

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, 2018 through December 31, 2018.

OUR 2018 COUNTY FOREST consists of 100,843.05 acres.

2018 TIMBER SALES REVENUE TOTALED \$2,768,117.69. This revenue is distributed as follows: \$276,811.99 (10%) to Towns with County Forest Lands; \$553,623.16 (20%) to the County General Fund; and \$1,937,682.54 (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, 34 TIMBER SALES WERE SOLD with an estimated value of \$1,675,076.20.

FOURTEEN BOUGH PERMITS WERE ISSUED @ \$100.00 per permit = \$1,400.00.

GRANT REVENUES administered by the Forestry, Land & Parks Department during 2018 totaled \$575,045.85. 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 2018 TOTALED \$705.00. No wood sales and thirty 30-day firewood permits (\$450.00) were issued. Seventeen firewood permits (\$255.00) were extended.

TREE PLANTING/SITE PREP/BIOMASS:

Fill-in planting of approximately 2,000 2-year old red pine seedlings throughout the 16 acre Five Corners planting site in Sec. 27 of the Harrison (N) Township was done by the Lincoln County Forestry Crew.

Site prep on two planting sites totaling 35 acres was done in Sections 7 and 19 of the Wilson Township. Site prep was done by the Lincoln County Forestry crew utilizing a dozer mounted V-blade.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI):

Approximately 1277 acres of aspen release was completed in aspen regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 114 acres of red maple release was completed in red maple regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 20 acres of swamp conifer site prep was completed by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 15 acres of white birch site prep (whole tree skidding) was completed by a logging contractor as a requirement of the timber sale harvest.

Approximately 3 acres of red pine release was done by the LCF crew with brush saws in the Town of Wilson.

SURVEYING: All of the surveying done in 2018 was in conjunction with the Lincoln County Surveyor.

In Section 1 of T33N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the SE1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the E1/4.

In Section 12 of T33N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the NE1/4 NE1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the E1/16NE.

In Section 6 of T34N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the NW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 13 of T34N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the NE1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 9 of T32N R7E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south and west line of the N1/2 SW1/4 totaling approximately 3/4 mile of boundary. Monuments were set at the W1/16SW and the CS1/16.

In Section 27 of T33N R7E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south and east line of the NW1/4 SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary. Monuments were set at the W1/16SW and the C1/16SW.

In Section 27 of T33N R7E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line of the SW1/4 SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary.

In Section 34 of T35N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east and north line of the W1/2 SW1/4 totaling approximately 3/4 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the CW1/16.

In Section 5 of T34N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the north line of the NW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 9 of T34N R8E a monument was set at the S1/16SW.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDS FOR 2018: We continued work on our County Conservation Aids grant for improving forest access by repairing the access road into Posey Rapids. Wildlife Habitat funds were used for alder shearing in Newwood and roadside brushing on Swamp Road.

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 2018 we received approximately \$312.06/mile for maintaining 27.25 miles of roads for a total of \$8,503.68. 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. One culvert was replaced on Camp Ave and one on Cinder Road in 2018 as well as 3.0 miles of roadside brushing being conducted on Swamp Road and 1.6 miles of roadside brushing completed on Camp Ave.

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, the Central Wisconsin Off-Road Cycling Coalition 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. Signing and trail improvements were also completed on several trail segments by the bike club. A connecting return trail was completed 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. 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 utilized 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 2018. We have been using non-lethal means in an integrated approach to control geese population issues at Tug Lake County Park. Signing improvements were made to the nature trail by Otter Lake and new signs were made for the entrance of Tug Lake and Otter Lake Parks. Improvements were made to the boardwalk on the Otter Lake Nature Trail. Several new campfire rings were installed within our campground system and removal of hazard trees and drainage improvement work was done to several campsites located at Otter Lake.

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.

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, adjacent private landowners to the 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: Improvement work to Posey Rapids Road was completed and improvements to our primary gas tax roads and to the Averill Creek Firelane were accomplished with grant funding. A return loop was completed on the newly developed single track bike trail from the Merrill Memorial Forest to the Underdown trails. 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.

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. We continue to do maintenance and monthly county inspections of the dam on a routine basis. A leaking weep hole on the dam was discovered and monitored in 2018.

LINCOLN COUNTY'S 2017-2018 SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROJECT was approved for \$93,900.00 consisting of 313 miles of trail @ \$300/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 \$43,610.96. We acquired grant funding in the amount of \$57,612.80 to completely rehabilitate the 544' railroad trestle bridge just north of the SARA Park trailhead on the Hiawatha Trail in Tomahawk. We also received funding in the amount of \$84,276.50 to place a steel clear span bridge across the Green Meadow Creek on Corridor 16 and \$10,004 to replace two culverts on Corridor 19 on our trail system. These two projects will be completed in 2019.

ATV PROGRAM: We received trail maintenance aids of \$22,064.00 consisting of 219.1 miles of winter trails @ \$100/mile and \$33,495.00 consisting of 47.8 miles of summer ATV and UTV trail at \$700/mile as well as \$285.19 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. Obtained additional miles of summer maintenance funding for the new Pine Lake Trail in Harrison. 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.

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. Lincoln County was one of the four counties audited in 2018. 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 2018 included 8 tax delinquent parcels that were sold for \$63,728.63.

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 working with County Mutual 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.

DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: 2018 Accomplishments on the Lincoln County Forest submitted by Janet Brehm, DNR Wildlife Biologist

Flowages:

Water levels and wildlife were actively monitored on Camp 26, Trapper Morrison, and Coffee Creek Flowages in 2018.

- Coffee Creek: In late summer, boards in the water control structure were wearing out, therefore the boards were replaced. Some brushing work was completed on Coffee Creek. In the fall, water was over Armstrong Creek Rd, downstream from the flowage, as beaver clogged a culvert under the road. The DNR contacted APHIS and the county staff helped removed the clog.

- Camp 26: Someone stole the boards that hold back water in the control structure as well as stole the cover that keeps the boards in place, therefore the flowage had been drained. Boards were cut and replaced. A new temporary cover was made. Also, the dock over the tube was fixed, it had shifted and was crooked for some time. Beaver activity was also evident, so APHIS was sent in. The wild rice crop was down again this year, especially because of the illegal activity.
- Trapper Morrison had new beaver activity, APHIS was called in to remove beaver and unclogged the tube.

Wildlife Openings:

No wildlife openings were mowed, due to elimination of the DNR's Wildlife Technician position for Lincoln County. The DNR's Langlade County Wildlife Technician will now assist Lincoln County. Openings will be completed in 2019 with contractor's assistance. 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 that were conducted in 2018 on the Lincoln County Forest included woodcock peenting survey, ruffed grouse drumming survey, turkey, deer sightings and fawn to doe ratios, winter and summer waterfowl surveys, carnivore tracking, and furbearer tracking. Grouse and turkey surveys include spring breeding activity as well as brood counts. The bear survey was discontinued in 2018, however, a bear hair-snare survey was test piloted on the NE part of Lincoln County forest, with permission from the Administrator. Based on the results, a new bear survey will begin in 2019. The county will be kept informed regarding the new process.

The ruffed grouse drumming counts from both Lincoln County surveys, were the same from 2017 to 2018, however all northern surveys combined showed a decrease of 38% during the same time frame. As for the ruffed grouse brood survey, statewide brood observations remained relatively the same from 2017, but down from the long-term average. Ruffed grouse brood size did rise from 3.6 in 2017 to 4.3 young per brood in 2018. A tri-state effort (Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan) is looking at disease as a potential factor, but localized weather events that have occurred, like heavy spring rain and late winter snow, could play a factor, as well as habitat. Grouse populations ebb and rise on a nine to eleven-year cycle. Young forest creation as well as age class diversity play an important role on the county, and it appears Lincoln County grouse population are doing well.

Lincoln County Forest agreed to be part of a collaboration between WI DNR and the Missouri Department of Conservation to restore ruffed grouse by translocation of 300 ruffed grouse from northern Wisconsin to the River Hills region of east-central Missouri over a three-year period from 2018 to 2020. Wisconsin counties involved in 2018 were Lincoln, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, and Rusk, with most of 2018's 100 grouse coming from Price County. A total of 9 grouse were trapped from the Lincoln County Forest in 2018.

In the fall of 2018, Lincoln County Forest also agreed to be part of a targeted Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) surveillance effort. CWD was confirmed in late 2017, in NE Lincoln County, in the Town of Harrison. To determine range and infection rate of CWD in this area, the DNR established a goal to test 450 deer inside a Surveillance Area which included northeast Lincoln, northwest Langlade and south-central Oneida counties. The Lincoln County Forest Administrator and Committee, agreed to special public land permits that required testing of deer heads for CWD, to help the DNR meet their goal. About 50 square miles of Lincoln County Forest occur within the established Surveillance Area,

and the DNR had a goal of about 1 deer per square mile with this effort. 165 tags were made available, 70 tags were issued, and 13 tags were registered. With the county's assistance, it helped the DNR near their goal; about 400 deer were submitted for testing within the Harrison Surveillance Area.

Other:

DNR staff worked on recreating informational signage for the county forest, one for a grouse management area, another for Trapper Morrison flowage. Wooden signs were routed and painted, final painting needs to be completed.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN 2018: 2018 Dodge RAM 1500 Pick-up Truck, 2019 Big Tex Flatbed Equipment Trailer and a 2018 John Deere 450 K Crawler Dozer.

Respectfully submitted,
Kevin Kleinschmidt
Forest Administrator