



MARATHON COUNTY FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE AGENDA

Date and Time of Meeting: Tuesday, November 29, 2022 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: 2482 641 3695. Please Note: If you are prompted to provide an "Attendee Identification Number" enter the # sign. No other number is required to participate in the telephone conference. 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, November 1, 2022 Committee Meeting**
4. **Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:**
 - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee
 1. Consider Timber Sale Contract Extension Requests
 2. 2023 Forestry/Recreation Meeting Schedule
 3. Timber Sale Closeouts: Country Forest Products – Contract #682-19 and Twin Forest Products Contract #711-22
 4. Consider Timber Bids and Award Contract
 - B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration
 1. Review and Consider Approving the 2023 Wildlife Work Plan – Brandon Stefanski, DNR
 2. Review and Consider Approving the 2023 County Forest Work Plan
 3. Resolution: Application for County Forest Acreage Payment
5. **Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None**
6. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
 - A. Fall Timber Bid Summary
 - B. 2023 – 2025 Wisconsin State Budget Requests

7. **Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 at 1:00pm at 212 River Dr., Wausau, WI 54403, Room 5 or via Webex**
A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence
B. Future Agenda Items:

8. **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 ONE BUSINESS DAY BEFORE THE MEETING.

EMAILED/FAXED TO: Daily Herald and other News Media Groups
EMAILED/FAXED BY: Jodi Luebbe
EMAIL/FAX DATE/TIME: November 23, 2022 9:30 a.m.

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

Members present: Tom Rosenberg (vice-chair), Jean Maszk
Members excused: Rick Seefeldt (chair)
Staff present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director
Others present: Jeff Sorenson-DNR Liaison Forester

1. Call Meeting to Order – The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chairman Rosenberg 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 Maszk / Rosenberg to approve the minutes from the October 4, 2022 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 2-0.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Consider Timber Bids and Award Contracts – Lovlien reported that bids were opened yesterday and eight bids were received on three sales. One of the four county forest sales had no bids. The County has worked with two of the high bidders before and he checked references on the other bidder. Lovlien recommends awarding the sales to the highest bidders on the three sales. He mentioned that the tract that did not sell will have a second bid opening on November 23rd. If it still does not sell then it can be sold direct for the appraised/or advertised value which is made public. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Maszk to award the fall timber sale tracts 6-22, 7-22, and 9-22 to the high bidders. Questions were answered. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 2-0.

2. County Forest Citizens Advisory Subcommittee Appointment – Lovlien explained that the equestrian representative has been vacant for a few months. He contacted a few people but received no applications. Lovlien sent a press release and received two applications. Both applications were discussed. **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to approve Carmen Engelman to the County Forest Citizens Advisory Subcommittee. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 2-0.

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

5. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Proclamation – Forest Products Week in Wisconsin October 16-22, 2022 – Lovlien discussed the importance of Wisconsin’s forests to Marathon County and the State. With over 17 million acres the forest product sector generates more than \$20 billion in goods and services annually and employs around 60,000 people across the state. Healthy and vigorously growing forests have economic value in the State by creating jobs and providing recreation.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: Tuesday, November 29, 2022, 1:00pm, Rm. 5 and WebEx, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403

A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward

B. Future Agenda Items: Consider Timber Sale Extension Requests, 2023 Forestry/Recreation Committee Meeting Schedule, Review and Consider Approving the 2023 County Forest Work Plan, Application for County Forest Acreage Payment, Fall Timber Bid Summary

8. Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Maszk / Rosenberg to adjourn the meeting at 1:25 p.m. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 2-0.

TIMBER SALE EXTENSION REQUESTS

DECEMBER 2022

1. Sales that are 3 years old on December 31, 2022
(1st Extension Request)

<u>Contract #</u>	<u>Purchaser</u>	<u>% Completed by Volume</u>	<u>Season</u>	<u>Recommendations</u>
#686-19	Rodney Hix Forest Products	Over 100%	Winter	10% increase
#689-19	Tigerton Lumber Company	0%	Winter	15% increase



SINCE 1887

TIGERTON LUMBER CO.

"PREMIUM SHAWANO COUNTY HARD MAPLE"
MODERN KILN FACILITIES

P. O. BOX 70
TIGERTON, WISCONSIN 54486
PHONE 715-535-2181
FAX 715-535-2676

November 21, 2022

Marathon County Forestry Committee

Tigerton Lumber Company requests an extension on contract 688-19th. Due to last winter's short frozen period and additional summer 2022 storm damage timber that needed attention, we are not able to get to this sale this winter. Our plan is to prep the access into the sale during Fall 2023 and start harvesting winter 2023-2024. That said, we would like the extension to run until March 31, 2024 to allow for a full winter logging season.

Bunkelman Harvesting is the crew planned for this sale.

Thank You for your consideration.

Jon Holger
Forester
Tigerton Lumber Co
715-650-3480
Jhtlc1887@gmail.com



MEMO

To: Forestry/Recreation Committee
From: Tom Lovlien, Forest Administrator
Date: November 29, 2022
Re: 2023 Meeting Dates

Meetings begin at 1:00pm

Tuesday, January 3	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, January 31	212 River Drive, Room <u>3</u>
Tuesday, February 28	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, April 4	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, May 2	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, May 30	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, July 4 - TBD	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, August 1	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, September 5	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, October 3	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, October 31	212 River Drive, Room 5
Tuesday, December 5	212 River Drive, Room 5

CLOSE OUT TIMBER SALES

Sale 682-19

COUNTRY FOREST PROD

	Estimated	Cut	
Basswood Pulp	70 Tons	132.93 Tons	Basswood Pulp
Mixed Hardwood Pulp	220 Tons	732.52 Tons	Mixed Hardwood Pulp
Oak Pulp	490 Tons	360.40 Tons	Oak Pulp
Red Pine Pulp	45 Tons	39.27 Tons	Red Pine Pulp
Mixed Hardwood Tops <	170 Tons		
	995 Tons	1265.12 Total Tons Cut	
Ash Sawlogs	7 MBF	19.86 MBF	Ash Sawlogs
Basswood Sawlogs	7 MBF	17.23 MBF	Basswood Sawlogs
Red Maple Sawlogs	6 MBF	11.85 MBF	Red Maple Sawlogs
Red Oak Sawlogs	50 MBF	104.02 MBF	Red Oak Sawlogs
	70 MBF	152.96 Total MBF Cut	

Total Revenue for Sale: **\$70,780.77**

Balance: (\$3,387.46)

Bond Amount: \$8,612.50

Bond Type: Cash Bond

Recommendation: **Close Sale and Return Cash Bond
and Balance in the Account**

CLOSE OUT TIMBER SALES

Sale 711-22

TWIN FOREST PRODUCTS LLC

	Estimated	Cut	
Aspen Pulp	25 Tons	0.30 Tons	Aspen Pulp
Basswood Pulp	110 Tons	38.39 Tons	Basswood Pulp
Mixed Hardwood Pulp	825 Tons	682.60 Tons	Mixed Hardwood Pulp
Oak Pulp	440 Tons	144.08 Tons	Oak Pulp
Fuelwood	6.63 Tons	6.63 Tons	Fuelwood
	1407 Tons	872.00 Total Tons Cut	
Ash Sawlogs	30 MBF	68.30 MBF	Ash Sawlogs
Basswood Sawlogs	8 MBF	17.39 MBF	Basswood Sawlogs
Hard Maple Sawlogs	9 MBF	14.29 MBF	Hard Maple Sawlogs
Red Oak Sawlogs	25 MBF	34.10 MBF	Red Oak Sawlogs
White Oak Sawlogs	3.2 MBF	3.20 MBF	White Oak Sawlogs
	75 MBF	137.28 Total MBF Cut	

Total Revenue for Sale: **\$82,250.44**

Balance: \$0.00

Bond Amount: \$15,673.75

Bond Type: Letter of Credit

Recommendation: **Close Sale and Return the Original Letter of Credit**

RESOLUTION #R - _____ - 22

TO APPROVE THE ANNUAL COUNTY FOREST WORK PLAN

WHEREAS, Marathon County has lands enrolled in the Wisconsin County Forest Land Program commonly referred to as the Marathon County Forest; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan requires an annual work plan to be approved by the Marathon County Board of Supervisors to be eligible for certain grant funding per §28.11(5)(b), Wis. Stats.; and

WHEREAS, the Forestry/Recreation Committee and Environmental Resources Committees approved the 2023 Forestry Division Work Plan at their regular meeting held November 29, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the Marathon County Board of Supervisors adopted the 2023 Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Budget at its budget meeting November 10, 2022.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the County Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon does hereby ordain and resolve as follows: To approve and adopt the attached 2023 Forestry Division Work Plan.

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED, that the County Clerk is directed to issue checks pursuant to this resolution and the Treasurer to honor said checks.

Dated this 13th day of December, 2022.

FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE

Rick Seefeldt, Chair

Tom Rosenberg, Vice-Chair

Jean Maszk

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Jacob Langenhahn, Chair

Mike Ritter

Allen Drabek, Vice-Chair

Andrew Venzke

Rick Seefeldt

Tony Sherfinski

David Oberbeck

Kim Ungerer

Fiscal Impact Estimate: No Budgetary Tax Levy Impact. If the Resolution is not approved, the County would lose approximately \$67,599.00 State Grant Funds.

Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department Forestry Division 2023 Work Plan

Personnel:	Forest Administrator	1.00 FTE
	County Forester	0.80 FTE
	Director	0.06 FTE
	Department Clerical Support	0.50 FTE
	Maintenance Specialist (labor)	0.26 FTE
	Maintenance Technician (labor)	0.26 FTE
	Recreational Officer (Sheriff)	0.04 FTE
	DNR Cooperative Assistance (State Funded)	0.35 FTE
	 Total	 3.27 FTE

A. Timber Management:

1. Evaluate a minimum of 5% of the forest (1550 acres) and update compartment reconnaissance.
2. Establish and advertise 600-625 acres of timber for sale. Timber sale acreage and locations are determined using the Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS) and proposed long-term harvest goals chapter 2000 of the County Fifteen Year Comprehensive Plan. Specific locations and details about timber harvests scheduled for the coming year can be obtained by contacting the County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.
3. Administer the cutting and scaling of 22 timber sales on 1737 acres established on County Forest Land with an estimated stumpage value of \$1,047,515.19.
4. Administer the cutting and scaling of one timber sale on 69 acres at Big Eau Pleine Park with an estimated stumpage value of \$45,965.00.
5. Complete site preparation (disc trenching and herbicide) on approximately 60 acres at Nine Mile Forest Unit to prepare the area for a red pine planting in the spring of 2024.
6. Complete deer browse surveys at Big Eau Pleine Park and on County Forest lands to determine to what extent tree regeneration is being affected.
7. Classify habitat types on a minimum of 1200 acres.
8. Calculate allowable harvest levels out 20 and 30 years to ensure sustainability.
9. Evaluate 35–40-year-old aspen stands to determine feasibility of harvesting stands early to improve age class distribution and stabilize harvest levels.
10. Issue approximately 25 firewood permits.
11. Evaluate and complete oak scarification on sites that are identified.
12. Evaluate release needs for all acres of red pine planted since 2012. Release plantations by mechanical or herbicides as needed.

13. Continue to assist the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources with an oak wilt study to confirm the frill-girdle-herbicide method to stop the disease from spreading through interconnected root systems.
14. Complete forest inventories and management recommendations on park properties.
15. Continue implementing the policy on heterobasidial root rot disease requiring contractors to spray conifer stumps with fungicide to prevent infection according to DNR recommendations.
16. Monitor timber sales for unauthorized timber removal using the video detection system.
17. Monitor, evaluate, and treat oak wilt pockets in Nine Mile and other Forest Units.
18. Monitor, evaluate, and treat invasive species on the forest.
19. Apply techniques that reduce the ash component in forest stands on County Forest and Park lands according to DNR recommendations due to Emerald Ash borer being found in the County for the first time in 2017.

B. Road, Trail, and Facility Construction and Maintenance:

1. Continue the contract with APHIS for beaver control.
2. Inspect county forest and park boundaries as needed to control encroaching uses from neighboring private landowners.
3. Contract with professional land surveyors to complete surveys where needed to facilitate administration between County Forest and private lands.
4. Mow 50 miles of hunter walking trails and associated wildlife openings.
5. Mow all forest road ditches in the County Forest.
6. Maintain pit toilets at Bitzke Nature Trail, Burma Road and Nine Mile Forest Units.
7. Continue to assist law enforcement for illegal tree stands, unauthorized motorized use, and dumping on County Forest property.
8. Continue to assist law enforcement to enforce seasonal closures and ordinance violations at Nine Mile and other Forest Units.
9. Resurface up to one mile of trail in Nine Mile and Burma Forest Units.
10. Maintain 6.48 miles of certified County Forest Roads.
11. Fabricate and install gates where needed.
12. Place granite on roads and trails in Forest Units to patch holes as needed.
13. Check the National Heritage Inventory Database (NHI) and the Wildlife Action Plan for endangered resources on any project that occurs on the County Forest.
14. Complete an additional County Conservation Aids project at Duane Corbin Shooting Range Park that replaces archery shooting platforms and targets.
15. Complete a County Conservation Aids Project at Big Eau Pleine Park that adds additional planks at three boat landings.
16. Replace culverts in Leathercamp, Kronenwetter, Nine Mile and Burma Forest Units as needed.
17. Continue mitigation of the 2010 flood using a FEMA grant at the Bern Forest Unit.
18. Complete an Archeological search on any proposed project on County Forest lands.

19. Complete the planning of facility improvements to Nine Mile chalet upon approval of American Rescue Plan funding by the County Board.

C. Land and Equipment:

1. Negotiate the purchase of additional lands to enter as County Forest that will improve blocking, facilitate management, and aligns with the Marathon County Strategic and County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plans.
2. Maintain all vehicles and equipment.

D. Developed Recreation (Non-Motorized):

1. Participate in the planning, administration and approval of all trail construction, expansions, relocations, and maintenance on County Forest Lands.
2. Monitor reconstruction of 2 km of the Nine Mile ski trail to improve trail profile and surface characteristics.
3. Assist Park facilities division in administering intensive recreation at Nine Mile.
4. Utilize volunteers to brush up to 20 km of ski trail.
5. Monitor the non-motorized recreation on County Forest Land.
6. Continue to assist law enforcement to enforce recreation pass requirements and violations at Nine Mile and other Forest Units.
7. Evaluate the 2022-2023 Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition winter fat biking trial season at Nine Mile Forest to determine if biking, skiing, and snowshoeing may become a permanent activity.

E. Developed Recreation (Motorized):

1. Participate in the planning, administration, and approval of all trail construction, expansions, relocations, and maintenance on County Forest Lands.
2. Monitor and approve reconstruction of the Burma Road Forest ATV/UTV trails.
3. The Central Wisconsin Trailblazers ATV/UTV club will maintain 11 miles of ATV/UTV trail in the Burma Road Forest to include brushing, grading, signing, and mowing.
4. Assess all trails and land in the Burma Road Forest to protect the resource from excessive soil erosion and to prevent illegal off-trail use.
5. Volunteers will brush up to 42 miles of snowmobile trail on County Forest Land.
6. Monitor the snowmobile program on County Forest Land.
7. Monitor and enforce ordinances pertaining to the unauthorized motorized use (ATV/UTV) on all County Forest Units.
8. Assist the Recreation Coordinator on the update of the Countywide snowmobile map.

F. Wildlife Management (Partially Grant funded):

1. Complete work identified in the DNR annual wildlife work plan. (See attached plan).
2. Mow flowage dikes, forest trails and select openings for brush control.
3. Seed select forest trails following timber sales to enhance wildlife habitat.
4. Improve forest opening condition through mechanical and chemical applications.
5. Cooperate with the DNR on identifying tag alder to shear in the Harrison-Hewitt and Leathercamp Forest Units.
6. Cooperate with DNR the Ruffed Grouse Society and the United States Fish and Wildlife Service on tag alder shearing in Harrison-Hewitt Forest Unit.

G. Administration and GIS:

1. Implement the 2021-2035 County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
2. Develop and improve the Forestry Division portion on the Department's web page.
3. Continue to work with the Forest Citizen's Advisory Subcommittee for county forests to address issues of concern including use conflicts at Nine Mile during the fall season, the sustainability of mountain biking, equestrian user needs, and the impact of forest management on hunting.
4. Amend the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan to reflect ordinance, boundary, and policy changes.
5. Continue implementing marking guidelines, Best Management Practices for Invasive Species and Biomass Harvesting guidelines on the County Forest.
6. Attend the Annual DNR integrated planning meeting to evaluate, maintain, and improve the County/DNR partnership.
7. Develop interpretive displays explaining the benefits of sustainable forest management for display at recreation areas.
8. Monitor and administer all road use, land use, and other agreements/leases currently on County Forest Lands. Develop new agreements or leases when appropriate.
9. Implement and monitor third party Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) forest certification on the Marathon County Forest.
10. Coordinate integration of the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan with the Marathon County Comprehensive and Strategic Plans.
11. Continue to implement the DNR Wisconsin Forest Inventory Reporting System (WisFIRS).
12. Follow the Bern Flowage emergency action plan, if required, due to flooding.
13. Review county zoning to ensure alignment with the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
14. Apply for grants and permits that accomplish County Forest and Park land improvements.
15. Supervise the County Forester and other seasonal employees.
16. Continue to be part of the senior administration team working on strategic planning and other initiatives to meet Department and County goals.

17. Continue studying the possibility of entering into carbon market project on County Forest lands including education with County Board leadership and presentations with Committee's and County Board.
18. Assist in the annual Marathon County single audit of Forestry budgets.
19. Participate in bi-weekly Parks, Recreation and Forestry Staff meetings.
20. Partner with WDNR Bureau of Watershed Management and the Bureau of Wildlife in the 2023 inspection of the Bern Flowage Dam.
21. Continue education with members of the Forestry/Recreation and Environmental Resources Committees on County Forest management.
22. Submit testimony to the County Deer Advisory Council(CDAC) and other Committee's that may affect County Forest management.
23. Support and assist the County Surveyor in the monumentation project that will locate and place survey corners between County Forest and private lands in the Village of Kronenwetter.

H. Public Outreach/Professional Development

1. Participate in school career programs and attempt to make two classroom presentations on forestry and natural resource management.
2. Attend County sponsored training and other management meetings as required.
3. Participate in job shadows introducing students into the forestry profession.
4. Continue to assist the public with insect, disease, and timber management information.
5. Tour the Marathon County Forest that includes members of the Marathon County Board and others as time allows.
6. Attend appropriate professional development training.
7. Maintain membership in the Society of American Foresters.
8. Attend Forest Certification training as required.
9. Continue to work with the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) by serving as a member of the Legislative/Forest Certification Committee on issues affecting County Forests.
10. Continue involvement on numerous WCFA committee's advancing the practice of forestry.
11. Continue updating maps to be included in new Forest Unit brochures and website for the public.
12. Revise and develop recreational maps for the public including cross country skiing, snowmobiling, equestrian and single-track mountain biking for County Park and Forest lands.

2023 MARATHON COUNTY FOREST WILDLIFE WORK PLAN

This represents the 2023 Annual Wildlife Work Plan, pursuant to the fifteen-year Comprehensive Plan for the Marathon County Forest.

Personnel

Assistance to the County Forest Administrator and DNR Forester Liaison will be provided in all wildlife matters concerning the County Forest. The DNR Wildlife Biologist position assigned to Marathon County will be filled through 2023. However, the DNR is currently short on Wildlife Technician positions in the area. Much of the work done during 2022 was accomplished by the Biologist or a DNR LTE crew.

Flowage Management

Most flowages were managed to keep water levels stable throughout the year. Some flowages were maintained in draw down and some had fluctuating water levels due to beaver activity and precipitation. Waterfowl production and sightings were very good on Marathon County flowages in 2022. Beaver issues and damage were not a major issue throughout the year.

Dike Maintenance:

Muskrat and beaver holes on the flowage dikes are usually patched to maintain their integrity. The dikes at Harrison-Hewitt and Bitzke were all patched during the summer of 2022 by a summer DNR LTE crew. This crew also cut brush and sprayed the invasive Tansy and other invasive plants on these dikes. In 2023, dike maintenance will be needed at the Nine Mile East and Birch flowages.

A USDA-Wildlife Services Certified Service Agreement (CSA) was signed by DNR Wildlife Management to trap and remove problem beaver in 2022 on flowages in the Harrison-Hewitt and Nine Mile Forest blocks as part of a statewide agreement. Fortunately, beaver damage was minimal on the flowages and USDA trapping was not needed. In 2023, DNR once again plans to contract with USDA-Wildlife Services to trap beaver on the flowages due to expected beaver damage.

Bern Flowage:

Bern flowage is chronically affected by floating cattail masses that occasionally plug the dam (Picture 1). Contractors have removed cattails for several years along the dike and weir with an excavator (Picture 2). This technique has proven to be effective at keeping the water flowing and water levels stable. There are still cattails that need to be removed from the flowage as they move closer to the weir. In efforts to keep the cattails from plugging the weir, DNR managed the water level lower in 2022 through the summer to keep cattail mats rooted. The water was brought back up in late summer to allow for better waterfowl hunting.

A contractor removed the cattails along the dike and in front of the dam in November of 2022. A contractor will remove cattails in the fall of 2023 as needed. Additional options of removing cattail are being explored by DNR wildlife management and County Forestry staff.



Picture 1. Bern before cattail removal



Picture 2. Bern after cattail removal

Wild Rice:

Wild rice production was terrific on Lower Nienow, Swamp and Lower Leo flowages (Picture 3) in 2022. Patches of rice were also seen at Nienow and Leo flowages in the Harrison-Hewitt unit. In September of 2022, managers purchased 80 lbs. of wild rice and seeded Leo, Nienow, Lower Nienow and Swamp flowages in the Harrison-Hewitt block.



Picture 3. Wild Rice production in 2022 on Lower Leo Flowage

Flowage Management:

Planned flowage management for 2023 includes a continuation of the flowage drawdown rotation. All the flowages will benefit from being drawn down periodically. Drawdowns reduce undesirable plant species, allow desirable plant species to germinate and return nutrients to the soil. The drawdown plan for 2022 called for drawdowns on Nienow flowage and Nine Mile East #2. However, they were not brought down due to drawdowns at other locations. Lower Leo was kept in draw down due to maintenance needs and the tremendous rice production created by the draw down. Bern flowage was in a partial drawdown throughout the summer, providing great smartweed and *Bidens* production as well as mudflats for shorebirds (Picture 4). Leo flowage is starting a drawdown the fall of 2022 and will continue through the summer of 2023 to set back the Watershield (*Brasenia*) that is taking over the flowage. In 2023, managers plan to draw down Nienow flowage, Nine Mile East #2, and continue with Leo Flowage through the summer.



Picture 4. Summer drawdown at Bern flowage

Forest Management

Openings Management:

Maintaining early successional habitat, such as grass openings, is an important part of Central Wisconsin forest management. In 2022, four forest openings on Kronenwetter were brush cut. Twenty-seven openings were scheduled to be managed in 2022, but limited staff availability during the normal management period impacted the ability to accomplish these goals. The openings not managed will be added to future work plans.

In 2023 wildlife staff plan to manage twenty-three openings in the Harrison-Hewitt, Kronenwetter, Leather Camp and Nine Mile units. We were also awarded a \$2,500 grant from the Ruffed Grouse Society that will allow for renovations of twenty degraded openings in Kronenwetter and Leather Camp over a two-year period. We have been granted an extension to accomplish this project. This renovation project will enhance 15-20 acres of wildlife openings in those two units.

Trails:

DNR wildlife staff seeded 0.67 miles of forest trails in the Kronenwetter Forest Unit and 0.34 miles of trails in Ringle Forest Unit were seeded with a clover/grass mix in the summer of 2022. Seeding trails post-logging prevents erosion and provides a valuable food source for ruffed grouse and other game and non-game species. Trails and log landings will be seeded in Marathon County in 2023 as requested by Marathon County Forestry staff.

Grasslands/ Hoffman Farm

The large burn unit south of County Road G is recommended to be burned during the fall of 2023. It is listed as low priority when compared to other burn units in the district. We will explore other options for managing this grassland complex to control brush if burning is not possible.

Alder Management:

Wet conditions with little frost prevented planned alder management from being accomplished during the winter of 2021-22. Managers have set a goal of mowing 10-20 acres of alder during the winter of 2022-23. Meeting these goals will rely on acceptable weather conditions as well as having equipment and an operator available. A contractor will likely be hired to accomplish this work. Multiple sites in Leather Camp County Forest Unit have been identified for alder mowing, but additional sites will be selected to allow for more options.

2022/2023 Nickel-an-Acre Budget

The following table lists the 2022 Nickel-an-Acre project budgets and expenses. It also includes proposed 2023 projects and the associated spending plan.

Project Activity	2022 Budgeted	2022 Expended	2022 Budgeted
Flowage Maintenance (dikes, spillways, structures)	\$300	\$795.55	\$300
Flowage Maintenance (brush/cattail removal-dikes)	\$300	\$424.91	\$300
Wildlife Opening Maintenance	\$900	\$0	\$900
Trail Seeding	\$100	\$0	\$100
Wild Rice Seeding	\$500	\$400	\$500
Alder Management	\$500	\$0	\$500
Totals	\$2,600	\$1620.46	\$2,600

After all expenses are subtracted, the Nickel-an-Acre account balance at the end of 2022 should be \$2,747.54. This will increase to \$4,178.57 after deposit of the 2023 allotment.

Submitted by:

Brandon Stefanski, DNR Wildlife Biologist, Marathon County

Vacant, DNR Wildlife Technician, Marathon County

Approved by:

Tom Lovlien, Marathon County Forest Administrator

Rick Seefeldt, Vice Chairperson, Marathon County Forestry/Recreation
Committee

Joseph Schwantes, NR Area Supervisor, Wausau

APPLICATION FOR COUNTY FOREST ACREAGE SHARE LOAN PAYMENT

WHEREAS, Counties having lands entered as “County Forest Lands”, under the provisions of Sec. 28.11(4)(b), Wis. Stats., annually receive from the state a non-interest bearing loan to be used for the purchase, development, preservation and maintenance of such lands; and

WHEREAS, said loan monies are repaid through a 20% severance tax on timber revenue coming from County Forest Lands unless a higher rate is mutually agreed to by the County and the department; and

WHEREAS, the current provisions of Sec. 28.11 (8)(b)1 make it possible for the County, at its option to receive not more than 50 cents per acre to meet the needs identified in its County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors of the County of Marathon, in consideration of meeting the needs identified in its County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan hereby request the Department of Natural Resources to provide the 2023 payment to the County on the basis of 50 cents for each acre of Marathon County Forest Lands; and

BE IT FURTHER ORDAINED AND RESOLVED that the Clerk is hereby authorized and directed to file this request with the Department of Natural Resources prior to December 31st preceding the year in which said payment is being requested to be made.

Dated this 13th day of December, 2022.

FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE

Rick Seefeldt, Chair

Tom Rosenberg, Vice-Chair

Jean Maszk

ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Jacob Langenhahn, Chair

Mike Ritter

Allen Drabek, Vice-Chair

Andrew Venzke

Rick Seefeldt

Tony Sherfinski

David Oberbeck

Kim Ungerer

Fiscal Impact: Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Department will receive \$15,011.00 as an interest free loan to be used for forest maintenance, development and land acquisition.

MARATHON COUNTY FOREST Fall 2022 BID OPENING RESULTS

SPECIES	TONS	HIGH BID	LOW BID	Weighted Average of All Bids	Weighted Average of High Bids	Wt. Av. High Bids Spring 2022	Wt. Av. High Bids Fall 2021	Wt. Av. High Bids Spring 2021
ASPEN	9700	\$13.26	\$6.00	\$11.07	\$ 12.10	\$ 16.35	\$ 7.70	\$13.87
MIXED HWD	4400	\$17.00	\$7.00	\$9.07	\$ 11.00	\$ 17.01	\$ 8.15	\$11.34
OAK	340	\$7.00	\$5.00	\$5.75	\$ 6.00	\$ 12.07	\$ 6.00	\$7.87
BASSWOOD	35	\$6.00	\$1.00	\$3.00	\$ 6.00	\$ 10.52	\$ 10.00	\$2.41
MBF								
RED OAK	15	\$350.00	\$220.00	\$290.00	\$ 350.00	\$ 473.68	\$ 300.00	\$386.36
RED MAPLE	191	\$350.00	\$120.00	\$235.52	\$ 326.96	\$ 405.71	\$ 226.88	\$242.50
ASH	5	\$200.00	\$120.00	\$175.38	\$ 200.00	\$ 397.83	\$ 157.39	\$238.42
MIXED HWD	3	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$162.50	\$ 200.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 180.00	\$175.00
BASSWOOD	3	\$150.00	\$120.00	\$140.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 316.67	xxxx	\$197.78
BIOMASS Tons								
All Species	3725	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$0.50	\$1.00	xxxx	\$0.50

Number of sales sold	3/4			5/5	4/4	5/5
Acres sold	254			301	297	336
Value of sales sold	\$217,162.00			\$ 382,264.40	\$164,428.75	\$ 246,237.50
Appraised value of sales	\$155,789.00			\$ 199,942.00	\$156,239.50	\$ 166,572.00
\$ / acre sold	\$854.97			\$ 1,269.98	\$553.63	\$732.85
Ton eq. sold	15552			18126	15160	14050
\$ / ton ave.	\$13.96			\$ 21.09	\$10.85	\$17.53
Cord eq. sold	6764			7481	6539	6110
\$ / cord ave.	\$32.11			\$ 51.10	\$25.15	\$40.30

This bid opening was for four county forest timber sales.
 Received 8 bids from 6 separate bidders.
 Three of four sales were winter only.
 One sale received no bids.
 Somewhat significant decrease on stumpage prices from last spring

Wisconsin County Forests Association

Joe Waichulis
President
Clark County

Phil Schneider
Vice President
Rusk County

Bill Bialecki
Treasurer
Lincoln County

Norman Bickford
Director
Burnett County

Myron Brooks
Director
Taylor County

Ed Kelley
Director
Florence County

Bill Schradle
Director
Barron County

Hank Graber
Director
Washburn County

Alan VanRaalte
Director-at-Large
Rhineland, WI

Michael Luedeke
Director-at-Large
Spooner, WI

Jeff Barkley
Director-at-Large
Madison, WI

Henry Schienebeck
Director-at-Large
Rhineland, WI

Rebekah Luedtke
Executive Director

November 16, 2022

Jenni Dye
Policy Advisor
Office of Governor Tony Evers

Dear Jenni,

The Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) represents the forestry interests of the 30 counties in Wisconsin with lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (§28.10 & §28.11). Our member counties collectively manage over 2.4 million acres in Wisconsin, making them the largest public ownership in the State. Acting as a forum for collaboration and united resolutions on issues which affect them all, WCFA also advocates on the Counties' behalf in fiscal and legislative matters.

The County Forest System plays a vital role in Wisconsin's forest product industry, the second largest industry in the State. In addition to ensuring the various mills around the State have the necessary raw materials, the Counties also provide invaluable environmental and socio-economic benefits to the citizens and visitors of Wisconsin through numerous recreational opportunities, as well as providing healthy forests, clean water resources and robust wildlife habitat. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the county forests also served as a critical refuge for those needing relief and recharge.

Statutorily, the Department of Natural Resources financially and legislatively supports the Counties in order for them to accomplish all of these vital tasks. All of the Counties greatly appreciate and rely on Department's support to fund staff and program budgets, and without it, the Counties would be challenged to meet their annual goals. It's essential, now more than ever, that in this budget cycle, the State commits support of the County Forests and the DNR, both financially and legislatively. To that end, the current priorities for the Wisconsin County Forests Association for this upcoming Budget are as follows.

1. Increase Budget Support for DNR Forestry Programs

The counties and the DNR have built a system over the years which has created substantial reliance by the counties on the State for assistance, both financially and technically. However, without technical assistance (time standard hours) and financial support (grants) keeping pace with inflation and the complexity of the county forest system, both in scope and scale, the impact realized by our county forests is diminishing every year. The revenue to cover additional support for the county forests already exists within the DNR's coffers but the spending authority has been overly restrictive. We respectfully request legislative support of the county forest system by raising the DNR's spending authority and increasing funding available in the DNR budget through the following measures: a) Increase the County Forest Administrator Grant by a minimum of 5% each year of the biennium to cover the ever-increasing costs of salary and fringe, b) Allocate \$250,000 for the Sustainable Forestry Grant, above and beyond what is made

Wisconsin County Forests Association

available for the Administrator Grant, c) At a minimum, the Wildlife Habitat Grant should be made whole with no proration occurring. Secondly, we request the Wildlife Habitat Grant be increased back up to \$0.10/acre as it states in statute and lastly, d) Increase the Division of Forestry's position authority and support the hiring of an additional 3.3 FTE staff to fully support the county forests mission through time standard hours.

2. Increase ATV/UTV Trail & Law Enforcement Funding

Currently, grants are awarded to local units of government at a rate of \$600/mile for ATV trail maintenance and an additional \$200/mile for UTV trail maintenance. The program also offers aids to Sheriff's Departments for reimbursing ATV/UTV patrols. However, local Sheriff Departments are struggling to provide appropriate levels of law enforcement for the growing use and pressure. The most recent funding cycle for WDNR ATV/UTV patrol aids resulted in a 63% pro-rate in reimbursement funding. To that end, we respectfully ask the Governor's support in the following areas: a) Increase the annual summer UTV trail maintenance funding from \$200/mile to \$400/mile, which would result in an additional annual allocation of approximately \$425,000, b) Increase the hybrid (Troute) trail funding to allow for 50% of the per mile trail maintenance rate to include the UTV trail funding rate and c) Increase the annual budget allocation for county ATV law enforcement aids from \$750,000 to \$1,300,000 and cease any proration.

3. Reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

WCFA supports the reauthorization of the County Forest Subprogram of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and maintaining the \$3 million annually to provide land acquisition grants to counties. We also request statutory language be amended to allow nature-based recreational development grants under the County Forest Subprogram of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund.

We are enclosing the issue briefs for the above priorities which will provide more information and details. Thank you for your consideration in these matters and we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss them further with the Governor's office. Please contact our office should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Rebekah Luedtke
Executive Director
Wisconsin County Forests Association

Enclosed: Issue Briefs

CC: Sarah Barry, Deputy Secretary, Department of Natural Resources

WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

DNR BUDGET SUPPORT FOR WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS

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 reliable raw materials 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 forested land holdings 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 of Wisconsin. County forests produced over 938,000 cord equivalents of wood products, valued at \$44,600,000 during calendar year 2021, 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 administrator grants, which allow the counties to accomplish their annual goals and priorities.

CURRENT STATUS: We have built a system over the years which has created substantial reliance on the DNR for assistance, both financially and technically. However, without technical assistance (time standard hours) and financial support (grants) keeping pace with inflation and the complexity of the county forest system, both in scope and scale, the impact realized by our county forests is diminishing every year.

RECOMMENDATION: The revenue to cover these items already exists within the DNR's coffers but the spending authority has been overly restrictive. We respectfully request legislative support of the county forest system by raising the DNR's spending authority, increasing funding available in the DNR budget and backing the following initiatives.

1. **County Forest Administrator Grant** – Per §28.11, the DNR agrees to “fund all of the following for one professional forester in the position of county forest administrator or assistant county forest administrator: 1. Up to 50% of the forester's salary. 2. Up to 50% of the forester's fringe benefits, except that the fringe benefits may not exceed 40% of the forester's salary.” The amount the DNR's allocates for this grant annually is quickly consumed by the ever-increasing costs of salary and fringe.
 - o **Request:** The allocation amount should be increased by a minimum of 5% each year of the biennium to cover these costs.
2. **Sustainable Forestry Grant** – Because the Sustainable Forestry Grant is taken from the same pot of money as the County Forest Administrator Grant, as salary and fringe costs grow with inflation, the less becomes available for forest management work accomplished through these grants.
 - o **Request:** Allocate the full \$250,000 for this grant, above and beyond what is made available for the County Forest Administrators Grant, essentially making the Sustainable Forestry Grant whole once again.

3. **Wildlife Habitat Grant** – The Wildlife Habitat Grant has been at \$0.05/acre since 2010. However, it has also been prorated for the last several years, as the funds are being redistributed elsewhere. Even so, \$120,000 doesn't go a long way on 2.4 million acres of publicly owned land.
- **Request:** At a minimum, the Wildlife Habitat Grant should be made whole with no proration occurring. Secondly, we request the Wildlife Habitat Grant be increased back up to \$0.10/acre as it states in statute.
4. **Time Standard Hours** – Time Standard Hours are critical to the county forests' mission. Division of Forestry personnel complete essential tasks on behalf of the counties. The time standard allocation has been more or less 46,000 hours for 20 years. A recent needs assessment exercise, using calculation formulas established by the Division of Forestry, WCFA and the Counties, showed a need of over 52,000 hours. However, due to other priorities and staffing shortages, the Division is still only able to supply 46,000 hours, a proration of 88%. Given the increasing complexity of the county forest system, both in scope and scale, more work is having to be done with the same number of hours received.
- **Request:** The allocation of time standard hours should be increased to 52,000 hours. This will require an increase of the Division's position authority and the hiring of an additional 3.3 FTE staff to support the county forests mission.
 - It should be noted that we do not want to diminish the work of the DNR on their own lands, for their own priorities and are not suggesting reprioritizing work or reallocating staff time.
 - **Request:** Going forward, the allocation of hours should be seriously reviewed every time a needs assessment is completed. It would be appropriate to adjust the allotment of hours based on the actual need over time as programs, services, funding and staffing shifts.

Rebekah Luedtke, Executive Director
Wisconsin County Forests Association
715. 539.1097
rebekah@wisconsincountyforests.com



WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

ATV/UTV TRAIL & LAW ENFORCEMENT FUNDING

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 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 northern Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State. As part of the recreation programs, these county forests host and/or manage over 85% of the official, off-road, ATV trail systems in Wisconsin.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides aids for the management of these ATV/UTV trails through grants funded from machine registrations, trail passes, and gas tax allocations. The grant programs provide for trail development, rehabilitation and maintenance as well as law enforcement aids.

The ATV/UTV sport has seen dramatic growth over the last 5 years, with an increase of over 25% in registered machines. This steady increase in machines has resulted in a significant surplus of revenues over expenditures and a large "fund" balance in the segregated ATV account. At the same time, trail sponsors are struggling to maintain trails with the existing funding allocations. Ever increasing costs of fuel, materials and time, along with higher traffic volumes, coupled with ever larger machine size and power, result in trail sponsors (primarily counties) not having sufficient funds to maintain trails.

CURRENT STATUS: Currently, grants are awarded to local units of government at a rate of \$600/mile for ATV trail maintenance and an additional \$200/mile for UTV trail maintenance. The program also offers aids to Sheriff's Departments for reimbursing ATV/UTV patrols.

In addition, local Sheriff Departments are struggling to provide appropriate levels of law enforcement for the growing use and pressure. The most recent funding cycle for WDNR ATV/UTV patrol aids resulted in a 63% pro-rate in reimbursement funding.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Increase the annual summer trail UTV maintenance funding from \$200/mile to \$400/mile, which would result in an additional annual allocation of approximately \$425,000. This will provide assistance in trying to manage trail impacts from increase numbers and size of ATV's and UTV's on trail systems.
2. Increase the hybrid (Troute) trail funding to allow for 50% of the per mile trail maintenance rate to include the UTV funding rate. Under the current trail maintenance funding rates this would be an annual increase of approximately \$27,000. If the UTV funding rate is increased from \$200 to \$400 per mile, the annual increase would be approximately \$46,000.
3. Increase the annual budget allocation for county ATV law enforcement aids from \$750,000 to \$1,300,000. This will provide short term elimination of the pro-rate within the law enforcement reimbursement program.

It should be noted these measures are also supported by the Wisconsin ATV Association, the Badger State Sheriff's Association and the Wisconsin Towns Association.

For more information, please contact:

Rebekah Luedtke, Executive Director

715.539.1097

rebekah@wisconsincountyforests.com

WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

KNOWLES-NELSON STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM REAUTHORIZATION

Authorized in FY 2011, the County Forest Subprogram has been one of the most cost effective and efficient uses of Knowles-Nelson Stewardship funds. It is one of the few uses of the Stewardship funds which actually produces revenue and a positive rate of return on its investment, most of which goes back into local coffers to be invested elsewhere.

Wisconsin counties hold and manage significant acres enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes §28.10 & §28.11). Citizens and visitors of Wisconsin value these County Forests because not only do they provide reliable raw materials for the State's \$24 billion forest products industry, they also ensure public access and recreation amenities on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands in 30 Wisconsin counties. These county forests are a large part of what makes Wisconsin unique and collectively they make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State.

The State's investment in the County Forest Subprogram currently leverages 50% local match, and to date, this subprogram has resulted in the acquisition and enrollment of 26,942 acres of additional public lands, in 15 county forests, into §28.11, at a total cost of \$41.6 million, \$20.8 million being Stewardship funding. Besides being open for public recreational use into perpetuity and providing numerous environmental and socio-economic benefits, these lands have already generated over \$1.6 million in revenue to county governments from the sale of timber, reducing local tax burdens. These timber sales are estimated to have produced another \$2.85 million of economic benefits as additional jobs and businesses utilize these forest products.

County Forest land acquisitions are proven to be of great value for Wisconsin, both for citizens and visitors. According to the USDA-National Agricultural Statistics Survey, the average price per acre for forest land transactions in Wisconsin in 2018 was \$2,349/acre. The average price per acre for County Forest land acquisitions under the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program is approximately \$1,547/acre, with \$773/acre coming from the Stewardship Program, a 300% decrease from open market prices.

Stewardship funds have been critical to the recent growth of Wisconsin's County Forests, and many counties plan on utilizing the program in the next decade. It is doubtful many of the public land acquisitions would have taken place without the availability of these funds, and many counties would not have a land acquisition program without it. County funding is limited and often not readily available when willing sellers come forth. Lands to be purchased under the County Forest Subprogram are prioritized under a ranking system developed between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin County Forests Association. This ranking system only moves forward potential acquisitions which are sound, high-quality investments, and that often provide many environmental and economic benefits to the counties and the general public.

Lands to be purchased must be within established County Forest boundaries, often reducing costs and increasing efficiencies of future management activities in the area.

In addition, Wisconsin's County Forests are critical to the state's outdoor recreation industry providing over 8,400 miles of managed snowmobile trails, 1,860 miles of ATV trails, 540 miles of designated hiking trails, 460 miles of ski trails, 670 miles of bike trails, 2,780 campsites, 320 boat landings, and many more. To keep pace with ever-expanding demand, investment in the development, restoration, and modernization of facilities is essential.

Developments such as parking lots, trailheads, restrooms, and other amenities are highly-valued by residents and tourists, but are currently not eligible uses of County Forest Subprogram allocations or carry-forward balances. Investments in nature-based recreational development on county land in counties with land enrolled under Wisconsin's Forest Law will further increase the State's return on investment in the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.

Wisconsin County Forests Association supports the reauthorization of the County Forest Subprogram of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and maintaining the \$3 million annually set aside to provide land acquisition grants to counties. We also request statutory language be amended to allow nature-based recreational development grants under the County Forest Subprogram of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund at the 50% match level.

CURRENT STATUS: The State's investment in the County Forest Subprogram currently leverages 50% local match, and to date, this subprogram has resulted in the acquisition and enrollment of 26,942 acres of additional public lands, in 15 county forests, into \$28.11, at a total cost of \$41.6 million, \$20.8 million being Stewardship funding.

RECOMMENDATION: Request the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship County Forest Subprogram be reauthorized and funded at current levels, and be amended to allow nature-based recreational development grants under the County Forest Subprogram.