

2013

CLARK COUNTY FORESTRY & PARKS COMMITTEE

Jeff Kolzow, Chairperson

Al Bower, Brian Kunze, Joe Waichulis, Norman Wesenberg

Forestry & Parks Department Employees

Rick Dailey, Administrator
Brian Duell, Parks Manager
John Wendorski, Forester
Luke Nigon, Forester
Tom Behrens, Parks Worker III
Kelly Kirn, Parks Worker II
James Smagacz, Bruce Mound &
Fairgrounds Assistant

Jon Holger, Forestry Manager
Debbie Tlusty, Admin. Secretary
Ian Remus, Forestry Tech.
Tim Hagen, Parks Worker II
Don Friemoth, Parks Worker II
Daryn Horn, Maintenance Tech.

Seasonal & Temporary Personnel – 35 persons
Black River Correctional Inmate Crew - 6 to 10 persons

DNR Personnel assigned to Clark County

Andy Sorenson, Liaison Forester
Scott Roepke, Wildlife Biologist
Chris Schmitz, Forester

Tim Mayer, Forester
Vacant Position, Conservation Warden
Adam Hanna, Conservation Warden

TIMBER SALES

After many years of accelerated timber harvests to salvage over mature and dying aspen, Clark County Forest harvest levels became regulated (in 2005) by means of an annual allowable harvest. Annual allowable harvest levels have steadily increased to 2,940 acres in 2013. Year 2013 timber sale efforts focused on catch-up of overdue oak and red pine thinning.

Total gross wood product revenues received in 2013 were \$2,509,873.00, including \$939.54 for local firewood. This is an increase of \$3,118.00 over 2012 and is an all-time record high. See the attached graph showing annual county forest timber revenues for the last 15 years.

The total volume harvested by 26 different logging contractors from 75 active timber sale contracts in 2013 was 48,472 cord equivalents. Based on the DNR's formula of 28.5 cord equivalents equals one job, 1,701 jobs were generated. Markets during this period were generally stable. Pulpwood and firewood markets were fair to good. Hardwood log mill prices and markets were generally higher in 2013 when compared to 2012 levels. Red pine log markets remained strong. Weather conditions early in the year were unfavorably wet. Mid-summer weather transitioned to very dry/drought conditions that continued through the fall, improving logging accessibility and operability.

Having paid off all outstanding variable acreage loans in 1994, the county now retains 90% of timber revenue generated. The remaining 10% is distributed to townships with county forest land.

A total of 57 county forest timber sales with an estimated 93,361 tons and 3,296,740 board feet on 3,008 acres were established 2013. All but three sales established in 2013 have been sold and are under contract. The total contract value of these sales is \$3,185,359.84. Of the total acreage established, 1,622 acres are thinning's and 1,386 acres regeneration harvests.

FOREST INVENTORY

The reconnaissance geodatabase was updated in mid-2011 to improve monitoring and reporting functionality. In addition to the stand information, the stand boundaries are now housed on a state-wide server and are viewable to anyone with internet access. Data security is in place to ensure only authorized individuals can edit this database. This system can instantaneously provide up-to-date annual allowable harvest figures and accomplishments as they occur; a process that previously took days. This latest upgrade now provides additional mapping and geospatial analysis tools available to all personnel working on the forest.

This geodatabase is the backbone of our land management program. It provides valuable planning information and will guide many future management decisions. Keeping data current is vital for making sound management decisions. In 2013, stand reconnaissance updates were completed on 14,555 acres or 11% of the forested cover types. Most of the updated acreage is timber sale related. Attached is a graph showing current county forest cover types.

REFORESTATION

The vast majority of county forest harvested acres regenerate naturally through seed, root suckers, and stump sprouts. Tree planting does occur in areas where natural regeneration fails or is insufficient to fully stock the site and where conversion to an alternate species will yield substantial increases in productivity.

During the spring of 2013, 207,360 trees were planted on 261 acres. A total of 11 sites were planted in Dewhurst, Hewett, Sherwood and Washburn Townships. Of the total number of trees planted, 100,800 were jack pine, 90,000 were red pine, and 16,560 were tamarack. All trees were hand planted by a professional tree planting crew from Arkansas.

Preliminary survival surveys conducted this fall for seedlings planted in the spring of 2013 indicate 86% survival for Red Pine, 97% survival for Jack Pine, and 100% survival for Tamarack. The surviving seedlings appear healthy and vigorous despite the abnormally cold wet spring and dry summer and fall soil conditions.

Site preparation for spring 2014 and 2015 tree planting was completed during the summer and fall of 2013. A total of two sites, covering 52 acres were treated with herbicide by a contracted broadcast herbicide applicator and department foresters to control competing vegetation. Additionally, six sites covering 91 acres were power disc trenched to break up existing slash mats and prepare the planting beds. Disc trenching was also completed by a contractor.

Due to a very poor acorn crop in the fall of 2013, no sites were scarified with anchor chains or by blade scarification. Acorns need to be present in order for this type of treatment to be effective for regenerating oak stands.

PRESCRIBED BURNS

Prescribed fire is an important forest management tool. Controlled burns are used to rejuvenate native grass openings and prepare stands for natural oak regeneration, benefiting both wildlife and silviculture. Due to the long, wet spring no prescribed burns were completed on the county forest in 2013.

TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT

Ten (10) timber stand improvement projects involving 224 acres were completed in 2013. Oak release was the primary focus of our 2013 efforts. Private contractors and county employees completed the following projects.

- ❑ Cutting undesirable competition to release oak saplings on 6 sites covering 111 acres.
- ❑ Basal spraying of undesirable competition to release oak seedlings on 4 sites covering 92 acres.
- ❑ Root springing undesirable competition to release oak seedlings on 3 sites covering 59 acres.

FOREST PROTECTION

Over the last few years, several threats to the overall forest health have emerged. Oak Wilt, Red Pine Pocket Mortality, Gypsy Moth, and exotic invasive plants have all been identified on the county forest. The impact of these threats has so far been minor.

Damage to the forest resource is minimized through active forest management. Activities such as harvesting mature trees and thinning young stands help promote a vigorous and healthy forest. The trees within these healthy stands are better able to resist attacks from forest pests.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was first found in Wisconsin in 2008. Although there are no known infestations in or adjacent to Clark County, this department has been actively preparing for its arrival. Where found, EAB does devastate the ash resource. Ash timber type is not abundant on the county forest; therefore EAB impact on county forest resources will be minimal.

Oak Wilt is a lethal fungal disease affecting primarily the Red Oak family. Oak Wilt was first identified on the county forest and in Snyder County Park in 2000. Since then, a total of 44 sites have been identified, including 5 new infections in 2013. Oak Wilt spreads through root grafts between infected and healthy trees and overland by sap-feeding beetles. The majority of oak wilt is located in the south half of the county. To date approximately 23 acres of oak timber type have been lost to Oak Wilt. Aerial surveys are conducted to detect new Oak Wilt infections and check previously treated sites. Active sites are treated by various methods during the fall and winter months. Our efforts to contain the spread of Oak Wilt appear to be working. The number of new infections has remained stable or declined each of the last several years.

The Forestry and Parks Department will continue Oak Wilt control efforts that were first initiated in 2000. With approximately 22,000 acres of oak timber type in the county forest, there is much at stake. If Oak Wilt becomes firmly established on the county forest, any hope for control will be lost.

Red Pine Pocket Mortality was first identified on the Clark County Forest in 2001. Since then more than 40 sites have been identified. Sites vary

from a handful of trees to two acres in size. Pocket Mortality is caused by an interaction between a complex of insects and a root fungus, causing red pine deterioration then mortality. There is no known control although progression is slowed by harvesting infected trees. Little else is known about this syndrome. This department will continue to cooperate with DNR researchers by providing site data and research opportunities.

Annosum Root Rot prevention measures were implemented in 2011 for timber harvests occurring in red pine plantations. Similar to pocket mortality, Annosum Root Rot causes decay in the roots and butt of infected trees, ultimately leading to mortality. Unlike pocket mortality, annosum can survive in the soil for decades, prohibiting productive conifer growth on the site. Annosum Root Rot has been detected in surrounding Wood and Taylor Counties; however there currently are no known sites within Clark County. The best method of control is prevention. A simple stump fungicide application during harvest will prevent infection from occurring.

Gypsy Moth has slowly and methodically spread west from the east coast of the United States since the early 1900's. Currently, the eastern 2/3 of Wisconsin, including neighboring Jackson, Marathon and Wood Counties, are considered generally infested and under a Gypsy Moth quarantine. Clark County became quarantined in 2012.

In 2013, aerial spraying for Gypsy Moth was conducted on two sites in or adjacent to the county forest and covering 12,891 acres. Spraying was conducted in June and July by the State and Federal "Slow the Spread" program.

In July of 2013, a large infestation of gypsy moth caterpillars was observed in and around the Levis Mound Recreational Area in Dewhust Township. It appears that a large percentage of the caterpillars died from natural causes; however, egg masses were still detected following the outbreak. DNR foresters assisted Clark County by performing egg mass surveys in early December to help determine if the County needed to implement harvest restrictions on timber sales in the infested area. Results from the survey indicated there were not enough egg masses to justify implementing harvest restrictions; however, continued monitoring of this area will be necessary. At this time, Clark County lies on the leading edge of the gypsy moth wave. Large outbreaks are expected to continue within the county until the wave pushes further west. The County, with help from the DNR

will continue to survey areas in and around future outbreaks and plan timber harvests accordingly. The DNR will no longer be spraying property within the county as part of the "Slow the Spread" program and will shift its focus west into neighboring counties.

Exotic Invasive Plants native to Europe and Asia are beginning to show up within the County Forest. Following introduction, these aggressive perennial weeds become established quickly. Once established, they out compete and displace native flora using a variety of survival strategies. They often lack natural predators and diseases, which serve to control their populations in native environments. These plants can reduce forest productivity, damage wildlife habitat, degrade ecosystems, and impede natural and artificial regeneration.

Since 2003 Clark County has surveyed high-risk areas of the county forest for invasive plants. By the end of the 2013 growing season, 148 occurrences had been documented. Six new sites were discovered in 2013. Nearly every documented invasive occurrence is associated with human vectors and are concentrated in high use recreational areas.

Herbicide treatments to control Spotted Knapweed, Leafy Spurge, Japanese Honeysuckle, and Purple Loosestrife began in 2004 and continued through 2013. These treatments have helped contain the spread of invasives and reduced their intensity in the treated areas. Japanese Bar Berry was identified and treated along a county forest road. This site will be monitored and retreated as necessary. Japanese Knotweed was identified on a site in Dewhurst Township near a popular camping spot. This site will be treated in 2014 to try and control its spread.

Swift, deliberate action is necessary to prevent the spread and further colonization of the County Forest by exotic invasive plants. By acting now we reduce the cost of treatment, reduce the size of the area impacted by herbicide, and increase the likelihood of success.

FOREST CERTIFICATION

On March 11, 2005, the Clark County Forest along with 27 of the 29 Wisconsin County Forests became certified by an independent, recognized authority. The Clark County Forest is certified by the Forest Stewardship

Council certification system. While certification is primarily driven by consumer demand for environmentally friendly forest products, the certification process has confirmed that the Clark County Forest has been well managed and already adheres to sustainable and ecologically sound management practices.

WILDLIFE HABITAT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Continued support by the WINX Club, and the Department of Natural Resources has provided significant accomplishment for the benefit of wildlife on the Clark County Forest. Habitat reclamation and maintenance remain of primary concern.

Wildlife accomplishments for 2013 include:

- ◆ Partial rehabilitation of the dike and control structure at the Winx Flowage Migratory Bird Refuge. Project was conducted with assistance from the Winx Club, a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation of local waterfowl. This impoundment creates a 42 acre reservoir, and is critical habitat to over 4,000 waterfowl during their annual migration. Additional rehab work is planned for 2014.
- ◆ Maintenance of aspen timber type through the harvest of mature and over mature aspen timber.
- ◆ Construction of timber sale access roads to facilitate harvest of mature and over mature aspen timber.
- ◆ Mechanical and chemical release to stimulate aspen and jack pine regeneration.
- ◆ Enhance, maintain, and promote oak regeneration on 388 acres.
- ◆ Wildlife opening and trail maintenance.
- ◆ Inventoried more than 9,800 acres for the benefit of endangered or threatened resources.
- ◆ Habitat maintenance to benefit the endangered Karner Blue Butterfly.
- ◆ Continue to implement an Ecological Management Plan that will further integrate wildlife management into forest management.
- ◆ Waterfowl flowage maintenance.
- ◆ Invasive plant surveys and control.
- ◆ Inventory, prioritize, and establish other wildlife management projects.

FOREST ROADS

The department maintains 44.69 miles of roads in the county forest which meet minimum town road standards. The 2013 state maintenance funding received was \$14,405.75. State road aids decreased slightly in 2013. This \$322.35/mile annual payment does not provide sufficient funding to maintain the long-term integrity of the County Forest Road system.

Action by the Forestry & Parks and Finance Committees in 2009 has established a reserved forest road maintenance fund. Five percent (5%) of annual gross county forest timber revenues are to be placed in this fund. Approximately 5.2 miles of the Butler Lanes forest road were reconstructed in 2013 using this money.

LAND ACQUISITION

In December 2013, the purchase of 924 acres of forest land in Mead Township was finalized. This acquisition was the first significant addition to the county forest since the 1940's. The land was purchased from Plum Creek Timberlands LP, a private, industrial land owner. This property was entered in the open Managed Forest Law program.

The County applied for and received a Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant from the State of Wisconsin to purchase the property. This grant paid approximately 50% of the \$962,403.00 purchase price plus associated expenses. Additional Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant funds for the purchase were secured by enrolling 427 acres of county land, located at Sportsman Lake Recreational Area in Hixon and Hoard Townships and 163 acres of Highway lands in Levis Township into the county forest program. The county received 50% of the appraised value of these acres as a match toward the purchase price. The total out of pocket cost to the county was about \$17,000.00.

Altogether, over 1,514 acres will be enrolled into the Clark County Forest. Enrollment into the county forest program ensures that these lands will be open to the public for the foreseeable future and townships will benefit from additional severance payments.

FAIRGROUNDS

The Clark County Fairgrounds budget continues to be bare bones, leaving little money for grounds and facility upgrades. Expenditures for 2013 decreased by \$14,893 (15%) versus 2012. Revenues increased slightly. Overall, the cost to operate the fairgrounds in 2013 decreased by \$15,024 from 2012. Consistent with the Clark County parks system, very few improvement projects are being considered for the fairgrounds. In 2013, a new PA system with coverage across the entire grounds was installed. The system was paid for through private donations.

Year	Expenditures	Revenue	Net Cost of Fairgrounds
2010	\$152,390	\$23,672	(\$128,718)
2011	\$95,965	\$21,874	(\$74,091)
2012	\$98,668	\$24,796	(\$73,872)
2013	\$83,775	\$24,927	(\$58,848)

CAMPGROUNDS AND PARKS

Revenue from camping fees totaled \$457,245.39 in 2013, a decrease of \$33,109.43 or 7% from 2012. The department currently maintains 11 county parks, including 8 campgrounds. There are currently 570 campsites available for public use. Fifteen (15) park day use locations are provided, together with 9 designated boat landings. Other park amenities include 17 shelter buildings, 27 vault toilet buildings, 7 shower/flush toilet buildings, 5 flush toilet buildings, 5 beach areas, convenience stores, laundromats, parking lots, dump stations, trail access points, fishing access points, and much more.

TRAILS

Development, rehabilitation, and maintenance projects were carried out on an extensive system of motorized and non-motorized recreational trails and associated support facilities in 2013.

ATV and snowmobile grant programs provided \$183,065.97 for development, rehabilitation, relocation and maintenance of trails and support facilities. The primary source of this grant funding is

ATV/snowmobile registration fees and gas tax on ATV/snowmobile fuel consumption.

The Clark County ATV trail system consists of approximately 86 miles of funded summer trails and 205 miles of winter trails. The Neillsville-Grantton, Greenwood, Loyal, Dorchester, Curtiss, and Riplinger snowmobile clubs assist on 65 miles of winter ATV trail maintenance.

Snowmobile trail funded maintenance mileage is approximately 373 miles. Of the total mileage, nine cooperating clubs maintain 282 miles of trail in Clark County.

Knobby Ridge Motorcycle Trail: Located in Hewett and Seif Townships, Knobby Ridge consists of 16 miles of trail with four interconnecting loops and a youth loop. No revenues were received in 2013 for Knobby Ridge. The trail system was closed in 2011 and remained closed during 2012 and 2013 due to excessive erosion and rutting of the trail surface.

Mid-West Off Road Trail Riders, Knobby Ridge Trail System sponsoring club, did complete trail rehabilitation projects in 2013. The club is planning to continue trail work projects in 2014 and hope to reopen some trails during the summer 2014.

Horse Trails: Located in Seif and South Foster Township, Wild Rock Campground and Park is the main trailhead for this trail system. Wild Rock offers 41 miles of trail with seven interconnecting loops. Trail user fees for 2013 totaled \$1,809.48.

Levis/Trow Mound Recreation Area: Located in the Town of Dewhurst, this trail system offers hiking, mountain biking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. There are 15 miles of cross-country ski trails and 22.5 miles of single-track mountain bike trails available.

Year 2013 projects included trail rehabilitation, pruning, brushing, and improved signage. Neillsville Area Trail Association (NATA) completed the work. Levis trail user fees for 2013 totaled \$13,698.39.

Recreational Patrol Officer / Enforcement: The Recreation Officer position started trail enforcement efforts in Clark County during the summer of 2001. The position is an important link within Clark County for the protection and enhancement of the trail systems, natural resources, townships, residents and recreational enthusiasts.

The Recreation Officer contributes to the enforcement, education and safety of all trail systems in Clark County. The goal is to reduce off trail riding, resource damage and township and resident complaints. The Recreation Officer is also involved in enforcement of forest and park related ordinances.

In 2013 we were again without a fulltime recreation officer. Reserve deputies performed periodic patrol of the ATV trail system. Consistent park patrol was available.

Trail Partners: The Clark County Forestry and Parks Department recognizes and appreciates the concerted efforts of our partners for success of Clark County trail systems:

- GWR (Greenwood-Willard-Rock Dam) Riders
- Loyal Sno Angels
- Colby Trailblazers
- Thorp Sno Raiders
- Riplinger Rip Riders
- Hatfield Road Runners
- Spencer Swampstompers
- Boomtown Sno Chasers
- Dorchester Midnight Riders
- Neillsville/Granton Trail Busters
- Hatfield ATV Riders
- Quad County ATV Club
- Rock Dam ATV Riders
- Northern Clark County ATV Riders
- Neillsville Area Trail Association
- Neillsville Saddle Tramps
- Mid-West Off Road Trail Riders
- Clark County Sheriff's Department
- Volunteers for the Snowmobile Council

BRUCE MOUND

Calendar Year 2013: Net (after sales tax) revenues for the year totaled \$196,126.54. Revenues are down 10% from 2012. Recent financial history for Bruce Mound operating costs are as follows:

- 2013 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$53,710.22
- 2012 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$15,184.93
- 2011 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$83,448.69
- 2010 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$28,293.35
- 2009 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$ 1,360.23
- 2008 expenditures exceeded revenues by \$20,187.06

2013 – 2014 Season: Snowmaking efforts resulted in the opening of Bruce Mound as scheduled on December 14th. It was a couple weeks into the season before all slopes were open. Bruce Mound remained open until March 16th with excellent conditions throughout the season.

Many non-profit groups and organizations scheduled weekend visits to Bruce Mound during the season. Area organizations such as 4-H, FFA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, and numerous church and school groups were provided with reduced fee opportunities for wholesome winter recreation.

The extremely cold weather created challenges for scheduling school groups. Many cancellations occurred. Even with these challenges, 22 different schools and 1 new school (Neillsville) booked outings at Bruce Mound during the 2013 - 2014 season. New for 2012 and continued in 2013, we provided a buy-one-get-one free ticket to each school group child that visited our hill. This opportunity was taken advantage of by dozens of kids throughout the season.

Promotional efforts continued to shift from a focus on radio and print media, to more online and social media again this year. A large amount of our promotional efforts were directed to our Bruce Mound Facebook page. We grew from just over 100 “likes” prior to the 2012 - 2013 season to almost 800 “likes” after the 2012 - 2013 ski season. After the 2013 - 2014 season we now have more than 1,500 “likes”. We continue to do some radio and print marketing as well, while focusing mainly on the Eau Claire media market. The buy-one-get-one ski lift ticket free on Friday nights continued for 2013 -2014 season.

The Bruce Mound kitchen was leased again this season. The food service lease allowed the county to collect 13% of the gross kitchen sales or \$8,183.00, an increase of \$1,498.00 over 2013. The current lease expires at the end of the 2014 - 2015 season.

Ski instruction was offered at Bruce Mound again. The target group is 6th grade classes from around the area, although many diverse populations were served. School groups receive free ski instruction. Paid customers increased from 117 during the 2012 – 2013 season to 167 during the 2013 – 2014 season.

Bruce Mound Ski Patrol Program remains as an effective way of providing and administering first aid and improving on the overall mission at Bruce Mound. Special event and season pass opportunities have further complimented this mission of providing dependable winter recreation for the many families of Clark County.

Bruce Mound Future: The Forestry and Parks Committee continues to analyze challenges and opportunities at Bruce Mound with a goal of no net annual operating cost to the county. Improved expenditure reporting procedures have been implemented to improve transparency and support the decision making process. The implementation of a “flex” schedule has allowed management to significantly reduce Bruce Mound overtime costs and has freed up staff members for other projects, who previously were fully dedicated to working at Bruce Mound. The ability to use skilled seasonal employees and possibly volunteers for snow making will help continue to narrow the financial gap at Bruce Mound.

The Committee has been assessing long term operating costs at Bruce Mound. Maintenance and upgrades to existing infrastructure and equipment remains a concern and priority. The T-bar and rope tows are antiquated, maintenance intensive and are no longer supported by the manufacturer. The engine powering the rope tow at the tube hill did go down several times during the 2013 -2014 season, forcing us to close the tube hill on several occasions. The Piston Bully groomer, a key piece of equipment for grooming the slopes continues to require considerable resources to maintain.

COUNTY DAMS

Repair directives have been issued on several county forest flowage dams. Per DNR Dam Safety orders, these dams will need to be repaired or abandoned in the near future. The Forestry and Parks Department continues to prioritize needs and associated costs, in an effort to determine which dams will be abandoned and which will receive functional repairs.

OTHER DEPARTMENT NEWS/ACTIVITIES

Revenue/Expense Alternatives: The Forestry and Parks Committee continues to study ways and means of increasing departmental revenues and reducing long range expense. A comprehensive expenditure and revenue tracking structure was implemented beginning January 1, 2011. Additional revenue and expenditure accounts and subaccounts have been added and continue to be added to the department financial statement to improve functionality and transparency. Much has been learned about program costs and revenues. This will help create a clearer financial picture moving forward and improve the accuracy of future budget preparations.

NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

January 1, 2013 – December 31, 2013

Fund 330 – Forestry and Parks General Account:

- Total revenues \$4,657,171.28
- Total expenditures \$3,092,051.78
- Transfer from forestry to general fund for levy reduction \$850,000.00
- Including transfer from forestry budget to general fund for levy reduction, year-end 2013 budget closed in the positive by \$715,119.50.

Fund 330 Fund Balance Summary:

- Year-end 2006 Balance \$1,598,547.84
- Year-end 2007 Balance \$1,071,661.32
- Year-end 2008 Balance \$1,306,043.75
- Year-end 2009 Balance \$1,098,524.44
- Year-end 2010 Balance \$856,948.38
- Year-end 2011 Balance \$794,160.52
- Year-end 2012 Balance \$1,616,267.86
- Year-end 2013 Balance \$2,331,387.36
- Year-end 2013 fund balance includes reserved funds of \$90,338.91 for dam improvements, \$150,000 for capital equipment, \$142,047.03 for forest regeneration, \$162,211.51 for forest roads and \$164,129.45 for land acquisition.
- Unreserved/non-earmarked fund balance stands at \$1,622,660.46 at year-end 2013.

Fairgrounds:

- 2013 Fairgrounds expenditures exceed revenues by \$58,848.00
- Fairgrounds budget is a general fund budget and is supported by levy dollars

Financial Summary:

Forestry & Parks 2013 year-end budget summary is attached.