

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 100

2/16/2021

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100 MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Florence County Forest is to manage, conserve, and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. The resources provided by the County Forest are the basis for addressing ecological and socioeconomic needs of society.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect, disease outbreaks, human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation, and excessive development. Management for environmental needs, such as watershed protection, protection and maintenance of biotic diversity, must also be managed and provide for sociological needs. These needs include the production of raw materials for wood-using industries that provide a wide variety of products fulfilling consumer demands, and provisions for recreational opportunities.

105 GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN (Hereafter referred to as the “Plan”)

To administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement, the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., and giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”

110 COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

FLORENCE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN POLICY

This plan shall incorporate, or reference, all official County Forest policies, pertinent county regulations, planning documents, and the needs and actions for the period 2021 through 2035.

This plan is the authority for management on county forest lands enrolled under Wisconsin County Forest Law s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. This Plan may be encompassed within required local planning efforts.

110.1 MANAGEMENT PLANNING

OBJECTIVES

Management planning shall be used to establish objectives, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations. To promote an efficient, orderly, program of development through management of the County Forest, in the interest of:

1. Determining needs and priorities.
2. Achieving goals set forth in the mission statement of this plan.
3. Satisfying the statutory requirements of s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.
4. Satisfying requirements for participation in various state and federal aid programs.
5. Providing broad long-term and detailed short-term guidelines for actions.

110.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN

Section 28.11, Wis. Stats., places the responsibility for the plan development on the Committee, with technical assistance, from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other agencies. The County Forest Administrator will take the lead at the committee's request. During development of the plan public participation should be utilized throughout the planning process. Public participation and inputs into the plan should consider s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., which governs the County Forest program and provides the sideboards to which this plan must adhere.

Florence County's public participation process includes the following:

- Update 1 chapter per month, as time allows, and allow committee a month to review each chapter. Draft plan to be complete by June 2020
- Contact Tribal representatives for input on the plan
- When all chapters have been drafted, provide a listening session (advertise in paper and/or website)
- Provide a 30-day comment period
- Send draft Plan to the DNR for review
- Address any comments and amend plan as needed
- Committee and full County Board approval by October 2020
- Send final Plan to DNR by November 2020

110.3 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN

Comments received should be given consideration during plan development. The Committee will then present the plan to the County Board for their approval. Following County Board approval, the Plan will then be forwarded to the Department for approval, as is required by s. 28.11(5)(a), Wis. Stats.

110.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLAN

Each member of the County Board will have access to a copy of the plan at the time of initial review and approval. Updated official copies will be maintained by the Forest Administrator and available electronically.

Plan and future amendments will be: Electronic versions of the plan or plan amendments or electronic links to the documents will be distributed to the following:

1. Department of Natural Resources - Liaison and County Forest & Public Lands Specialist.
2. Executive Director- Wisconsin County Forest Association.

110.5 UPDATING THE PLAN

Necessary changes in policy and procedure will be incorporated into the plan by an

amendment as required. Amendments to the plan will require approval by both the County Board and the Department of Natural Resources as stated in s. 28.11(5)(a), Wis. Stats. Changes to official County Forest Blocking map require County Board approval. The annual county board approved work plan, budget, and annual accomplishment report are appended to the plan but do not require official DNR approval. In addition, changes to Chapters 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 do not require a plan amendment, official DNR approval, or official County Board Approval, with the exception of the official County Forest Blocking map.

110.6 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING

The development of this plan and any future amendments to this plan will include considerations, and if warranted, participation in other local and regional planning efforts.

115 FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING

The Committee will utilize procedure as set forth in the Department of Natural Resources Public Forest Lands Handbook no. 2460.5. Silviculture Guidance, supported by Wisconsin's forestry community and Silvicultural Guidance Team may be referenced in forest management activities. WisFIRS will be utilized as the primary tool for forest management planning decisions. Additional resources such as forest habitat type classification, soil surveys, and DNR's *Best Management Practices for Water Quality Guidelines* may be utilized in management decisions.

115.1 FOREST CERTIFICATION GROUP ADMINISTRATION

As the certification group manager, the Department of Natural Resources will be responsible for overall administration of third-party certification efforts. The DNR County Forest & Public Lands Specialist will work in close cooperation with the Wisconsin County Forests Association in coordinating this effort. The group manager's responsibilities will include:

- Record keeping of certification
- Coordinating communication with the certification auditing firms
- Reporting and payment of fees
- Processing new entries and departures from the groups

- Internal compliance monitoring
- Dispute resolution

Detail on the certification group administration is maintained in the Public Forest Lands Handbook.

115.2 FOREST CERTIFICATION

Florence County's Commitment to Sustainable Forestry

Our county forests provide a vital contribution to the State and the world by providing economic, environmental, and social benefits essential to our quality of life. Florence County believes sustainable forestry is accomplished by a commitment and partnership, from all the groups, and individuals that benefit from these public lands.

Florence County's Commitment

Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan will provide guidance for Florence County's forestry practices. These practices promote forest sustainability and multiple use of the forest. The management of the forest will include the sustainable harvest of forest products, the protection of special sites, wildlife, plants, water quality, and aesthetics.

All forestland owners have a responsibility to provide sound forest stewardship. Florence County will work, in cooperation with, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other natural resources groups / agencies. Provision of sustainable forestry information to those landowners and individuals impacting forest sustainability in Wisconsin will be provided. We will support research efforts to improve the health, productivity, and management of forestlands both internally and through cooperative efforts. In managing the Florence County Forest a spectrum of forestry practices will be employed to achieve our sustainable forestry objective. Intensive and more extensive forest management techniques will be used to provide for wildlife, forest products, recreation, aesthetics, water quality, aesthetics, and ecosystem maintenance. In keeping with this responsibility

Florence County is committed to conforming to the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC® C006090) FSC 100% and/or Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®-01617) SFI 100%.

120 COUNTY AUTHORITY

The Florence County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Forestry and Parks Committee of the Florence County Board enforces the regulations governing the use of the Florence County Forest.

120.1 ORDINANCES

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Florence County Forest can be found in Chapter 1000. In addition, the following will be considered in planning process.

- Zoning ordinance
- Floodplain - Shoreland Zoning ordinance
- Motorized recreation ordinance
- Non-Metallic Mining ordinance
- Other (*individual counties list their ordinances here*)

125 HISTORY

125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. In 1929 the law was amended to create the County Forest Reserve Law. In 1963, several major revisions were made creating the County Forest Law s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance of a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, developed by the county, and with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. Several grants and loans were created and remain available to counties to compensate for public uses of these county forest lands as stipulated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. To fulfill additional statutory obligations, acreage share payments to

towns are currently \$.30/acre, and towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year.

In 2020, thirty counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

125.2 FLORENCE COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

The logging industry has been a dominant factor in the economy of Florence County since the days of early settlement. Several logging companies operated extensively in the area. The larger companies had cutover their holdings by the early 1900's and began to curtail operations. Millions of board feet of timber had been harvested during the preceding half century, leaving vast cutover areas. The lumbering firms disposed of these cutover barrens as best they could. Most of these lands were sold to speculating land companies, some sold outright to individuals, and the remainder was left to go tax delinquent. Following the "agricultural depression" of 1921, the land boom bubble had burst and the land companies were letting their less desirable lands go tax delinquent in order to retain more desirable holdings.

By the late 1920's, the tax structure in Florence County was in serious difficulty. Florence County was reluctant to take tax deeds on tax delinquent lands, due in part, to the magnitude of the job, and partially to the political influence of the land companies.

During this same period, the "Great Depression" struck the nation and the situation worsened. Early in the 1930's the County Board realized that some form of action had to be taken and the tax delinquent lands were acquired by the county in the ten-year period of 1930-1940 in staggering amounts.

Three legislative acts in Wisconsin during this period had an important bearing on the future of Florence County:

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law authorizing counties to create county forests. In 1928, legislative approval was given for the establishment of National

Forests. In 1927, the private Forest Crop Law was also passed. The Florence County Board approved a Federal Acquisition unit in the western part of the county, in 1934. The County sold this land for the purpose of timber production. This purchase unit, along with others in adjacent counties, was officially designated as the Nicolet National Forest. The first large acquisition, involving thousands of acres of land, was in 1935. This unit, to date, has reached approximately 85,000 acres in Florence County. Goodman Lumber Company was also operating in Florence County during the early 1900's and the company, then known as Sawyer Goodman, was also acquiring hardwood lands that were generally considered of little value. They established a large lumber mill in Goodman Wisconsin.

As early as 1931, a considerable acreage was entered under the Private Forest Crop Law and aimed toward a sustained yield operation. This acquisition block grew to approximately 42,989 acres in Florence County. Goodman Lumber Company sold in 1957 to the Calumet and Hecla Corporation. Then in 1968 Calumet and Hecla was purchased by Universal Oil Products, which turned the company over to Lake Superior Land Company, a subsidiary of Universal Oil. Lake Superior Land then sold the Goodman mill to Louisiana Pacific and retained the timberlands. Lake Superior Land then leased the timber rights to Louisiana Pacific for 15 years. During this lease period, Louisiana Pacific closed the mill and in 1982 sold the mill to Goodman Forest Industries who took over the cutting rights of the Goodman Timber lands until 1987. At that time Lake Superior Land hired their own logging crews and began to harvest their lands and sell the cut products on the open market. In 1995 Champion International Corporation purchased the timber from Lake Superior Land. In 2000 International Paper purchased the Champion International Paper Mill in Quinnesec and their timberlands. In 2005, this land again was on the market for purchase. This is by far the largest private timberland owned in Florence County.

Following the adoption of the County Forest Ordinance and the County Zoning Ordinance in 1935, the County Board approved the establishment of a County Forest made largely of County owned lands in the Townships of Fence, Fern, Commonwealth, and Homestead. The Board approved the first entry of 26,841 acres in the same year.

The early phases of development of the County Forest consisted largely of investments in

planting open areas. Much of the early planting was accomplished by hand using W.P.A. labor. The first machine planting on the county forest occurred in 1957. The first timber sale was established in 1941, and with the exception of 1943, sales have been made annually to date.

125.3 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Florence County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (WCFA). This Association was incorporated May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of fifteen delegates elected from County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association and two members at large.

WCFA provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s. 28.11 and chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues. WCFA develops and implements a strategic plan. The organization's mission statement is as follows:

Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long term forest health and sustainability.

125.4 TRENDS

The values and uses of the Florence County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs, now, and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the forest in coming years.

- Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid-1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the

early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, and woodcock. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

- Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clearcutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.
- Florence County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments.
- Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigation measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities.
- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, garlic mustard, buckthorn, and honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests.
- The Forest is considered an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

125.5 PROTECTING THE PUBLIC RESOURCE

As stated in s. 28.11 (1) Wis. Stats., the county forest program enables and encourages “the planned development and management of the county forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple-use to

assure maximum public benefits to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”