

# **CLARK COUNTY FORESTRY & PARKS ANNUAL WORK PLAN - 2024**



## **CLARK COUNTY FORESTRY AND PARKS 2024 ANNUAL WORK PLAN**

It is the mission of the Forestry and Parks Department to establish, develop, protect, maintain, and manage county parks, campgrounds, dams, forests, fairgrounds, ski areas, and trail systems. We strive to provide a sustained yield of forest products and associated amenities while also providing dependable multi-season recreational opportunities for the public.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human acts such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental harm 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 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.

Following is the proposed Clark County Forestry and Parks work plan for the year 2024. The plan gives direction and meaning to the proposed Forestry, Parks and Fairgrounds budgets. The plan further defines and supplements the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan and emphasizes the current needs of the County Forest and Recreation System that encompasses 134,742 acres.

### **DEPARTMENT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

- Continue to monitor all Forestry and Parks Department programs and functions to assess and improve operational efficiencies.
- Continue to improve expenditure and revenue accounting efficacy to better analyze individual program effectiveness.
- Improve short and long-range maintenance and development plans.

### **TIMBER HARVEST**

Timber harvests are not only important for the economic well-being of Clark County, but also for the health and vigor of the forest. Many social, environmental, and recreation benefits are provided by a managed harvest program. Professional implementation of proper forest management and harvest techniques is essential. The timber harvest goal is to produce a sustained yield of forest products, using harvest techniques that are suited to the regeneration and growth needs of each timber type.

The following 2024 Annual Harvest Goals include acreage from all County Forest timber stands that have a backlog of harvest activities. All of this acreage is eligible for harvest evaluation in 2024; however, present staffing levels and associated work-load, together with market limitations, will dictate the extent of timber harvest establishment accomplishments. The long-term (15 yr. average) harvest goal is 3,202 acres annually.

## Annual Harvest Goals

Timber Type	Regeneration Harvest Acres	Thinning Acres	Harvest Acres Per Timber Type
Aspen	1,251	241	1,492
Bottomland Hdwds	0	96	96
Red Maple	118	112	230
Oak	657	381	1,038
Scrub Oak	215	8	223
Jack Pine	157	0	157
Red Pine	121	475	596
White Pine	117	743	860
Other	245	0	245
	Total 2,881 Regeneration Harvest Acres	Total 2,056 Thinning Acres	Total Annual Harvest Goal = 4,937 acres

Clark County plans to evaluate a minimum of 3,202 acres of timber (excluding salvage operations due to unknown occurrences) in 2024. The goal of the Clark County Forestry and Parks Department is to annually meet the long-term harvest goal. In 2024, the planned harvest is 3,202. However, annual allowable harvest levels by timber type may be exceeded or reduced to address prior year's timber sale acreage establishment deficit or surplus and for other factors such as markets, silviculture, or other extraordinary circumstances.

### TIMBER SALE ESTABLISHMENT

- Set up and offer for sale approximately fifty (50) sales totaling approximately 3,202 acres with 4 bid openings.

### TIMBER SALE ADMINISTRATION

Maintain a continual program of inspections on all timber sale contracts for the purpose of checking completion status, contract compliance, and to deter timber theft.

- Administer Active Timber Sale Contracts 135 contracts
- Close Completed Contracts 40 contracts
- Logging Crews Active – Average of 8 30 total

## FOREST RECONNAISSANCE

- Re-inventory approximately 15,000 acres or 14% of productive timber stands in 2024. This acreage includes 3,202 acres of planned timber sale establishment.

Clark County will be shifting how it achieves its re-inventory goals from standard compartment recon to a more species/management backlog focused reconnaissance effort. This will allow the county more flexibility to address backlog concerns and increase efficiency. Forest reconnaissance data was collected on the entire county forest in 2002 and 2003 leaving a number of compartments due for updates. For this reason, it makes sense to focus reconnaissance efforts on areas of need versus a structured compartment by compartment approach in order to balance workload and management objectives.

Reconnaissance efforts for 2024 will be focus primarily on stands that were last reconned in 2008 or later in an effort to catch up on backlogged reconnaissance data. Other compartments and stands can and will be examined as opportunities present themselves. The majority of Clark County's oak cover type is nearing rotation age, are scheduled for thinning or a regeneration harvest and needs to be evaluated prior to management activities. The second priority for forest reconnaissance will be second generation aspen nearing rotation age. The department will be looking for opportunities to rotate stands ahead of schedule to help balance the age class structure of aspen on the county forest. County and DNR staff are also trained in habitat typing and do so during stand reconnaissance. All reconnaissance data and stand boundary changes are entered and maintained in WISFIRS. Also in WISFIRS, cultural/silvicultural treatments are determined and scheduled from the reconnaissance data gathered from each stand.

## REFORESTATION

- Site Preparation in 2024 for Spring 2024 Tree Planting
  1. Site Prep Spray: 0 acres
  2. Disk Trench: 0 acres
  3. Trench & Spray: 300 acres
- Site Preparation for Natural Regeneration
  1. Scarification (acorn crop & budget dependent) – 200 acres
  2. Prescribed Burns (weather dependent) – 100 acres
- Tree Planting
  1. Contract Hand Planting – 0 acres
- Natural Regeneration. The vast majority of county forest harvested acres regenerates 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.
- Survival/Regeneration Checks
  1. 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> year survival checks are performed on planted sites each year. For 2024, there are no scheduled survival checks for planted sites. If stocking is found to be inadequate following survival checks necessary regeneration management activities are scheduled.

2. Regeneration checks/surveys are scheduled for 4,927 acres that have been harvested with anticipated natural regeneration. Beginning in 2021, many sites are inspected for adequate natural regeneration using the Forest Regeneration Metric (FRM) tool developed by WI DNR. This new monitoring tool collects number of seedlings by height class as well as browse severity for each plot. If regeneration is determined to be inadequate, artificial regeneration strategies are scheduled accordingly.

## **TIMBER STAND IMPROVEMENT**

Timber Stand Improvement activities will be conducted to further optimize potential values of the County Forest.

- Mechanical Pine Release 20 acres
- Pine Release with Herbicide 20 acres
- Mechanical Oak Release 150 acres
- Inspection and Follow up on TSI 200 acres

## **FUTURE FOREST CONDITIONS**

Clark County desires to maintain a high percentage of early successional (aspen, white birch, and jack pine) and mid successional (red, white, and black oak) timber types on the county forest. Broad cover type goals are established for each of the seven ecological management units as identified in and part of the Clark County Forest Fifteen Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

- Aspen – Future aspen acreage is expected to decline due to conversion to higher value oak on productive sites and more productive jack pine on nutrient poor wetter sites. White pine and red maple will also replace some aspen where these species are abundant in the understory.
- Red and White Oak – Maintaining oak on the county forest is both costly and labor intensive. The county takes every opportunity to invest in the ongoing establishment and maintenance of high quality oak sites. With continued funding for establishment and maintenance, red and white oak acreage is expected to remain relatively stable.
- Red Pine – Future red pine acreage is expected to decline. High costs associated with site preparation, insect and disease concerns, along with the quality and density of naturally occurring regeneration in the understory are some of the factors considered when determining the suitability of establishing another stand of red pine on the same site. As a result, many red pine plantations with adequate hardwood understories may be allowed to convert to their understory component.

**Forest Structure – Past, Present, Future**  
(Reference: WisFirs Report 207, 10/20/2021)

<b>Cover Type</b>	<b>Acres Past (1977)</b>	<b>Acres Present (2021)</b>	<b>Acres Future</b>
Aspen	70,561	52,068	50,965
Red and White oak	13,922	17,698	17,959
Red Pine	10,656	6,373	6,460
White Pine	0	10,128	10,667
Other Hardwood	9,723	13,923	14,212
Other Conifer	8,938	10,295	10,247
Non- Productive	19,012	24,389	24,232
<b>Total</b>	<b>132,812</b>	<b>134,742</b>	<b>134,742</b>

**COUNTY FOREST ROADS AND ACCESS**

- Forest Road Maintenance Meeting Minimum Town Road Standards 46 miles
- Maintenance of Forest Road Infrastructure as needed
- New Timber Sale Access Construction 1 mile
- Access Improvements for Timber Sales 5 miles
- Ongoing Implementation of Access Plan as needed
- Access Management – Trail Inventory and Planning as needed
- Access Agreements Issued and Administered 24 agreements

**BOUNDARY MAINTENANCE**

- Property Line Maintenance and Establishment 10 miles

Property boundaries are maintained and established annually by the Clark County Forestry and Parks Department in cooperation with Clark County Surveyor and WI DNR forestry staff.

The Department maintains an electronic file of all property boundaries including the last time they were maintained. The Department strives to revisit established lines on 5 year intervals to ensure boundary paint remains visible. Management boundary lines that need to be established with no prior history of maintenance are given to the County Surveyor for establishment of survey corners and line markers.

**FOREST PROTECTION**

- Invasive Plant Control and Surveys 264 sites & 10,000 acres
- Oak Wilt Surveillance and Control 66 sites
- Gypsy Moth Planning and Monitoring 8 campgrounds & Co. Forest
- Emerald Ash Borer Planning and Monitoring 8 campgrounds & Co. Forest

Fire, insect damage, and extraordinary weather events are the most visible causes of widespread County Forest resource damage. The Department will respond to any such

event with the overall goal of protecting the resource assets of the County and minimizing any potential economic losses.

Less recognized but equally important is the potential impact of invasive plant species on the forest resource. The Department will continue its aggressive campaign to survey for, monitor and control destructive invasive plants from the forest and associated recreational sites.

Land encroachment and property trespass issues will continue to be addressed as needs arise. The Department will assess each such instance on a case-by-case basis and explore options for resolution with the overall goal of best protecting the public land base of the County.

In 2024, the Clark County Forestry and Parks Department will provide assistance and support to the WDNR wildland fire protection program as outlined in the most current version of the “Clark County/DNR Memorandum of Understanding for Fire Suppression Services and Occupancy Agreement for DNR Incident Command Post” at Bruce Mound.

A late summer aerial survey of the forest for insect and disease damage detection will continue. These surveys have been very effective at locating remote pockets of oak wilt and insect damage to red pine plantations. Secondly, these aerial surveys are able to locate areas of off-trail resource damage by motorized vehicles, especially ATVs.

## **LAND ACQUISITION**

The acquisition of lands for addition to the County Forest will be considered on a case by case basis. Any lands purchased will be in the best interest of the County and for the purpose of expanding forest holdings, protecting special resources, securing access or improving recreational opportunities. The Department’s segregated Land Acquisition Fund and/or Federal and State grant programs will be utilized to help fund purchases.

## **LAND SALES**

The withdrawal and sale of County Forest lands will be considered on a case by case basis. Lands within the County Forest boundary will not normally be considered for withdrawal from County Forest Law. Applications for the purchase of these lands by the private sector will be discouraged by the committee. If, in the opinion of the committee and County Board, the land will be put to a higher and better use and will benefit people of the County and State to a greater extent, the withdrawal procedure outlined in Clark County Forest Fifteen Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan will be employed.

## **FOREST CERTIFICATION**

Clark County will continue to implement forest and land management activities consistent with third party forest certification. Forest certification supports sustainable and ecological management practices and promotes multiple uses of the forest. Areas of the program identified as needing corrective actions or areas of improvement will be addressed in cooperation with the WDNR.

## FISH AND WILDLIFE

- Dam (flowage) Maintenance and Repair 6 flowages
- Continue Implementation of Committee Directive for County Forest Dam Abandonments 1-2 dams
- Wildlife Opening Maintenance 20 acres
- Game Trail/Hunter Access Maintenance 15 miles
- Timber Sale Modifications to Benefit Wildlife as needed
- Conduct Endangered Resource Surveys as needed
- Gate and Structure Replacements as needed
- Conduct Other Wildlife Surveys as needed
- Maintain Karner Blue Butterfly Partnership as needed
- Barrens/KBB Permanent Habitat Expansion 25 acres
- Ruffed Grouse Habitat Improvement Plans 2 compartments

## MISCELLANEOUS FOREST ACTIVITIES

- Firewood Permits Issued and Administered 40 permits
- Miscellaneous Forest Permits Issues 100 permits
- White Oak Genetics/Seed Orchard Establishment 5 acres
- Oak Barrens/Open Woodland Conversion 13 acres
- Diversity Maintenance/State Natural Areas 1 site
  1. Blue Swamp SNA
- Monitoring for Best Management Practices as needed
- Ordinance Enforcement as needed
- Ecological Management Unit Plan Implementation as needed
- Forest Pest Research Cooperation as needed
- Tree Planter Maintenance and Rental 5 planters & 8 rentals
- Wisconsin County Forest Association Participation as needed
- Forestry Presentations for Schools and Local Clubs as requested

## RECREATION TRAILS

Clark County recreation trail systems are extensive and of high quality, attracting many thousands of users each year. Certain trail improvement efforts are supported by grant funding that typically cover 100% of project costs. Others are partially supported by volunteers.

- Snowmobile Trails
  1. Continue to maintain 369.9 miles of state funded snowmobile trails in cooperation with the Clark County Snowmobile Council (60.6 miles on county forest).
  2. Perform as the Snowmobile Trail Coordinator for Clark County.
  3. Apply for grant funding where needed for any trail improvements, trail relocations, and bridge repair and replacement. Includes two new bridges, and a recreational lane for a DOT bridge over the Black River.
  4. Administer grant projects and associated contracts.



- **ATV Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 259.62 miles of state funded ATV trails that include winter ATV miles (88.1 miles, including routes on county forest land). Perform as the ATV Trail Coordinator for Clark County.
  2. Apply for grant funding where needed for any trail improvements, trail relocations, and bridge repair and replacement.
  3. Administer grant projects and associated contracts.
  
- **Cross-Country Ski Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 17 miles of designated cross-country ski trails at Levis/Trow Mound Recreational Area in cooperation with associated clubs.
  2. Maintain trail support facilities as needed.
  
- **Hiking Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 34 miles of designated hiking trails at Levis/Trow Mound Recreational Area.
  2. Maintain trail support facilities as needed.
  
- **Horse Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 42 miles of designated horse riding trails in cooperation with associated clubs.
  2. Maintain trail support facilities as needed.
  
- **Mountain Bike Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 24 miles of designated mountain bike trails in cooperation with associated clubs.
  2. Maintain trail support facilities as needed.
  
- **Motorcycle Trails**
  1. Continue to maintain 10 miles of designated off-road motorcycle trails in cooperation with associated clubs.
  2. Maintain trail support facilities as needed.
  3. Secure grant assistance to allow for ongoing maintenance and improvements.

## **PARKS, CAMPGROUNDS, AND RECREATION SITES**

Clark County maintains a large and diverse park and campground system, offering recreation opportunities to thousands of visitors each year.

- Maintain 10 County Parks and 8 Campgrounds including: 570 campsites and associated support facilities including toilets, shelter buildings, shower houses, ball courts, pavement areas, electric systems, wells and water systems, septic systems, roads, etc. as needed.
- 2024 Park and Campground Improvements:
  1. Russell Memorial Park – Shoreline stabilization, tree planting, and recreation improvements.

2. Rock Dam Park – Tree planting, shoreline stabilization, electrical upgrades and boat landing upgrade.
  3. Mead Lake Park – Tree planting, shoreline stabilization, blacktop maintenance and electric site improvements.
  4. Snyder Park – Tree planting and electrical upgrades.
  5. Sherwood Park – Recreational and disk golf course improvements.
  6. Wild Rock – Maintenance.
  7. Levis Mound – Maintenance.
  8. Greenwood Park – Playground replacement, drainage improvements and parking lot maintenance.
- Maintain Nine Designated Boat Landings
  - Maintain Bruce Mound Winter Sports Area for Snow Tubing and Downhill Skiing.
  - Maintain Clark County Fairgrounds Facilities and Grounds:
    1. Continue implementation of various aspects of the Fairgrounds Revitalization Project.

## **LARGE DAMS**

Clark County Forestry and Parks Department maintains 4 large dams. These dams include: Wedges Creek Dam (Snyder Lake), Rock Dam, Sherwood Lake Dam and Mead Lake Dam. The impoundments created by these dams provide abundant water based recreational opportunities for thousands of residents and visitors alike in a county without any natural lakes.

- Establish better vegetation for Sherwood Lake Dam embankment.
- Start action plan for repairs to Mead Lake Dam
- Miscellaneous Dam Administration, Monitoring and Maintenance

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Forestry and Parks 2024 budget:

Revenue	\$7,528,685.00*
Expenses	\$7,528,685.00*

Fairgrounds 2024 budget.

Revenue	\$ 50,050.00
Donations	\$ 1,000.00
Levy	\$ 148,415.00
Fund Transfer	\$ 100,000.00
Expenditures	\$ 299,465.00

\*The above Forestry and Parks budget financial considerations exclude the transfer of \$2,360,000.00 of Forestry fund balance to other funds, including \$1,500,000.00 to the general fund for levy reduction, \$680,000 used for short term borrowing, \$200,000 transferred into the capital infrastructure account and \$100,000.00 to the Fairgrounds

budget. Includes use of \$2,314,590.00 in fund balance. The Forestry and Parks budget does not require a levy.

Thousands of visitors derive benefits from the Clark County Forest and associated recreational trails, facilities and programs. These visitors come with varied interests including hikers, hunters, fishermen, berry pickers, sightseers, ATV riders, skiers, snowmobilers and many others. Many forest industry jobs are supported by the Clark County Forest including timber producers, truckers, mill workers, and product handlers. In addition, local businesses serving the needs of County Forest visitors and the forest industry also benefit the local economy.

## **Clark County Forestry and Parks – 2024 Annual Work Plan**

### **Review/Approval Signatures**

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Clark Co. Forest Administrator                      Date

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DNR Liaison Forester                                      Date

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DNR Forestry Team Leader                              Date

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DNR BRF Area Forestry Leader                      Date

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DNR District Forestry Leader                              Date