

2016 Work Plan for the Coulee Experimental State Forest

As a condition of forest certification state forests are required to annually provide an opportunity for the public to provide input on property activities. The Coulee Experimental State Forest (CESF) uses an online format including a synopsis of the property's major work plan goals. Annual work goals are directly tied to the property's master plan, which can be found online at <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/FR/FR0445.pdf>.

Forestry and Timber Management

The Coulee Experimental State Forest meets the highest standards for environmental quality in forestry, being certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council.

State forest timber sales are a combination of thinnings and regeneration harvests. A thinning is an intermediate harvest where poorer quality trees are removed to favor higher quality future crop trees. Thinnings on the CESF are primarily in conifer plantations, which may be thinned several times during the stand's lifetime. A regeneration harvest removes the majority of overstory trees in stages or at one time. These harvests occur mostly in hardwood stands that regenerate naturally as a result of the harvest rather than by planting. These sites are thoroughly assessed by foresters in order to prescribe harvest strategies with successful regeneration results.

In 2015, two timber harvests were marked for harvest. One of the sales consisted of 54 acres of conifer plantation thinning. The other sale included 30 acres of hardwood thinning and 60 acres of regeneration harvesting. One previously sold timber sale (26 acres red pine thinning and 21 acres of aspen/hardwood clear-cutting) was completed and closed out in 2015.

In 2016 the following *forest management* activities are planned:

- Timber harvest goals are to mark 137 acres for harvest and to prepare 137 acres to be contracted for marking.
- Update forest stand data on acreage examined but not marked for harvest.
- Administer & close-out any active timber sale and sold sales that began harvest operations in 2015 or 2016.

Recreation Management

The state forest supports a variety of day-use recreational opportunities including hiking, hunting, cross-country skiing, horseback riding and nature or wildlife study. The designated cross-country ski trail is available during non-snow conditions for other uses, primarily hiking, but during snow conditions only skiing is allowed on the trail.

In 2015, trail mowing was completed in late September. Annual trail inspections were completed, along with trail maintenance / brushing/ downed tree removal conducted by the Cross Country Ski Club and DNR Forestry / Wildlife Staff. New trail maps were put up at trailhead signs.

The following *recreation management* activities are planned in 2016:

- Mow the ski trail as well as undesignated primitive roads and trails after designated bird nesting season (August 1st).
- Complete trail inspections to clear obstacles, remove hazard trees, maintain clearance and monitor invasive plant populations.
- Continue the Volunteer Agreement for grooming of cross country ski trail.
- Maintain and update trail and property signs.

Wildlife & Endangered Resources Management

Wildlife management on the state forest is integrated with most other activities in order to develop forest structure and suitable habitat to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife populations.

In 2015, the Endangered Resources Crew burned 32 acres at Berg Prairie. On acreage administered under a sharecropping agreement; 25% of the corn crop was left standing overwinter for wildlife food and habitat. Approximately 7 acres of young early successional forest was created through the timber sales in aspen and birch cover types.

In 2016 the following *wildlife & endangered resources management* activities are planned:

- Administer current Sharecrop Agreements, evaluate new crop rotations, and evaluate fields for afforestation.
- Utilize prescribed fire for dry prairie habitat restoration at Berg Prairie State Natural Area.
- Balance early successional forest regeneration acreage within timber harvest goals.

Invasive Species Management

Invasive species pose a serious threat to the integrity of forest ecosystems by displacing native species and negatively impacting forest regeneration. The state forest completed an invasive species plan in 2008 that outlines management strategies.

The 2016 state forest goals for *invasive species management* include:

- Practice best management practices to prevent the spread of invasive species
<http://council.wisconsinforestry.org/invasives/>
- Control Pampas Grass infestation along County II (1/2 mile south of Antony Road and County Hwy. II intersection) and adjacent to Berg Prairie SNA.
- Monitor and treat invasive species along areas of high public use, with an emphasis on trails and parking lots.

Research

The CESF was originally established to provide a Driftless Area land base for forestry and watershed research conducted by the US Forest Service. Partnerships with the Forest Service, universities, forest products industry, government agencies and others have fostered a rich tradition of applied learning on the property. In 2016 the state forest will continue to maintain *research* opportunities with:

- Diverse cover types representative of the Driftless Area to facilitate meaningful research to the region's landowners.
- Relationships with universities, agencies, local schools and others who wish to conduct forest land based research or educational field sessions.
- The US Forest Service 15-year lease to conduct research or related studies.
- Continue implementation and monitoring of oak wilt herbicide control study.

Comments:

Comments of the 2016 Coulee Experimental State Forest work plan should be directed to:

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Comments must be received by April 1, 2016