

**WOOD COUNTY, WI  
FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN  
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CHAPTER 100  
BACKGROUND**

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**100 MISSION STATEMENT**

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

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 and maintenance of biotic diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including the production of raw materials for wood-using industries that provide a wide variety of products fulfilling consumer demands, and provisions for recreational opportunities.

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 with 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.”

**110 COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN  
WOOD COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN POLICY**

This plan shall incorporate or reference all official County Forest policies, pertinent county regulations, planning documents and the needs and actions for the period 2021-2035.

This plan is the authority for management on county forest lands enrolled under Wisconsin County Forest Law s.28.11. This plan may be encompassed within required local planning efforts.

## **110.1 Management Planning**

### **OBJECTIVES**

Management planning shall be used to establish objectives, policies, procedures, rules and regulations, and to promote an efficient and orderly program of development and management of the County Forest in the interest of:

1. Determining needs and priorities.
2. Achieving goals set forth in the mission statement of this plan.
3. Satisfying the statutory requirements of s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.
4. Satisfying requirements for participation in various state and federal aid programs.
5. Providing broad long-term and detailed short-term guidelines for actions.

## **110.2 Development of the Plan**

Section 28.11, Wis. Stats., places the responsibility for the plan development on the Wood County Oversight Committee known as the Highway, Infrastructure, and Recreation Committee (HIRC), with technical assistance from the Department and other agencies. All subsequent references to “Committee” shall be understood to mean the HIRC Committee. The County Forest Administrator will take the lead at the committee’s request. During development of the plan, public participation should be utilized to provide for public participation throughout the planning process. Public participation and inputs into the plan should consider s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., which governs the County Forest program and provides the sideboards to which this plan must adhere.

Wood County’s public participation process includes the following:

- 1) Draft Development – Chapters will be drafted and presented to oversight committee on a monthly basis. Public will be notified via traditional newspaper outlet(s), Wood County website, social media (Facebook). Public will be encouraged to provide comments throughout chapter development. Comments may be submitted via email, hand written letter, verbal comments during public comment period of regular monthly committee meetings, and on survey/comment form to be available on website or in the Park and Forestry Office. Additionally, those identified, as likely stakeholders (e.g. snowmobile clubs, sportsman’s groups, Ho-Chunk representatives, etc.) will receive a mailed notification letter.
- 2) Preliminary Draft – Comments and survey results received during chapter development will be considered and may be incorporated into draft chapters. These comments and their incorporation will be made through consultation with appropriate people, stakeholders, groups, authorities associated with the particular comment(s).
- 3) 30 – Day Public Comment Period and Open House Public Meeting – Preliminary Draft of plan will be presented to public and via previously mentioned outlets along with notification of 30-day public comment period and an open house public meeting. Additional changes may be made to Preliminary Draft because of these efforts.
- 4) Draft Completion – Draft Plan will be presented to HIRC Committee at a regularly scheduled, legally noticed committee meeting for approval.

- 5) Draft Plan forwarded to Wisconsin DNR. Required changes (if any) will be incorporated into draft plan.
- 6) HIRC Committee approval of Final Draft
- 7) Final Draft presented to Wood County Board for approval by resolution.
- 8) DNR Approval of Final Draft.

### **110.3 Approval of the Plan**

Comments received should be given consideration during plan development. The Committee will then present the plan to the County Board for their approval. Following County Board approval, the plan will then be forwarded to the Department for approval of the plan by the DNR is required by s. 28.11(5) (a), Wis. Stats.

### **110.4 Distribution of the Plan**

Each member of the County Board will have access to a copy of the plan at the time of initial review and approval. Updated official copies will be maintained by the Forest Administrator and available electronically.

Plan and future amendments will be electronic versions of the plan or plan amendments or electronic links to the documents will be distributed to the following:

1. Department of Natural Resources - Liaison and County Forest Specialist.
2. Executive Director- Wisconsin County Forest Association.

### **110.5 Updating the Plan**

Necessary changes in policy and procedure will be incorporated into the plan by amendment as required. Amendments to the plan will require approval by both the County Board and the Department of Natural Resources as stated in s. 28.11(5) (a), Wis. Stats. Changes to official County Forest Blocking map require County Board approval. The annual county board approved work plan, budget, and annual accomplishment report are appended to the plan and do not require official DNR approval. In addition, changes to Chapters 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 do not require a plan amendment or official DNR approval, with the exception of the official County Forest Blocking map.

### **110.6 Coordination with Other Planning**

The development of this plan and any future amendments to this plan will include considerations, and if warranted, participation in other local and regional planning efforts.

## **115 FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING**

The Committee will utilize procedure as set forth in the Department of Natural Resources Public Forest Lands Handbook no. 2460.5.

Silviculture Guidance, supported by Wisconsin's forestry community and Silvicultural Guidance Team may be referenced in forest management activities. WisFIRS will be utilized as the primary tool for forest management planning decisions. Additional resources such as forest habitat type classification, soil surveys, and DNR's Best Management Practices for Water Quality guidelines may be utilized in management decisions.

### **115.1 Forest Certification Group Administration**

As the certification group manager, the Department of Natural Resources will be responsible for overall administration of third-party certification efforts. The DNR County Forest Specialist will work in close

cooperation with the Wisconsin County Forests Association in coordinating this effort. The group manager's responsibilities will include:

- Record keeping of certification
- Coordinating communication with the certification auditing firms
- Reporting and payment of fees
- Processing new entries and departures from the groups
- Internal compliance monitoring
- Dispute resolution

Detail on the certification group administration is maintained in the Public Forest Lands Handbook.

## **115.2 Forest Certification**

### **Wood County's Commitment to Sustainable Forestry**

Our county forests provide a vital contribution to the State and the world by providing economic, environmental and social benefits important to our quality of life. Wood County believes that accomplishing such sustainable forestry requires a commitment and partnership from all the groups and individuals that benefit from these public lands.

#### **Wood County's Commitment**

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Wood 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.

All forestland owners have a responsibility to provide sound forest stewardship. Wood County will work in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other natural resources groups / agencies in providing sustainable forestry information to those landowners and individuals affecting forest sustainability in Wisconsin. We will support research efforts to improve the health, productivity, and management of forestlands both internally and through cooperative efforts. In managing the Wood County Forest, a spectrum of forestry practices will be employed to achieve our sustainable forestry objective. Both intensive and more extensive forest management techniques will be used to provide for wildlife, forest products, recreation, aesthetics, water quality, aesthetics and ecosystem maintenance. In keeping with this responsibility Wood County is currently is committed to dual certification through Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®). Wood County reserves the right to evaluate whether or not forest certification with any certification body is beneficial to the county at any time in the future, and to act according to its best interest.

## **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Highway, Infrastructure, and Recreation Committee (HIRC) of the Wood County Board enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

## **120.1 Ordinances**

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Wood County Forest can be found in Chapter 1005.2. In addition, the following will be considered in planning process.

- Forestry Ordinance
- County Park Ordinance
- Snowmobile Ordinance
- Zoning Ordinance
- Floodplain - Shoreland Zoning ordinance
- Non-Metallic Mining ordinance

## **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. In 1929, the law was amended to create the County Forest Reserve Law. In 1963, several major revisions were made, creating the County Forest Law s28.11. 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. Several grants and loans were created and remain available to counties to compensate for public uses of these county forestlands as stipulated in s28.11. To fulfill additional statutory obligations acreage share payments to towns are currently \$.30/acre, and towns with county forestland receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year.

In 2020, counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law. A listing of current County Forests and corresponding acreages are as follows:

Adams	140 acres
Ashland	40,305
Barron	16,305
Bayfield	175,557
Burnett	111,516
Chippewa	34,738
Clark	134,742
Douglas	281,853
Eau Claire	52,712
Florence	37,003
Forest	15,251
Iron	175,343
Jackson	122,685
Juneau	17,799
Langlade	130,717
Lincoln	100,843
Marathon	30,674
Marinette	229,978
Monroe	7,443
Oconto	43,791
Oneida	82,960
Polk	17,183
Price	92,294
Rusk	89,284
Sawyer	115,197
Taylor	17,728
Vernon	1,942
Vilas	41,151
Washburn	150,196
<b>Wood</b>	<b>37,826</b>

### 125.2 County Forest Program History & 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.

However, 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 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 reports to the Wood County Highway, Infrastructure, and Recreation Committee. (HIRC)

#### **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 fifteen delegates elected from County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association and two members at large.

WCFA 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. WCFA develops and implements a strategic plan. The organization's mission statement is as follows:

*Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long-term forest health and sustainability.*

#### **125.5 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 affect the values and uses of the Forest in coming years.

- Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of natural 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. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.
- 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.

- Recent recreational trends and associated demands placed on Wood County Forest resources, particularly in relation to ATV/UTV and Fat Tire/Mountain Bike groups, are likely to increase. While these trends can be viewed as a positive development in public use of the forest, they will also necessitate greater staff time and county expense to accommodate.
- 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 may be complicated by a potential increase in public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.
- 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.
- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 600 for specifics on this subject.
- The Forest is considered an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving many opportunities for study and observation.

#### **125.6 Protecting the Public Resource**

As stated in State Statute 28.11 (1), the county forest program enables and encourages “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.”