecosystem framework, giving consideration to a variety of objectives within the local and regional land scopes. Management concerns of special importance for low land forest types include Best Management Practices (BMP's) for water quality, endangered resources, biodiversity, wildlife and aesthetics.

### Regeneration of Stands After Harvest.

Aspen

These stands should regenerate naturally from stump sprouts of the existing roots systems from Aspen, Paper Birch, Soft Maple, and Oaks that are present and of good vigor on the site.

### Swamp Hardwood

These stands will surely regenerate to soft maple where present. However on sites where other light seeded species dominate the site the use of scarification and group selection may be employed to achieve successful regeneration.

### Northern Hardwood

These stands will surely regenerate to hard maple where present. However on sites where other light seeded species dominate the site use of scarification and group selection may be employed to achieve successful regeneration.

### Red Pine

There are not any stands presently existing on the Oconto County Forest of Sufficient age in need of regeneration. The residual stands after thinning will close canopy within 10 years and fully occupy the site.

## **Forest Planning**

### Fifteen Year Comprehensive Forest Land Use Plan Update.

In October of 2005, the Oconto County Board of Supervisors approved the 15 Year Plan and final approval from the WDNR in 2006. In 2014, some amendments will be necessary.

## **Planting**

No planting or restocking will occur in 2014.

## **Timber Sale Administration**

Currently there are 55 timber sales on record. Timber sale administration is estimated to be 1,000 hours. Additional time needs to be spent by Oconto County Forest Staff on administration.

## **Timber Sale Establishment**

Due to the timber sale establishment partnership agreement between Oconto County and the WDNR, Oconto County Forestry personnel will establish 50% of the timber sales. Timber Sale establishment has taken more time due to marking property boundaries.

## **WIS FIRS/Forest Recon**

In 2007, Wisconsin DNR initiated the Wisconsin Forest Inventory & Reporting System (WIS FIRS) for Forest Recon. In 2014, Oconto County will be utilizing new online mapping tool.

## **County Forest Sustainable Grant**

Oconto County was awarded a white pine regeneration grant for \$14,000.00 and should complete this project in 2014.

## **County Forest Road System**

Oconto County will maintain 37 miles of forest roads on the forest. Maintenance of these roads will require 300 hours to complete.

## **Wildlife**

Oconto County will be working with the NE Chapter of the Ruffed Grouse Society and the Breed Sportsman Club to improve grouse opportunities and habitat in the South Branch Unit. This entire unit has been designated for Grouse Management. Emphasis will be controlling and mapping access, trails, wildlife

openings and establishing parking lots. Digitizing and mapping habitat to take advantage of GPS and GIS will be a priority. This will amount to 500 hours. Reseeding logging roads and/or landings will be done when feasible. In 2014, Oconto County will be working with the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association to develop a project for Oconto County. Oconto County has an easement with the Wisconsin Waterfowl Association.

## **Recreation on the Forest**

Oconto County has wilderness campsites that need to be maintained, trails maintained and coordinated, and respond to the public regarding other hunting and recreational use of the forest. Enforcement on the ATV trail will become a priority to control environmental damage. Total Human Resource needs to accomplish these tasks are estimated to be 600 hours. In 2004, the Sheriff's Department hired a full time Recreational Officer. 2014 budget includes \$12,000 for enforcement on County Forest, not related to ATV's. This Recreational Officer has worked out excellently, with many positive comments. Oconto County has applied for a County Conservation Aids Grant to expand the shooting range on the County Forest.

## **Property Management**

Property lines, removal of debris, illegal activity, flooding by beavers, all require responsiveness to the public. Resources needed to accomplish this task are estimated at 500+ hours; most often these goals are not fully accomplished. Oconto County has a County Conservation AIDS Grant for \$5,512.00 (50% matching) for marking the county forest boundary in 2014.

## **County Forest Partnership (State)**

Have annual county Forest Partnership meetings with appropriate DNR staff-include minutes in annual work plan. Partnership meeting has been very useful and will continue in 2014.

## **County Forest Certification**

Oconto County will comply with Forest Certification requirements in 2014.

## **National Forest Pilot Project**

Oconto County is involved in a Federal Forest County Management Pilot Project with Florence and Forest Counties. This project, if approved, would involve co-managing 36,939 acres of the National Forest Lands in Oconto County.

## **2014 Annual Needs/Budget**

Detailed annual needs in the 15 Year Plan include: 5 culverts, and 10 gates. The major item, a road grader, has been postponed until 2015. In 2014, Forestry & Parks will work with Highway Dept. on using Highway Grader on a trial basis. The 2014 Budget includes training/meetings for Forestry/Parks staff and Forestry/Parks Committee Members.

## **Summary**

Direct revenues from the County Forest System are expected to be \$363,750.00 with expenses projected at \$314,665.00. Indirect benefits include thousands of visits to the forest by tourists, hunters, fishermen, berry pickers, sightseers, skiers, snowmobilers, and ATV Trail. Jobs supported by the forest are estimated to be nearly 400 throughout Northeast Wisconsin including timber producers, truckers, mill workers, and product handlers. Plus the multiple effects each of these has on the local economy.