# Hoffman Hills Recreation Area
# Interim Forest Management Plan

## Property Identifiers

Property Name and Designation: **Hoffman Hills Recreation Area**

County: **Dunn**

Property Acreage: **706** (711 in Division of Forestry database)

DNR Property Code: **9216**

Forestry Property Code(s): **1708**

Master Plan Date: **1982**

Property Manager: **Calvin Kunkle**

## Property Assessment

### LANDSCAPE AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

The property is located near the northern end of the Western Coulee and Ridges ecological landscape. This ecological landscape is characterized by its highly eroded, unglaciated topography with steep sided valleys and ridges, high gradient headwaters streams, and large rivers with extensive, complex floodplains and terraces. Many rare species have been documented here due to the diversity, scale, types, condition and context of the natural communities present. Oak forests are more abundant here than any other ecological landscape, and mesic maple-basswood forests are also widespread. All of these forest types can provide critical breeding and/or migratory habitat for significant populations of native plants and animals. Maintaining large blocks of these forest types, including areas with combinations of these types, is a major opportunity. Fire-dependent oak ecosystems are well-represented here include Oak Openings, Oak Barrens, Oak Woodland and dry to mesic oak forests. These fire-dependent communities could be managed in a continuum with savanna and forest communities, wherever possible. Man-made habitats such as "surrogate grasslands" can be important for many species by increasing the effective size and reducing isolation of small remnant prairies or savannas. Large open habitats can be critical for area-sensitive grassland birds and others.

About three quarters of Hoffman Hills lies within the Hay River Sandstone Hills Landtype Association (LTA; 222La02). The characteristic landform pattern for this LTA is hilly, and the sandstone bedrock is often within five feet of the surface. Soils are well drained and excessively drained loamy, sandy and silty soils with a fine sandy loam, loamy sand, or silt loam surface. The western quarter of the property is in the Red Cedar/Chippewa Valley Trains LTA (222La01). This LTA has a characteristic landform that is nearly level outwash plain. Soils are excessively drained, well drained, and somewhat poorly drained sandy and loamy soils with a loamy sand, sandy loam, or silt loam surface.

The landscape within about five miles of Hoffman Hills is a mixture of dissected topography and level outwash plain. Land use is a mosaic of row crops on more level, arable areas, forested hills, a variety of wetlands, streams, and homes. Agriculture is the dominant land use to the north, west, and south on flatter topography. Larger parcels of forest occur on the hills east of the property. There are extensive wetlands to the south including most of Muddy Creek Wildlife Area. The Red Cedar River is just a few miles to the west.

### General Property Description

The property was once an operating farm in the early 1900's. Due to weather conditions and how the land was operated, severe erosion led to loss of much of the topsoil in the 1930's to 1940's. Once agriculture had ended, the property began to revert back to oak forest in the hills. After purchase of the defunct farm by Richard Hoffman, red and white pine trees were planted in some of the fallow fields.

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Hoffman Hills Recreation Area was established in 1980 beginning with a land donation of 281 acres by Richard Hoffman. The last year of land acquisition was 1986, and the property has since been developed for a multitude of recreational uses including cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, youth camping, nature study, and deer hunting. Development on the property includes about 9 miles of multi-use trails, a 60 foot observation tower, group camp, picnic shelter, and pit toilets. Visitation is influenced by the nearby population centers of Menomonie and Eau Claire as well as the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan areas. Use has continually increased to about 40,000 visitors a year.

Most of Hoffman Hills is comprised of rugged hills with some lowland habitat. The property maintains a good population of deer, ruffed grouse, and wild turkey because of the surrounding agricultural land and large area of forest. The comparatively large forest in relation to the surrounding area also attracts many neotropical birds either migrating through or using the area as breeding habitat. The restored prairies adjacent to lowland brush and marsh also provides habitat for a variety of wildlife such as mallards, Canada geese, wood ducks, green herons, and other grassland birds. This mix of forest, grassland, and wetlands make it an excellent birding location and is part of the Great Wisconsin Birding & Nature Trail.

Past management includes thinning the pine plantations, some small aspen regeneration harvests, and plantings for prairie and savanna restoration. Prescribed burns have been used to help manage the open habitats. There are two small, man-made ponds in the wetland area.

The soils in the hills are mainly Urne types that are characterized as fine sandy loams; slopes range from 2 to 45%. The slopes within this type often have a moderate amount of erosion. The other upland soils are a mix of sandy loams and some sand and loam. The steeper slopes in these types are often moderately eroded too. There areas of mucks as well.

## Current Cover Types

- **Oak** (33%) 235 acres; date of origin 1932; large sawlogs; dominated by red oak and red maple.
- **Aspen** (31%) 219 acres in 3 stands; dates of origin 1990, 1980, 1950; seedlings/saplings, hardwood poles, small sawlogs, respectively; dominated by aspen, red maple, paper birch, and black cherry.
- **Central hardwoods** (5%) 33 acres; date of origin 1990; seedling/sapling; dominated by red maple, volunteer box elder abundant.
- **Pine plantation** (6%) 45 acres in 3 stands (2 white pine, 1 red pine); dates of origin 1965, 1967, 1985; white pine softwood poles, red pine softwood small sawlogs
- **Bottomland hardwoods** (<1%) 4 acres; date of origin 1970; hardwood poles; dominated by American elm
- **Other types** (25%) 175 acres; includes upland grass, lowland brush, and developed use areas.

## NHI

No Endangered or Threatened species are known from the property. Several SGCN birds have recently been documented.

## WISCONSIN WILDLIFE ACTION PLAN CONSERVATION OPPORTUNITY AREA

There are no Conservation Opportunity Areas identified within Hoffman Hills Recreation Area.

## CULTURAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES: (including tribal sites)

According to the Wisconsin Historical Society records there are archaeological and historical sites associated with Hoffman Hills Recreation Area. At the time of planning any management activity it will be required to screen the database and contact the DNR Archeologist prior to implementing any activity.

## INVASIVE SPECIES

An invasive species inventory has not been conducted but some are known to exist on the property. Species known to occur within the property are garlic mustard, common buckthorn, and Japanese knotweed. Currently garlic mustard and buckthorn are minor components of the vegetation. Garlic mustard is along the trails and is still manageable. Buckthorn has been found widely scattered throughout the property. Control efforts are opportunistic. A small infestation of knotweed exists near the entrance of the recreation area and is manageable. Due to increased visitor use future invasive infestations are likely.

## EXISTING STATE NATURAL AREAS

None

## HIGH VALUE CONSERVATION FOREST (HCVF) or other resources/ natural community types limited in the landscape

There are no identified HCVF within the property. There is potential in the hilly areas due to the age of the oaks and the presence of several SGCNs.

There are restored prairies and oak savannas within the recreation area that are within themselves rare but are in the early stages of development.

## PRIMARY PUBLIC USES (RECREATION)

*Cross-Country Skiing*
Cross-country skiing is the primary public use during the winter. Demand for these trails is strong.

*Snow-Shoeing*
Snowshoeing and other winter hiking is available off of the groomed ski trails.

*Hiking/Nature Study*
Hiking is open on all trails except of ski trails during the skiing season. The most popular attraction for hikers is the observation tower, approximately 0.7 mile walk from the nearest parking lot. There are also other vistas where users can enjoy seeing the surrounding landscape.

*Picnicking*
Picnic areas are located by each of two parking lots, and a picnic shelter is located near the center of the property that is only available to walk-in use (approx 0.5 mile trail).

*Group Youth Camping*
Group youth camping is available near the walk-in picnic shelter.

*Hunting*
The property is open to the public for the 9-day deer gun hunt.

## BIOTIC INVENTORY STATUS:

Other than a breeding bird survey in the forest in 2013, no comprehensive biotic inventories are known for this property.

## DEFERRAL/CONSULTATION AREA DESIGNATIONS

None

# IFMP Components

## MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES

1. To provide recreational facilities for the activities listed above.
2. To manage and enhance the property's scenic and landscape quality by restoring and maintaining a diversity of cover types for the life of the property
3. Vegetation management:
    - To manage the property's vegetative resources limiting tree cutting to safety, salvage, aesthetics, and forest stand perpetuation.
    - Forestry practices will include managing pine plantations and possible cutting of aspen and birch stands.
    - Remnant prairies, lowland marshes, and similar areas will be maintained for the diversity they provide.

## PROPERTY PRESCRIPTIONS

1. Pine plantations: thin as needed per department silvicultural handbook.
2. Widen and/or reroute trail corridors, including hazard tree removal, as indicated on attached map for safety. A commercial harvest may be used.
3. Conduct aspen regeneration harvest in the area indicated on the map.
4. Passive management techniques will be used around the parking and picnic areas as well as on the ridge around the observation tower.
5. Non-commercial forest management such as brush removal and prescribed fires may be used to maintain the existing lowlands, grasslands, savannas, and other oak dominated stands.

## SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AND COMMENTS RECEIVED

No comments received.

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Approvals:

Armand O Bartz — 12/19/2013

Regional Ecologist — Date

Robert R. Strauss — 12/18/13

Forester — Date

Carla Kunkle — 12-16-13

Property Manager — Date

Ben Bagley — 12/19/13

Area/Team Supervisor — Date

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## Hoffman Hills Recreation Area Maps

The following link is for the DNR website and Hoffman Hills Recreation Area Map:
http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/parks/name/hoffmanhills/pdfs/hoffmanhills.pdf

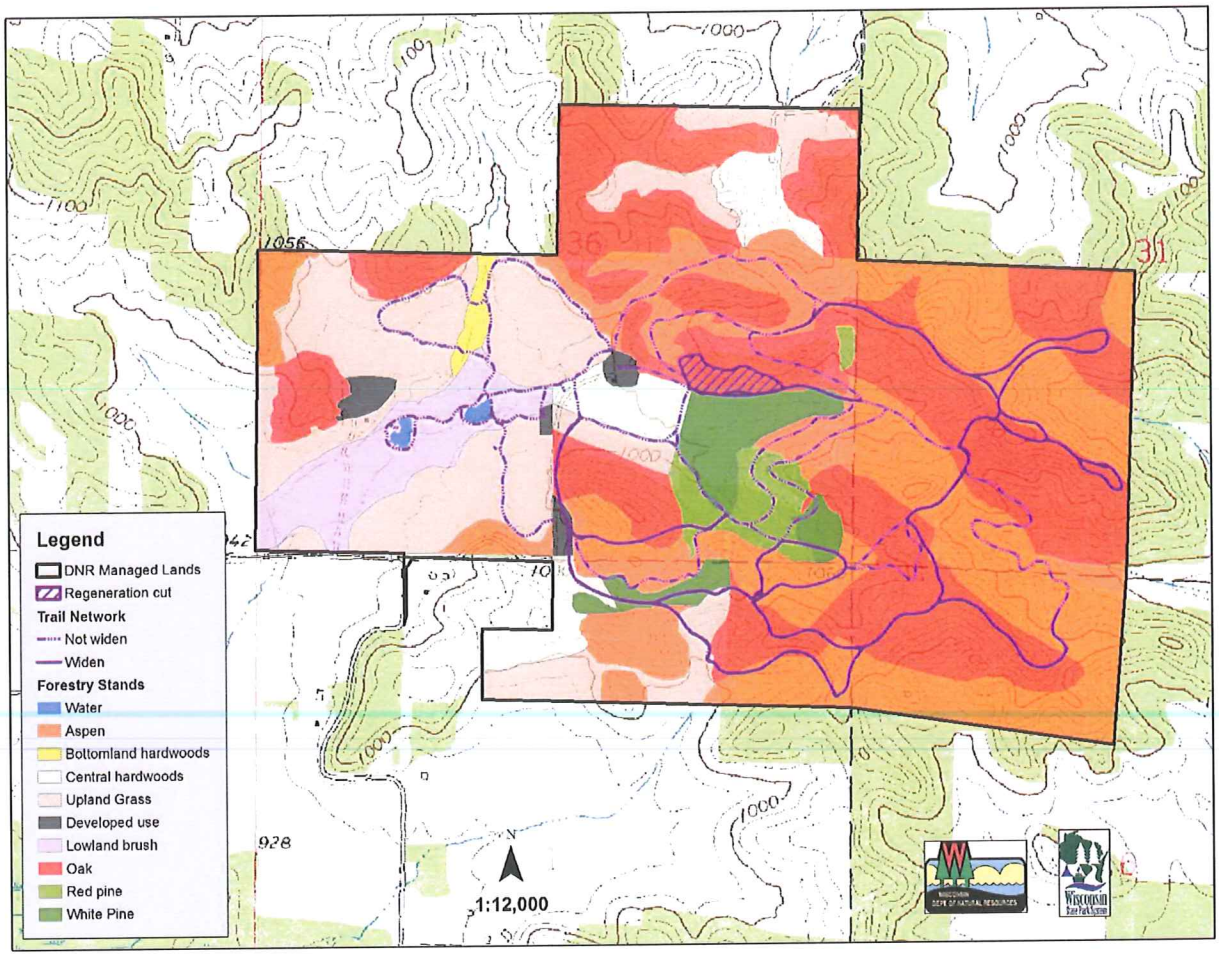


Figure 1. Forest management with vegetation cover types on 1:24,000 topographic map.

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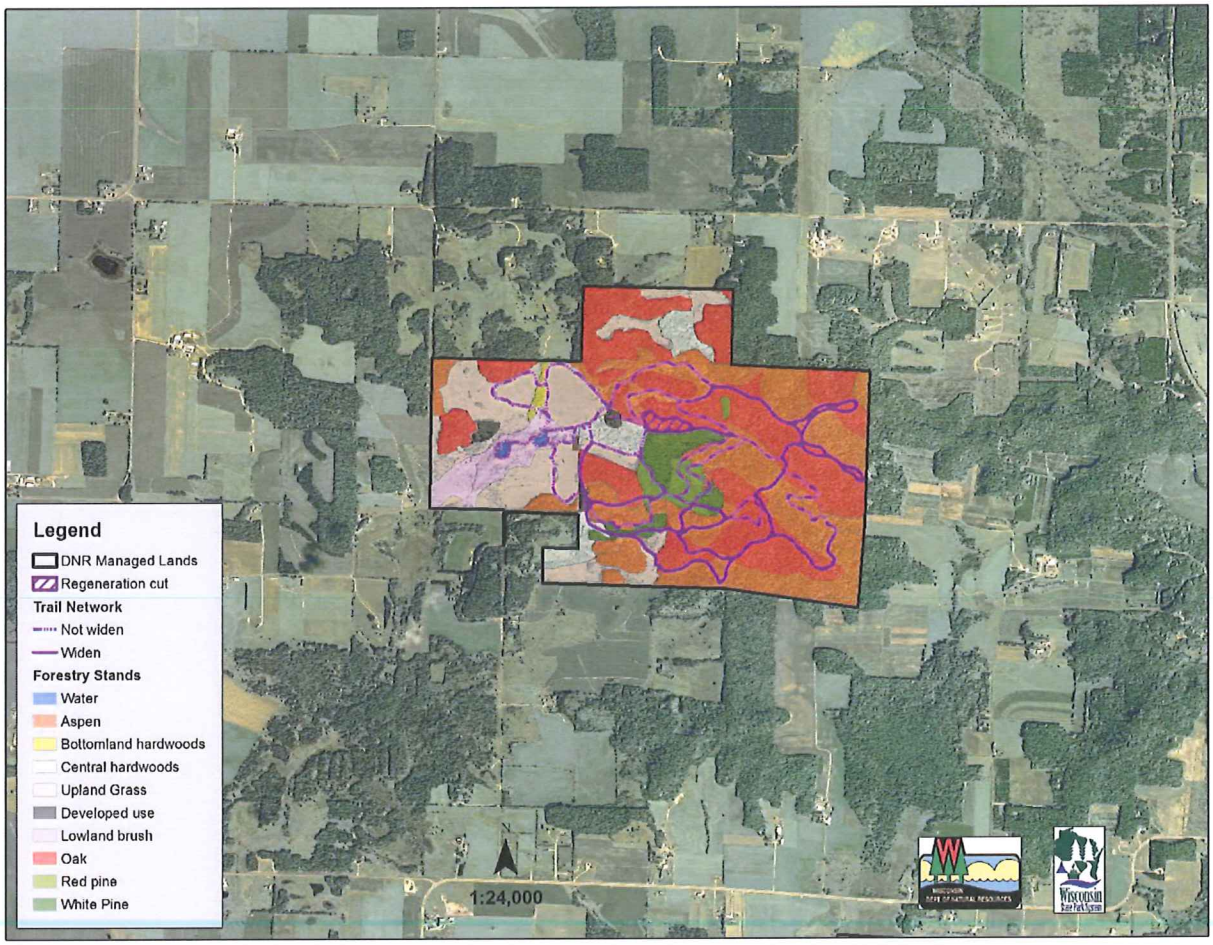


Figure 2. Forest management with vegetation cover types on aerial photograph showing surrounding landscape.