

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Monitoring the Implementation of Property Master Plans in 2015**

Property: COULEE EXPERIMENTAL STATE FOREST

Master Plan Year: 2009

Land Management Area #1

Forest Production Area: Forest Coulee and Ridges...2,299 Acres

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a diversity of forest cover types and age classes for: overall forest health, sustainable forest production, aesthetic appeal, wildlife habitat, and sites for research and demonstration opportunities. • Maintain at least half of existing oak cover type (550 acres); improve oak age class distribution. • Maintain early successional aspen/birch stands to provide wildlife habitat. • Manage healthy conifer plantations to develop some old forest characteristics. • Convert red pine and unhealthy larch stands to better adapted conifer and hardwood types. • Improve sawtimber quality of central hardwood and northern hardwood stands. • Maintain or slightly reduce non-forest cover types for future research plantings. • Maintain permanent forest cover to provide interior songbird habitat. • Provide opportunity for research to develop experiments and demonstrations that will benefit land management in the Driftless Area.
<p>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the oak, aspen & white birch, conifer, central & northern hardwood and non-forested stand types using the General Management Prescriptions listed for each cover type in the <i>Master Plan</i>, pages 22-23. Specific prescriptions range from regeneration methods to managing established stands. Additional management information & prescriptions are available in the DNR <i>Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook</i> and WDNR <i>Forest Management Guidelines</i>.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Harvest operations, administration, and closeout on Tract 1-2011, (Conifer Plantation Thinning w/ Aspen / Hardwood Coppice Harvest) for approximately 47 acres of timber sales completed in 2015.</i> • <i>Harvest operations & administration continued in 2015 for Tract 2-2013 (82 acres); also a mix of conifer plantation 1st thinning and aspen / hardwood coppice harvest in adjacent stands.</i> • <i>Harvest operations were started and completed on tract 3-2013. It included 21 acres of conifer thinning, and 7 acres of aspen coppice.</i>

Native Community Management Areas #2

Northeast Forest and Cliffs... 285 Acres

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a large area of reserved old-growth forest primarily affected by natural processes with limited active management. • Provide closed canopy or near closed canopy conditions to benefit interior forest songbirds. • Maintain aesthetic qualities of old forest habitat and enhance water quality through protection of forested seeps and springs. • Promote existing oak regeneration within young stands to maintain a component of oak. • Eradicate populations of garlic mustard; monitor other invasive species threatening native plants & animals. • Maintain as a research and ecological reference site for minimally manipulated Southern Dry Mesic Forest.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow old-growth and old forest to develop naturally; retain snags and coarse woody debris. • Control invasive species with non-commercial Department approved methods. • Use intermediate release or crown thinning to develop existing oak within young stands. • Monitor changes in composition and structure for information to aid in future management decisions (recon update).
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Accomplishments 2015</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No active management activities were completed within the management area.</i>

Native Community Management Areas #3

Southwest Russian Coulee Woods... 296 Acres

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and maintain a managed old forest with old growth characteristics through natural processes and active management that mimics natural disturbance. • Improve oak age class distribution for long-term sustainability of oak in oak-dominated or mixed cover types. • Maintain at least 50% in mature forest with closed or near closed canopy conditions to benefit interior forest songbirds. • Maintain the aesthetic qualities of old forest habitat. • Promote research and demonstration projects that seek to balance development of old forest characteristics with active management practices that maintain mid-successional species like oak. • Eradicate populations of garlic mustard and monitor/manage other invasive species.
<p style="text-align: center;">Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management prescriptions will consist of natural processes or active management that mimics natural processes in order to sustain and enhance old forest characteristics and maintain a portion of the oak cover type. • Follow guidelines for Managed Old Forest in the DNR <i>Old Growth and Old Forest Handbook</i> and specific Resource Management Prescriptions on page 32 of <i>Master Plan</i>. Utilize the DNR <i>Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook</i> and WDNR <i>Forest Management Guidelines</i> to sustain oak within the management area. • Salvage damaged trees if consistent with objectives of the area; retain coarse woody debris and legacy trees to improve old forest structural attributes. • Utilize <i>Wisconsin's Forestry BMPs for Water Quality</i> to protect springs in road design and maintenance. • Promote research and demonstrations that integrate old forest objectives and active forest management.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Harvested approximately 9 acres of Northern Hardwoods (part of Tract #3-2013). Goal of harvest is selection thinning of northern hardwood stand to reduce ash stocking in advance of expected mortality from Emerald Ash Borer (confirmed in La Crosse County in 2011).</i>

Native Community Management Areas #4

Berg Prairie and Billy Goat Ridge... 92 Acres

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand high quality Dry Prairie remnants and Oak Openings to increase the diversity and abundance of native prairie vegetation and associated animal species with emphasis on rare species. • Eradicate populations of autumn olive; monitor and manage other invasive species. • Conduct scientific research compatible with the ecological and aesthetic attributes of these sites.
<p>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and expand Dry Prairie and Oak Opening natural communities with mechanical and chemical treatments and prescribed fire according to DNR <i>Prescribed Burn Handbook</i> where feasible and safe. • Use existing DNR screening guidance to minimize impacts on sensitive species. • Contain and eradicate invasive species by DNR approved chemical, biological & mechanical practices.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>NHI data screened for management activities & methods to benefit endangered, threatened and special concern species by Endangered Resources Crew Leader.</i> • <i>A firebreak was established with handtools on two sides of a 49 acre burn unit at the Berg Prairie State Natural Area by the Natural Heritage Conservation Crew with a planned prescribed burn to take place spring 2016.</i> • <i>One acre of autumn olive was treated using the cut stump and herbicide method.</i>

Public Communications Plan

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities and a mechanism for the public and other government agencies to have on-going involvement in the master plan implementation.
<p>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain a list of persons, groups and governments (stakeholders) interested in receiving information about on-going management of the CESF. • Issue an annual report to stakeholders and the public of primary management and development activities completed or significant issues addressed in the past year and outline proposed management and development activities and any management action changes or approaches for the following year. • Annually invite stakeholders and the public to comment on the annual accomplishment report and the proposed work plan for the following year and incorporate public comments into work planning where feasible and appropriate.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Submitted the annual accomplishment report and posted the report and plan on the public State Forest website with information on how the public could provide comments. No comments were received.</i>

Recreation Management

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide public opportunities for quiet day-use activities including hiking, sight-seeing and wildlife viewing. • Maintain and improve the designated cross-country ski trail for user safety. • Manage user conflicts along the designated ski trail during the winter ski season and the summer season as needed. • Provide upland game hunting opportunities. • Provide horseback riding opportunities while protecting sensitive habitats and soils. • Control movement of invasive species throughout the property caused by recreational uses. • Provide forestry, wildlife and natural resource education opportunities.
<p style="text-align: center;">Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain & improve property and trail signage to accommodate safe public access. • Inspect & maintain the designated XC Ski trail according to DNR <i>Trail Handbook</i> standards; monitor and control invasive plant populations found along the trail during the growing season. • Provide habitat for upland game species through forestry practices. • Monitor and close horseback riding areas when necessary to avoid degradation of soil and native vegetation. • Encourage partnerships with educational and conservation organizations to demonstrate sound forestry and watershed management principles to landowners and resource managers through public field events.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Completed required trail inspections, maintained clearances to DNR Trail Standards, mowed trail in early October for user satisfaction and safety, along with brushing /downed tree removal / maintenance by volunteer XC ski club.</i> • <i>Continued Volunteer Agreement to groom XC Ski trail and improved trail signage for user satisfaction and safety.</i> • <i>Posted NR 45.04 & 45.06 (prohibits snowshoeing, walking in ski tracks) along the ski trail during snow conditions to avoid user conflicts.</i> • <i>Administered one Mobility Device Access Permit for a trail user during 2015.</i> • <i>Early successional upland game habitat (young aspen and birch) was established / created by timber sales encompassing over 7 acres.</i>

Road Management

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a sustainable network of roads that meet recreational and management needs while minimizing environmental impacts. • Manage and protect scenic values along road corridors in balance with management area objectives. • Manage the spread of invasive plants along road corridors to maintain native vegetation diversity.
<p>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage roads using <i>Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality</i> and with general prescriptions listed on page 47 of the <i>Master Plan</i>. • Improve the base, grade and surface of the main forest road leading to ski trailhead and ridge parking lot.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Monitored soil disturbance and restored logging trails to non-erosive conditions following timber harvesting on Tract No. 2-2013.</i>

Real Estate Management

<p>MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest boundary expansion within the master plan project boundary (<i>Map 2.9, Master Plan</i>) is encouraged. • The Dept. may enter into land use and sharecropping agreements to meet management area objectives and provide public benefits.
<p>Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department land acquisition program will be used to purchase land or easements from willing sellers to expand the forest boundary. • Active land use and sharecropping agreements will be evaluated periodically and continue until deemed unnecessary to meet management area objectives, are no longer in the best interests of the Department or no longer provide public benefits.
<p>Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Sharecropping agreements were evaluated and deemed necessary to continue maintaining open lands for wildlife game and non-game habitat and future research or tree planting opportunities.</i> • <i>No land acquisition activities to expand the forest boundary were completed.</i>

Administration and Operations

<p style="text-align: center;">MASTER PLAN OBJECTIVES</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain in a safe and functional condition property facilities such as boundary fencing to protect from adjacent livestock grazing, gates and parking lot barriers that limit unauthorized vehicle access, the storage building that houses supplies, machinery and tools and is available for research project supplies/fabrication and signs & kiosks that identify the property and designated trail areas. • Consider the needs of endangered, threatened and species of special concern and the impacts to listed species and their habitat. • Use appropriate techniques to provide effective fire suppression while minimizing resource damage. • Evaluate and manage significant forest pests with consideration given to property management goals and potential threat to other landowners. • Use pesticides and herbicides according to Department procedures and apply according to label requirements.
<p style="text-align: center;">Appropriate Management Activities or Prescriptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract with private businesses to complete management activities like fencing that staff cannot complete. • Utilize the Natural Heritage Inventory data to evaluate management activities for impacts to endangered, threatened and species of special concern. • Maintain Fire Suppression Agreements with local fire departments to suppress fires on CESF. • Utilize Wisconsin DACTP, other government agency resource management advice and the CESF Gypsy Moth and CESF Invasive Plant Management Plans to administer forest pest management activities. • Follow DNR Chemical Use Approval and Report procedures and apply herbicides according to label requirements.
<p style="text-align: center;">Accomplishments 2015</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Submitted DNR Chemical Use Approvals and Reports and applied approved herbicides to sharecrop fields according to label requirements.</i>

Property Forester _____ Date _____ Area Forestry Leader _____ Date _____

Regional Forester _____ Date _____ Bureau of Forest Management _____ Date _____