

CHIPPEWA COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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CHAPTER 100

BACKGROUND

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100 MISSION STATEMENT

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

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 and maintenance of biotic diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including 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”)

The goal of the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is 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.”

110 CHIPPEWA 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, and to promote an efficient and orderly program of development and 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 Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee, with technical assistance from the Department 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 to provide for public participation 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.

Chippewa County's public participation process includes the following:

The Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee invites stakeholders to serve as members of an advisory group to inform in the development of the plan. The group will include representatives from law enforcement, natural resource managers, private landowners, forest products industry professionals, recreational trail organizations, hunting and fishing organizations.

Public notice is published in local newspapers alerting the general public that the process of updating the plan is taking place and inviting participation.

Members of the stakeholder advisory group convene several sessions to address a range of policy and management issues related to the forest. Topics to consider include access, recreation, ecologically significant areas, soil, water, fish & wildlife management, silviculture and forest administration. Comments received from stakeholder members and the general public will be given consideration during plan development.

A public open house will be held to allow interested citizens opportunity to review the draft plan and associated content relating to the topics reviewed by the stakeholder group. Following the open house, a public hearing and 30-day comment period will be conducted to allow an opportunity for citizens to provide oral and written testimony.

110.3 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN

The Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee will review a report of the public testimony received on the draft plan. The Committee will consider revisions and may direct the County Forest Administrator to make amendments to the plan until a version satisfactory to the Committee is achieved. The final draft of the plan, approved by the Committee, will be forwarded to the DNR for approval of the plan, as required by s. 28.11(5)(a), Wis. Stats. Once the DNR has approved the plan, it will be presented to the County Board for their final approval.

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 County Forest Administrator and available electronically.

Plan and future amendments will be: Electronic versions of the plan, plan amendments, or electronic links to the documents, and 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 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 the official County Forest Blocking map requires County Board approval. The annual County Board approved work plan, budget, and annual accomplishment report are appended to the plan and do not require official DNR approval. In addition, changes to Chapters 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 do not require a plan amendment or official DNR 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 Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee will utilize procedure, as set forth in the WI 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 *Wisconsin's Forestry 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 WI 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

Chippewa 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 important to our quality of life. Chippewa County believes that accomplishing such sustainable forestry requires a commitment and partnership from all the groups and individuals that benefit from these public lands.

Chippewa County's Commitment

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Chippewa County will implement forestry practices that promote forest sustainability and multiple use of the County Forest. Management of the County 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. Chippewa County will work in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other

natural resources groups/agencies in providing sustainable forestry information to those landowners and individuals impacting forest sustainability in Wisconsin. We will support research efforts to improve the health, productivity, and management of forestlands both internally and through cooperative efforts. In managing the Chippewa County Forest, a spectrum of forestry practices will be employed to achieve our sustainable forestry objective. Both intensive and more extensive forest management techniques will be used to provide for wildlife, forest products, recreation, aesthetics, water quality and ecosystem maintenance. In keeping with this responsibility, Chippewa County is committed to conforming to the standards of the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC® C006090) FSC 100%.

120 COUNTY AUTHORITY

The Chippewa County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Chippewa County Land Conservation & Forest Management Committee of the County Board 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 Chippewa County Forest can be found in Chapter 1000. In addition, the following will be considered in the planning process:

- Zoning ordinance.
- Parks ordinance.
- Traffic and Vehicles ordinance.
- Environment ordinance.
- Shoreland Zoning ordinance.
- Floodplain ordinance.

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 with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, developed by the County 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 ten percent (10%) of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Chippewa County has raised the annual stumpage revenue payment made to towns to twelve percent (12%) of annual stumpage revenue. In 2020, thirty (30) counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

125.2 CHIPPEWA COUNTY FOREST HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Prior to European settlement in the mid 1800's, Chippewa County was heavily forested with old growth timber. Pine, hemlock, and northern hardwoods dominated much of the highlands while white cedar, spruce, black ash, elm and balsam fir covered much of the lowlands. These forests provided the raw materials for a growing lumber industry from about 1840 to the 1920's. As a result of efforts to tame wilderness for settlement, supply an ever-increasing demand for lumber to build a growing nation, and a lack of sound forest management, the forests were degraded to the point that they had lost nearly all of their commercial value. The degraded forest conditions, left in the wake of this over-harvest in the cutover northern half of the State, helped to fuel large wildfires from the 1850's through the 1920's. Though the outbreak of fires became a regular occurrence, the most severe fires that affected Chippewa County were in 1894, 1907 and 1910.

Public and private efforts encouraged immigrants to settle these newly cleared lands for agriculture. However, in just a few years, many of the soils across the northern part of the State became depleted or proved to be unsuitable for agriculture. Many early pioneers abandoned their homesteads and most immigrants settled elsewhere. Much of the previously forested land was left barren and tax delinquent. State law required counties to offer these tax delinquent lands for sale. A clear lack of parties interested in purchasing these lands and the expense associated with continual efforts to resell them caused the State legislature to offer the Forest Crop and County

Forest Reserve Law as a remedy. Counties could enroll tax delinquent property to avoid the costs of perpetual efforts to resell and receive assistance from the State for the development and management of those lands.

By 1939, Chippewa County had acquired thousands of acres of tax delinquent lands and put it into a County Forest reserve. In November of 1940, a County Forest ordinance was adopted for the establishment, management, protection and extension of County Forests. The first State aid payment to the County for lands entered under County Forest Law was received in 1943. County funding of the forestry account was first received in 1958, when stumpage revenue from the previous year was appropriated. From 1940 thru 1972, the County Extension Agent acted as a part-time administrator of the County Forest. In 1972, a full time County Forest Administrator was hired to implement the policies of the Forest and Parks Committee of the County Board. The full-time administrator was hired due to an increasing amount of recreational development in the area, to provide wood fiber to Wisconsin's forest industry and to generate revenue from timber harvests for the County.

125.3 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Chippewa 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 fifteen (15) 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:

"The 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 Chippewa 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 County 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 fifteen percent (15%) of the State's public land base and twenty-four percent (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.
- Chippewa 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.
- 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. Refer to Chapter 800 for specifics on this subject.
- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Emerald Ash Borer, Gypsy moth, garlic mustard, buckthorn, and honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in

Wisconsin's forests.

- The County 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.

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.”