

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, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

OUR 2022 COUNTY FOREST consists of 100,843.05 acres.

TIMBER SALE REVENUE: Timber harvesting generated \$ 1,955,340.53 This revenue is distributed as follows: \$ 195,534.12 to Townships with County Forest Lands; \$391,067.91 to the County General Fund; and \$ 1,368,738.50 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. 2022 saw a decrease in timber sale revenue over the 2021 total. With the paper mill in Wisconsin Rapids potentially closed permanently, the demand for hardwood pulp has declined and stumpage prices have reflected that.

TIMBER SALES SOLD: Twenty-seven timber sales with an estimated value of \$2,181,429.35 sold in 2022. Contractors returned three uncompleted timber sales to Lincoln County that they were unable to harvest. These sales required re-establishment work prior to re-selling but did not receive any bids along with four other timber sales.

PERMITS ISSUED: Thirteen balsam bough-cutting permits issued for \$100.00 per permit totaled \$1,300.00. Two Christmas tree permits issued for \$5.00 each. Three new land access permits issued for \$100.00 each. Ten disabled, motorized access permits issued.

GRANT MONIES: Grants administered by the Forestry, Land & Parks Department during 2022 totaled \$429,771.24. Of this amount, \$18,719.81 was required in cost sharing by Lincoln County.

REVENUE FROM WOOD SALES, BIOMASS AND FIREWOOD PERMITS: The Forestry Department handles firewood sales on closed timber sales, marked wood sales, and occasionally biomass from timber sales. Six wood sales (\$647.20), twenty-two 30-day firewood permits (\$330.00) issued and nine firewood permits (\$135.00) extended for a total of \$1,112.20.

TREE PLANTING/SITE PREP:
Approximately 3000 two year old white spruce were planted in an 11 acre site in Section 6 of the Township of Harrison(S) by the Lincoln County Forestry Crew. We hired a contractor to power trench and spray herbicide on sixty-three acres to prepare several sites for planting in spring 2023. DNR bulldozer operators scarified approximately 95 acres to promote pre-harvest oak regeneration establishment. Lincoln County received a two-year Sustainable Forestry grant of \$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, power trenching and herbicide spraying (included in 63 acre total) to prep the site for planting occurred in 2022.

Approximately 49 acres of black spruce site prep was completed in black spruce regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 26 acres of tamarack site prep was completed in tamarack regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT (TSI):

Approximately 866 acres of aspen release was completed in aspen regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

Approximately 107 acres of red maple release was completed in red maple regeneration areas by logging contractors as a requirement of their timber sale contract.

SURVEYING: All of the surveying done in 2022 was in conjunction with the Lincoln County Surveyor.

In Section 28 of T34N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the SW1/4 SW1/4; the north line of the SW1/4 SW1/4 and the west line of the NW1/4 SW1/4 totaling approximately 3/4 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 north line of the SE1/4 SE1/4 and the SW1/4 SE1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 13 of T35N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the SE1/4 SW1/4 and the north line of the NW1/4 SW1/4 totaling approximately 1/2 mile of boundary.

In Section 27 of T34N R8E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the east line of the E1/2 SW1/4 & S1/2 NE1/4 totaling approximately 1 mile of boundary.

In Section 32 of T33N R7E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along County Forest property boundary for the west line of the E1/2 SE1/4 & south line of the SE1/4 SE1/4 totaling approximately 3/4 mile of boundary.

In Section 13 of T32N R7E, Prairie Dells Park property line was established totaling approximately 1.12 mile of boundary.

In Section 10 T34N R4E, T-style fence posts were placed at various points along the County Forest property boundary for the west line of SE1/4 and a monument was established CS1/16.

COUNTY FOREST ROAD AIDS PROGRAM: We continued our County Forest road maintenance program including graveling, installing culverts, improving drainage, right-of-way brushing, regular grading and snowplowing of roads. In 2022, 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. Culverts are identified by type, material, diameter and length, and priority for replacement. As culverts are replaced, information is updated in the database. We are now focusing our efforts on roadside brushing, ditching and monitoring the culverts for replacement needs. In 2021, a small borrow pit was opened along Armstrong Creek Road to reduce travel time for hauling material. Staff hauled and spread screened material on Armstrong Creek Road, Camp Ave. and Swamp Rd. in 2022.

COUNTY CONSERVATION AND WILDLIFE HABITAT FUNDS FOR 2022: County Conservation Aids and Wildlife Habitat Funds are grant monies available to county forest programs. Staff completed the County Conservation Aids project on a forest road west of Mail Route Rd. in northeastern Lincoln County. This project improved public access in a Grouse Management Area on the county forest and included installing culverts, repairing ongoing erosion problems, ditching and crowning a segment of road the road and hauling gravel. Wildlife Habitat funds were used to improve drainage and gravel a hunter access parking area on Camp Ave., level off and re-seed a gated forest road east of New Wood Road.

ORGANIZED AND/OR COMPETITIVE ACTIVITIES: The Distance Riders of Wisconsin, Badger State Games and Central Wisconsin off Road Cycling Association all hosted events on the County Forest in the Underdown Recreation Area. The Iron Bull Red Granite Grinder bike race included a segment through the New Wood area of the County Forest. The Iron Bull organization also hosted an adventure race, with 78 contestants, in the Underdown area in 2022.

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 in February. The horse and bike club members volunteer time to help maintain the trail systems they use. A three-year Recreational Trails Program grant was obtained in 2019 for improvement work and maintenance of non-motorized trails in the Underdown. The total grant amount was \$32,562.48 with Lincoln County providing a 50% match. The grant period ended in June 2022 and Lincoln County received reimbursement of \$16,281.24.

COUNTY PARKS ACTIVITIES: Total parks revenue from 2022 was \$24,473.82. Forestry staff mowed lawns and performed other maintenance of County parks and facilities during 2022. A temporary fence was erected to keep geese off the beach at Tug Lake County Park, it seemed to work well. Wood chips were added to the playground equipment areas at both Tug Lake and New Wood Park. Staff removed trees and brush along Tug Lake Road to improve the appearance of Tug Lake Park. Steel 55-gallon drum parks garbage cans were replaced with plastic containers and bags. Staff removed wellhead structures from Hay Meadow and Larson Lake Parks to allow proper abandonment of the wells. A grant application to replace restrooms and make other improvements at the New Wood Campground was denied again this year. We will apply again in 2023. New Wood Park and Campground are being included as a point of interest on the developing Great Pinery Heritage Waterway.

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 colonies of this

invasive plant have been discovered in other locations of the Underdown, Harrison, New Wood and Wildwood areas. In addition to garlic mustard, other invasive species are present on County Forest property. Glossy buckthorn, Japanese barberry, crown vetch, leafy spurge and Japanese knotweed are present in areas of Underdown and Harrison. Garlic mustard and glossy buckthorn are present along the Hiawatha Trail by Tomahawk. We close the section of trail for the recommended period during treatment of the garlic mustard. Glossy buckthorn is so prevalent along the trail it is not treated. A GIS Layer exists to identify known location of invasive plant species on the county forest. Steps to control or eradicate these species occur when discovered. Spraying with herbicide is the most efficient, cost effective way for us to control these species in the quantity they exist. Spraying garlic mustard consumes many weeks of time and workload continues to increase as we discover new infestations. 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. We will continue to monitor make every effort to control invasive plants while being observant for new species and infestations on the County Forest. We worked with Land Conservation to erect informational signs on invasive species at several trail heads on the county forest.

LINCOLN COUNTY ACCESS PLAN and FOREST ROADS: Lincoln County has many miles of non-gas tax forest roads used for logging and public access purposes. Motorized travel is allowed on some of these roads while some are blocked to prevent damage to the road itself or hunter walking trails, snowmobile trails, etc. A GIS layer exists for these forest roads along with a culvert inventory, which is updated as necessary. Limited maintenance is performed by the county on the majority of these forest roads, unless necessary. Road construction and maintenance activities fall under Best Management Practices for Water Quality guidelines. Many older, metal culverts on these roads are in need of replacement.

In 2022, Lincoln County used Sustainable Forestry Grant money to replace a bridge with a large culvert on a forest road to improve accessibility for logging contractors and the public. Culverts installed on forest roads at three locations will improve accessibility for logging contractors. Gates installed on forest roads at various locations will protect the snowmobile trail from rutting damage while allowing ATV access at appropriate times. Continued work on issuing permits for private individuals that access their lands through the County Forest. Recreation Officer continued working on the County Forest, following up with complaints of illegal dumping, contacting non-paying campers, helping to reduce vandalism and maintain order to our public lands and recreational facilities.

LINCOLN COUNTY 5-YEAR OUTDOOR RECREATION PLAN: 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 Lincoln County Board of Supervisors approved the updated plan on October 19, 2021. It is effective January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2025. We will continue to use Outdoor Recreation Plan as a guide for our recreation program.

SNOWMOBILE TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM: Lincoln County participates in the State Snowmobile Trail Grant Program and holds a contract with the State to develop and maintain public snowmobile trails in the county. Lincoln County contracts with six snowmobile clubs to maintain all of the trails. A total of 318.2 miles of snowmobile trail qualify for the \$300.00/mile reimbursement rate resulting in a grant value of \$95,460.00 for the Lincoln County program. During the 2021-22 snowmobile season, the clubs spent more than \$300.00/mile in maintenance and qualified for an additional \$66,276.61 supplemental payment from the program. We continue to apply for new trail miles that fit the parameters of the program.

ATV TRAIL MAINTENANCE PROGRAM: Lincoln County participates in the State summer and winter ATV trail program and holds a contract with the State to develop and maintain public ATV trails in the county. The summer ATV trails traverse the Harrison Hills area and connect with Langlade and Oneida County trail systems. Lincoln County staff perform the majority of the maintenance on the summer ATV trail system. Lincoln County has again contracted with the Harrison Hills ATV Club to assist with brushing and signing the summer trails. We continue to implement an emergency signing system at trail intersections for the summer trail network. This system is linked to the County's 911 system to provide first responders with more accurate emergency locations. We continue to work with local ATV clubs to identify possible sites for ATV trail/route links.

Lincoln County was approved for a trail maintenance grant of \$37,875.00 for 47.3 miles of summer ATV and UTV trail at \$800/mile as well as \$249.50 for maintenance of 1 mile of TROUTE. A summer ATV/snowmobile trail re-route grant for \$20,136.54 has been approved and will be constructed during the summer of 2023.

Lincoln County's winter ATV trails run in conjunction with designated portions of snowmobile trails. Five snowmobile clubs maintain 227.1 miles of winter trails @ \$100/mile for a total of \$22,864.00.

ICE AGE TRAIL: 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. Becher-Hoppe Associates inspected the dam in 2014 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. APHIS is able to react quickly to issues we find on the county forest in the summer and save the county money on future road repairs and loss of timber value.

FOREST CERTIFICATION: The Lincoln County Forest became SFI certified in March 2005 and FSC certified in July 2007. The County Forest Program is audited annually to ensure compliance with certification standards. The Forestry Department implements any changes required on the County Forest by SFI and FSC to maintain our certified status. Several other county forests were selected for the audit this year.

LAND SOLD, RATIFIED, CONFIRMED AND APPROVED: Seven tax deed properties and two other properties were sold to the City of Merrill for \$35,202.44. One tax deed property was sold to the City of Tomahawk for \$6,187.79. One tax deed property was sold to the Town of King for \$1,092.40. Fourteen properties were sold to private individuals for \$235,180.00. Total of properties sold \$277,662.63.

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) has again contracted with Fehr Graham to keep employees up to

date with safety training. Our department worked with Fehr Graham 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. Field staff completed a first Aid and CPR refresher in 2022.

DNR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT: 2022 Accomplishments on the Lincoln County Forest submitted by Eric Borchert, DNR Wildlife Technician and Carissa Knab, DNR Wildlife Biologist

Flowages:

The DNR manages 3 impoundments on Lincoln County Forest lands encompassing 27 acres of shallow wetlands. Wildlife staff actively managed water levels on Camp 26, Trapper Morrison, and Coffee Creek Flowages in 2022. No major maintenance was completed or was necessary this year. Camp 26 contains an approximately 5-acre wild rice bed. The rice crop was excellent in 2022. However, a drier than normal summer prevented us from raising water levels in the fall to maximize use by migrating waterfowl.

Forest Openings and Trails:

DNR Wildlife staff worked cooperatively with the county forestry staff to facilitate the mowing of 21 miles of hunter walking trails and 66 forest wildlife openings on the New Wood block of Lincoln County Forest lands. A contractor was hired and paid for by DNR to complete this work. The DNR manages 345 constructed wildlife openings on LCF lands totaling approximately 325 acres.

Wildlife Surveys:

Numerous wildlife population monitoring surveys were conducted in Lincoln County in 2022. Many of these surveys fall completely within or partially within Lincoln County Forest Lands.

- 2 ruffed grouse drumming surveys
- 2 woodcock singing ground surveys
- 3 carnivore track surveys
- 1 breeding waterfowl survey

DNR staff worked with Lincoln County cooperators to conduct whitetail deer aging during the fall hunting seasons.

DNR research staff began a black bear den survey project in 2022. Bear dens were visited in Lincoln County where staff collected biological data and fitted sows with GPS tracking collars. The project aims to improve the input parameters of the DNR black bear population model. The project focuses on black bear reproduction, updating parameters like average litter size, cub survival and litter frequency.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD):

In 2022 DNR staff continued to collect and sample wild deer for CWD monitoring and surveillance within the county. In November 2022 DNR was notified by the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) that a farm-raised deer on a deer farm in Lincoln County tested positive for CWD. As a result of this new detection, a baiting and feeding ban was reinstated starting Dec. 12, 2022.

EQUIPMENT PURCHASES IN 2022: A John Deere 1550 commercial grade riding mower was purchased to replace a large homeowner rated riding mower, considerably reducing mowing time. A dump trailer was purchased instead of a lift gate for the replacement parks truck to improve efficiency in the parks program. Two pickup trucks were bid out and ordered but due to vehicle shortages they were

not delivered in 2021, one pickup was delivered in 2022. We are still waiting for the second. A tracked UTV was purchased to replace a snowmobile and an ATV.

OTHER: The failing septic system at the Forestry Shop in Irma was replaced, two structures on a tax delinquent property were demolished and cleaned up, a tax deed property near Tomahawk was cleaned up to sell, Forestry Department staff assisted in clearing brush from the Jack Pines area at the Service Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Dean Bowe
Forest Administrator