

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, 2020 through December 31, 2020.

OUR 2020 COUNTY FOREST consists of 100,843.05 acres.

2020 TIMBER SALES REVENUE TOTALED \$1,668,814.91. This revenue is distributed as follows: \$162,711.16 to Townships with County Forest Lands; \$325,421.87 to the County General Fund; and \$1,180,681.88 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. 2020 saw a significant drop in revenue for our timber sale program from the previous five years. Prior to 2015, this year's revenue would have been a near record amount.

DURING THE YEAR, 29 TIMBER SALES WERE SOLD with an estimated value of \$1,226,661.70.

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

GRANT REVENUES administered by the Forestry, Land & Parks Department during 2020 totaled \$600,694.83. Of this amount, \$18,727.24 is required in cost sharing by Lincoln County.

REVENUE FROM WOOD SALES AND FIREWOOD PERMITS DURING 2020 TOTALED \$810.00. Two wood sales (\$30.00) and thirty eight 30-day firewood permits (\$570.00) were issued. Fourteen firewood permits (\$210.00) were extended.

TREE PLANTING/SITE PREP:

Due to COVID 19, the Department of Natural Resources did not pull trees for our department to plant this year.

Lincoln County was awarded a two-year Sustainable Forestry grant for \$54,750.00 by the Department of Natural Resources to clear 40 acres of dying jack pine, site prep and herbicide the site for replanting.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI):

Approximately 734 acres of aspen release was completed in aspen regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 63 acres of red maple release was completed in red maple regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 13 acres of swamp conifer site prep was completed by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 11 acres of white birch site prep (scarification) was completed by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

SURVEYING: All of the surveying done in 2020 was in conjunction with the Lincoln County Surveyor.

In Section 4 of T35N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south and west lines of the SW1/4 totaling approximately 1 mile of boundary.

In Section 2 of T34N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west, south, and east lines of the NE1/4 SW1/4 NW1/4 totaling approximately 3/8 mile of boundary.

In Section 7 of T33N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line totaling approximately 1 mile of boundary.

In Section 19 of T35N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 26 of T34N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the north line of the NW1/4 NW1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the N1/16NW.

In Section 15 of T34N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line totaling approximately 1 mile of boundary. A monument was set at the C1/4.

In Section 10 of T34N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line of the SE1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 19 of T35N R5E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the south line of the SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

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 2020 we received approximately \$351.00/mile for maintaining 27.25 miles of roads for a total of \$9,564.75. A GIS layer was developed several years ago identifying the locations of culverts on our gas tax roads. These structures were identified by type, material, diameter and length, and prioritized for replacement. All high priority culverts have been replaced and updated in the system. We are now focusing our efforts on roadside brushing, ditching and monitoring the culverts for replacement needs. In 2020 we hauled and leveled screened gravel on Swamp Road with the help of the highway department but due to being short staffed, we did not get any culverts replaced that we had scheduled.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDS FOR 2020: Due to the hiring freeze thus being short staffed, we were unable to fill a full time Forestry Worker position that

became vacant at the end of May. We were unable to complete the CCF project on a woods road near the Harrison Flowage. Wildlife Habitat funds were used to improve a hunter access road north of Camp Ave and grade Averill Creek Fire Lane to Trapper Morrison Pond.

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. The department hauled and leveled approximately 50 yards of gravel to improve the access and parking to the scenic overlook.

ORGANIZED AND/OR COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES WERE CONDUCTED on the County Forest in the Underdown Recreation Area by the Underdown Horse Club and Rocky Run Stable. The Iron Bull Granite Grinder bike race included a segment through the New Wood area of the County Forest.

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 maintaining these trails. Several small bridges were constructed by the bike club on the single track bike trail where wet areas are crossed. Signing and trail improvements were also completed on several trail segments by this club. A cable gate was replaced with a new all metal gate near Underdown Lake to accommodate horse drawn wagon events for the Underdown Horse Club. Two trail re-routes were constructed. One, around a rough, muddy section east of Underdown Lake for the horse and cross country ski trails. The second, around a steep curvy hill which often resulted in our ski trail grooming equipment getting stuck. Several segments of Cross-County ski trail had bulldozer work and trail signing improvements completed. A Recreational Trails Program grant was obtained for improvement work and maintenance of non-motorized trails in the Underdown over the next two years. The amount awarded to Lincoln County under this grant was \$16,281.24 and we must match these dollars for a total project cost of \$32,562.48.

COUNTY PARKS ACTIVITIES: Regular maintenance of County parks and facilities was performed during 2020. We have been using non-lethal means in an integrated approach to control goose population issues at Tug Lake County Park. Our park system experienced heavy usage during the summer of 2020 resulting in \$30,840.04 from user fees. Playground equipment was closed most of the summer to use due to COVID 19. Due to the purchasing moratorium, we did not replace our parks truck and wood chips were not replaced under the playground equipment at Tug Lake and New Wood parks.

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. Since then, many 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. The workload on this issue consumes weeks of time and continues to increase as we make every effort to control invasive plants on the county forest.

LINCOLN COUNTY ACCESS PLAN: The east end of Averill Creek Firelane was graded to improve the road for access and a road providing hunter access north of Camp Ave. was improved. Maintenance work was done on the single track bike trails. Maintenance work was done on portions of the summer ATV/UTV trail in order to continue controlling erosion on the trail and make conditions more user friendly. Applied for ATV/Snowmobile grant funding to rehab a section of trail including culvert replacement, ditching and crowning. Continued work on acquiring access permits for private individuals that access their lands through the County Forest. Issued a temporary access permit for an individual hauling forest products from private lands across the County Forest. Recreation Officer continued working on the County Forest, helping to reduce vandalism and maintain order to our public lands and recreational facilities.

LINCOLN COUNTY 5-YEAR OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN was updated in 2016 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 2019-2020 SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROJECT was approved for \$87,960.00 for of 293.2 miles of trail at \$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 \$64,016.25. The 12' x 40' steel clear span bridge on Corridor 16 south of Gouda Road on the Green Meadow Creek was installed with grant funding. We continue to apply for new trail miles that fit the parameters of the program.

ATV PROGRAM: We received trail maintenance aids of \$22,404.00 for of 222.7 miles of winter trails @ \$100/mile and \$33,495.00 for 47.8 miles of summer ATV and UTV trail at \$700/mile as well as \$288.27 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 trails traverse the Harrison Hills and connect with Langlade and Oneida County trail systems as well as Gleason, Harrison, and the Pine Lake area. Lincoln County performs the majority of the maintenance on the summer ATV trail system and contracts with the Harrison Hills ATV Club to assist with brushing and signing. We continue to implement an emergency signing system at trail intersections for the summer trail network. This system is tied in with the County's 911 system to provide first responders with more accurate emergency locations. We continue to work with ATV clubs in the Somo, Wilson, and Spirit Falls areas to identify possible sites for an ATV trail/route link as well as to the Village of Gleason. 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 addressed 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.

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 2020 included the Our Way home at 825 Charles Ave. Tomahawk sold to a private individual for \$80,612.00. Eleven tax deed properties were sold to the City of Merrill for \$64,426.87.

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) worked with County Mutual in 2019 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 blood borne pathogens.

DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: 2020 Accomplishments on the Lincoln County Forest submitted by Eric Borchert DNR Wildlife Biologist

Flowages:

Water levels and wildlife were actively monitored on Camp 26, Trapper Morrison, and Coffee Creek Flowages in 2020.

- Camp 26: The wild rice crop was fair this year. Heavy rains and high water during the early part of the growing season is likely the cause. This condition was observed on other impounded wild rice beds in our area.
- Camp 26 and Trapper Morrison: APHIS was called to remove beaver and unclog the water control structures.
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Wildlife Openings:

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.

For FY21, the Spirit Falls area openings and trails were mowed in fall of 2020 by JJ's Brushcutting (contractor). This year bidding was a bit more competitive with 3 contractors providing bids for this job. The local DNR wildlife budget was used to fund this project. The remaining Turkey stamp funds from FY 20 will be used this fall to complete a brush mowing project on the Camp 26 Ruffed Grouse Management area. The DNR plans to continue to assist with upkeep of the Camp 26 GMA and will add this area to the forest openings mowing rotation on an every other year basis.

Wildlife Surveys:

Due to the COVID 19 pandemic wildlife surveys were suspended for most of FY 21. Wildlife surveys were not conducted in 2020 on the Lincoln County Forest. However, CWD monitoring throughout the entire area is a priority for all deer seasons this fall. CWD was confirmed in late 2017, in NE Lincoln County, in the Town of Harrison.

Other:

Wildlife Biologist Janet Brehm accepted a promotion as an Area Wildlife Supervisor in Peshtigo. Her former position remains vacant due to hiring restrictions within DNR. This position is expected to be staffed at some point in 2021. In the interim Wildlife responsibilities on the Lincoln County Forest are being coordinated through Wildlife Technician Eric Borchert in Antigo.

Chapters of the "Lincoln County Forest 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan" were reviewed by wildlife staff.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN 2019: Due to the purchasing moratorium, no new equipment was purchased in 2020.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Bowe
Forest Administrator