

LINCOLN COUNTY FORESTRY, LAND AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

To the Honorable Board of Supervisors
Lincoln County, Wisconsin

The following is a report of the various activities of the Lincoln County Forestry, Land and Parks Department from January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2017.

OUR 2017 COUNTY FOREST consists of 100,843.05 acres.

2017 TIMBER SALES REVENUE TOTALED \$1,922,395.38. This revenue is distributed as follows: \$192,227.67 (10%) to Towns with County Forest Lands; \$384,454.97 (20%) to the County General Fund; and \$1,345,712.74 (70%) to the County Forestry Fund. Any unused budgeted funds and surplus revenues are transferred to the County CIP Program after the annual audit is completed.

DURING THE YEAR, 37 TIMBER SALES WERE SOLD with an estimated value of \$1,900,610.90.

SIXTEEN BOUGH PERMITS WERE ISSUED @ \$100.00 per permit = \$1,600.00.

GRANT REVENUES administered by the Forestry, Land & Parks Department during 2017 totaled \$502,336.43. Of this amount, \$9,217.77 was provided by Lincoln County for those grants requiring cost sharing.

REVENUE FROM WOOD SALES AND FIREWOOD PERMITS DURING 2017 TOTALED \$870.00. One wood sale (\$120.00) and forty-five 30-day firewood permits (\$675.00) were issued. Five firewood permits (\$75.00) were extended.

TREE PLANTING/SITE PREP/BIOMASS:

Fill-in planting of approximately 3500 2-year old red pine seedlings on the south half of a 40 acre site planted in 2014 in the Town of Wilson was done by the Lincoln County Forestry Crew.

Approximately 16,800 2 year old red pines were planted on 16 acres in the Town of Harrison by the Lincoln County Forestry Crew in 2017.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI):

Approximately 850 acres of aspen release was completed in aspen regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 7 acres of swamp conifer site prep was completed by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 18 acres of red pine seedlings were released with brush saws in the Town of Wilson by the Lincoln County Forestry Crew.

SURVEYING: All of the surveying done in 2017 was in conjunction with the Lincoln County Surveyor.

In Section 35 of T33N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the NW1/4 NE1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary.

In Section 21 of T35N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the north and east lines of the NW1/4 totaling approximately 1 mile of boundary.

In Section 5 of T33N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the NE1/4 NW1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the CN1/16.

In Section 5 of T33N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the N1/2 NE1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 16 of T35N R4E a witness monument was set at the N1/16NW.

COUNTY FOREST ROAD AIDS PROGRAM: We continued our County Forest road maintenance program including graveling, installing culverts, improving drainage, right-of-way brushing and regular grading and snowplowing of roads. In 2017 we received approximately \$314.81/mile for maintaining 27.25 miles of roads for a total of \$8,578.62. A GIS layer was developed several years ago showing the locations of culverts on our gas tax roads and these structures were identified by diameter and length, prioritized and placed on a replacement schedule. All high priority culverts have been replaced and we are now focusing our efforts on roadside brushing, ditching and moderate risk culverts. Six culverts were replaced on Cinder Road, Camp Ave, Swamp Road and Armstrong Creek Road in 2017 as well as 3.54 miles of roadside brushing being conducted on Armstrong Creek Road.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDS FOR 2017: We continued work on our County Conservation Aids grant for improving lake access by repairing the access road and expanding the boat landing at Underdown Lake. Wildlife Habitat funds were used for alder shearing, mowing of wildlife openings and trails and roadside brushing on the Averill Creek Firelane.

PRAIRIE DELLS SCENIC AREA: The Forestry, Land and Parks Committee accepted the donation of a 5-acre parcel bordering the Prairie Dells Scenic Area in 2015. This donation will allow our department to enhance the recreational opportunities in this location and will also prevent future developments from occurring adjacent to this scenic area. A three acre timber sale was established on county land on the west side of the river on the Prairie Dells property. This sale will be harvested in conjunction with a harvest that will occur on the Merrill Memorial Forest.

ORGANIZED AND/OR COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES WERE CONDUCTED on the County Forest in the Underdown Recreation Area by the Underdown Horse Club and the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA) and in the Harrison Unit by the Harrison Hills ATV Club.

THE UNDERDOWN RECREATION AREA is available for a variety of uses year round. Groomed and tracked X-C ski trails, snowshoe trails, horse trails, single track bike trails, fat bike trails, hiking trails, and a snowmobile/winter ATV trail are all mapped and signed in the Underdown. Season

trail passes were made available to the public to offset the cost of these trails. A culvert was installed by the Forestry Dept. using grant funding where the trail crosses a wet, muddy area. Signing and trail improvements were also completed on several trail segments by the bike club. A connecting return trail was constructed on the County Forest from the Underdown trails to the newly developed bike trails on the Merrill Memorial Forest. New gates were installed in various locations to accommodate horse drawn wagon events for the Underdown Horse Club. Electrical service was installed underground from the storage building to the new shelterhouse providing this facility with generator powered lights and electrical power. A new groomer for the ski trail that was purchased using donated funds continued to be utilized. Several segments of Cross-County ski trail had dozer work and trail signing improvements completed. An RTA grant was obtained for improvement work and maintenance of non-motorized trails in the Underdown. The amount awarded to Lincoln County under this grant was \$6,771.77 and we must match these dollars for a total project cost of \$13,543.54.

COUNTY PARKS ACTIVITIES: Regular maintenance of County parks and facilities was performed during 2017. We have been using non-lethal means in an integrated approach to control geese population issues at Tug Lake County Park. A new steel roof was constructed on Shelterhouse B at Newwood Park and several new campfire rings were installed within our campground system. Drainage improvement work was done to several campsites located at Otter Lake.

INVASIVE SPECIES: In 2007, a significant garlic mustard infestation was discovered in the Underdown Block of the County Forest and on adjacent private land. Our department took immediate action to try to control the spread of this invasive plant by conducting a search to find new infestations and applying herbicide where the plant was known to occur. Several other small, satellite colonies of this invasive plant have been found in other locations of the Underdown, Harrison and Wildwood Blocks.

In addition to Garlic Mustard, other invasive species have been discovered on County Forest property. Glossy Buckthorn, Japanese Barberry, Crown Vetch, Leafy Spurge and Japanese Knotweed have been found in areas of Underdown and Harrison. Steps are taken to control or eradicate these species when they are found. A GIS Layer is maintained to identify every known location of invasive plant species on the county forest. We will continue to monitor and treat known infestations while being observant for new species and infestations on the County Forest. The Forestry Department has provided training and publications to user groups of the County Forest and to townships within the county on how to identify invasive plant species so that they can assist our department with early detection and treatment.

LINCOLN COUNTY ACCESS PLAN: Restoration work to Underdown Lake boat landing was completed and improvements to our primary gas tax roads and to the Averill Creek Firelane were completed with grant funding. The Underdown shelter house was completed and generator powered underground electrical service was run to this facility. A return loop was constructed to connect the newly developed single track bike trails in the Merrill Memorial Forest to the Underdown trails. Development work for 3.7 miles of new summer ATV/UTV trail was finalized in 2017 in the Town of Harrison. Continued work on acquiring access permits for private individuals that access their lands through the County Forest. Issued temporary access permits for individuals hauling forest products from private lands across the County Forest. A Recreation Officer continued working on the County Forest and helped reduce vandalism and restore order to our public lands and recreational facilities.

LINCOLN COUNTY 5-YEAR OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN was updated in conjunction with North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning, the City of Tomahawk, The City of Merrill, local townships and special interest groups. The Plan was approved by the Lincoln County Board of

Supervisors on October 18, 2016 and is effective January 1, 2017 through December 31, 2021. We continue to implement this plan.

LINCOLN COUNTY'S 2016-2017 SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROJECT was approved for \$78,250.00 consisting of 313 miles of trail @ \$250/mile. Seven clubs in the county were contracted to maintain the total number of funded miles in Lincoln County. In addition, supplemental maintenance funding was approved at 100% statewide making the portion paid out to Lincoln County's clubs an additional \$11,467.12. We acquired grant funding in the amount of \$81,200 to place a 12' x 35' steel clear span bridge and 12' x 20' steel clear span access ramp on the 39 trail between North Star Road and Lincoln Drive.

ATV PROGRAM: We received trail maintenance aids of \$20,374.00 consisting of 202.2 miles of winter trails @ \$100/mile and \$31,115.00 consisting of 44.4 miles of summer ATV and UTV trail at \$700/mile as well as \$285.50 for maintenance of 1 mile of TROUTE. Five snowmobile clubs contracted to maintain the funded miles of winter ATV trail in the county. These trails are part of the county's snowmobile trail system. Our summer ATV mileage traverses through the Harrison Hills and links up with Langlade and Oneida County Trails as well as the communities of Gleason, Harrison, and the Pine Lake area. Lincoln County maintains the summer ATV trail system, and contracts with the Harrison Hills ATV Club to assist with brushing and signing. We continued to implement an emergency signing system for the summer trail network which is compatible with the County's 911 system. Worked with ATV clubs in the Somo, Wilson, and Spirit Falls areas to identify possible sites for an ATV trail/route link. Participated in the development of the Northern Wisconsin ATV/UTV Council to assist organizations in enhancing ATV/UTV and other recreational opportunities in our area. Our department acquired funding for and completed the development of 3.7 miles of new summer ATV trail north of Pine Lake in Harrison. Maintenance funding for these additional miles of trail will be obtained for the 2017-18 season. Lincoln County continues to participate in the permanent Utility Terrain Vehicle program which began on July 1, 2012.

ICE AGE TRAIL: Several sections of the Ice Age Trail were relocated and/or reconstructed as needed with the majority of the work being done in the Harrison area. We continue to work with our local chapter to provide quality facilities and address issues as they arise.

HARRISON FLOWAGE DAM: An owner-responsible inspection of the Harrison Dam is required every 10 years in order to keep the dam in conformance with state law. The dam was inspected in 2014 by Becher-Hoppe Associates and several deficiencies were identified to bring the dam in compliance with state code. These deficiencies were all completed in 2015 to include replacing the stoplogs in the spillway; brushing the toeslope of the dike; performing concrete repair work on the catwalk and erecting a dam warning sign. Pieces of keg were removed from the area surrounding the dam's spillway several times in 2017 due to high water from excessive rain events. We continue to do maintenance and monthly county inspections of the dam on a routine basis.

BEAVER PROGRAM: The Lincoln County Forestry Department continued to work with USDA WS APHIS regarding beaver problems on the Lincoln County Forest and on the County Forest road system.

FOREST CERTIFICATION: The Lincoln County Forest became SFI certified in March, 2005 and FSC certified in July, 2007. We worked on implementing necessary changes on the County Forest required by SFI and FSC forest certification.

LAND SOLD, RATIFIED, CONFIRMED AND APPROVED by the Lincoln County Board in 2017 included 1 county owned highway reservation sold for \$100.00 and 12 tax delinquent properties sold to the City of Merrill for \$42,711.20.

DEPARTMENT SAFETY PLAN: Continued development and implementation of our department safety plan. The Lincoln County Public Works Safety Group (Highway, Forestry, Solid Waste and Maintenance Departments) are under contract with Alpha Terra Science to implement this plan. Programs are in place for hazardous communication, control of hazardous energy, confined space entry and excavation safety, emergency action and fire prevention plan, personal protective equipment, occupational noise exposure and bloodborne pathogens. Alpha Terra has set up a webpage for the user groups above to manage and maintain safety records. As part of our county safety plan, the county implemented a group made up of employees as a first response team. This team is trained in CPR and first aid and will respond to any medical emergency to make the work place safer for employees and the public.

DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: 2017 Accomplishments on the Lincoln County Forest submitted by Thomas Carlson, DNR Wildlife Technician.

Flowages:

Water levels and wildlife were actively monitored on Camp 26, Trapper Morrison, and Coffee Creek Flowages in 2017. Repairs were made to the earthen dam and spillway of Trapper Morrison Pond. Water levels were held down in preparation of this work, but were brought up slowly throughout the summer and are now at full pool. The spillway was damaged due to heavy spring runoff and muskrats have been burrowing into the flowage side of the dike.

The wild rice crop of Camp 26 flowage was down this year from the two previous years.

Wildlife Openings:

Maintenance was performed on openings in the Towns of Harrison North & South and Skanawan. A total of 88 openings were inspected totaling approximately 62 acres. 86 opening were mowed. 23 miles of trails leading into the openings were mowed.

Mowing is performed with the objective of setting back woody encroachment and promoting herbaceous (grass/forb) cover to benefit deer, woodcock, ruffed grouse, turkeys and many other forest wildlife species. This cover type is an important habitat component for many of our game species as well as numerous other non-game species. Openings are mowed on a 4 year rotation.

Wildlife Surveys:

Wildlife surveys in 2017 that were conducted on the Lincoln County Forest included woodcock, ruffed grouse, turkey, bear, deer, carnivore and furbearer. Grouse and turkey surveys include spring breeding activity as well as brood counts.

Ruffed Grouse drumming counts increased 30% from 2016 to 2017 in the north. Statewide, Ruffed Grouse brood observations increased 16.5% from 2016, but are still 44% below the long-term average. Brood rearing conditions have been less than ideal the last two years given the substantial summer rains we saw in both 2016 and 2017. Wisconsin is through the trough of the grouse cycle and is likely to be on the increase until the next decline in 2021 or 2022.

Bear bait visitation numbers were consistent with previous years. Furbearer and waterfowl surveys were also completed.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN 2017: 2017 SURE -TRAC 7' x 12' Utility Trailer and a 2017 Ford F-150 Pick-up Truck.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Kleinschmidt
Forest Administrator