

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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100 **MISSION STATEMENT**

Natural resources, such as those provided by the County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the County Forest is to manage, conserve and protect these resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable forest management practices.

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 and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., 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.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning) s. 1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This County Forest plan will complement, and should be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts (e.g. Smart growth). There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. In an effort to ensure that the values of the Jackson County Forest are fully recognized, protected and infused into local planning, the County Forest administrator / Assistant administrator will participate in the planning of the local government design that is in its geographical area.

110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Jackson County Forest.
2. To provide the reader of the plan with background information regarding the County Forest.

115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY

Wisconsin Statutes (s 28.10 and 28.11) set up three levels of government as being administratively and financially involved with this program; state, county, and towns. The state participates with assistance in financing and technical help. Counties provide the land, determine local policy, provide additional financing and management, and govern all fiscal affairs through the Forestry and Parks Committee of the County Board of Supervisors & the County Forest Administrator. Towns having county forest lands receive an annual payment from the county totaling 10% of gross county timber sales revenue based on the acreage in each town. The towns also receive an annual 30 cents per acre payment from the state in lieu of taxes. (For the full text of the County Forest Law refer to Chapter 900 (905.1).

120 COUNTY AUTHORITY

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Forestry and Parks Committee of the County Board (*hereafter referred to as the "Committee"*) enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

120.1 ORDINANCES

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Jackson County Forest can be found in Chapter 900 (905.2.1). The current Forestry Ordinance adopted by the Jackson County Board on the 25th day of March, 1997 gives authorization to the Forestry and Parks Committee and other proper authorities of the Jackson County Board to enforce the regulations governing the use of the Jackson County Forest.

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. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within county forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the county forest. In return for this aid, the state originally collected a seventy-five percent severance tax on the products cut on county forests. This was reduced to fifty percent in 1937 and then to twenty percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in

accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20% of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment to towns is currently \$.30/acre. In addition, towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Stumpage revenues exceed \$18,000,000 annually statewide. Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin now own approximately 2.3 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in overharvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

125.3 JACKSON COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

Much of the Jackson County Forest lies within an area known historically as the Great Swamp. This vast area, covering more than a million and a quarter acres of Central Wisconsin, consisted of low marsh and swamp lands with sandy uplands and dense stands of white pine and red pine. Most of the streams were too small to float logs, and overland access was difficult because of the wet terrain. The Great Swamp remained uncut into the mid-1880's, nearly half a century behind the logging in surrounding areas with higher ground.

In 1885 a tremendous windstorm swept through the Great Swamp leveling huge tracts of

timber. About the same time, D.A. and E.M. Goodyear, entrepreneurs from Portage, Wisconsin, were establishing a sawmill near Mather Station in northwestern Juneau County. In order to salvage the windthrown timber, the Goodyears constructed a narrow gauge rail line into the heart of the remote pinery and founded a sawmill and a town called Goodyear. Other logging companies moved into the area, rail lines were extended and new towns were built. Within twenty years most of the pinery of the Great Swamp had been depleted, the mills were dismantled, and the towns were abandoned.

A period of land speculation followed the demise of logging. Realtors advertised the peat soils as rich black farmland to unsuspecting immigrants. Steam dredges were brought in to dig hundreds of miles of drainage ditches, lowering the water table and drying out the marshes. By the mid-1920's the new settlers found that farming was impossible. The peat soils had no mineral content and produced poor crops, while the sandy uplands had little organic matter and gave similar results. Droughts allowed the peat soils to catch fire and burn stubbornly. Late spring frosts and early fall frosts in the open marshlands made for short and unpredictable growing seasons. Drainage ditch taxes made meager incomes unlivable. The Great Depression ended most farming in the Great Swamp. Discouraged settlers abandoned their lands, or the federal government, through the Resettlement Administration, bought them out and relocated them to other areas.

Faced with extensive tax delinquent lands, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors, on May 2, 1933, adopted a resolution applying for the entry of 36,792.4 acres of land under the recently enacted County Forest Crop Law. The Jackson County Forest had been born. Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration crews were employed to begin restoration work of the depleted forest lands. According to Fred Rogers, a CCC forester and later a historian, there were three CCC camps located in Central Wisconsin. The City Point camp, located west of City Point near the old Pray Ranger Station, employed over 200 men at its peak on a variety of conservation projects. By 1937 the three camps together had built 35 bridges, 15 concrete dams, 100 miles of truck trails for fire access, planted nearly three million trees, built 95 miles of fire breaks, and spent over 1,000 man days fighting wild fires. By the end of 1943 the CCC had planted 8,848,000 trees on about 6,400 acres of County Forest land.

The County Forest continued to grow. By 1938 it totalled 96,300 acres. The County Forest has not had less than 100,000 acres since 1942. The first administrator of the Jackson County Forest was Kermit A. Hanson. He was hired at a salary of \$25.00 per month and an annual operating budget of \$6,960.00. Other former forest administrators included Bert Jones, Merlin Lambert, Robert Hess and James Zahasky. The first commercial timber sale on the County Forest was in 1940. The County sold 100 cords of jack pine to Fred Rhoades, Jr. of Black River Falls for \$2.10 per cord. The first tree planting machine was purchased for the County Forest in 1945.

125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

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

This corporation 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.

130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST

130.1 NATURAL FEATURES

130.1.1 Topography

Jackson County, located in the west central part of Wisconsin, is comprised of 21 civil townships having an area of 987.3 square miles. The topography of the county is the result of glacial activity. The last glacier (the Wisconsin Stage) produced two distinct

types of topography in the county. These are known as the Western Uplands and the Central Plains region.

The Western Uplands, or “driftless” area of the county, are composed of hills, coulees and sandstone bluffs, some with dolomitic limestone “caps”. The North Alma Unit of the county forest is located along the northeastern fringe of the Western Uplands. The Western Uplands lie to the west of the Black River.

The Central Plains region is considered to be glaciated, although most of the area was not ice covered. Only the extreme northeastern corner of the county, in the Town of City Point, was covered by ice. The terrain is undulating to rolling, but no significant morrainal features are evident. The balance of the Central Plains region was part of the bed of Glacial Lake Wisconsin and was under water. These sandy plains are characterized by low sandy upland generously interspersed with marshes. The flat landscape is broken by isolated sandstone mounds rising several hundreds of feet above the surrounding terrain. All of the County Forest east of the Black River lies within the Central Plains region.

The Black River and its tributaries once served to drain Glacial Lake Wisconsin along with the Wisconsin River to the east. It is the dividing line between the Western Uplands and the Central Plains region. The Black River runs through the county from north to south, nearly bisecting it.

130.1.2 Geology and Soils

The county forest is underlain by Mount Simon sandstone. Elevations range from 1400 feet on Saddle Mound south of Pray to about 760 feet in the Shamrock area.

Soils of the county forest were formed from siliceous sandy alluvium or siliceous residuum from sandstone. They have very low fertility and are characterized by shallow topsoils with little organic matter and noticeable leaching of iron compounds into the lower layers of the subsoil. These soils are generally poorly suited for agricultural use.

Soils formed in the sandy alluvium include three soil associations: The Tarr-Boone-Rockdam Association, the Ironrun-Pony Creek-Dawsil Association, and the Loxley-Dawsil Association. The soils vary mainly due to their position in the landscape which determines the level of the water table. Permeability is rapid and available water capacity is low restricting land use.

Soils formed in alluvium overlying loamy residuum from the underlying interbedded sandstone and shale include the Merrilan-Veedum-Humbird Association and the Elm Lake-Fairchild Association. Clayey residuum weathered from shale restricts the permeability and the water capacity in these soils. Wetness is a problem but the soils are somewhat droughty when drained. Areas of these soils are generally found north of Highway 54 in the eastern side of Jackson County.

A generalized soil map can be found in Chapter 900 (900.1). Detailed soils information is available in the soil survey for Jackson County.

130.1.3 Geography

Jackson County is the fifteenth largest county in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 626,000 acres, plus another 5,800 acres of water included in lakes and streams. Roughly 60 percent of the land in the county is classified as forest land. The county forest, which contains about 120,000 acres, is the tenth largest in the state operating under provisions of the County Forest Law (Chapter 28.11, Wisconsin Statutes).

130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger ecoregion. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and landtype associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and potential plant communities. The Jackson County Forest is encompassed within the Eastern

Broadleaf Forest (222) province including subsections Eau Claire (IV.2) and Central Wisconsin Sand Plain (V.1). Landtype Associations (LTA's) within the subsections include: Glacial Lake, Wisconsin Sand Plain, Spaulding Uplands, Jackson Siliceous Sand Plain, Northwest Outlet Cranberry Bogs, Jackson, Juneau Sandstone Knolls and Terraces, and Black-Robinson-Harrison Terraces and Floodplains. LTA's, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species, living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. The following biological communities are found on the Jackson County Forest:

Oak and Pine Barrens: typically occur on sandy soils and are dominated by grasses, low shrubs, small trees, and scattered large trees. Most commonly these are pine barrens in northern and southern Wisconsin and oak barrens in the southern and west central parts of the state. LTA Jackson Siliceous Sandplain in the Central part of the forest, contains the barrens communities on the Jackson County Forest.

Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water. This community is common across the Northwest Outlet Cranberry Bogs LTA(s) throughout the forest.

130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately 83 percent of the Jackson County Forest land base is forested. The forest is composed of eleven commercial forest cover types. The major forest types among them are jack pine (about 16,400 acres), oak (32,000 acres) and aspen (27,100 acres). These three species represent about 80 percent of the commercial forest types on the forest. Chapter 900 (900.5), contains details of these forest cover type acreages. The remainder is an open landscape comprised of wetlands, lowland shrubs, upland shrubs, bogs, lakes, streams,

grassy openings, roads, rock outcroppings, and utility right-of-ways.

The majority of the forest is located east of the Black River with a small block of land (about 5,300 acres) located north of the village of Merrillan. Chapter 900, (900.2), contains a map showing the location of the county forest.

130.1.6 Wildlife

Wildlife species are an integral component of the biological communities and processes that occur within the Jackson County Forest. Literally hundreds of species of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and insects utilize the various habitats that are found here. Each different habitat type has its own unique assemblage of wildlife species that are specially adapted to finding part or all of their life requirements within that type. The various wildlife species within each community interact with each other and the habitat forming complex interdependent associations that are the basis of functioning ecosystems. Activities or changes that affect one component of the habitat have far reaching effects on other members that inhabit that same community. Broad categories of habitat found in the Jackson County Forest include: upland forest, lowland forest, upland brush, lowland brush, barrens, grassland, marshland, bog, open water, and riverine.

Equally as important to wildlife as the habitat category is the successional stage and vegetative structure of the habitat, as well as its position relative to other types. Many species utilize varying habitat types or successional stages for food or cover requirements during different seasons of the year. There are several specialized habitats located within the county forest that are critical for survival of our most popular wildlife species.

The aspen forest habitat, a type which is restricted primarily to the Lake States and Southern Canada, is a common but important element of the Jackson County Forest. White-tail deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare, woodcock, black bear, beaver, as well as numerous species of small mammals and birds rely heavily on aspen to meet their life requirements. Aspen

maintenance is vital to the continued species diversity of this region.

The oak component of the Jackson County Forest is critical to the survival of many wildlife species. Acorn production provides sustenance for deer, squirrels, mice, raccoons, black bear, bluejays, and wild turkeys. Old oaks provide tree cavities that are used as den sites for up to 36 species of birds, and mammals. Young oak, from both seed and stump sprout origin, provide valuable cover and browse for wildlife because of the thick growth of oak reproduction stands.

Jack pine stands are also used extensively by many species of wildlife that utilize early successional stages of forestry growth. The dense vegetative structure that is produced by jack pine is very beneficial in providing resting areas, escape cover and nesting sites for a variety of mammals and birds. Jack pine is extensively used as a forage site by a number of insect eating birds; and new growth is often browsed by deer during the winter months.

Sodded grass openings, barrens and remnant prairie grass sites are a vital component of Jackson County's forest wildlife habitat. An estimated 150 different wildlife species that range in size from black bears to newly emerged leopard frogs utilize grass areas during some part of their life cycle. Grass habitats are of particular importance for many ground nesting species including mallards, woodcock, sharp-tailed grouse, cottontail rabbits, mice, songbirds and reptiles.

Marshes, flowages, rivers and streams provide specialized habitat for a multitude of aquatic and semi-aquatic species in the county forest. Amphibians, waterfowl, shorebirds, as well as some species of reptiles and furbearing mammals all require aquatic habitat for their livelihood. Many other upland adapted species utilize these water areas on a regular basis for feeding and drinking purposes. The open aspect provided by large marshes on county forest lands provides a critical habitat element that helps sustain a remnant population of sharp-tailed grouse in the region.

130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities and unique natural features on the Jackson County Forest. The endangered Karner Blue Butterfly is, perhaps, most notable because of the impact its presence has on allowable management and land use in locations where known populations exist. Threatened bird species including the Bald Eagle, Osprey and Red Shouldered Hawk are part time residents on the county forest, primarily during the breeding and brood rearing season. A number of other species rare to Central Wisconsin, include Bobcat, Fisher, Sharp-tail Grouse, Timber Wolves and Goshawk, are known to be present on portions of the county forest. See Chapter 900(900.7) for a listing of threatened and endangered species in the Forest.

130.1.8 Water

Jackson County has approximately 5,800 acres of surface water in its lakes and streams. There are 144 lakes and flowages with a surface area of about 3525 acres. Thirty two of these are named lakes and flowages covering about 1154 acres. Another 112 are unnamed flowages totaling 2009 acres. There are 667 miles of streams with a surface area of about 2275 acres. Of this, 79 streams, or 279 miles, are classified as trout streams.

Fishery resources within the County Forest are somewhat limited. Thirteen named and unnamed lakes and flowages have all or portions of their shoreline under county ownership. All but one are warm water fisheries. Wazee Lake, formerly an open pit taconite ore mine, has excellent quality water and has been stocked with rainbow, brown and brook trout, as well as walleye and smallmouth bass. The county owns limited frontage on four trout streams in the Towns of Brockway and Manchester. The streams are Robinson Creek, Clear Creek, Stoney Creek and Levis Creek.

Jackson County also has 54 streams totaling 132.31 miles which are classified as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters. An entire listing of the outstanding and exceptional resource waters can be found in Wisconsin Admin. Code NR102.10 and 102.11

130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Jackson County. Recreational facilities include: parks, beaches, campgrounds, and boat landings. There are also extensive snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle and motorcycle trails. The county forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, scuba diving and sight-seeing.

130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and spin-off industries derived from the recreational opportunities on the Forest are vitally important to Jackson County's economic well being. Jackson county forest products and processing industrial output is 5.3% of the total county industrial output. The quality of life in many counties is heavily dependent on the traditional resources the County Forest provides.

130.2.3 Roads & Access

All Jackson County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. The County Forest is served by a network of town, county, and state highways that access the forest. A system of forest roads and trails provides at least seasonal access to almost every section of land in the forest. Most of the unsurfaced roads are seasonal and many are passable only when frozen or during extremely dry periods. Access management remains a controversial issue on the Forest. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation are provided for within the Forest. See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access.

130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Jackson County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational

opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Jackson 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.

a. Greater demands are being placed on the Forest by people using it to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has led to user conflicts. In particular, dramatic increases in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATV's) has pressured County forests into providing trails for their use and resolving access conflicts on the County Forest. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are commonplace.

b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forest land is being lost to residential development, and forest landowners are decreasingly interested in managing land primarily for timber values.

c. 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. A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on Wisconsin's National and State forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the county forests. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

d. 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.

e. Jackson 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. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.

f. 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. Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities.

g. Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn, spotted knapweed, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests.

h. The Forest is considered to be 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.

130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest is composed of 159 management compartments ranging in size from 55 acres to nearly 3,529 acres. Within the county forest boundaries approximately 75 percent of the land is county owned with most of the remaining 25 percent in small private holdings. A map of these compartments can be found in Chapter 900 (900.4).