

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department **2021 County Forest Division Annual Report**

January 1, 2021 - December 31, 2021

Program Highlights:

- Net timber sale revenue to Marathon County of \$457,140.08.
- Total net revenue for the Forestry Division program was \$535,072.00 and expenses were \$344,560.00. Returned \$190,512.00 to the general fund.
- Traded 80 acres of non-County Forest property for 40 acres of land in the Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit to add to the County Forest.
- Practiced sustainable forestry on 346 acres on the Marathon County Forest. This is based on closed out sales with DNR in 2021.
- Completed a third party Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) Certification field audit that showed County Forest management meets all standards.
- Received 649 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.
- Participated and assisted in the 100+1 Marathon County Parks anniversary event.
- Continued participation in the County Forest Administrator grant program that funds one-half the salary and fringe benefits of the Forest Administrator position.
- Resurfaced 1.40 miles of roads in Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit adding 2992 yards of granite.
- The pandemic forced some cancellations of mountain bike, cross country ski, and competitive cross country running races again at Nine Mile County Forest. Although some were held at lower participation rates.
- The continued closure of the Verso Paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids significantly reduced pulp markets, lowered stumpage prices and made it a challenge for timber producers to market their wood.
- 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 2021:

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:

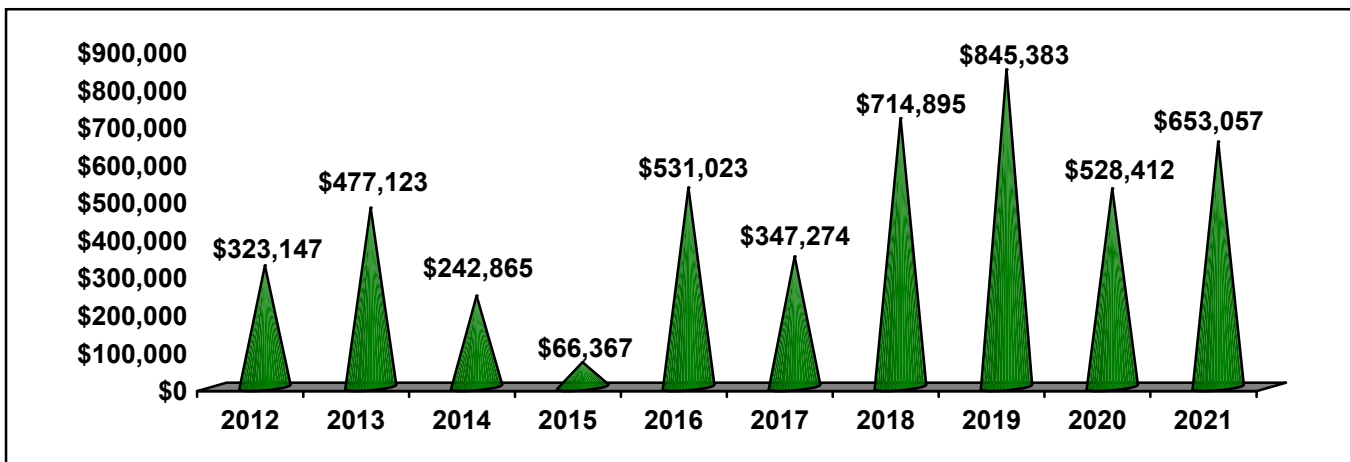
Timber Sales:

Timber sales generated 14,009.36 cords of pulpwood and 825,000 board feet of logs worth \$653,057.25 (unaudited) in 2021. The following is a listing of the gross value of timber cut from the forest over the past 10 years:

2012	\$323,146.07	2017	\$347,274.04
2013	\$477,122.61	2018	\$714,895.21
2014	\$242,865.33	2019	\$845,383.37
2015	\$66,366.74	2020	\$528,411.64
2016	\$531,022.66	2021	\$653,057.25

Marathon County Forest

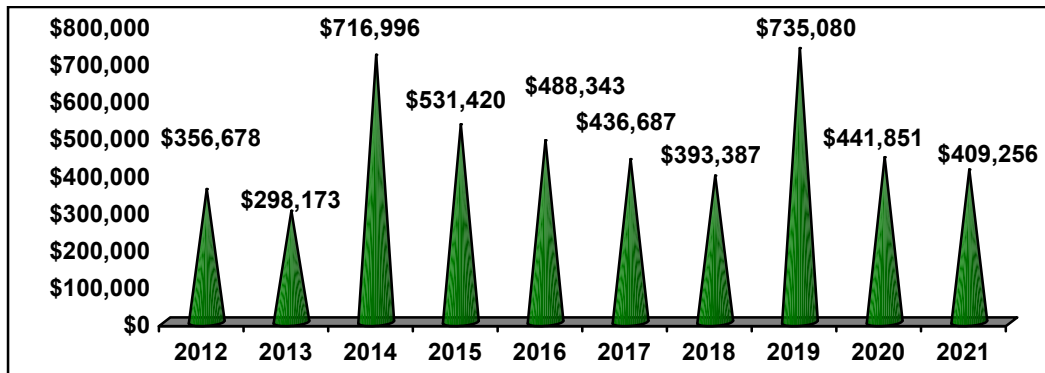
Timber Sales Annual Gross Revenue – Cut and Hauled



Other Timber Sale Data:

New sales – 9 were established on 633 acres with 14,862 cords appraised at \$325,794.00.

Marathon County Forest
Timber Sales Annual Sold Value



- Sold sales – 9 of 9 advertised were sold in 2021 for a value of \$409,255.50.
- Uncompleted timber contracts – 32 on 2,194 acres with 35,838 cord equivalents worth \$1,206,411.21.
- Cut volume reports filed with DNR (form 2460):
 - Final reports – 6 sales worth \$594,519.45.
 - Partial reports - 0 sales worth \$0.
- Severance paid to DNR on interest free loans \$118,903.89.
- Severance Tax Escrow for Town payments (10% of gross receipts) \$65,305.71.
- Firewood permits – 10 permits were issued worth \$270.00.
- New sale establishment – evaluated 650 acres for potential sale (established 633 acres).
- Forest reconnaissance – updated 1947 forested acres, 3363 non-forested acres.
- Completed forest management plans for Ashley, Dells of the Eau Claire, Big Rapids, Cherokee, Amco and Rib Falls County Parks.
- Established and sold an 81-acre timber sale at Big Eau Pleine Park for a value of \$28,420.00.
- Administered a 23-acre timber sale at Mission Lake County Park.

Cultural Projects:

- Classified forest habitat types on 40 acres for inclusion in our GIS database.
- Monitored for additional oak wilt areas in Nine Mile and Kronenwetter Forest Units.
- One new pocket of oak trees was identified in Nine Mile infected with the oak wilt fungus. Monitoring for new pockets will be done in 2022.
- Scarified 34 acres of the forest floor to prepare the site for oak acorn seedling germination at Kronenwetter Forest Unit using DNR heavy equipment.
- Hand pulled garlic mustard at Burma Road Forest Unit and Big Eau Pleine Park in attempt to reduce the spread of this invasive species.
- Completed deer browse surveys at Big Eau Pleine County Park. This will continue in 2022 and beyond.
- Completed deer browse surveys on 123 acres of the Marathon County Forest.
- Mowed between the 2020 tree plantings at Nine Mile and Miller Forest Units to ensure proper growth.

Road, Trail, and Facility Construction and Maintenance:

1. APHIS trapped 23 beaver and removed 25 total dams at problem locations in the county forest. Ten dams were blown using dynamite.
2. Replaced 7 culverts at Nine Mile and Burma Road Forest Units and added granite in problem locations.
3. Brushed approximately 2 miles of roads and trails in the Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit.
4. Placed 2922 yards of granite on forest roads in the Harrison-Hewitt 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 place 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. They are installed to collect data on deer browsing.

Administration:

1. Continued the utilization of the DNR forestry reconnaissance program (WisFIRS).
2. Evaluated one 40-acre parcel for potential acquisition as an addition to County Forest land. This parcel was acquired and added to the County Forest.
3. Assisted in the acquisition of approximately 39 acres to add to the Brokaw County Park.
4. Assisted in the potential donation of 40 acres of land to create a new County Park.
5. Lead discussions and collaborated with the Wausau Nordic Ski Club on the proposal to add snowmaking operations at Nine Mile.
6. Lead discussions and collaborated with the Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition on the proposal to add fat tire biking at Nine Mile.
7. Researched, provided information and continued to follow updates on draft legislation regarding the Verso mill closure and any possible funding opportunities to assist in reopening the mill.
8. Developed policy and implemented principals of Forest Certification - Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) on the Marathon County Forest.
9. Participated in several Wisconsin County Forests Association committee meetings to prioritize strategies for the 2021-2023 State Budget.
10. Began initial research on carbon credit markets and how enrolling may net additional revenue for Marathon County. Research will continue in 2022.
11. Implemented the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan 2021-2035.
12. Located and assisted in the purchase of approximately 100 cords of firewood for campers for use at the County Park campgrounds.
13. Our Recreational Safety Deputies along with assistance from the County Forester confiscated a total of fourteen illegal tree stands. They also confiscated three trail cameras that were illegally placed on County Forest Land. They investigated complaints of vehicle, vandalism, illegal dumping, and criminal activities issuing two ordinance violations and numerous warnings. At Nine Mile Forest Unit, Deputies conducted patrols checking for cross country ski and mountain bike passes issuing multiple warnings. Completed an additional 106 regular patrols at nearly every forest unit.
14. Issued five ATV/UTV disabled person access permits to people with disabilities for County Forest access.
15. Revisions were drafted to Chapter 16 of the County Forest Ordinances and were adopted by County Board in early 2021.
16. 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.
2. Mowed forest openings, Nine Mile and Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit flowage dikes and the Bitzke Bird Walk trail.
3. Twelve beaver and 10 dams were removed by APHIS that were causing damage at waterfowl flowages.
4. Mowed most forest unit trails suitable for mowing.
5. Because of a DNR Wildlife vacancy none of the 72 forest openings in the forest units were either mowed or had herbicides applied. Treatment on twenty-seven openings will take place in 2022.
6. 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. Shearing will continue in 2022.
7. Seeded 1.25 miles of trails with a wildlife mixture in Nine Mile and Leather Camp Forest Units.
8. 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 2022 and beyond.
9. Seeded 100 lbs. of wild rice in flowages at the Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit.
10. 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.

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

The ski season opened on December 31, 2020 and the chalet closed for the season on March 8, 2021. 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 and the Badger State Games were cancelled in 2021. Special Olympics was held and netted \$745.00 in revenue. Stomp the Swamp Snowshoe race was again held in February with \$126.00 in revenue. IronBull winter triathlon event had 48 participants and \$252.00 in revenue. Total annual receipts associated with skiing and snowshoe activity was \$59,825.00.

Ski 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, and damaged trail signs replaced, some new signage added, this work will continue in 2021 as the signage is evaluated and updated.

Mountain Biking at Nine Mile Forest Unit:

The 2021 mountain bike season opened at noon on May 1. The bike trails closed as scheduled on October 15. There were three Mountain Bike events held at Nine Mile in 2021: The Wisconsin Endurance Mountain Bike Series, Wausau 24 and the IronBull Granite Grinder. NICA High school bike race was cancelled. A total of 1125 daily passes and 537 annual passes were sold in 2021. Total receipts associated with mountain biking in 2021 totaled \$16,447.99. Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition, (CWOCC) continues to be a great partner in maintaining the trail system. CWOCC fund raised and completed phase II of the Nine Mile Forest single track improvement project. Volunteers donate many hours of their time to maintain the single-track trails.

Other Recreation:

1. Three cross country running races were held at Nine Mile in 2021.
2. Iron Bull's Adventure Challenge was held at Nine Mile with 491 participants and \$2,577.75 in revenue.
3. Issued fifty-three undesignated camping permits for county forests in 2021 resulting in \$754.29 in revenue.
4. 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 and the demand for more trails is increasing.

Recreational GIS Mapping:

1. Created 2 maps for potential acquisition for addition to County Forest and Park lands.
2. Created 4 maps for utilizing the new CivicRec software including Big Eau Pleine, Dells of the Eau Claire and Marathon parks.
3. Created 2 County Forest and Park location maps.
4. Created new maps for the County website including Amco, Ashley, Big Rapids, Blue Gill Bay, Cherokee, DC Everest, Mission Lake and Rib Falls parks.

Snowmobile Trails:

1. Trails were open 16 days during the 2020-21 season. Looking back 29 years, the seasonal average has been 44 days.
2. Seven local snowmobile clubs' contracts 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 not printed, although a reprint was done. 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 has been re-established. 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 \$16,598.14 of State ATV/UTV trail maintenance funds. More work will be completed this summer in the Burma Forest Unit than was done 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: (Pandemic caused cancellations again in 2021)

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 Society of American Foresters, Wisconsin County Forests Association and Forest Certification training sessions.
3. County Forester attended a virtual training on managing for irregular shelterwoods.
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.

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 20-21
 Cross-Country Ski Trails
 General Fund - Snowmobile Coordinator
 Snowmobile Grant 20-21