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# Brule River State Forest 15-Year Master Plan Review Public Involvement Plan March 2016

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The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) recognizes sound planning is a partnership effort with the people it serves and that the end product must be broadly supported by them as well as fit the capabilities of the property. The WDNR encourages citizen involvement throughout the planning process. This document outlines the strategy for soliciting public review and feedback into the 15-year review of the Brule River State Forest Master Plan.

Any resulting master plan recommendations, revisions or additions will be guided and influenced by: existing statutes, administrative codes, scientific data, and ecological capacity of the forest resources, surveys, judgment of forest management experts, and public and government input. Local and regional recreational supply and demand, economic, and social needs also will be considered. Management alternatives for the property are influenced by these factors and the approved master plan represents a balance of key benefits.

The planning process is guided by the following:

- A. Any changes, revisions or additions to the Brule River State Forest Master Plan will be developed within the parameters of Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter NR 44, which governs master planning for WDNR properties;
- B. The Brule River State Forest is designated as a state forest under Wisconsin Statute 28.04, and will be administratively managed by WDNR's Division of Forestry; and
- C. The Brule River State Forest will be managed and developed in accordance with Wisconsin Administrative Code Chapter NR 1 – Natural Resources Board (NRB) Policies.

## **Purpose of the 15-year Master Plan Review**

Chapter NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code requires the department to review each master plan (approved after 1996) every 15 years to determine if any changes should be made. The plan review is the process of assessing the adequacy of the current master plan in meeting the management and use of the property and reporting to the NRB.

This report includes recommendations regarding:

1. Whether or not any plan changes should be made, and if they are, what specific elements of the plan are proposed to be changed; and
2. If changes or additions are recommended, request NRB approval for a plan amendment or plan revision.

## **Planning Process**

The master plan review is divided into three primary phases:

### Phase 1 - Conduct a Master Plan Review and Assessment

Department staff will do an internal review of how well the current master plan is working, including an evaluation of the property's resource conditions and public use patterns. The review will assess the status/condition of the property and identify any significant existing property management issues that need to be addressed in the plan.

The department will share the initial results of the internal review with the public, including key assessment data.. The department will get public input on significant issues and opportunities that should be considered in the plan review process.

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## Phase 2 - Draft Plan Review Recommendations

The department will prepare a draft master plan for public review incorporating public comments on the plan. If additional options or new issues and opportunities are identified the department will seek additional public input before finalizing the draft plan.

## Phase 3 - Seek NRB Approval

Share the results of the plan review and recommendations with the Natural Resources Board.

### **Opportunities for Public Participation**

The Department's goals for public involvement in property planning are to offer the public, including business entities, citizen groups and individuals who have a demonstrated interest, nearby landowners, and users of the property meaningful ways to be involved in shaping the future management and use, and to provide a means for interested people to stay informed about a property and management issues.

Public review and comment is formally sought at three key points during the planning process. The formal public input points are:

1. At the beginning of the process to help identify important planning issues;
2. Midway in the process to review and comment on draft alternatives, recommendations and assessments; and
3. Finally, the NRB offers the public an opportunity to provide input to them when they consider approval of the final proposal.

### **Ways to Make Your Voice Heard**

You may review planning materials and leave your comments on the Brule River State Forest planning website. You may also email directly, use postal mail, or comment by phone using the contact information at the end of this document.

WDNR staff will hold informal public informational meetings at key points during the plan review process. The purpose of these meetings is to present and discuss information on the property and plan proposals, and to listen to your comments and suggestions for improving the plan. Meetings will be held in the vicinity of the property and in other locations as appropriate.

### **How the Department Provides Planning Information to You**

#### E-Gov Delivery

A majority of interested stakeholders will receive updates via a specific Brule River subscriber-based email distribution system available on the WDNR home web page.

#### Issue Press Releases

Press releases will be issued to announce the public meetings and to solicit comments.

#### Direct Mailings (postal and email)

Mailings at key points in the planning process will provide information about the proposal and planning issues, to announce meetings and the availability of drafts for review, or to inform about other planning developments. A mailing list of interested and potentially affected parties will be developed and maintained. You may sign up for the contact list using the address or phone number given at the end of this document. You may also subscribe to email notices about state forest events and master planning on the WDNR's internet home web page. <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/WIDNR/subscriber/new>

#### Web Page

The department will set up a special web page where planning information may be viewed, including: information about the Brule River State Forest, the planning process, draft documents, public notices, and other important planning information.

#### Public Meetings

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Opportunity to converse with resource management experts is provided during informational public meetings scheduled at key points in the planning process. Map displays and paper copies of planning documents are provided as appropriate.

#### Other Government Involvement

As needed, throughout the planning process the department will consult with federal, state, county, town and local units of government, local agencies and Indian tribes. Because the Brule River State Forest lies within ceded territory recognized by *Lac Courte Oreilles v. Voigt*, 700 F.2d, 341 (7th Cir. 1983), the department shall consult on a government to government basis with Indian tribes retaining off-reservation hunting, fishing and gathering rights in that territory. The department has established the procedures for the tribal consultation process based upon a dialogue with and agreement of the tribes.

#### **How Decisions Will be Made**

To make sound master plan recommendations the department must, on one hand, consider technical data and meet statutory and code requirements and department policies; and, on the other hand, must listen to the many and varied voices of the public. Decisions on which ideas to include in the master plan and on how to best incorporate them will be made based on the property's purpose (i.e. state forest), its physical/biological capabilities, the best role of the property in its local, regional and state-wide context, and on the professional expertise of WDNR staff. Every reasonable effort will be made to communicate the reasons for key plan decisions.

While a broad range of public interests and staff recommendations will be listened to and considered in developing a proposed master plan, the final decision-making responsibility and authority on the plan rests with the WDNR's citizen policy-making Natural Resources Board.

#### **Questions about the Brule River State Forest 15-year Master Plan Review:**

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#### **Send comments, join the mailing list, or request print documents:**

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