

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, 2021 through December 31, 2021.

OUR 2021 COUNTY FOREST consists of 100,843.05 acres.

2021 TIMBER SALES REVENUE TOTALED \$2,139,037.67. This revenue is distributed as follows: \$213,827.64 to Townships with County Forest Lands; \$427,654.96 to the County General Fund; and \$1,497,555.07 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. 2021 saw an increase in timber sale revenue over the 2020 total. Contractors worked to complete older jobs with higher stumpage than they are bidding now. With the Verso Mill in Wisconsin Rapids still closed, the demand for wood has declined significantly and stumpage prices will reflect that going forward.

DURING THE YEAR, 35 TIMBER SALES WERE SOLD with an estimated value of \$1,703,429.15.

Twelve BOUGH PERMITS WERE ISSUED @ \$100.00 per permit = \$1,200.00.

GRANT REVENUES administered by the Forestry, Land & Parks Department during 2021 totaled \$360,149.29. Of this amount, \$18,727.24 is required in cost sharing by Lincoln County.

REVENUE FROM WOOD SALES, BIOMASS AND FIREWOOD PERMITS TOTALED \$1,874.16. Six wood sales (\$746.00), two biomass sales (\$438.16), and thirty nine 30-day firewood permits (\$585.00) were issued. Seven firewood permits (\$105.00) were extended.

TREE PLANTING/SITE PREP:

9,000 2-0 red pine seedlings were planted by a contracted crew to fill in a site initially planted in 2019. 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. The removal of trees and clearing the site for this project was completed in 2021 at a cost of \$39,200.00.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI):

Approximately 503 acres of aspen release was completed in aspen regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 42 acres of red maple release was completed in red maple regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 10 acres of red pine were mechanically released by the Lincoln County shop crew.

SURVEYING: All of the surveying done in 2021 was in conjunction with the Lincoln County Surveyor.

In Section 12 of T35N 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 1/4 mile of boundary.

In Section 31 of T35N R4E, 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 24 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 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 18 of T35N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line of the NE1/4 SW1/4 & SW1/4 SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/3 mile of boundary.

In Section 19 of T35N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line of the NW1/4 totaling approximately 1/4 mile of boundary.

In Section 3 of T34N R6E, NE1/4 SE1/4 property line was established along the east Hiawatha Trail ROW totaling approximately 1/6 mile of boundary.

In Section 13 T35N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along the County Forest property boundary for the north line of NE1/4 and the NE1/4 NW1/4 totaling approximately 3/4 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 2021 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 2021 we hauled and leveled screened gravel on Armstrong Creek Road and replaced 3 culverts. We also opened a borrow pit on Armstrong Creek Road to shorten haul distance to where the material is needed.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDS FOR 2021: We completed the CCF project on a woods road near the Harrison Flowage. This project included replacing culverts, repairing an ongoing erosion problem area and hauling gravel. Wildlife Habitat funds were used to improve a hunter access road north of Camp Ave., improve a parking area at a hunter walking trailhead on Newwood Road and replace the informational sign for Trapper Morrison Pond.

ORGANIZED AND/OR COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES WERE CONDUCTED on the County Forest in the Underdown Recreation Area by the Distance Riders of Wisconsin, Badger State Games, and Wisconsin Off Road Bike Association. The Iron Bull Red Granite Grinder bike race included a

segment through the New Wood area of the County Forest. The Iron Bull organization received compliments on the location of the race route.

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 tire bike trails, hiking trails, and a snowmobile/winter ATV trail are all mapped and signed in the Underdown. The purchase of trail passes by users is required and helps to offset the cost of maintaining the ski and horse trails. The annual Free Trail Pass Weekend was held Feb 27&28. Several small bridges have been constructed by the bike club on the single track bike trail where wet areas are crossed. The horse and bike club members volunteer time to help do maintenance on the trail systems. A cable gate was replaced with a new tubular steel gate near Underdown Lake to accommodate horse drawn wagon events for the Underdown Horse Club. A three year Recreational Trails Program grant was obtained in 2019 for improvement work and maintenance of non-motorized trails in the Underdown. 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: Total parks revenue from 2021 was \$24,928.95. Mowing lawns and other maintenance of County parks and facilities was performed during 2021. We have been using non-lethal means in an integrated approach to control goose population issues at Tug Lake County Park. Road work was done at Otter Lake Park to improve access. We were denied a grant to replace restrooms and make other improvements at the New Wood Campground. We will try again in 2022.

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. Garlic mustard has also been found along the Hiawatha Trail by Tomahawk. The infested section of trail is closed for the recommended time frame during treatment. 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: Maintenance work was done on the single track bike trails. Maintenance work was done on the summer ATV/UTV trail in order to continue controlling erosion on the trail and make conditions more user friendly. A section of summer ATV and snowmobile trail was improved with grant dollars from these programs. Culverts were replaced, sections of trail were ditched and crowned, a rock ford was reconstructed and gravel was added. Continued work on issuing permits for private individuals that access their lands through 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 2021 with the assistance of 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 19, 2021 and is effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2025. We will continue to implement this plan.

LINCOLN COUNTY'S 2021-2022 SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROJECT was approved for \$91,710.00 for of 305.7 miles of trail at \$300/mile. Six clubs in the county are contracted to maintain all of the funded miles in Lincoln County. The Rock Island X-press club decided to disband and most of the trail miles have been redistributed among other clubs with a few miles of parallel trails being eliminated. We worked with the Knight Owls Snowmobile Club to reroute a section of difficult trail through swamp to a different location on the County Forest. We continue to apply for new trail miles that fit the parameters of the program.

ATV PROGRAM: We received trail maintenance aids of \$23,314.00 for of 231.6 miles of winter trails @ \$100/mile and \$38,275.00 for 47.8 miles of summer ATV and UTV trail at \$800/mile as well as \$249.50 for maintenance of 1 mile of TROUTE. We received trail rehabilitation funding totaling \$25,031.00 from the ATV and Snowmobile programs to continue to upgrade and maintain our trail systems. Five snowmobile clubs are contracted to maintain the funded miles of winter ATV trail in the county. Winter ATV trails coincide with some of the county's snowmobile trail system. Our summer ATV trails traverse the Harrison Hills area and connect with the Langlade and Oneida County trail systems. We experienced two high wind events over the summer which resulted in several days of recreational trail clean up. Lincoln County performs the majority of the maintenance on the summer ATV trail system and has contracted with the Harrison Hills ATV Club to assist with brushing and signing in the past. The Harrison Hills ATV Club has chosen to not renew their contract with the County going forward. We continue to implement an emergency signing system at trail intersections for the summer trail network. This system is linked 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.

ICE AGE TRAIL: Our department issued a permit for the Ice Age Trail group to construct a second shelter along the Ice Age Trail. The new shelter was constructed at a location east of Turtle Lake Road in the Harrison Hills. 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 including replacement of 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 required inspections of the dam on a routine basis.

BEAVER PROGRAM: The Lincoln County Forestry Department continued to work with USDA APHIS program regarding beaver problems on the Lincoln County Forest and 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. Several other county forests hosted audit teams this year.

LAND SOLD, RATIFIED, CONFIRMED AND APPROVED by the Lincoln County Board in 2021. Three tax deed properties were sold to the City of Tomahawk for \$14,711.30. Three properties were sold to private individuals for \$11,199.00.

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 United Safety Solutions to bring employees up to date with safety training. Our department worked with with USS to update our written plans for hazardous communication, control of hazardous energy, excavation safety, emergency action and fire prevention plan, personal protective equipment, occupational noise exposure and blood borne pathogens. We also participated in chainsaw safety training in 2021.

DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: 2021 Accomplishments on the Lincoln County Forest submitted by Eric Borchert, DNR Wildlife Technician and Carissa Knab, DNR Wildlife Biologist

Flowages:

Water levels and wildlife were actively monitored on Camp 26, Trapper Morrison, and Coffee Creek Flowages in 2021.

- Camp 26: The wild rice crop was good this year. Brush and trees were removed from the dam and spillway.
- Coffee Creek: Brush and trees were removed from the dam and spillway.
- Trapper Morrison: Brush and trees were removed from the dam and spillway. Complete drawdown was completed this summer to improve food availability for migrating waterfowl.
- Camp 26 and Trapper Morrison: APHIS was called to remove beaver and unclog the water control structures.

Wildlife Surveys:

Due to a reduction in staffing wildlife surveys were not conducted in 2021 on the Lincoln County Forest. However, CWD monitoring throughout the entire area was a priority for all deer seasons this fall. CWD was confirmed in late 2017, in NE Lincoln County, in the Town of Harrison.

Other:

The Wildlife Biologist position in Merrill has been filled. Carissa Knab started in this position in September 2021 and covers DNR wildlife biologist duties for Lincoln and Langlade Counties. Carissa was previously employed with DNR in Merrill as a limited term employee in the wildlife management program before working as a Farm Bill Biologist with Pheasants Forever. She comes to this position with familiarity with the Lincoln County Forest and background in forest habitat management. Carissa will be the primary contact for the wildlife management program on the County Forest.

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

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN 2021: A new John Deere 333G Tracked skid steer with bucket, pallet forks and forestry mulching head was purchased to replace the fork lift. Two pickup trucks were bid out and ordered but due to vehicle shortages they were not delivered in 2021.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Bowe
Forest Administrator