

WOOD COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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100 **MISSION STATEMENT**

Natural resources, such as those provided by the Wood County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the 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.

105 **GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN  
(Hereafter referred to as the “Plan”)**

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 rights, 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.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning) s. 1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This County Forest plan will complement, and should be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts (e.g. Smart growth). There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. In an effort to ensure that the values of the Wood County Forest are fully recognized, protected and infused into local planning, the County Forest administrator will monitor and participate in “Smart Growth” planning as needed.

## **110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE**

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Wood County Forest.
2. To provide the reader of the plan with background information regarding the County Forest.

## **115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Law (s. 28.10 and 28.11 Wis. Stats.) provides the authority to establish, develop, and manage a permanent County Forest Program. (For the full text of the County Forest Law refer to Chapter 900, section 905.1).

## **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Wood County Park and Forestry Committee of the Wood County Board (*hereafter referred to as the “committee”*) enforces the regulations governing the use of the Wood County Forest.

### **120.1 ORDINANCES**

The Wood County Forestry Ordinance applies to the administration and management of the Wood County Forest and can be found in Chapter 900 (900.2.1).

## **125 HISTORY**

### **125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT**

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within county forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the county forest. In return for this aid, the state originally collected a seventy-five percent severance tax on the products cut on county forests. This was reduced to fifty percent in 1937 and then to twenty percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20% of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment to towns is currently \$.30/acre. In addition, towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Stumpage revenues exceed \$18,000,000 annually. Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin now own approximately two and one third million acres entered under the County Forest Law. A listing of current County Forests and corresponding acreages are as follows:

Ashland	40,003 acres
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Barron	15,827
Bayfield	169,047
Burnett	106,429
Chippewa	33,107
Clark	132,852
Douglas	269,794
Eau Claire	52,278
Florence	36,390
Forest	10,848
Iron	174,321
Jackson	120,887
Juneau	15,146
Langlade	127,109
Lincoln	100,703
Marathon	28,662
Marinette	231,220
Monroe	6,706
Oconto	43,516
Oneida	82,312
Polk	17,109
Price	92,119
Rusk	89,043
Sawyer	113,851
Taylor	17,566
Vernon	880
Vilas	40,860
Washburn	149,015
Wood	37,554

## 125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in

overharvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

### 125.3 WOOD COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

The original survey records from the 1850's show that the Wood County Forest area was primarily covered with stands of white pine and tamarack. Other commonly mentioned species included maple, birch, aspen, and oak. Between 1850 and the early 1930's, when the county first acquired forest land, portions of the county were cut over, drained, burned, and farmed. Many farms failed due to poor soil characteristics, leaving the land tax delinquent. The Wood County Forest originated primarily from these tax delinquent lands, with acquisitions beginning in the 1930's. Wood County was one of the first counties to participate under the County Forest Crop Law. The first Wood County Forestry Ordinance was adopted on November 21, 1932 and the first state aid payment was received in June of 1934. Wood County operated with a part-time administrator and bookkeeper who served as a bookkeeper and secretary for the Conservation and Forestry Committee until 1982. At that time, Wood County, in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, mutually agreed to create a full-time Forest Administrator position. The position became known as a "Cost Shared Forest Administrator" and several other counties also participated in this program. This position was funded equally by Wood County and the DNR. Since the last planning cycle the State decided to discontinue the "Cost Shared Forest Administrator" program. Instead, the DNR has implemented a "County Forest Administrator Grant Program". Under this program, annual grants are available to fund up to 50% of the salary and fringe benefits of a county employed, professional forester in the position of County Forest Administrator or Assistant County Forest Administrator. Benefits may not exceed 40% of salary. Wood County created the position of County Forest Administrator in September 2002 and entered into the County Forest Administrator Grant Program in January 2003. The Forest Administrator is supervised by the Parks Administrator, and also reports to the Wood County Park and Forestry Committee.

## 125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Wood County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (WCFA). This Association was incorporated on May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of ten delegates elected from the County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association.

This corporation provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s.28.11 and Chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues.

## **130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST**

### 130.1 NATURAL FEATURES

#### 130.1.1 Topography

Wood County contains Precambrian igneous and metamorphic rock, Cambrian sandstone, and a variety of Pleistocene material. The southern part of the county is the flat plain of Glacial Lake Wisconsin. The remainder of the county has undulating topography. The northwest part of the county is underlain by thick glacial sediment deposited before the Wisconsin Glaciation. Much of the rest of the county is underlain by Cambrian sand and sandstone, but outcrops of Precambrian rock are abundant. The present landforms are the direct result of the Wisconsin Glacial Ice Sheet. This last stage of glaciation ended some fifteen to twenty thousand years ago. Most of the county forest lies in the southern portion of the county in the flat plain of Glacial Lake Wisconsin.

#### 130.1.2 Geology and Soils

Wood County consists of three geologically different areas. As mentioned previously, the southern third of the county is the flat plain of Glacial Lake Wisconsin. Most of the plain is

underlain by offshore sand, which is thickest in the east. In many places one or more beds of offshore silt and clay occur in the sand at a depth of several meters or tens of meters. The water table is near the surface in the western half of the lake plain, and peat overlies the sand in many places. The water table is well below the surface in most of the eastern half of the lake plain, which is bisected by the trench of the Wisconsin River. The middle third and northeastern part of the county have undulating topography underlain in many areas by thin Cambrian sand and sandstone; other areas are underlain by Precambrian metamorphic and igneous rock. Although this area has been glaciated, Pleistocene material generally consists of surface layer hill slope deposits containing only scattered fragments of glacially transported material. The northwestern part of the county has undulating topography underlain by thick glacial sediment deposited before the Wisconsin Glaciation.

Soil types on the Wood County Forest are generally sandy and are in the following associations: Elm Lake-Merrilan, Plainfield-Friendship, and Newson-Meehan. Organic soils present on the Wood County Forest are primarily from the Dawson-Greenwood and Markey-Rifle associations. A generalized soil map can be found in Chapter 900 (900.1). Detailed soils information is available in the soil survey for Wood County.

### 130.1.3 Geography

Wood County is the 32nd largest county in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 507,428 acres, plus another 9,116 acres of water including: nine named lakes, 70 unnamed lakes or flowages and 82 streams, totaling approximately 390 miles in length. Approximately 206,500 acres (40%) are classified as forest land. The County Forest, which contains approximately 37,554 acres, is the 19th largest County Forest in the state.

### 130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger ecoregion. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and landtype associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and

potential plant communities. The Wood County Forest is encompassed within the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222) province, and is entirely encompassed by the “Central Sand Plain” Subsection. Landtype Associations (LTA’s) within this subsection include: 222Ra04 Northwest Outlet Cranberry Bogs, 222Ra07 Wisconsin River Outwash Terraces, 222Ra11 Yellow River Floodplain and Terraces, 222Ra14 Glacial Lake Wisconsin Siliceous Sand Plain, 222Ra16 Jackson-Juneau Sandstone Knolls and Terraces, 222Rb02 Spaulding Uplands, 222Rb03 Pittsville Uplands. LTA’s, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species, living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. Wood County lies within the “Curtis Tension Zone”, which is a vegetative transition band that runs through central Wisconsin, separating northern forest communities from southern forest communities. As a result, there are species found on the Wood County Forest that are either on the northern or southern limit of their natural ranges. The following biological communities are found on the Wood County Forest:

*Northern Forest: contains mixed deciduous and coniferous forests found in a distinct climatic zone that occurs north of the tension zone. Commonly found in the 222Rb03 LTA in the northern portion(s) of the County Forest. An example is the mixed white pine, aspen, birch, oak, and maple stands found on County lands in Hiles and Seneca Townships.*

*Southern Forest: contain a predominance of oaks and a general absence of conifers and lie south of the tension zone. Commonly found in the 222Ra11, 222Ra14, 222Ra16 LTA’s in the Southern portion(s) of the County Forest. The stands of black and pin oak common in Port Edwards and Remington Townships are examples of this community.*

*Oak Savannas: characterized by open grassland areas interspersed with trees, especially oaks. They are defined as having less than fifty percent of the ground covered with trees. There are no known areas of good savannah being*

*managed on the County Forest. However there may be opportunities, particularly in the southern portions of the County Forest, to manage or restore this community.*

*Oak and Pine Barrens: typically occur on sandy soils and are dominated by grasses, low shrubs, small trees, and scattered large trees. Most commonly these are pine barrens in northern and southern Wisconsin and oak barrens in the southern and west central parts of the state. There are no known barrens communities on the County Forest.*

*Grassland: characterized by the absence of trees and large shrubs and the dominance of grass and forb species.*

*Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water. This community is common across all LTA(s) throughout the forest.*

*Aquatic Communities: including springs, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Common to most LTA's within the County Forest. The Yellow River, Lake Dexter, Hemlock Creek, East Fork Black River, and their tributaries are the major stream complexes on the County Forest.*

#### 130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately 77% of the Wood County Forest land base is forested. Forested uplands are comprised of primarily aspen, oak, mixed hardwood, red pine, and white pine while red maple, off-site aspen, white pine, and tamarack occupy the forested lowlands. It is worth noting that approximately 62% of the forested area is in the aspen cover types. The remainder is classified as non-forested, including types such as open water, wetlands, rights-of-way, grass openings, shrubs and bogs. More information about the different cover types present on the Wood County Forest is detailed under “Forested Communities” in Chapter 800 (820.1).

All of the Wood County Forest is located in the Southern one-half of the county, in five

general blocks. Chapter 900 (900.2) contains maps showing the location of the County Forest.

#### 130.1.6 Wildlife

The Wood County Forest is habitat for wildlife common to Wisconsin. Numerous species of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and mammals frequent the forest. Each species, or interacting group of species, do best under different conditions, ranging from recently disturbed ground to old growth. A diversity of plant communities is key to providing a niche for a variety of wildlife species. For example, two very popular wildlife species in the county are the white-tailed deer, and the ruffed grouse. The aspen forest type is recognized as key habitat for these and many other species and is important in maintaining biological diversity across North America. A number of endangered, threatened, or rare wildlife species make their home in or near the Wood County Forest. The bald eagle, osprey, red-shouldered hawk, Karner blue butterfly, timber wolf, and massasauga rattlesnake are examples. Longer rotation forest communities, such as bottomland hardwoods, white pine, or northern hardwoods, similarly provide important habitat for other, less well-known species, such as pileated woodpeckers or northern goshawk.

#### 130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities and unique natural features on the Wood County Forest. See Chapter 900 (900.8) for a listing of threatened and endangered species in the Forest.

#### 130.1.8 Water

Wood County has 5740.67 acres involving 9 named lakes, 70 unnamed lakes/flowages and 389.7 miles of streams. Of this total, 26.4 miles are classified as trout streams.

The fishery resource within the County Forest boundaries is classified as warm water. There are two named lakes, Dexter Lake and Skunk Creek Flowage, having all or portions of their shoreline under county ownership. A map of the surface waters of Wood County is found in Chapter 900 (900.12).

Wood County currently has no streams or lakes classified as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters within County Forest boundaries.

## 130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

### 130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Wood County. Recreational opportunities with developed facilities include a park, beach, campground, wayside, and boat landings at Dexter Lake. Cross-country skiing, and nature trails are also available near Dexter Lake. Snowmobilers will also find trails through much of the County Forest, while all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts can recreate at a designated ATV area south of highway 54 in Port Edwards and Cranmoor Townships. The county forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, and sightseeing.

### 130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and spin-off industries derived from the recreational opportunities on the Forest and the forest products it produces are vitally important to Wood County's economic well-being. Forest industry is the #3 ranked employer in the County. Wood county forest products and processing industrial output is 33.8% of the total county industrial output. These forest related industries employ 15.0% of the total employment in the county. For every 10 statewide jobs in the forest related industries an additional 16 jobs are produced in other sectors of the state's economy as a result of forest industry purchases and their employee's household purchases. By comparison, for every 10 jobs in the service industry only 6 jobs are produced in other economic sectors. The quality of life in Wood County is heavily dependent on the resources and values the County Forest provides.

### 130.2.3 Roads & Access

All Wood County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. In addition to the town and county roads that access the forest, the county also maintains 8.22 miles of County

Forest roads. Access management is an important issue on the Forest. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation are provided for within the Forest. See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access. The Wood County Forestry Ordinance contained in Chapter 900 also provides direction pertaining to motorized access policy.

#### 130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Wood County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

#### 130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Wood County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs now and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the Forest in coming years.

a. Greater demands are being placed on the Forest by people using it to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has lead to user conflicts. In particular, dramatic increases in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATV's) has pressured County forests into providing trails for their use and resolving access conflicts on the County Forest. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are commonplace.

b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forest land is being lost to residential development, and forest landowners are decreasingly interested in managing land primarily for timber values.

c. Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid 1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock.

A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on Wisconsin's National and State forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the county forests. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

d. Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clearcutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.

e. Wood County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.

f. Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

g. Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 800 (830.4) for specifics on this subject.

h. The Forest is considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

### 130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest is composed of 78 management compartments ranging in size from 113 acres to 1327 acres. Within the county forest boundaries approximately 70 percent of the land is county owned with the balance in small private holdings. A

map of these compartments can be found in Chapter 900 (900.4).