



## MARATHON COUNTY FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE AGENDA

**Date and Time of Meeting:** Tuesday, March 5, 2024 at 1:00pm

**Meeting Location:** Conference Room #5, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

MEMBERS: Rick Seefeldt (Chairman), Tom Rosenberg (Vice-Chairman), Jean Maszk

***Marathon County Mission Statement:*** *Marathon County Government serves people by leading, coordinating, and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly or in cooperation with other public and private partners provides services and creates opportunities that make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business.*

***Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Mission Statement:*** *Adaptively manage our park and forest lands for natural resource sustainability while providing healthy recreational opportunities and unique experiences making Marathon County the preferred place to live, work, and play.*

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the telephone conference beginning ten (10) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number: Phone Number: 1-408-418-9388 Access Code: 2499 076 7758. When you enter the telephone conference, PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!

### Agenda Items:

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Public Comment (15 minute limit)** *(Any person who wishes to address the County Board, or one of its committees, during the "Public Comment" portion of meetings, must provide his or her name, address, and the topic he or she wishes to present to the Marathon County Clerk or chair of the committee, no later than five minutes before the start of the meeting.)*
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the Tuesday, January 30, 2024 Committee Meeting**
4. **Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination**
  - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee
    1. Request for Motorized Access Permit by Persons with Disabilities – Mr. LeRoy Knase
5. **Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:**
  - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee
    1. 2023 County Forest Division Annual Report
  - B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None
6. **Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee - None**
7. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
  - A. Forestry Division Expense/Revenue Reports
  - B. 2023 Timber Stumpage Payment to Townships
  - C. Update on Wisconsin County Forests Association Meetings in Madison
  - D. Department of Natural Resources Liaison Report

- 8. **Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tuesday, April 2, 2024 at 1:00pm at 212 River Dr., Wausau, WI 54403, Room 5 or via Webex**
  - A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence
  - B. Future Agenda Items: Review and Consider Approving Spring 2024 Timber Sale Package, Timber Sale Closeout, Department of Natural Resources Liaison Report

9. **Adjournment**

**SIGNED /s/ Thomas Lovlien  
PRESIDING OFFICER OR DESIGNEE**

ANY PERSON PLANNING TO ATTEND THIS MEETING WHO NEEDS SOME TYPE OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE SHOULD CALL THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE AT 261-1500 OR E-MAIL [COUNTYCLERK@CO.MARATHON.WI.US](mailto:COUNTYCLERK@CO.MARATHON.WI.US) ONE BUSINESS DAY BEFORE THE MEETING.

EMAILED TO: Daily Herald and other News Media Groups  
 EMAILED BY: Jodi Luebbe  
 EMAIL DATE/TIME: February 28, 2024 8:30 a.m.

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE:  
 By: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Time: \_\_\_\_\_ a.m/p.m.

Members present: Tom Rosenberg (vice-chair), Jean Maszk, Rick Seefeldt (chair)  
Staff present: Tom Lovlien - Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley - Director  
Others present: Luitenant Michael Van Offeren

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Chair Seefeldt at 1:00pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with State statutes.
2. Public Comment – none brought forward.
3. Approve Minutes – **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to approve the minutes from the December 5, 2023 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.
4. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination
  - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee
    1. 2023 Department Year In Review – Polley highlighted some of the accomplishments from the previous year. The gross timber sale revenue in 2023 was \$495,764 and the net to the County was \$347,034. In 2023 the even flow amount was \$305,000. A few of the other highlights include Marathon Park water system update, treating and removing ash trees, completed timber sale at Big Eau Pleine Park, increased recreational programming, new playgrounds, Nine Mile garage renovation, ADA kayak launch installed at DC Everest Park, boat launch work, implemented a Fat Tire Bike season at Nine Mile, completed amendments to the County Forest Comprehensive Work Plan, and established a trial archery deer hunt at Big Eau Pleine Park.  
  
2. 2024 Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Workplan – Polley highlighted some of the work planned which includes Eastgate Hall renovation, dump station installation at Dells of the Eau Claire Park, Nine Mile septic system replacement, Amco and Marathon Park Campground playgrounds, build skatepark, treating and removing ash trees, planning the Department consolidation, and ice arena feasibility study. Polley discussed upcoming small County and City projects. Some forestry work includes administering timber sales, planting 60,000 red pine trees on 60 acres, and establishing another timber sale at Big Eau Pleine Park. Staff will also be working on the Rib Falls Master Plan, Big Rapids Dam Removal, County CORP Update, AED/Save Station Grant and Athletic Park Clubhouse Review. Motion / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to approve the 2024 Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Workplan. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.
5. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution
  - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee - None
  - B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None
6. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None
7. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports
  - A. Parks, Recreation and Forestry Law Enforcement Annual Report – Van Offeren reported on law enforcement activity in the forest units. There were forty-seven complaints of which the majority were for camping registration violations, noise and littering complaints. Other complaints were for entering prohibited areas, pay tube break-ins, domestic animal violations, and wild animal complaints. He discussed citations and written warnings that were given. Questions were answered.

B. WCFA Media and Marketing Campaign – Keep Wisconsin Forests Thriving – A video from You Tube was played which is being used as outreach to get recognition of the WCFA name in preparation for their License Plate project. The hope is to have WCFA license plates available this fall or by spring of 2025.

C. Update on Timber Sale Harvest Activity on County Forest Lands – Lovlien said the weather is having a great effect on winter timber sale revenue. There are eleven sales that need to be cut this winter that will expire at the end of 2024. Currently, only three are being worked on. Five sales have been active so far and two of those will be closed this winter for sure. An estimate of forty percent of the evenflow revenue may be received from those five sales and if two or three are cut this coming summer/fall then the revenue could be close to the evenflow amount. Questions were answered.

D. Winter Recreation Program Update – This has been a poor weather winter with hardly any snow and warm temperatures. Nine Mile is closed for winter recreation, snowmobile trails are closed, and the outdoor ice rink is closed. Sylvan Tubing Hill is currently open.

E. Department of Natural Resources Liaison Report – As of December 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023 the DNR had completed approximately 393.5 hours of 660 time-standard hours for 2023/2024. Sorenson finished up the field work on an 87-acre hardwood sale in the Harrison/Hewitt forest unit. The upcoming winter months will include recon, helping the County Forester with sale administration and musclewood and ironwood control on the Einstein sale.

F. Governor Evers Announces Approval of Largest Forest Conservation Effort in State History – Lovlien discussed a press release which announced the approval of an additional conservation easement covering 54,898 acres of the Pelican River Forest which completes one of the largest conservation projects in Wisconsin history. Altogether, over 67,000 acres of the Pelican River Forest will be protected, ensuring the forest will remain open to the public in perpetuity for outdoor recreation activities such as fishing, hunting, skiing, trapping, and hiking.

8. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tuesday, March 5, 2024, 1:00 pm, Rm. 5 & Webex, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence

B. Future Agenda Items: 2023 County Forests Annual Report, Forestry Division Expense/Revenue Report, 2023 Timber Stumpage Payments to Towns, Timber Sale Closeouts, Update on the WCFA Meeting in Madison

9. Adjourn – Motion / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to adjourn the meeting at 2:00 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.

To the Parks and Forestry Board of Marathon County:

My name is LeRoy Knase. I live at 2075 Walker Rd. Kronenwettter, WI 54455. My phone number is 218-269-1383. (wife, Marcie, 218-393-9695).

I am a 76 year old disabled Vietnam Vet who is having trouble walking but still enjoy the outdoors immensely. Because of a 45 year old injury to my ankle, walking for a few hours in the woods can lay me up for several days to more than a week. I also suffer with sciatica nerve issues which limits my walking to less than 200 yards without stopping.

Both rifle and archery hunting keep me going, but it is much more than hunting. My joy comes from being in the woods, watching for deer sign, analyzing those signs (Hunting is more than shooting an animal!). To do that I usually begin the first part of August exploring the woods, setting some cameras, watching for things that say it might be a good place to sit during the season. I actually spend more time in the woods before the deer season than actually hunting. If I could use my ATV on the trails, the walking time in the woods would be less, and I would not be so crippled up for so long afterwards.

The issue with the current 2 week permit is I am limited in both days and areas would like to explore. I would like to ask you to grant me permission to be on the trails from August until the end of the deer seasons. I'm not sure how many trails you would allow me to use at one time. The roads I have travelled down are: the Martin Rd., Dahlman Rd., Timberridge Line Rd., Sportsman Lane, Litza Rd., Rocky Rd., Hwy 169, Twilight Rd., and Huntsman Rd. Of course, I don't go down any one of them often, but I do like to check out the areas.

I appreciate your time and consideration to allow me to continue my passion.

LeRoy Knase

Tom,

After thinking about it for a while, LeRoy would like to add something to the original email.

This is what he is thinking:

From June to the end of archery season...This year unlike last year, I can get into the woods earlier (because of lack of snow) to look for last year's deer sign such as tree rubs and ground ruts. Then I can plot them on my XHUNT app. so I can figure out where I may want to set cameras.

I would like to have a permit that would allow me to be in the woods (with the ATV use on trails) 8-9 months of the year. I would not be in the woods on a regular basis as it would depend on weather conditions.

I don't mind calling every two weeks to renew this permit, but coming into the office every two weeks makes it difficult.

I hunt the fire arms season every day during the 9 days. For archery, I hunt from the beginning to the end of the season but not on a regular basis. It depends on the weather conditions (wet, cold, etc.) Sometimes I hunt the morning and other times the evening.. not a whole day.

I respect the outdoors and do not want to destroy or harm the forest in any way. I don't use tree stands or blinds. It's just me and a stool on the ground.

I need the permit to get me down these trails to get to an area I can walk in. My walking is limited because of my injured ankle and hip. I don't just hunt deer, I hunt big bucks that I get on camera. I need to utilize the public land so I can pattern them.

I hope that explains better why I would like an extended permit.

Thank you,  
LeRoy Knase

- (b) *Trail cameras.* No person shall place or use any camera or other device commonly referred to as a trail camera on lands owned or under the control of the County that causes permanent or temporary damage to natural vegetation or other County property. The placement and use of trail cameras are permitted for hunting and wildlife scouting purposes, and are prohibited in designated areas of the County forest where such activity would interfere with other recreational activities and shall include parking areas and buildings. Trail cameras may be left in the woods provided they bear the name, address, and phone number in the English language of the owner permanently affixed in a manner that is clearly visible and kept legible at all times without moving the camera. Trail cameras without such identifying information shall be subject to immediate removal by County officials. Trail cameras may be chained or locked to natural vegetation and must be removed from County forest lands as stipulated for tree stands in paragraph (a).
- (c) *Ground blinds.* No person shall construct, cause to be constructed, use or occupy any ground blind, as that term is defined herein, without a minimum of 144 square inches of solid blaze orange or florescent pink material visible from all directions during any deer hunting season with firearms on any lands owned or under the control of the County. A ground blind may be left in the woods seven days prior to, and must be removed by the owner within seven days after the close of any deer or bear hunting season, provided that ground blinds are collapsed to the ground except while hunting in accordance with applicable state statutes and applicable provisions of the Wisconsin Administrative Code setting forth regulations of the Department of Natural Resources. Any blind must bear the name, address, and phone number of the owner affixed permanently to the blind in the English language, and shall be clearly visible and kept legible at all times. Ground blinds without such identifying information shall be subject to immediate removal by County officials.
- (4) *Firearms, bows and arrows.*
- (a) The use of firearms, or bows and arrows is prohibited in designated areas, except by permit issued by the Committee or its designee. Such designated areas shall be posted with notice of this regulation.
- (b) No person shall discharge any firearm or use a bow and arrow within Nine Mile or Wisconsin River County Forests, or within 300 feet of any established parking area within County lands under the jurisdiction of the Committee, except while hunting in accordance with applicable state statutes and applicable provisions of the Wisconsin Administrative Code setting forth regulations of the Department of Natural Resources and, except in that portion of Shooting Range Park north of Four Mile Creek where the use of firearms or bow and arrow are permitted on designated range areas in accordance with posted regulations.
- (c)

Department shall be used by the Department or given to other public agencies for their use, or sold, as the Committee shall determine. When given to other public agencies, the latter shall pay the County a sum equal to the severance tax thereon.

- (b) "Salvage cuttings" shall include the cutting of timber damaged by fire, storm, insect or disease. Salvage cutting shall be done under procedure specified for cultural cutting or for commercial cutting, as the Committee may decide.
- (c) "Commercial cutting" shall include all cutting where stumpage is sold under contract in which the primary objective of the cutting is the marketing of the timber products, including logs, ties, poles, posts, pulpwood, piling, Christmas trees and boughs, or other forest products.
- (d) Proposed timber sales shall be submitted to the Committee by the County Forest Administrator after all provisions relating to forestry practice have been endorsed by the Team Leader or designee of the DNR.
- (e) Contract specifications for each cutting operation pertaining to payment and financial responsibility of the bidder shall be determined by the Committee in consultation with the County Forest Administrator and the Team Leader or designee of the DNR.
- (f) After approval of any sale by the Committee a Notice of Intention to Cut shall be filed with the DNR as provided by § 28.11(6)(b)(3), Wis. Stats. Cutting operations shall not be started until cutting notice approval is received by the County from the DNR.
- (g) All timber sales shall conform with the provisions of § 28.11(6), Wis. Stats.
- (h) Payment for forest products shall be made promptly after billing. Prepayment and other payment arrangements may be adopted with the approval of the Committee.

**(3) *Tree stands, trail cameras and ground blinds.***

- (a) *Tree stands.* No person shall construct, cause to be constructed, use or occupy any elevated scaffold or other elevated device commonly referred to as a tree stand on any lands owned or under the control of the County, except that portable tree stands may be used, provided that they are completely removed from the tree each day at the close of hunting hours and provided that such portable tree stands are not in any manner bolted, nailed, screwed or fastened to the tree and provided that such portable tree stands cause no permanent or temporary damage to the trees in which they are placed. Portable tree stands may be left in the woods provided that they have the name, address, and phone number of the owner permanently affixed to the stand in the English language, and shall be clearly visible and kept legible at all times. Portable tree stands without such identifying information shall be subject to immediate removal by County officials. Portable tree stands may be chained or locked to the base of a tree seven days prior to, and must be removed by the owner within seven days after the close of any deer or bear hunting season established by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



2. Undesignated

There are no other undesignated motorized recreational vehicle trails on County Forest. Other motorized recreational use on the County Forest is prohibited.

960.2.6 Recreational Access with Persons with Disabilities

The Committee supports recreational access for persons with permanent disabilities. Federal and State disabled access guidelines will be met when required.

Requests for access in non-motorized areas will be considered on a case-by-case basis and be limited to ATV's/UTV's or snowmobiles. No other motorized access will be allowed. Permits may be granted if:

1. The Permittee provides proof as disabled under DOT or DNR guidelines. Requires Class A, B or C disabled hunter permit or disabled DOT license plate.
2. The requested use will not damage soil or vegetation in the area of use.
3. The requested use will not endanger other users.
4. The requested use will not significantly impact other users of the Forest.

Additionally, if a permit is granted, the ATV/UTV or snowmobile must be clearly marked with a sign provided by the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department that reads "Disabled" or "Disabled Hunter". The permit shall be limited to a specific entry point and area. The permit shall not exceed two weeks.

Permits are granted by the Committee under County General Code 16.08(9)(c). A copy of the permit can be found in Chapter 1000.

960.3 RECREATION TRAIL PERMITS

960.3.1 Storm Water Discharge

In general, any trail construction or rehabilitation activities that disturb one acre or more of land will require a Storm Water Discharge Permit. There have been instances of inconsistent application of permit requirements Statewide. In order to further define the County's understanding and implementation of permit requirements, the following current acceptable process will be used for determining when a permit is needed.

1. The 1 acre threshold will be determined by measuring/estimated new disturbance or disturbance of previously grassed surfaces.

**VEHICLE USE PERMIT (ATV)**

**Disabled Person Access**

Permit No. \_\_\_\_\_

Pursuant to authority granted by the Forestry / Recreation Committee of the Marathon County Board of Supervisors, permission is hereby granted by Marathon County, through its designated undersigned agent to INSERT NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, hereinafter referred to as the Permittee, to use the county trail referred to as:

Town of INSERT TOWN, NAME OF FOREST UNIT, ROAD NAME, AND SECTION#, NO OFF TRAIL USE PERMITTED, Marathon County, Wi.

This Permit is subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. This Permit shall cover the time period of **INSERT DATES AND YEAR.**
2. Only Class A or C DNR Permit holders or disabled DOT License plate holders are eligible for this permit.
3. The Permittee must possess and carry this permit whenever exercising this privilege.
4. The Permittee must attach a sign that says "DISABLED" or "DISABLED HUNTER" provided by the Parks and Forestry Department to the front or rear of the ATV or snowmobile. This sign must be clearly visible from the front or rear of the vehicle.
5. This Permit is limited to a specific entry point and area described on the permit.
6. The Permittee may use an ATV or snowmobile to get in/out from deer stand. Permittee is not authorized to use the ATV or snowmobile to scout territory.
7. The vehicle use permit holder must occupy the permitted vehicle. One additional person may ride in the vehicle to assist the Permittee.
8. Vehicles used under this permit may not be operated in excess of normal walking speed (judged to be 2-3 miles per hour).
9. Granting of this Permit shall not grant or transfer any rights other than those rights expressly set forth herein. This document contains all the terms and conditions of said Permit, and no other terms, conditions, rights, duties, or obligations shall be inferred or implied. The Permittee must abide by all other laws and regulations. This Permit shall be amended, modified, or continued only by written codicil duly executed by the parties hereto. This Permit is non-assignable and non-transferable for any reason.
10. The Permittee agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless Marathon County, its officials, officers, representatives, employees, and authorized agents from and against any and all penalties, liabilities, or losses resulting from claims or court actions, whether civil, criminal or in equity, which arise directly or indirectly out of the acts of the Permittee, its agents, servants, employees, guests, or visitors under this Permit, or by reason by any act or omission of such person(s), and/or arising out of duties or obligations under this Permit.
11. This Permit shall not exceed two weeks.
12. Permittee is required to abide by the conditions of this permit or is subject to revocation of the permit.
13. If a key is issued, it must be returned no later than 5 days after the expiration date of this permit. Failure to do so will result in loss of key deposit and permittee may not be eligible for future permits.

MARATHON COUNTY FORESTRY / RECREATION COMMITTEE

Dated \_\_\_\_\_  
County Forest Administrator

By \_\_\_\_\_

The undersigned Permittee hereby acknowledges receipt of this Permit and further acknowledges reading and understanding all terms and conditions set forth herein. Permittee further agrees to accept and comply with all of the above-stated terms and conditions of this Permit. Failure by Permittee to so comply may result in the immediate cancellation of this Permit in the discretion of the County, who retains the authority and discretion to cancel this Permit.

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

By \_\_\_\_\_

Key Deposit: \$ _____
Key Provided: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Permittee  
 Type of Vehicle: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Lic#: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department** **2023 County Forest Division Annual Report**

January 1, 2023 - December 31, 2023

### **Program Highlights:**

- Net timber sale revenue to Marathon County of \$347,034.48.
- Total net revenue for the Forestry Division program was \$443,142.00 and expenses were \$333,679.00. Returned \$109,463.00 to the general fund.
- Assisted in completing a land swap bordering Dells of the Eau Claire Park to extinguish a possible private party adverse possession claim.
- Practiced sustainable forestry on 648 acres on the Marathon County Forest. This is based on closed out sales with DNR in 2023.
- Completed amendments to the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035 which were approved by the County Board and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- Completed a third-party Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Certification field audit that showed County Forest management meets all standards.
- Received 664.5 hours of WDNR technical and field assistance in completing work on the Marathon County Forest.
- Continued participation as a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association Forest Legislative/Certification and other Committees.
- Implemented the 15-year County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035 adopted by the County Board and Department of Natural Resources.
- Revisions to Chapter 16 - County Forest Ordinance were drafted and approved by the County Board.
- Continued participation in the County Forest Administrator grant program that funds one-half the salary and fringe benefits of the Forest Administrator position.
- Resurfaced .25 miles of roads in Nine Mile Forest Unit adding 750 yards of granite.
- Established a permanent winter fat tire bike season a Nine Mile County Forest.
- Regulated uses at Nine Mile County Forest Recreation Area to allow all user groups to have safe and quality recreation experiences.

**Land Holdings:**

Acres in 2023:

County Forest - Regular County Forest Law	30,082.53
County Forest - Special County Forest Law	<u>631.77</u>
Total County Forest	30,714.30

**Other Land Holdings:**

Parking & road access	8.59
McMillan Marsh Lease (DNR)	1,661.40
Under water, island & wetlands	192.74
Railroad ROW/Snowmobile Trail	<u>85.04</u>
Total Other Lands	2,027.77

**Total Lands Managed: 32,662.07 Acres**

**Timber Management, Cultural Projects, and Reforestation:**

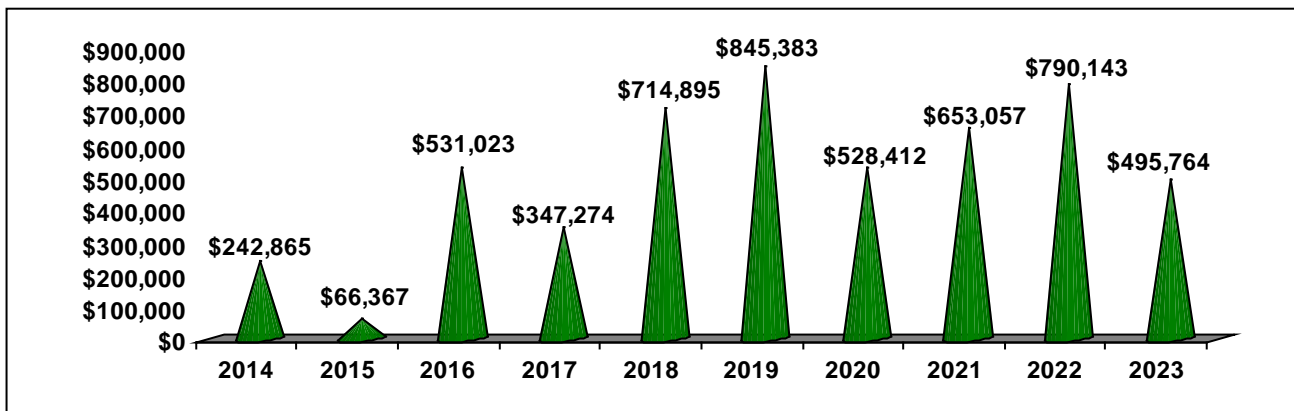
**Timber Sales:**

Timber sales generated 9155 cords of pulpwood and 754,000 board feet of logs worth \$495,763.54 (unaudited) in 2023. The following is a listing of the gross value of timber cut from the forest over the past 10 years:

2014	\$242,865.33	2019	\$845,383.37
2015	\$66,366.74	2020	\$528,411.64
2016	\$531,022.66	2021	\$653,057.25
2017	\$347,274.04	2022	\$790,142.87
2018	\$714,895.21	2023	\$495,763.54

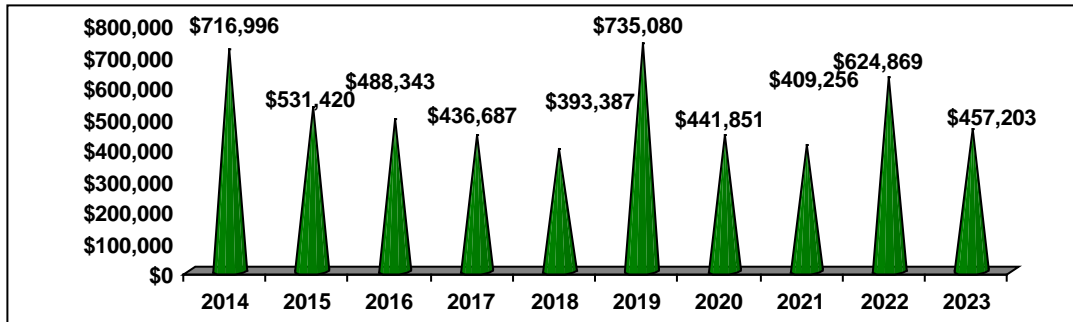
**Marathon County Forest**

Timber Sales Annual Gross Revenue – Cut and Hauled



**Other Timber Sale Data:**

New sales – 7 were established on 587 acres with 16,388 cords appraised at \$358,191.00.

**Marathon County Forest****Timber Sales Annual Sold Value**

1. Sold sales – 7 of 7 advertised were sold in 2023 for a value of \$457,203.20.
2. Uncompleted timber contracts – 24 on 1,872 acres with 37,920 cord equivalents worth \$1,174,913.48.
3. Cut volume reports filed with DNR (form 2460):
  - Final reports – 9 sales worth \$695,053.85.
  - Partial reports - 2 sales worth \$51,798.56.
4. Severance paid to DNR on interest free loans \$149,370.48.
5. Severance Tax Escrow for Town payments (10% of gross receipts) \$49,576.25.
6. Firewood permits – 7 permits were issued worth \$210.00.
7. New sale establishment – evaluated 587 acres for potential sale (established 587 acres).
8. Forest reconnaissance – updated 1766 forested acres, 28 non-forested acres.
9. Administered 13 different timber sales throughout the year on County Forest lands.
10. Administered a 69-acre timber sale at Big Eau Pleine County Park.

**Cultural Projects:**

1. Classified forest habitat types on 41 acres for inclusion in our GIS database.
2. Monitored for additional oak wilt areas in Nine Mile and Kronenwetter Forest Units.
3. One new pocket of oak trees was identified in Nine Mile infected with the oak wilt fungus. Treatment and removal of the affected trees will be completed in 2024 as well as monitoring for new pockets.
4. Scarified 35 acres of the forest floor to prepare the site for oak acorn seedling germination at Kronenwetter Forest Unit using DNR heavy equipment.
5. Treated multiple small areas of invasive species on County Forest lands.
6. Completed deer browse surveys at Big Eau Pleine County Park and County Forest lands. This will continue in 2024 and beyond.
7. Completed deer browse surveys on 101 acres of the Marathon County Forest.
8. Forest management inventories were completed on Trappe River Dells and Brokaw County Parks.
9. Treated garlic mustard at Big Eau Pleine Park and Burma Road Forest Unit and developed a GIS map for future treatments.

**Reforestation:**

1. No reforestation took place in 2023 as all plantations were fully stocked and growing well.

**Road, Trail, and Facility Construction and Maintenance:**

1. APHIS trapped 17 beaver and removed 11 total dams at problem locations in the county forest. Two dams were blown using dynamite.
2. Replaced 2 culverts at LeatherCamp and Nine Mile Forest Units and added granite at problem locations.
3. Brushed approximately 2 miles of roads and trails in the Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit.
4. Placed 50 yards of granite on forest roads in the Nine Mile Forest Unit.
5. Completed repairs to dikes and water control structures from muskrat and beaver damage.
6. Reconstructed several segments of Nine Mile ski trails to improve drainage and level the surface including repairs to several sections due to heavy use and erosion.
7. Performed normal maintenance on 190 miles of forest roads and trails.
8. Graded and placed material on several sections of the Burma Road ATV trails to prevent erosion.
9. Inspected County Forest boundaries to control encroaching land uses.
10. Repaired gates on roads and trails that access the County Forest.
11. Repaired deer exclusion fences at Big Eau Pleine Park. These were installed to collect data on deer browsing.

**Administration:**

1. Continued the utilization of the DNR forestry reconnaissance program (WisFIRS).
2. Evaluated one parcel for potential acquisition as an addition to County Forest land.
3. Collaborated with the Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition on winter fat tire biking and developed a yearly agreement outlining the responsibilities of the County and CWOCC regarding maintenance.
4. Forestry/Recreation Committee agreed to a permanent winter fat biking season at Nine Mile for the 2023-2024 season.
5. Developed policy and implemented principals of Forest Certification - Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) on the Marathon County Forest.
6. Participated in several Wisconsin County Forests Association committee meetings to prioritize the funding received from the 2023-2025 biennial State Budget.
7. Continued research on carbon credit markets and how enrolling may net additional revenue for Marathon County. Research will continue in 2024.
8. Implemented the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035.
9. Located and assisted in the purchase of approximately 204 cords of firewood for campers for use at the County Park campgrounds.
10. Our Recreational Deputies along with assistance from the County Forester confiscated a total of fifteen illegal tree stands and two boats. They investigated complaints of vehicle, vandalism, illegal dumping, and criminal activities issuing 11 ordinance violations and numerous warnings. At Nine Mile Forest Unit, Deputies conducted patrols checking for cross country ski and mountain bike passes also issuing multiple warnings. Completed an additional 137 regular patrols at the forest units.
11. Issued five ATV/UTV disabled person access permits to people with disabilities for County Forest access.
12. Revisions were drafted to Chapter 16 of the County Forest Ordinance and were adopted by County Board in December 2023.
13. Held quarterly meetings with the Forest Citizen's Advisory Subcommittee to discuss forestry and recreation issues.

**Wildlife and Fisheries Management:**

In cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources:

1. Maintained 17 flowages. Drawdowns of several flowages will occur in 2024 to create better habitat and provide food for waterfowl.
2. Mowed forest openings, Nine Mile and Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit flowage dikes and the Bitzke Bird Walk trail.
3. Mowed most forest unit trails suitable for mowing.
4. Two forest openings in the forest units were mowed. Mowing will continue on openings in 2024 at the same time as the forest trails.
5. Poor winter conditions prevented shearing of tag alder in the Leather Camp Forest Unit to create habitat for grouse, woodcock, and other early successional species. Due to a change in DNR priorities no shearing will occur in 2024.
6. Seeded .75 miles of trails with a wildlife mixture in Kronenwetter Forest Unit.
7. Removed cattails in front of the water control structure at Bern Forest Unit utilizing Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) funding. Removal of additional cattail masses will continue in 2024 and beyond.
8. Seeded 80 lbs. of wild rice in flowages at the Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit.
9. Testified in favor of additional antlerless tags to the County Deer Advisory Council (CDAC) to reduce the deer population in areas of County Forests with tree regeneration problems.
10. Hired an engineer to complete a required DNR 10-Year inspection on the Bern Dam. Awaiting DNR report on any necessary maintenance.

**Recreation:****Nine Mile County Forest Cross Country Ski Trails:**

The ski season opened on December 21, 2022, and stayed open until the chalet closed for the season on March 27, 2023. The Wausau Nordic Ski Club offered free adult ski lessons on Tuesday evenings in January. The County assisted by allowing free ski rental and ski passes for those taking lessons. This partnership was developed to help promote the ski area and increase the interest in cross country skiing.

The Snekkevik ski race, Badger State Games and the Stomp the Swamp Snowshoe race were not held in 2023. Special Olympics had 100 participants and \$845.62 in revenue. IronBull winter triathlon event had 24 participants and \$287.00 in revenue. A total of 2754 daily and 398 annual ski passes were sold totaling \$58,473.89. Additionally, 886 daily and 19 annual snowshoe passes were sold with revenues totaling \$5,395.50.

**Ski Trail, Snowshoe and Bike Trail Maintenance at Nine Mile Forest Unit:**

1. Brushing of all trails is ongoing, and the efforts of the volunteers are greatly appreciated.
2. Volunteers from the Nordic Ski Club sponsored workdays in October. They performed tasks such as rock picking, lifting trees and brushing trails.
3. Trail signs were inspected, damaged trail signs replaced, and some new signage added. This work will continue in 2023 as the signage is evaluated and updated.
4. An Eagle Scout project was completed including new snowshoe signs installed to help users follow and stay on the trail.
5. Additional winter fat tire biking signs were installed to help users follow the trail.

**Mountain Biking at Nine Mile Forest Unit:**

The 2023 summer mountain bike season opened at noon on May 11. The bike trails closed as scheduled on October 15. There were four Mountain Bike events held at Nine Mile in 2023: The Wisconsin Endurance Mountain Bike Series, Wausau 24, Shorewood weekend and the IronBull Granite Grinder with \$11,508.49 in revenue. The NICA High school bike race was not held in 2023.

A total of 913 daily passes and 491 annual passes were sold in 2023. Total receipts associated with summer/fall mountain biking in 2023 totaled \$18,390.88. A trial winter fat bike season opened in December. A total of 130 daily and 123 annual passes were sold totaling \$2,369.92 in revenue. Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition continues to be a great partner in maintaining the trail system. Volunteers donate many hours of their time to maintain the single-track trails.

**Other Recreation:**

1. Four cross country running races were held at Nine Mile in 2023 with \$1,680.00 in revenue.
2. The Ragnar Relay Series running race was again a popular venue at Nine Mile with 270 standard and 17 ultra-teams totaling 1,748 participants and \$24,087.58 in revenue.
3. Issued forty-eight undesignated camping permits for county forests in 2023 resulting in \$795.00 in revenue.
4. Women's Bike clinic held with \$306.16 in revenue.
5. Iron Bull's winter Adventure Challenge was held at Nine Mile with \$152.61 in revenue.
6. The number of people using all County Forest Units continues to increase. Activities such as hiking, dog walking, berry picking, and horseback riding are growing.

**Recreational GIS Mapping:**

1. Created numerous park locator maps for the Bat HCP incidental take application.
2. Created a New Brokaw County Park map that identifies the new acquisition.
3. Created a Big Eau Pleine timber sale map for the Park Commission.
4. Created a new Sunnysvale Park and Corbin Shooting Range maps.
5. Created several Nine Mile Forest Recreational trail maps.
6. Created five Forest Regeneration monitoring stand locator maps for Wisconsin DNR.

**Snowmobile Trails:**

1. Trails were open 55 days during the 2022-23 season. Looking back 30 years, the seasonal average has been just under 45 days.
2. Seven local snowmobile clubs contract with Marathon County to groom, sign, brush and perform other work related to maintaining the trail system on County Forest property.
3. Clubs are responsible for signing the trails to DNR specifications as well as meeting any requirements set forth by the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department and WCFA standards.
4. The Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department annually update the snowmobile trail map for the Snowmobile Council to print. This year a new map was printed for the 2022-2023 season. In the future, a new map will be printed each year, if circumstances allow.
5. Printed trail maps are made available at numerous locations throughout Marathon County.
6. Marathon County snowmobile clubs continue to receive financial assistance for trail maintenance from the Snowmobile and ATV Aids Programs through grants administered by the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department and disbursed by the DNR.
7. The snow and trail conditions hotline will continue to be used in the 2023-2024 season and moving forward. A recording is now available as an option on the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department phone tree. This was due to numerous requests by the public and local businesses. The message will be updated by the Motorized Recreation Coordinator to keep the public up to date on conditions and any trail closures. This recording provides an overview of the trail conditions, a more extensive trail report is found on the Marathon County website.
8. Current trail conditions are also updated by the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department on the Marathon County website, on Facebook and the Travel Wisconsin website.
9. The Snowmobile Automated Reporting System (SNARS) became mandatory for all snowmobile clubs statewide with the 2017-2018 season. SNARS is a computer program that was developed to improve the accurate and timely reporting of County trail maintenance expenses and other data to the DNR.



10. The Global Positioning System (GPS) requirement in all groomers became mandatory by the 2021-22 season. This was a requirement by DNR and the Governor's Snowmobile Council. This year all 28 of the clubs in Marathon County are online with the GPS units. The system is being implemented for greater accuracy of trail mileage and to track trail grooming.

### **Burma Forest ATV/UTV Trails:**

1. Summer trails were maintained using \$16,533.62 of State ATV/UTV trail maintenance funds. The club continued to maintain trails at a high standard during the past season.
2. The Mid-Wisconsin Trailblazers ATV Club, through a contract with Marathon County, is responsible for the routine maintenance of 11 miles of summer ATV/UTV trails.

### **Public Outreach/Professional Development:**

1. Forest Administrator served as a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association Legislative/Certification, Personnel, DNR Budget, Dues and Bylaws and Roads Committees.
2. Attended several in-person and virtual Marathon County, Society of American Foresters, Wisconsin County Forests Association and Forest Certification training sessions.
3. Attended the Climate Change Conference and Best Management for Water Quality training required to maintain forest certification.
4. Analyzed plant samples for insect and disease problems.
5. Interviewed by media on forestry related issues.
6. Created interpretive displays to educate the public about the benefits of sustainable forest management.
7. Presented to about 70 Mid-West United States and Ontario, Canada regional forest health specialists at Nine Mile Forest Unit about deer browse, silviculture and oak wilt treatments.
8. County Forester made a presentation to the Athens school district Maple Grove Charter 5<sup>th</sup> grade class.
9. Completed a timber sale assessment on a City of Wausau Department of Public Works pine plantation.

### **Budget Summaries** (available upon request)

#### **Forest Resources:**

County Forest Program  
 County Forest Administrator  
 County Forest Road Aids  
 County Conservation Aids  
 FEMA Cattail Removal  
 Sustainable Forestry  
 Segregated Land  
 Wildlife Habitat  
 Forestry State Aid  
 Knowles-Nelson Stewardship

#### **Debt Redemption:**

General Debt - Aid to County Forest

#### **Recreation:**

Burma Trail ATV 22-23  
 Cross-Country Ski Trails  
 General Fund - Snowmobile Coordinator  
 Snowmobile Grant 22-23

## 2014-2023 FORESTRY DIVISION EXPENSE/REVENUE REPORT

Year	Gross Timber Sold Amount	Net Timber Sold Amount	Acres	Timber Revenue Even-Flow Budget	Net Timber Revenue Actual <sup>1</sup>	Other Revenue <sup>2</sup>	Total Revenue	Expenses <sup>3</sup>	Program Net
2014	\$716,996	\$501,897	578	\$213,000	\$170,006	\$98,093	\$268,099	\$342,956	(\$74,857)
2015	\$531,420	\$371,994	596	\$245,000	\$46,457	\$57,908	\$104,365	\$345,387	(\$241,022)
2016	\$488,343	\$341,840	666	\$245,000	\$371,716	\$58,385	\$430,101	\$341,930	\$88,171
2017	\$436,687	\$305,681	520	\$245,000	\$243,092	\$60,606	\$303,698	\$343,106	(\$39,408)
2018	\$393,387	\$275,371	709	\$245,000	\$500,427	\$58,068	\$558,495	\$359,452	\$199,043
2019	\$735,080	\$514,556	644	\$245,000	\$591,768	\$59,779	\$651,547	\$354,742	\$296,805
2020	\$441,851	\$309,296	662	\$245,000	\$369,888	\$63,308	\$433,196	\$359,929	\$73,267
2021	\$409,256	\$286,479	633	\$245,000	\$457,140	\$77,932	\$535,072	\$344,560	\$190,512
2022	\$624,869	\$437,409	623	\$275,000	\$553,124	\$74,727	\$627,851	\$378,857	\$248,994
2023	\$457,203	\$320,042	587	\$305,000	\$347,034	\$96,107	\$443,142	\$333,679	\$109,463
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$5,235,092</b>	<b>\$3,664,565</b>	<b>6218</b>	<b>\$2,508,000</b>	<b>\$3,650,652</b>	<b>\$704,913</b>	<b>\$4,355,566</b>	<b>\$3,504,598</b>	<b>\$850,968</b>

<sup>1</sup> Revenue to Marathon County after 20% payment to State for loans and 10% payment to townships

<sup>2</sup> Includes County Forest Administrator grant, firewood permits, camping fees, bond recovery and misc. revenues

<sup>3</sup> Includes all personnel and operating expenses

2004-2023 FORESTRY DIVISION EXPENSE/REVENUE REPORT

Year	Gross Timber Sold Amount	Net Timber Sold Amount	Acres	Timber Revenue Even-Flow Budget	Net Timber Revenue Actual <sup>1</sup>	Other Revenue <sup>2</sup>	Total Revenue	Expenses <sup>3</sup>	Program Net
2004	\$495,726	\$347,008	796	\$190,000	\$203,189	\$44,886	\$248,075	\$312,769	(\$64,694)
2005	\$459,350	\$321,545	605	\$190,000	\$240,115	\$47,289	\$287,404	\$296,549	(\$9,145)
2006	\$275,111	\$192,578	586	\$190,000	\$356,346	\$50,841	\$407,187	\$327,691	\$79,496
2007	\$344,274	\$240,992	707	\$213,000	\$514,204	\$54,656	\$568,860	\$345,131	\$223,729
2008	\$318,189	\$222,732	641	\$213,000	\$339,896	\$53,529	\$393,425	\$322,621	\$70,804
2009	\$321,155	\$224,809	619	\$213,000	\$203,327	\$55,849	\$259,176	\$350,989	(\$91,813)
2010	\$411,312	\$287,918	622	\$213,000	\$368,270	\$56,986	\$425,256	\$344,442	\$80,814
2011	\$374,005	\$261,804	551	\$213,000	\$293,943	\$60,870	\$354,813	\$357,721	(\$2,908)
2012	\$356,678	\$249,675	548	\$213,000	\$226,203	\$57,170	\$283,373	\$346,272	(\$62,899)
2013	\$298,173	\$208,721	543	\$213,000	\$333,986	\$53,239	\$387,225	\$308,336	\$78,889
2014	\$716,996	\$501,897	578	\$213,000	\$170,006	\$98,093	\$268,099	\$342,956	(\$74,857)
2015	\$531,420	\$371,994	596	\$245,000	\$46,457	\$57,908	\$104,365	\$345,387	(\$241,022)
2016	\$488,343	\$341,840	666	\$245,000	\$371,716	\$58,385	\$430,101	\$341,930	\$88,171
2017	\$436,687	\$305,681	520	\$245,000	\$243,092	\$60,606	\$303,698	\$343,106	(\$39,408)
2018	\$393,387	\$275,371	709	\$245,000	\$500,427	\$58,068	\$558,495	\$359,452	\$199,043
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2021	\$409,256	\$286,479	633	\$245,000	\$457,140	\$77,932	\$535,072	\$344,560	\$190,512
2022	\$624,869	\$437,409	623	\$275,000	\$553,124	\$74,727	\$627,851	\$378,857	\$248,994
2023	<u>\$457,203</u>	<u>\$320,042</u>	<u>587</u>	<u>\$305,000</u>	<u>\$347,034</u>	<u>\$96,107</u>	<u>\$443,142</u>	<u>\$333,679</u>	<u>\$109,463</u>
TOTALS	\$8,889,065	\$6,222,347	12436	\$4,569,000	\$6,730,131	\$1,240,228	\$7,970,360	\$6,817,119	\$1,153,241

<sup>1</sup> Revenue to Marathon County after 20% payment to State for loans and 10% payment to townships

<sup>2</sup> Includes County Forest Administrator grant, firewood permits, bond recovery and misc. revenues

<sup>3</sup> Includes all personnel and operating expenses

MARATHON COUNTY  
 APPORTIONMENT OF TIMBER SALES  
 FOR THE YEAR ENDED: 12/31/2023

Amount in Balance Sheet Account CC 55302, RC 64508, CNT\_0199. Pay out of SC 65508  
 As of: 12/31/2023 49,576.25

DNR Distribution Used: Acreage by Towns as of 07/01/2023 (paid out in calendar 2024)

Vendor Code	Town	(2) Acreage	(3) % of Total Acreage	(4) Apportionment	added .01
00235	Bern (T)	269.1000	0.876100%	434.3400	
00243	Bevent (T)	54.7000	0.178100%	88.3000	
00667	Easton (T)	79.6700	0.259400%	128.6000	
00700	Elderon (T)	280.0000	0.911600%	451.9400	
00711	Emmet (T)	40.0000	0.130200%	64.5500	
00942	Guenther (T)	4,456.7100	14.510200%	7193.6100	
00997	Harrison (T)	6,611.2900	21.525000%	10671.2900	
02527	Hewitt (T)	3,262.1700	10.621000%	5265.4900	
14094	Kronenwetter (V)	4,313.0600	14.042500%	6961.7400	
02563	Maine (V)	115.7500	0.376900%	186.8500	
02592	Marathon (T)	682.0000	2.220500%	1100.8400	
02791	Mosinee (T)	2,407.7500	7.839200%	3886.3800	
02064	Reid (T)	2,896.5300	9.430600%	4675.3400	
02093	Rib Mountain (T)	3,247.3200	10.572700%	5241.5500	
02104	Ringle (T)	1,810.7800	5.895600%	2922.8200	
01096	Texas (T)	187.4700	0.610400%	302.6100	
		<u>30,714.300</u>	<u>1.00000</u>	<u>49576.25</u>	

All adjustments approved by Tom Lovlien

- (1) Amount in Balance Sheet account CC 55302, RC 64508, CNT\_0199  
 This is the total amount to be allocated and paid to the various towns for timber sales.
- (2) Information comes from "Forest Tax Report 17", supplied to the Marathon County Forestry Department by the State of Wisconsin--DNR Forest Tax Unit.  
 This number must match the acreage listed by the DNR.
- (3) Information comes from "Forest Tax Report 17", supplied to the Marathon County Forestry Department by the State of Wisconsin--DNR Forest Tax Unit.  
 The total must equal 100.00%. Small manual adjustments may be necessary due to rounding errors.
- (4) Automatic calculation of:  
 Total Balance Sheet Amount \* Percentage of Total Acreage.  
 The total must equal the total balance sheet amount. Small manual adjustments may be necessary due to rounding errors.  
 A check must be cut to each township for their allocated amount.

Payments will be made on the County Check Run Dated: 2/1/2024

Forward copy to Forestry Dept (Tom Lovlien) upon completion.

# WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

## WETLAND AND WATERWAY PERMIT CONSISTENCY

*The Wisconsin County Forests Association respectfully requests:*

The State issue a general permit to Wisconsin County Forests for wetland and waterway permitting.

Wisconsin counties hold significant acreage of lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & §28.11). Citizens of Wisconsin value these County Forests because they provide consistent, reliable raw materials for the forest products industry as well as public access and recreation programs on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands. These county forests are a large part of what makes Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State.

By the very nature of the wide variety of services and programs that county forests offer, we are frequently involved with permits for culverts, bridges, boardwalks and also for storm water discharge permits. These permit programs have often been cumbersome and difficult to work through and statewide implementation is not always consistent. At times, these issues have caused significant delays in completing recreational projects.

The Wisconsin County Forests Association has spent countless hours working with regulatory programs to institute streamlined applications and consistency in regulation and have achieved some success in making these permits easier to deal with. However, recently program guidance within certain programs has been a step backwards and has complicated permit compliance. We still recognize the need for additional improvement.

**CURRENT STATUS:** The individual County Forests generally have sufficient staff expertise to fulfill permit requirements without the need for engaging with local wetland and waterway regulatory staff. The Department of Natural Resources has the authority to grant a general permit to undertake certain permit activities and has done so with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. A general permit approval would result in efficiencies for both County Forests and DNR programs.

**RECOMMENDATION:** We respectfully request that the Department of Natural Resources issue a general permit to the Wisconsin County Forests, under the authority granted in 30.206(a)(1m) Wis. Stats., for the purpose of wetland and waterway permits. We request a permit similar to the current general permit renewal being considered for the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.

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For more information contact:

Rebekah Luedtke

Executive Director, Wisconsin County Forests Association

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# WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

## SUPPORT OF FOREST MARKETS

*The Wisconsin County Forests Association respectfully requests:*

**The State evaluate permitting processes and identify any roadblocks deterring new wood markets.**

Sustainable forests, outdoor recreation and public land management are vitally important to Wisconsin's economic health. Forest products are the 2nd largest industry for output in Wisconsin, supporting more than 64,000 jobs and contributing over \$24 billion annually to the State's economy. The Verso mill in Wisconsin Rapids, which was idled in June 2020, consumed roughly 25% of the total raw material harvested in Wisconsin. Losing this market, and many others along the way, has put sustainable forest management, including the viability of our healthy forests, in jeopardy.

The 30 counties, with lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & §28.11), are a major contributor to public land management and rural economic development. They are highly valued because they provide a consistent, reliable source of raw materials for the forest products industry, as well as a tremendous amount of recreation opportunities. Furthermore, the County Forest programs bring revenue into county coffers which not only fund their local programs but this forest derived income also supplements county wide budgets. In addition to market related economic setbacks, counties, and the citizens of Wisconsin, will see additional negative environmental and socio-economic impacts if new markets are not developed and current markets do not rebound.

**CURRENT STATUS:** Wisconsin is known to have an unfriendly environment for new wood markets when mills and businesses are considering establishing in the State. The question is why? What makes Wisconsin an unfavorable option? Discussions with certain mills looking for new opportunities have led us to believe Wisconsin has a very arduous and extremely time-consuming permitting process. Because of this, new businesses are by-passing Wisconsin and going elsewhere.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The red tape and lengthy permitting process has created an unfavorable environment which is why natural resource related industries such as forest products, are not interested in locating their business in Wisconsin. Not only does Wisconsin need newer, stronger markets to maintain forest health, but we also must take care of the existing businesses and markets we do have. We implore you to help keep Wisconsin a national leader in forest products and natural resource management by figuring out why Wisconsin gets overlooked for new wood markets and removing unnecessary road blocks.

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For more information contact:

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# WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

## RESTORING DNR DIVISION OF FORESTRY BUDGET CUTS

Wisconsin counties hold significant acreage of lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & 28.11). Citizens of Wisconsin value these County Forests because they provide consistent, reliable raw material for the forest products industry, as well as public access and recreation opportunities on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands. These county forests are a large part of what makes northern Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public ownership in the State.

Sustainable forestry and public land management are critically important to our State's economic health. County Forest lands are managed by individual counties for the benefit of all citizens and visitors of Wisconsin. County forests produced over 977,000 cord equivalents of wood products, valued at \$45 million during calendar year 2022, helping to fuel the \$24 billion forest products industry in Wisconsin. In addition, the abundant recreational opportunities provided by our programs are an important part of the State's vital tourism industry.

Their success, in no small part, is due to the strong relationships they've built with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR), especially the Division of Forestry, over the decades. In addition, the work they accomplish is dependent on the grants and financial assistance they receive from the DNR annually. In addition to sustainable funding for the counties, it is vital for the DNR, Division of Forestry to maintain their core budget. Through their funding, several entities receive critical assistance throughout the year. Specifically, for the county programs, the DNR supports staff funding and positions, such as time standard hours and administration grants, which allow the counties to accomplish their annual goals and priorities.

**CURRENT STATUS:** Five positions and approximately \$650,000 were cut from the Division of Forestry in the 2023-2025 State Budget. During the same budget, \$25 million was taken from "surplus" Forestry SEG funds were transferred to cover fish and wildlife program shortfalls. The State of Wisconsin made a commitment to fully fund the Forestry Account with General Purpose Revenues after the Forestry Mill Tax was eliminated in the 2017-2019 budget. Making cuts to the Division of Forestry while transferring funds out of the Forestry Account does not seem equitable.

**RECOMMENDATION:** The revenue to cover the budget cuts is available in the Forestry SEG account and we request restoration of cuts and additional funding initiatives as follows:

- **Budget Funds – Restore \$650,000 funding to the Division of Forestry Budgets**
- **Positions – Restore 5 positions to the Division of Forestry**
- **County Forest Time Standard Hours – Increase County Forest Time Standard Hours from the current cap of 46,000 hours to the documented need of 52,000 hours (additional 3.3 FTE).**
- **Forestry SEG Account – utilize surplus Forestry SEG account funds under a comprehensive plan to fund projects benefitting forestry programs in Wisconsin.**

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For more information contact:

Rebekah Luedtke

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# WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

## ELIGIBILITY FOR COUNTY FOREST ADMINISTRATION GRANT

*The Wisconsin County Forests Association respectfully requests:*

The State expand eligibility for the County Forest Administration Grant

Wisconsin counties hold significant acreage of lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & §28.11). Citizens of Wisconsin value these County Forests because they provide consistent, reliable raw materials for the forest products industry as well as public access and recreation programs on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands. These county forests are a large part of what makes Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State.

The Wisconsin Department Natural Resources is a strong partner with the County Forest program. By statute, the State of Wisconsin is obligated to compensate the counties for the public use, benefits and privileges these lands provide. As part of that partnership and compensation, County Forest Administration grants are available. Currently, these grants reimburse 50% of the wage and up to 40% of the fringe of a County Forest Administrator with a 4-year Forestry degree from an accredited school.

**CURRENT STATUS:** There are several County Forest Administrators with either associate degrees in Forestry or 4-year degrees in other natural resources fields, who are not eligible for the grant. Over time, it has become increasingly difficult to find qualified staff with 4-year accredited Forestry degrees and furthermore retain them.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Our goal is not to lessen the professionalism of a county forest administrator, but rather to open the door and allow work experience to be considered with some other levels of schooling. This should not be looked at as a way for counties to hire less qualified people, but rather to allow counties the opportunity to hire those individuals that have shown they are capable of being an administrator through their schooling and work experience combined. We respectfully request an amendment to the County Forestry Administration grant to allow counties to be eligible for the reimbursement of 50% of the wage and up to 40% of the fringe for a County Forest Administrator meeting ANY of the following 3 criteria:

- **A four-year degree in Forestry from an SAF accredited school;**
- **A two-year associate degree in Forestry with 3 years of experience as a County Forest Administrator;**
- **A four-year degree in Natural Resources, Wildlife or Conservation with 3 years of experience as a County Forest Administrator**

A change to grant eligibility can be accomplished by amendment to NR 47.70 of Administrative Code.

\*\*\*

For more information contact:

Rebekah Luedtke

Executive Director, Wisconsin County Forests Association

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Marathon County Forestry Committee

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 Meeting

- As of 2/24/24 the DNR had completed ~460.75 hours of 660 time standard hours for '23/'24. ~70% of total through 66% of the time (8 of 12 months). Sorenson ~392.5 hours of 525 hours ~75%
- Attended WCFA Spring conference in Madison on February 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>
- Finished up paperwork for March 2024 timber sale bid letting
- Assisted Joe Tucker with marking of Spring 2025 Oak thinning in the Kronenwetter Unit
- This spring, John Hunt and I will be assisting Tucker with timber sale marking at Eau Pleine Park and Spring 2025 timber sales on the Burma and Kronenwettter forest units

Respectfully submitted,

*Jeff Sorenson*

Jeff Sorenson

Wisconsin DNR – Marathon County Forest Liaison