

LINCOLN COUNTY FOREST FIFTEEN-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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100 **MISSION STATEMENT**

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

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable forest management practices.

105 **GOAL OF THE LINCOLN 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 §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.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under §66.1001 Wis. Stats (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning) §1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This County Forest plan will complement, and should be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning). There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by §28.11, Wis. Stats.

110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Lincoln County Forest.
2. To provide the reader of the plan with background information regarding the County Forest.

115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

The County Forest Law (§28.10 and §28.11 Wis. Stats.) provides the authority to establish, develop, and manage a permanent County Forest Program.

120 COUNTY AUTHORITY

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Committee of the County Board (*hereafter referred to as the “Committee”*) enforces the regulations governing the use of the Lincoln County Forest.

120.1 ORDINANCES

The County ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Lincoln County Forest are listed below.

- County Forest and Recreational Trails Ordinance-Chapter 16 of Lincoln County's General Code (see Chapter 900 of this plan)
- Parks and Recreation Ordinance-Chapter 19 of Lincoln County's General Code (see Chapter 900 of this plan)

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. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that Counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within County Forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the County Forest. In return for this aid, the State originally collected a seventy-five percent severance tax on the products cut on County Forests. This was reduced to fifty percent in 1937 and then to twenty percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. 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. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20% of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if Counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to Counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment to Towns is currently \$.30/acre. In addition, Towns with County Forest land receive 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Stumpage revenues exceed \$18,000,000 annually on Wisconsin's County Forests. Twenty-nine Counties in Wisconsin now own approximately 2.3 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in overharvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

125.3 LINCOLN COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

In 1934, the Lincoln County Board began discussing the possibility of a forest reserve. It was felt that thousands of acres of tax delinquent lands would best be utilized by keeping them in timber production. In December of 1934, 60,000 acres qualified for the State's Forest Crop Program and were included in the Forestry and Recreation District.

On May 7, 1935, the County Forest Reserve was established with these and other pending lands. By November 13, 1935, Lincoln County had 74,247 acres included in the Forest Reserve. The administration of the program was handled by the County Agricultural Agent until 1940.

On May 6, 1936, the County Forest Ordinance was drafted. This ordinance established the Lincoln County Forest and outlined its uses and regulations (§28.11 Administration of County Forests). A Forestry Committee was also formed and its duties established. Some of the earliest Committee actions included petitioning the Civilian Conservation Corps to bring the New Wood Camp back to full strength by replanting approximately 45,000 acres of severely burned lands. The Works Projects Administration (W.P.A.) also provided labor for these early re-forestation projects.

In 1940, the position of County Forest Administrator was created. The Administrator is responsible to the Forestry, Land and Parks Committee.

In 1963, annual gross timber sale receipts on the Lincoln County Forest were \$27,208.61. In 2004, annual gross timber sale receipts on the Lincoln County Forest were \$1,270,586.91.

As of December 2004, the Lincoln County Forest has a land area of about 100,805 acres, which makes up approximately 17.5% of the County's land surface.

125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Lincoln 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 ten delegates elected from County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association.

This corporation 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 §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.

130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST

130.1 NATURAL FEATURES

130.1.1 Topography

Lincoln County, located in the north central part of the State is comprised of sixteen civil townships having an area of 576,000 acres. It lies in the Northern Highland physiographic region of Wisconsin. The topography of the forest and surrounding area has glacial origin. The glaciers came southward in two different ages. The earlier ice sheet was called the Illinoian and covered the entire County. The later and principal glacier was the Wisconsin Ice Sheet, which stopped when it had covered slightly more than the northern one-half of the County.

The topography on the County Forest is varied. While the landscape is level over much of the area, there are conspicuous exceptions. The Harrison, Mail Route and Underdown Blocks on the eastern side of the County are hilly with many steep slopes and small lakes. The western portion of the County is relatively level with few hills and more gentle slopes with a smaller number of lakes, although streams interlace the land. The Highway 8, Highway T, New Wood and Wildwood Blocks are low and quite flat with large swamp and marsh areas. The Pine Tree Lane Block is flat with the majority of the area being moderately well drained, sandy soil. All the drainage of the County flows through tributaries into the largest river, the Wisconsin, which flows southward and bisects the County.

130.1.2 Geology and Soils

The soils of Lincoln County have been derived largely from the weathering of the glacial drift deposits and show a great variation within relatively short distances. Since the glacial period, the soils have been modified by water action, wind, and the accumulation and incorporation of organic material. A generalized soil map can be found in Chapter 900. Detailed soils information is available in the Lincoln County Soil Survey.

130.1.3 Geography

Lincoln County is the 21st largest County in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 576,000 acres. Additionally, approximately 16,840 acres of water included in lakes and streams are found in Lincoln County. Approximately 60 percent of the land in the County is classified as forest land. The County Forest, which contains approximately 100,805 acres, is the 11th largest County Forest in the State.

130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger eco-region. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and landtype associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and

potential plant communities. The Lincoln County Forest is encompassed within the Laurentian Mixed Forest province in the Northern Highland section, including the following subsections; Central/Northwest Wisconsin Loess Plains (New Wood, Wildwood and CTH T Block), Glidden Loamy Drift Plain (Pine Tree Lane and Hwy 8 Block), Perkinstown End Moraine (Underdown and Harrison Hills Block), and Northern Highlands Pitted Outwash (Mail Route Block). Landtype Associations (LTA's) within the subsections include: Jump River Ground Moraine (New Wood, Wildwood and CTH T Block), Chequamegon Washed Till and Outwash (New Wood, Pine Tree Lane and Highway 8 Block), Harrison Hills (Harrison Hills, Underdown and the Eastern Mail Route Block), Irma Moraines (Northern Underdown Block), and Northern Highland Pitted Outwash (Mail Route Block). LTA's, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species, living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. The following biological communities are found on the Lincoln County Forest:

Northern Forest: contains mixed deciduous and coniferous forests found in a distinct climatic zone that occurs north of the tension zone.

Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water.

Aquatic Communities: including springs, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers.

130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately 94% of the Lincoln County Forest land base is forested. Forested uplands are comprised of primarily aspen and northern hardwoods while fir-spruce, lowland hardwoods, tamarack and cedar occupy the forested lowlands. The remainder is classified as non-forested, including types such as open water, wetlands, rights-of-way, grass openings, shrubs and bogs. The different cover types present on the Lincoln County Forest are detailed under "Forested Communities" in Chapter 800 (820.1).

The Lincoln County Forest is primarily located in the northern one-half of the County. Chapter 900 contains maps showing the location of the County Forest.

130.1.6 Wildlife

The Lincoln County Forest provides a diversity of habitat types and natural communities associated with the Transition Forest, North Central Forest, and Northern Highland Forest Ecological Landscapes of Wisconsin. No formal survey has been conducted to identify or inventory the fauna occurring on the Forest. However, all of the common, and an abundance of the not-so common, northern forest game and non-game species occur. The wild turkey is a species of game bird that continues to expand its range northward into habitat types previously considered unsuitable for this species. Some of this range expansion has occurred on the Lincoln County Forest.

A diversity of both terrestrial and aquatic communities and habitat types is critical in maintaining the species rich and abundant wildlife associated with the Forest. Forest management decisions will take into consideration the habitat requirements of both the common, and not-so common, game and non-game wildlife species.

Needs of area sensitive species, those requiring large or small areas of a specific habitat type, will be considered. Where feasible, forest management decisions will incorporate these needs in timber sale establishment.

Aspen management and the early successional stage habitat it provides within the upper Great Lakes Region (Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan) is becoming more critical as forests across the region continue to age and transition into longer lived forest communities. Emphasis on aspen management will continue on the Forest, and diversity of stand size will be taken into consideration when determining prescribed harvests. This does not diminish the significance of longer rotation forest communities, such as uneven aged northern hardwoods. Diverse forest management will continue.

Permanently sodded, grassy openings within the forest, many originating from old log landings, camps, old burns, or frost pockets are vital components of forest wildlife habitat.

An effort is being made to maintain and improve the quality and, in some cases, the quantity of openings.

Management of three man-made flowages within the Lincoln County Forest; (Camp 26, Coffee Creek, and Harrison Flowage) will continue. The shallow water communities provided by these flowages offer habitat for a variety of waterfowl, songbirds, shorebirds, furbearers, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates. Active management of the Harrison Flowage will emphasize a shallow water community, as originally intended in flowage construction. Efforts to increase the wild rice beds and desired emergent aquatic plants will continue on this flowage.

130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities and unique natural features on the Lincoln County Forest. See Chapter 900 for a listing of threatened and endangered species in the forest.

130.1.8 Water

Lincoln County has 16,840 acres of water including 726 named lakes and 668 miles of streams. Of this total, 318 miles are classified as trout streams.

Within the County Forest boundaries there is a variety of fishery resources. Approximately 49 named and 140 unnamed lakes have all or portions of their shoreline under County ownership. In addition, the County owns frontage on over 11 named trout streams. A complete inventory of the surface water resources in Lincoln County can be found in Chapter 900, Appendix.

Lincoln County also has several streams located within the County Forest boundary which are classified as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters including:

- Center Fork New Wood Creek
- Little Pine Creek
- Big Pine Creek
- Green Meadow Creek

- Camp 26 Creek
- Armstrong Creek
- Flannigan Creek
- Hay Creek
- Squaw Creek
- Krueger Creek
- Prairie River

Note: An entire listing of the outstanding and exceptional resource waters can be found in Wisconsin Admin. Code NR102.10 and 102.11.

130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Lincoln County. Recreational opportunities with developed facilities include parks, beaches, campgrounds, waysides, boat landings, and horse, mountain bike, Ice Age, snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle, hunter/walking, and cross country ski trails. The County Forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, and sight-seeing.

130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and spin-off industries derived from the recreational opportunities on the Forest are vitally important to Lincoln County's economic well being. Forest industry is the #1 ranked employer in the County. The quality of life in many Wisconsin Counties is heavily dependent on the traditional resources the County Forests provide.

130.2.3 Roads & Access

All Lincoln County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. In addition to the Town and County Roads that access the forest, Lincoln County also maintains 27.25 miles of County Forest roads. A number of gated or bermed special use trails and roads are

also available. Access management remains a controversial issue on the Forest. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation are provided for within the Forest. (See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access).

130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our Forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Lincoln County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Lincoln 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.

a. Greater demands are being placed on the Forest by people using it to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has led to user conflicts. In particular, dramatic increases in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) has pressured County Forests into providing trails for their use. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are commonplace.

b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forest land is being lost to residential development, and forest landowners are decreasingly interested in managing land primarily for timber values.

c. 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. A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on

Wisconsin's National and State Forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the County Forests. The County Forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

d. Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Even-aged management practices will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of sound forest management techniques will continue.

e. Lincoln County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with fewer dollars. 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.

f. 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.

g. Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn and honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's Forests. Refer to Chapter 800 (830.2) for specifics on this subject.

h. 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.

130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest is composed of 138 management compartments ranging in size from 320 acres to nearly 1,400 acres. Within the County Forest boundaries, approximately 99 percent of the land is County owned with most of the remaining 1 percent in small private holdings. A map of these compartments can be found in Chapter 900, Appendix.