

SAWYER COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 100

BACKGROUND

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100 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Sawyer County Forest is to manage the natural resources and facilities of the Sawyer County Forest in order to provide economic, social, and ecological benefits to current and future residents of Sawyer County and the State of Wisconsin. Grow, sell, and harvest timber on a sustainable basis employing current science-based forestry principles in order to provide income to Sawyer County, and the Townships containing County Forest and in order to provide direct and indirect employment on a local and region wide scale. Provide a broad range of sustainable recreational opportunities to foster the local tourism industry in order to serve the desires of the general public and to encourage healthy lifestyles for our citizens. Ensure the sustainability or enhance natural resources including soils, waterways, wetlands, groundwater, and a broad base of flora and fauna. Protect rare or other unique resources from degradation, destruction, or over-consumption. Cooperate with other public and private entities or groups to achieve the mission.

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

To administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”

110 COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

SAWYER COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN POLICY

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

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

110.1 MANAGEMENT PLANNING

OBJECTIVES

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

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

110.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Section 28.11, Wis. Stats., places the responsibility for the plan development on the Committee with technical assistance from the Department and other agencies. The County Forest Administrator will take the lead at the committee's request. During development of the plan public participation should be utilized to provide for public participation throughout the planning process. Public participation and inputs into the plan should consider s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., which governs the County Forest program and provides the sideboards to which this plan must adhere.

Sawyer County's public participation process includes the following:

Sawyer County Forestry Department will prepare the initial draft chapters with the assistance of a citizen advisory committee where appropriate. Individual draft will be presented to the Land, Water, and Forest Resources committee for review. After approval of the draft by the committee the chapters will be posted on the Sawyer County website for a 30 day review period. Interested citizens may submit comments to the Sawyer County Forestry Department via e-mail, US mail, phone call or in person throughout the development of the plan.

110.3 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN

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

110.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLAN

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

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

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

110.5 UPDATING THE PLAN

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

4000 do not require a plan amendment or official DNR approval, with the exception of the official County Forest Blocking map.

110.6 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING

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

115 FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING

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

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

115.1 FOREST CERTIFICATION GROUP ADMINISTRATION

As the certification group manager, the Department of Natural Resources will be responsible for overall administration of third-party certification efforts. The DNR County Forest Specialist will work in close cooperation with the Wisconsin County Forests Association in coordinating this effort. The group manager's responsibilities will include:

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

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

115.2 FOREST CERTIFICATION

Sawyer County's Commitment to Sustainable Forestry

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

Sawyer County's Commitment

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Sawyer County will implement forestry practices that promote forest sustainability and multiple use of the forest. In the management of the Forest that will include the sustainable harvest of forest products, the protection of special sites, wildlife, plants, water quality and aesthetics.

All forestland owners have a responsibility to provide sound forest stewardship. Sawyer County will work in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other natural resources groups / agencies in providing sustainable forestry information to those landowners and individuals impacting forest sustainability in Wisconsin. We will support research efforts to improve the health, productivity, and management of forestlands both internally and through cooperative efforts. In managing the Sawyer County Forest, a spectrum of forestry practices will be employed to achieve our sustainable forestry objective. Both intensive and more extensive forest management techniques will be used to provide for wildlife, forest products, recreation, aesthetics, water quality, aesthetics and ecosystem maintenance. In keeping with this responsibility Sawyer County is committed to FSC and SFI Certification.

120 COUNTY AUTHORITY

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Land, Water, and Forest Resource Committee of the County Board enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

120.1 ORDINANCES

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Sawyer County Forest can be found in Chapter 1000, Section 1005.2 In addition, the following will be considered in planning process.

- County Owned Land Ordinance
- Zoning ordinance
- Floodplain Zoning ordinance
- Shoreland-Wetland Protection Ordinance
- Non-Metallic Mining Ordinance
- Non-Metallic Mining Reclamation Ordinance

125 HISTORY

125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. In 1929 the law was amended to create the County Forest Reserve Law. In 1963, several major revisions were made, creating the County Forest Law s28.11. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. Several grants and loans were created and remain available to counties to compensate for public uses of these county forest lands as stipulated in s28.11. To fulfill additional statutory obligations acreage share payments to towns are currently \$.30/acre, and towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year.

In 2020, twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

125.2 SAWYER COUNTY FOREST HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

1932: A County resolution was adopted designating the County Forest reserve Units. The units established were the Namekagon, Totogatic, Lake Chetac North, Lake Chetac South and the Thornapple Forest Reserve Units. At the time, the County Conservation Committee was placed in charge of the administration of these lands. They were also authorized to select some individuals to supervise activities on the Forest. The first Administrator was given title of County Trespass Officer. He was to be responsible to the Conservation Committee and to work in cooperation with the Wisconsin Conservation Department.

March 18, 1933: The first application was made by Sawyer County to enter non-agricultural County lands under the State Forest Crop Law and the County Forest Reserve Law. These lands were to be designated by the Conservation Committee, Agricultural Committee and Tax Deed Lands Committee.

1932-1941: An important development in the history of the Sawyer County Forest was the establishment of the Smith Lake Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp, located in Section 8, Township 42 North, Range 7 West. This camp was started in 1932 and closed down in 1941. The Federal CCC program employed young men who worked hard planting trees and improving the Forest and Forest infrastructure. Among the accomplishments on the Sawyer County Forest were 4,688 acres of trees planted and 4,237 acres of timber stand improvements. Other projects included white pine blister rust control, construction of fire towers, telephone lines, fire lands and firebreaks.

1933: The total acreage of Sawyer County land entered under the Forest Crop Law was 37,622 acres.

1934: The first County Forest ordinance was adopted.

1937: The first recorded County Forest withdrawals occurred.

1939: Portions of Section 21, Township 42 North, Range 8 West were withdrawn for

purposes of exchanging land to obtain flowage rights on the Totogatic Flowage. Also, in 1939, upon recommendation of the State and resolution of the County Board, County lands within the boundaries of the Flambeau River State Forest were traded for State lands within the boundaries of the Sawyer County Forest. At this time, the Sawyer County Forest was in excess of 70,000 acres.

1941: Starting about this time, lands that could be purchased for a reasonable price within the County Forest boundaries were acquired. Among the lands acquired was the Hans Thompson property in Section 7, Township 42 North, Range 7 West. These purchased lands, together with lands acquired through tax delinquency were entered under the Forest Crop Law.

1947: A resolution was adopted that all fire lanes in Sawyer County maintained by the State be turned over to Sawyer County to be maintained and operated under the direction and supervision of the Sawyer County Conservation Committee. Later, many of these roads were turned over to the individual Townships to be entered under the Town Road Systems.

1964: The total acreage of the Sawyer County Forest was 113,079 acres.

1960's: First snowmobile trail was developed.

1973: Johnson Timber chipping mill opens just outside Hayward, increasing demand for nearly unmarketable aspen timber.

1976: The County receives a Federal grant to develop a skiing and hiking trail. The trail eventually becomes known as the American Birkebeiner Trail.

1979: Louisiana-Pacific wafer board plant constructed, greatly increasing demand for aspen timber resource.

1979: American Birkebeiner Trail widened to present width.

1988: First funded ATV trails developed.

1993: First Chequamegon Area Mountain Bike Association (CAMBA) trail developed.

1993: County Forest gross timber sale revenue reaches \$255,586

2001: County Forest gross timber sale revenue exceeds \$1,000,000 for the first time with gross timber sale receipts of \$1,072,162.

2005: County Forest gross timber sale revenue exceeds \$2,000,000 for the first time with gross timber sale receipts of \$2,094,267.

2008: Sawyer County completes land purchase of 1398 acres from Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, parcels located within the Edgewater and Totogatic Blocks of County Forest bring total acreage of Sawyer County Forest to 115,197 acres.

2015: County Forest gross timber sale revenue exceeds \$3,000,000 with gross timber sale receipts of \$3,247,738.

125.3 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

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

WCFA provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s. 28.11 and chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues. WCFA develops and implements a strategic plan. The organization's mission statement is as

follows:

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

125.4 TRENDS

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

- Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid-1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.
- Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clearcutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.
- Sawyer County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.
- Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management

activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 600 (610) for specifics on this subject.
- The Forest is considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

125.5 PROTECTING THE PUBLIC RESOURCE

As stated in State Statute 28.11 (1), the county forest program enables and encourages “the planned development and management of the county forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple-use to assure maximum public benefits to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”