

**Oneida County Forestry, Land, and
Recreation Department**

2015 Annual Activity Report

To

Oneida County Board of Supervisors

By

Forestry, Land, and Recreation Committee

Committee

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Oneida County Board of Supervisors: We submit, for your approval and adoption, a report of activities of the Oneida County Forestry, Land, & Recreation Department (FLRD), for the year 2015.

2015 Department Highlights:

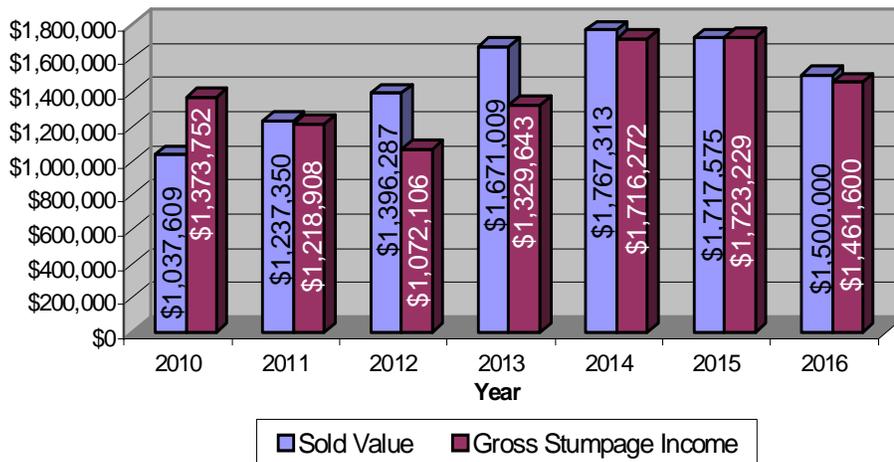
- In 2015, Forestry Department revenue exceeded departmental expenses by \$903,598.00.
- The Oneida County Forestry, Land, and Recreation Department (FLRD) sold an all-time high of \$1.723 million dollars of timber stumpage in 2015. This marked the seventh consecutive year that over 1 million dollars in stumpage revenue was realized by Oneida County.
- In 2015, the FLRD met its allowable cut goal of 2,000 acres, by establishing and offering for sale 2,043 acres of timber sale contracts.
- In 2015 the Forestry Department added 16.4 miles of recreation trails: 3.5 miles of state funded snowmobile trail; 1.9 miles of state funded ATV/UTV trail; 1.0 mile of cross country ski trail; 2.0 miles of mountain bike trail; and 8.0 miles of fat tire bike trail.

FORESTRY

County Forest Account

Forest Management & Timber Sale Revenue: In 2015 the harvesting of timber on Oneida County Forest resulted in gross stumpage revenue to the County of \$1,723,229. The stumpage revenue achieved by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2015 resulted from the harvest of 30,000 cords of pulpwood and 666,000 board feet of saw logs. Approximately 2,000 acres were harvested. An additional \$52,000 in revenue from miscellaneous programs such as firewood permits, balsam bough permits, cell tower payments and various other grants was deposited in the Forestry account in 2015.

Gross Stumpage Revenue Summary



The following table summarizes the past three years of timber sale activity along with a projection for activity in 2016.

Year	Acres Sold	Sold Value	Acres Cut	Cords Cut	Board Feet Cut	Gross Stumpage Income
2013	2,036	\$1,671,009	1,900	29,000	439,000	\$1,329,643
2014	2,116	\$1,767,313	2,000	27,000	600,000	\$1,716,272
2015	2,043	\$1,767,313	2,000	30,000	666,000	\$1,723,229
*2016	2,000	\$1,500,000	2,000	28,000	650,000	\$1,461,600

*The 2016 value is an estimate based on projected harvest activity and timber sale acreage to be sold.

2015 marked the 7th consecutive year that Oneida County Forest stumpage revenue has surpassed the \$1,000,000 mark.



Forest Certification

In 2004 the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) began to explore the possibility of entering into a third party certification system. The purpose of this certification was to ensure the forests are being managed in a sound, sustainable manner. In 2005 the WCFA entered third party certification through two certification programs: The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Oneida County elected to become certified under the SFI program. The Oneida County Forest has since had two full, on-site audits done by the SFI auditors. The results of these audits showed that that the Oneida County Forest is indeed being managed on a sound, sustainable basis.

The benefits of being certified by a third party are many. Among them is the fact that the wood products produced by the Oneida County Forest can be sold as “certified wood products”, which command a higher price in the open market. Other benefits include reassuring the general public that Oneida County is taking into account other forest values such as wildlife habitat, watershed protection, cultural resource protection and recreational pursuits during the management of the forest.

Severance Payments

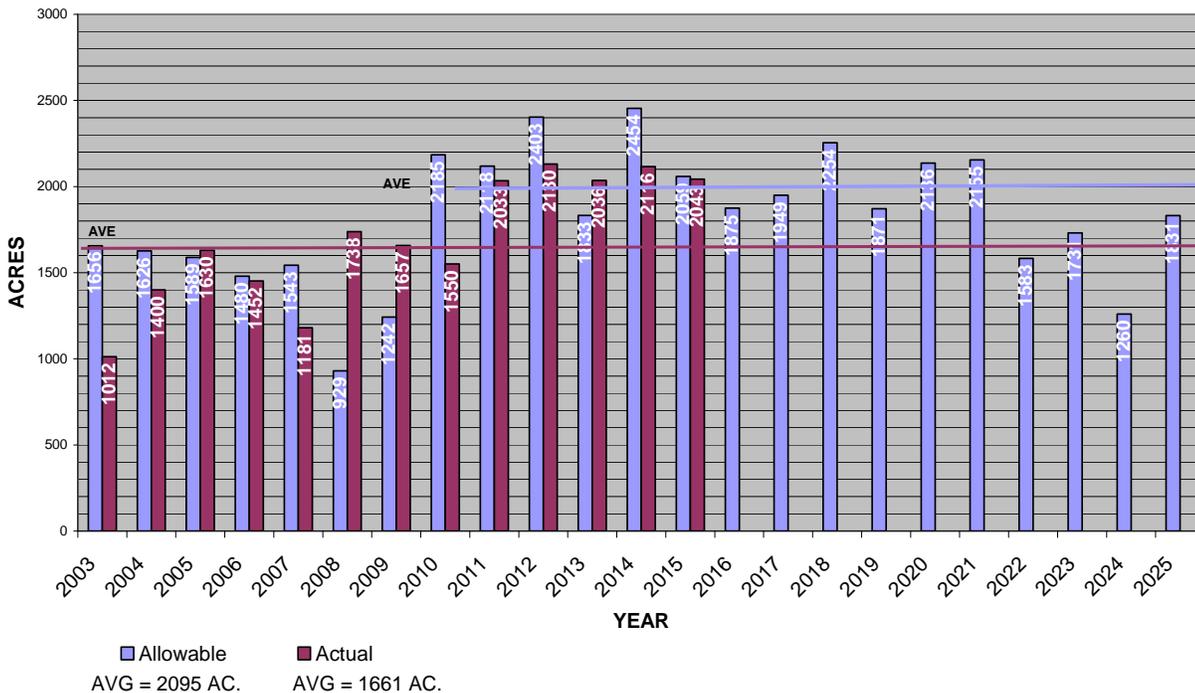
Each year the County returns 10% of the gross stumpage revenue to the towns in which the County Forest lies. The state requires these severance payments be based on the total revenue received in the calendar year (January 1 – December 31).

2015 TOTAL STUMPAGE REVENUE	\$1,723,229.00
LESS 10% TOWN SEVERANCE PAYMENTS	\$172,323.00
STUMPAGE REVENUE RETAINED BY OC	\$1,550,906.00

Allowable Timber Harvest Projections

Starting in 2010 the allowable harvest for the Oneida County Forest increased by approximately 33%, and is projected to remain relatively steady at approximately 2,000 acres/year for the foreseeable future. In order to facilitate a 33% increase in number of acres established per year for timber harvest, the Forestry, Personnel and Finance Committees investigated the need to hire additional forestry personnel. After much debate, the above-mentioned committees concluded that limited term foresters (LTE's) could be utilized to address the workload increase. In 2015 the FLORD established timber sales on 2,043 acres that sold for \$1,717,575, of which \$388,000 was directly attributed to the 2000 hours of budgeted LTE labor in 2015..

ALLOWABLE HARVEST VS ACTUAL HARVEST



Future Desired Conditions of the Forest: The Oneida County Forest is made up of a diverse array of plant communities. It is the intention of the FLRD to maintain the acreages of the existing plant communities at or near their current acreage. Due to the recent discovery of Emerald Ash Borer (see Forest Health Issues), it is anticipated that in the future, the White Ash and Black Ash components of the forest will decline and possibly disappear. These species will be replaced naturally or through planting/seeding with other suitable native species.

Forest Reconnaissance (Recon.): In 2015, the FLRD hired two LTE Foresters. Part of the duties of these positions was to update timber stand data (Recon) that was more than 20 years old. The LTE's completed 2000 acres of Recon updates in 2015.

Forest Health Issues: In 2015 no new significant insect or disease problems arose in Oneida County. However, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was located in another area within Rhinelander and will likely continue to spread. Oneida County remains in the EAB quarantine area. This restricts contractors, along with the general public, from transporting hardwood products (pulp, chips, firewood) out of the county during certain times of the year. The FLRD is working with the DNR and WI Dept of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on this matter. The FLRD has no immediate plans to conduct pre-emptive harvests of the County Forest's Ash component. However, as the infestation progresses and becomes more defined, an action plan will be developed. The Timber Sale Contract was amended to reflect the new restrictions regarding EAB.

Two small Red Pine plantations (10-15 acres total) suffered from hail damage during a thunderstorm in the summer of 2015.. These areas will be monitored in 2016. If damage is severe enough and the trees do not recover, the areas may need to be harvested and re-planted.

No new invasive infestations were discovered in 2015. Several invasive plant species were located in 2014 on County Forest property. Although these infestations were small at the time, control measures were implemented to eradicate or slow the spread of these species. Control/eradication measures included hand pulling Buck Thorn and a combination of hand pulling and herbicide application on Garlic Mustard. These sites will be monitored and additional control measures will be taken as needed. Monitoring of the sites in 2015 showed good control.



Fire Protection: No wildfires occurred on the Oneida County Forest in 2015. FLRD personnel are trained and available along with equipment to assist the DNR in fire control on the county forest.

Forestry Automotive Equipment Account:

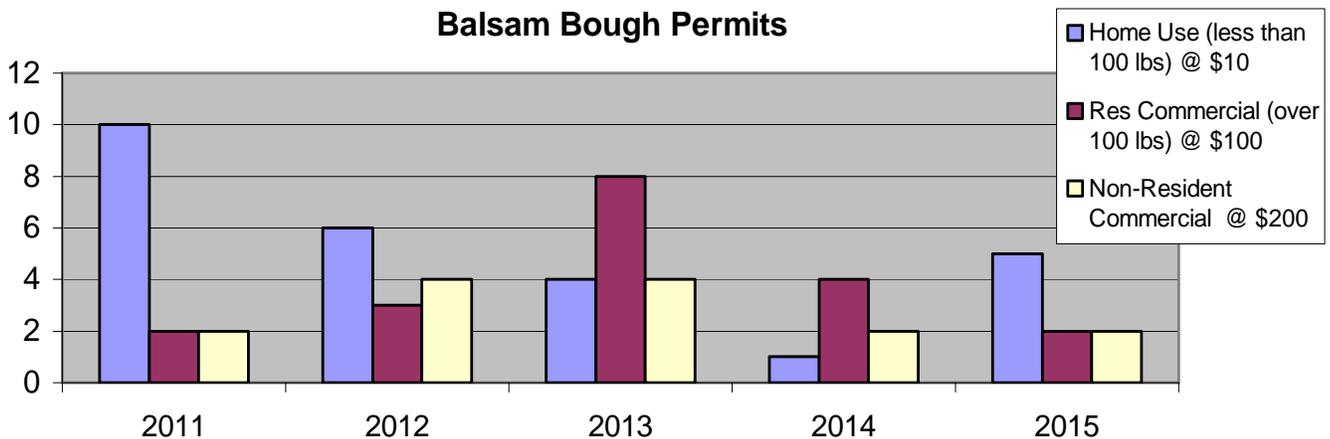
Each year \$20,000 is budgeted into the County Forest Account within the automotive equipment line item. The funds within the line item are used to purchase new and replacement equipment. The size and specialized nature of some of the equipment and/or vehicles used by the Forestry Department can be rather expensive to purchase. Accordingly, the automotive equipment line item is non-lapsing. This feature allows the Forestry Department to build up sufficient funds within the line item over a period of years, so that when an expensive piece of equipment requires replacing, the necessary funds are available. At the start of 2015 the account balance was \$122,925.79. Three pieces of equipment were purchased in 2015:

Purchased Equipment	Trade in / Value	Net Cost
John Deere 6105D Tractor with side mount Tiger mower & post hole auger	2004 Case JX7 tractor with side mount brush cutter - \$18,000	\$64,825.00
2016 Chevrolet ¾ Ton Truck with V- Plow	2005 Ford F250 - \$4000	\$30,138.00
2015 Oak & Iron Hydraulic Log Splitter	n/a	\$ 2,799.10
	Total Equipment Purchases	\$97,762.10

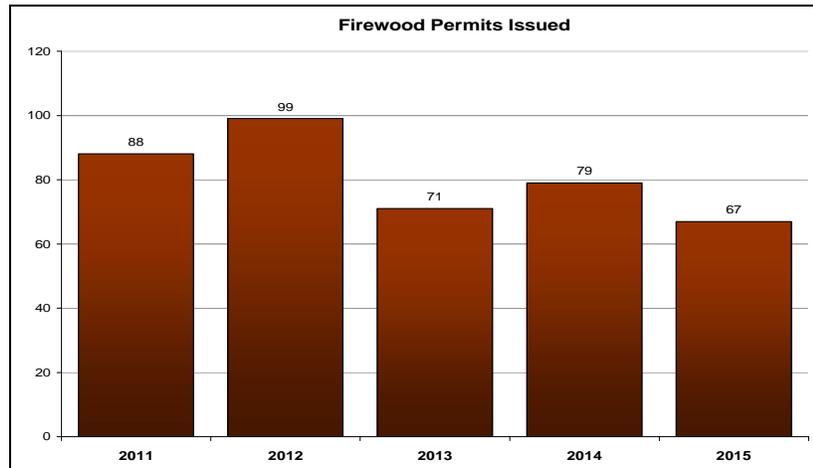
After the above purchases and the 2016 budgeted revenue have been posted, the balance in the account will be \$45,163.69.

Miscellaneous Forest Products Permits:

Balsam Bough Permits: The Balsam Bough Permit system is a fee-based program whereby private citizens can harvest balsam boughs from the County Forest. There are three categories of permits. In 2015 the FLRD issued 5 Home Use Permits, 2 Resident Commercial Permits, and 2 Non-Resident Commercial Permits. In total, the 2015 Balsam Bough Program generated \$650 of revenue for Oneida County.



Firewood Gathering Permits: The Firewood Gathering Permit system allows private citizens to gather up to 10 cords of firewood for personal home use from designated areas on the County Forest. Firewood. Gathering permits are generally issued on closed out timber sales so as to allow for the collection of any tops and limbs remaining after logging activities have been completed. The permit fee for Oneida County Residents and/or Oneida County landowners is \$20. The permit fee for non-resident individuals who do not own land in Oneida County is \$30. In 2015 the FLRD issued 67 Firewood Gathering Permits, which generated \$1,350 of revenue. The meteorological prediction for a strong El Niño throughout the winter of 2015-2016 may have contributed to the decreased sale of Firewood Permits from prior years.



FOREST ACCESS

County Forest Roads Account: The FLRD maintains 37.46 miles of road located in isolated areas of the county forest. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) formally classifies these roads as "County Forest Roads". By definition County Forest Roads must be a minimum of 16-ft. wide, have an improved gravel surface, and must be seasonally maintained (i.e., the WDOT does not require this type of road to be plowed in winter). The primary purpose for maintaining these roads is to aid in the removal of timber products from the County Forest. Secondly, these roads provide the public with vehicular access routes into otherwise isolated areas of the County Forest.

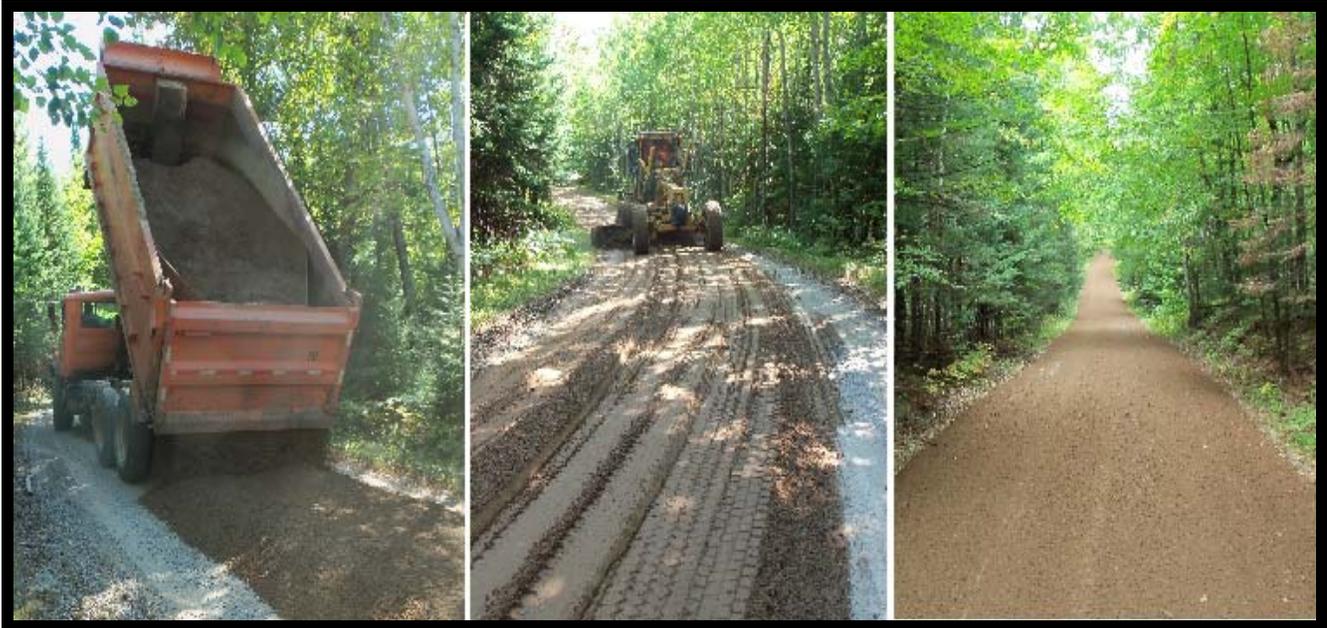
The funds needed for maintaining the County Forest Road system are primarily obtained through the WDOT. Each year the WDOT pays County Forest Programs \$336 for each mile of County Forest Road maintained. In 2015, the WDOT prorated their county forest road aid payments due to insufficient funds. As a result the Oneida County Forestry Department road aid payment was $(37.46 \text{ miles} \times \$336 \times 93.41\%) = \$11,757.74$. All State road aid received by the Forestry Department is deposited into a non-lapsing, Forest Roads Account.

Due to the equipment and materials required for road rehabilitation and/or maintenance work, these types of projects tend to be expensive. Accordingly, it is not uncommon to allow all or a portion of the funds deposited into the non-lapsing County Forest Roads Account to accumulate over time so that large scale road rehabilitation projects can be periodically addressed by the Forestry Department.

To remain compliant with the WDOT's County Forest Road minimum width requirement, it was determined that several Oneida County Forest Roads required widening. The total estimated cost of this project required it to be spread out over a period of several years. In 2015, the FLRD contracted with the OCHD to widen the entire 2.89 mile length of Bowman Road a a cost of \$10,821.90.

Two additional minor expenses were paid out of the County Forest Roads Account in 2015:

- 1) \$702.00 for roadside seeding and erosion control and
- 2) \$400.00 for annual gravel pit permit fees.



Photos of road widening work in the Enterprise Forest Block

In addition to the projects and expenses mentioned above, general road maintenance work also took place throughout the 37.46 mile county forest road system in 2015. Some of the general road maintenance activities routinely conducted by the FLRD are grading, signing, wash-out repair, spot graveling, brushing, shoulder mowing, small culvert installation, storm damage clean-up, vandalism repairs, and garbage collection.

LAND

Land Purchase Account: In late 2014 the Forestry Department became aware of an encroachment issue, whereby two individuals had located their driveways across county forest land without obtaining prior approval from the county. Upon further investigation the Forestry Department realized a 3rd party was also land-locked, but had not developed an access road into their property. In order to resolve the above described encroachment and/or access issue, the Oneida County Board approved Resolution #10-2015. The resolution gave authorization to the Forestry Committee to submit an application to the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) to withdraw a 1.50 acre parcel of land out of the County Forest Law Program. In 2015, upon receiving approval from the WDNR to withdraw the parcel, the land was divided and sold to the 3 adjoining landowners for \$24,370.00.

The WDNR placed a provision on their approval to withdraw the 1.50 acres parcel from the County Forest Law Program, that any proceeds realized by the county from the sale of said land must be deposited into a segregated account dedicated for the purchase of suitable land to replace that which had been withdrawn. Later in 2015, the Forestry Department utilized \$10,000 from the Land Purchase Account to obtain eight (8) state certified land appraisals. State approved appraisals are a requirement of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Land Acquisition Grant Program. In 2015 the Forestry Department applied for, and was awarded a Knowles Nelson Stewardship Land Acquisition Grant to purchase of 191.8-acres of land. If the Forestry Department's offer to purchase is accepted, said acreage will be enrolled into the County Forest Law Program.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Wildlife Habitat Management Account: The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides county forest programs with an annual allotment of funds that are to be used for wildlife habitat improvement projects on county forest land. The formula used to calculate payment for each eligible county is as follows: Number of County Forest Acres x \$0.05 = Payment. Due to a state budget shortfall in 2015, the DNR incorporated a small prorate into the above described formula. Accordingly, the 2015 Oneida County Forest Wildlife Habitat Improvement Payment was reduced. $[(82,279.01 \text{ acres} \times \$0.05) = \$4,113.95 \times 0.94348 \text{ Prorate} = \$3,881.43]$. All state funds received by Oneida County through the above-described program are deposited into a non-lapsing, State Aid Wildlife Habitat Management Improvement Account. The non-lapsing mechanism of this account provides the Forestry Department with the flexibility to build up state funding over a period of several years to pay for larger, more expensive projects, use the entire annual allotment of funds in 1 year, or a combination of the above described methods.

In 2015 the FLRD used approximately \$7,118.46 of State Aid Wildlife Habitat funds on the following projects, services, equipment, and supplies: 1) Cooperative Service Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), to provide technical and operational assistance in identifying and controlling nuisance beaver on the Oneida County Forest, \$2,240; 2) mowing established wildlife openings, \$2,140.94; 3) purchase a 3-point hitch post hole auger attachment for JD 6105D tractor, \$2,000; 4) herbicide, used for the control of invasive species, \$329.37; 5) steel components, used for the fabrication of a gate, \$293.30; and 6) a water gauge used to monitor water levels at Spruce Lake Waterfowl Management Area, \$114.85.



Spruce Lake Dam, Flowage, & Upland Nesting Cover collectively make up the Spruce Lake Waterfowl Habitat Management Area, located in the Town of Cassian.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Parks Account: In 2015 the FLRD maintained three day-use parks for picnicking, swimming, family gatherings, and general recreation.

Perch Lake Park: Perch Lake Park is located 5 miles west of Rhinelander on the north shore of Perch Lake. The diversity of recreational opportunities available in the Perch Lake area make this park a popular year-round destination. During winter months the facility serves as a trail head for a large network of winter silent sport trails. During spring, summer, and fall, Perch Lake Park is popular for picnicking, fishing, hiking, and biking. Some noteworthy attributes of Perch Lake include its largely undeveloped scenic shoreline, and the depth, clarity, and temperature of the lake, which makes it one of the few lakes in Oneida County capable of supporting trout.



Undisturbed portion of Perch Lake shoreline, & the Perch Lake Park accessible fishing pier. located in the town of Woodboro

Almon Park: Almon Park is the largest and most popular day use recreation area managed by the Oneida County FLRD. Located just 5 miles south of Rhinelander, Almon Park offers a combination of highly developed recreational facilities and undeveloped natural areas.



Photo of Buck Lake swimming beach located at Almon Park, in the Town of Pelican.

Park Shelter Rental Program: The FLRD allows citizens to reserve the upper level picnic pavilion at Almon Park and the Judy Swank Shelter Building at Perch Lake Park for private gatherings such as family reunions, graduation parties, weddings, and the like.



Photo of the Upper Level Picnic Pavilion at Almon Park

Both the Almon Park Pavilion and the Perch Lake Park Shelter Buildings are available to reserve for a fee of \$125/day, which includes a refundable security deposit of \$50 if the facility is left clean and undamaged. In 2015 the Perch Lake Shelter Building was rented 14 times resulting in \$1,050 of revenue, and the Almon Park Pavilion was rented 13 times resulting in \$975 of revenue. In total, the 2015 Park Shelter Rental Program generated \$2,025 of revenue for the county. All revenue generated from the Park Shelter Rental Program is deposited into the Forestry Department Parks Account.

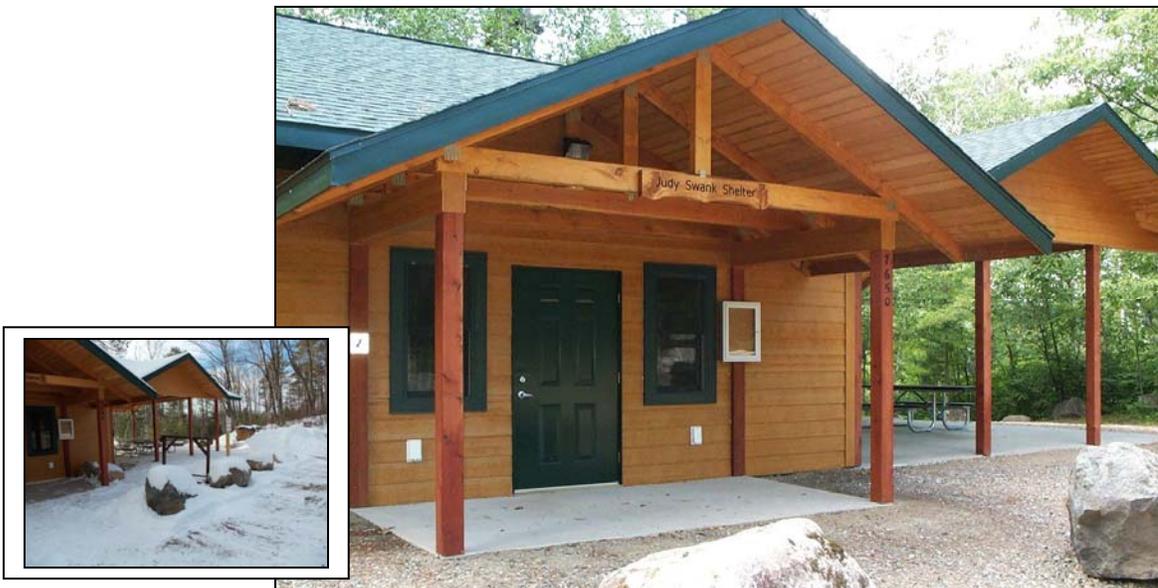
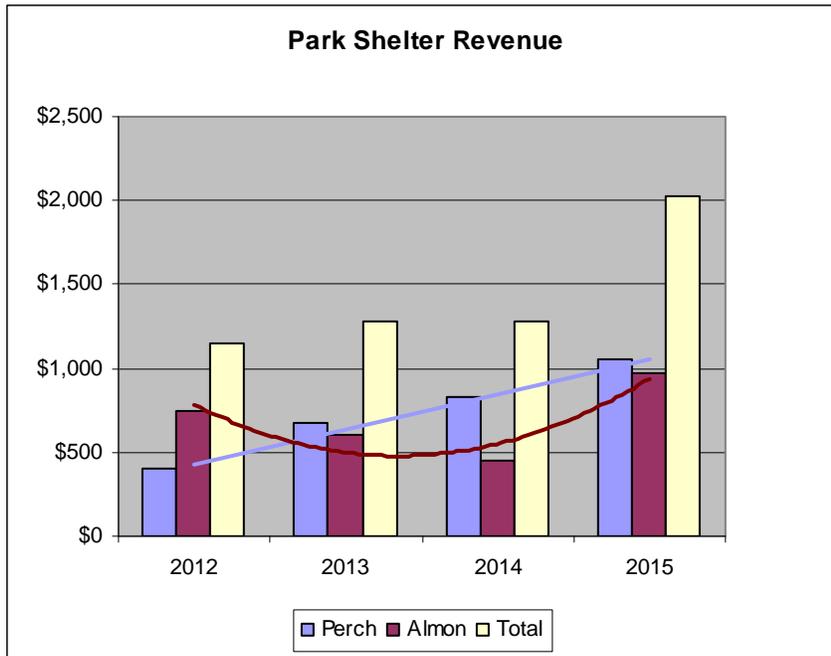


Photo of the Judy Swank Shelter Building located at Perch Lake Park, in the Town of Woodboro



The chart above clearly shows the decrease in usage at Almon Park prior to the new construction. Since the new pavilion opened, reservations are at an all time high. Perch Lake continues to show steady increases as more people become aware of the facility.



Amenities at the Perch Lake Shelter & Picnic area include an outdoor fireplace and an asphalt trail leading to an ADA compliant fishing pier.

Parks Capital Improvement Project:

Three significant parks capital improvement projects were undertaken in 2015. The largest of these projects was the rebuilding of the main asphalt parking lot at Almon Park. This asphalt parking lot was originally installed in the late 1970's. After almost 40 years of use, the condition of the asphalt was beyond repair and a decision was made to rebuild the parking lot.

In addition to removing and replacing the asphalt surface, the clay soil, rocks, and other miscellaneous debris that served as the original parking lot's base were excavated out and replaced with material better suited for an asphalt sub-base. The project was awarded to a local contractor through the competitive bidding process for a total project cost of \$111,500.

In 2015, after removing, replacing, and compacting the sub-base material, the project was placed on an anticipated hold, due to the advent of winter weather conditions. The project will be completed in early 2016, after spring road weight limits have been lifted. In 2015, \$73,709.02 was spent on the above described project.



In addition to the parking lot project described above, the Forestry Department also contracted out asphalt seal coating & crack repair in other areas of Almon Park for \$4,547.84, expanded the gravel parking lot at Perch Lake Park for \$2,797.25, and spent \$558.07 on a variety of small recreational capital improvement projects. In total, the Forestry Department spent \$81,054.11 on capital improvement projects related to the repair and/or development of county parks and recreational facilities.

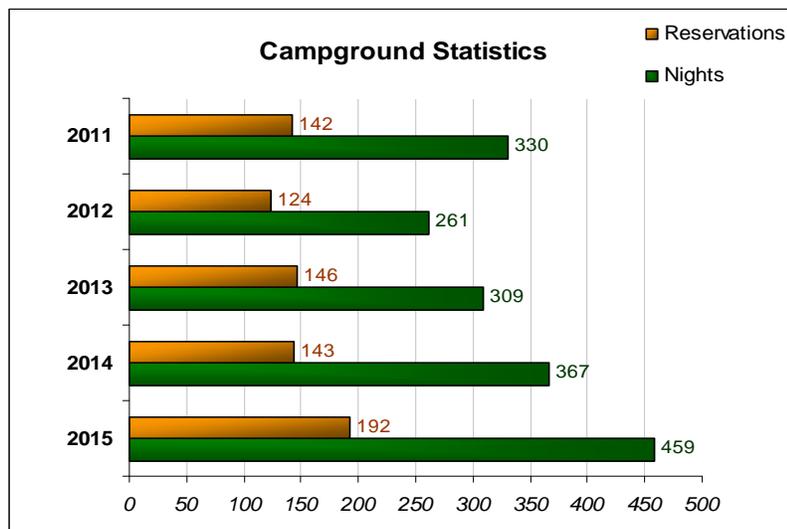


Campground Account: 2015 marked the 7th full year that the Oneida County Forest Enterprise Campground was open for public use. The Enterprise Forest Campground is officially open for camping from May 22nd to December 1st. Although the campground was designed to accommodate ATV's, the campground is open to all members of the general public, with or without an ATV.



An occupied campsite located within the Oneida County Enterprise Campground.

When campground use data in 2015 was compared with the data from 2014, the number of campground reservations had increased by approximately 34%. Not surprisingly, the campground's highest occupancy occurred on Friday and Saturday nights. Although the data sample size is too small to draw any concrete conclusions, one possible explanation for the increased number of campers could be that the continuing uptick in the economy has allowed individuals to spend more time on recreational pursuits. It is also apparent that there are increasing numbers of returning users.



In 2015 the fee to reserve a campsite at the Enterprise Campground remained unchanged at \$10/night. Camping registration fees and campground firewood donations resulted in \$5,239.00 of campground revenue. Conversely, the cost attributed to maintaining the campground in 2015 was \$3,351.00, which resulted in a net campground profit of \$1,888.00 in 2015. This figure is somewhat misleading in that firewood costs were approximately \$2,586.00—in large part due to the need to rent a log splitter multiple times. To address this issue the department purchased a log splitter in December 2015. The addition of the log splitter to the departments equipment pool will reduce the expense attributed to providing campground firewood in future years.

Motorized Sport Trails

ATV/UTV Account: The Forestry Department was responsible for the administration of 32.2 miles of ATV/UTV trails in 2015. Most of the trails are located on county forest land in the south-central and western portions of the county. The Forestry Department contracts out the maintenance of these trails to ATV/UTV clubs. In turn, these clubs are reimbursed for their work based upon the actual accountable costs they incur, up to a maximum of \$700 per mile, if the trail is open to both ATV's and UTV's. All Oneida County off road vehicle trails are open to both ATV's and UTV's. In 2015, Oneida County distributed \$22,540 to the two ATV/UTV clubs under contract for services rendered.

The Little Rice ATV Trail system was expanded by adding 1.9 miles of new state-funded trail in 2015. The new ATV/UTV trail miles are located entirely on County Forest Land in the Town of Little Rice. This new trail addition was heavily supported by both the Town of Little Rice and the ATV Club, as it eliminates the need for ATV's/UTV's to utilize a town road to connect with other portions of the trail. Reducing ATV/UTV use on public roads will also lessen the potential for ATV/UTV accidents, as those vehicles are not designed for use on roads.

The Forestry Department received a small grant in 2015 to produce 2,500 maps of the Little Rice ATV/UTV Trail system. The maps were printed and paid for in 2015, and are currently available for distribution.

In fall of 2015, the Forestry Committee directed the department staff to prepare a grant proposal on the behalf of a new ATV/UTV club - the Pelcho Mudd Nutz, for the development of 13 miles of new trail in the Enterprise County Forest Block. Due to the size and complexity of this trail development request, the grant proposal will be structured to take place over a period of 2 to 3 years. The WDNR will review and act upon the grant proposal during the summer of 2016.



Snowmobile Account: The Oneida County Forestry Department is also responsible for the administration and supervision of the county’s state-funded snowmobile trail network. In 2015, 3.5 miles of new snowmobile trail was added to the County’s state-funded snowmobile system. Similar to the ATV/UTV program described above, the Forestry Department contracts out the maintenance of this trail system to snowmobile clubs scattered throughout the County. In 2015, the Forestry Department distributed \$299,075 to the 10 trail maintenance clubs that are under contract with Forestry Department to maintain the 401 mile state-funded snowmobile trail system located in Oneida County.

In addition to the snowmobile trail maintenance activities described above, the Forestry Department also took the lead in a snowmobile trail reroute project that developed after the loss of a private land use agreement. The Forestry Department developed a plan that called for the cut off trail segment to be relocated onto state-owned land. An added benefit of the proposed reroute was that three potentially dangerous snowmobile trail road crossings would also be eliminated.

One drawback to the proposed plan was that it called for a costly 70 foot bridge to be constructed across Pickerel Canal. To generate the required funds needed to execute the plan, the Forestry Department utilized a variety of funding sources, including a \$110,692 grant from the WDNR Snowmobile Trails Program, a \$45,000 Recreational Trails Aid grant from the WDNR, a \$10,000 grant from the Wisconsin Valley Improvement Company, and a \$1,500 donation from the St. Germain BoBoen Tribe Snowmobile Club. The proposed snowmobile bridge and reroute leading into St. Germain were completed in December 2015 at a total cost of \$167,192. With the exception of staff time, no levied funds were required to facilitate the Snowmobile or ATV/UTV trail programs in 2015.



Photo of the recently completed Pickerel Canal Snowmobile Bridge, located in the Town of Newbold.

Silent Sports Trails

Cross-Country Ski Trails: Starting in the mid-1970's the FLRD began a program where by cross-country ski trails were developed and maintained (signed, groomed, and brushed) by the department. Over the years these ski trails grew in popularity. As a result of public demand, additional ski trail miles were developed by the FLRD. The Oneida County Forest ski trail network evolved into three signed and groomed ski trail systems that total 26.5 miles.

The Washburn Trail, which is the largest and most popular of the three ski trails, is located adjacent to Perch Lake Park in the Town of Woodboro. The Washburn Ski Trail is 12.0 miles long, offering 4.0 miles of trail groomed for tracked skiing, and 8.0 miles of trail groomed for ski skating. Due to the hilly topography found throughout the Washburn Lake Area, these trails are best suited for skiers possessing an intermediate to advanced skill set.

The Nose Lake Trail is also located in the Town of Woodboro and offers 7.0 miles of trail groomed for traditional tracked skiing. The gentle topography upon which the Nose Lake Trail is located makes this system very popular with skiers possessing either a beginner or intermediate skill set. Another popular feature of the Nose Lake Trail is that dogs are permitted.

With the addition of a 1-mile section of trail in 2015, the Cassian Ski Trail measures 8.5 miles. As its name implies, the trail is located in the Town of Cassian. The Cassian Trail is also located on gently rolling terrain, and is designed to accommodate users with a wide range of skills. The Cassian Trail is groomed for traditional tracked skiing.



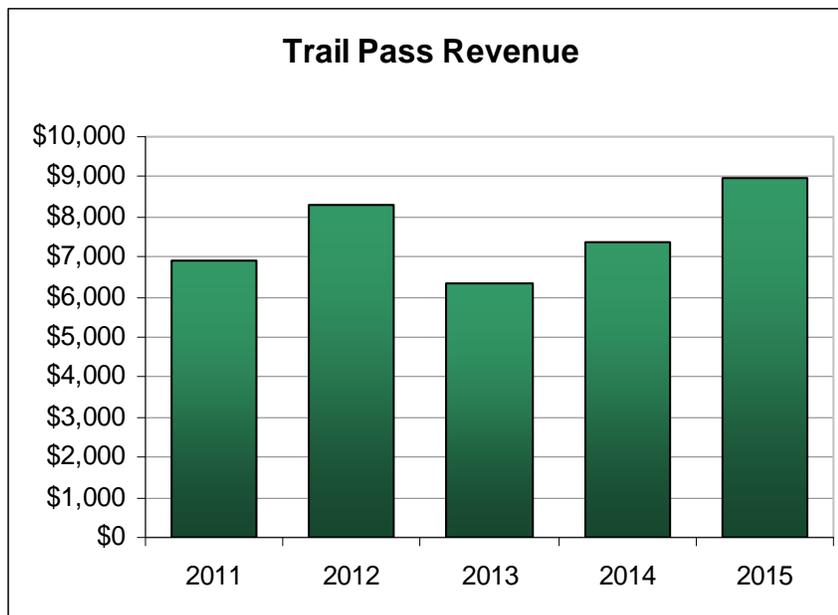
The increased popularity of these trails required the Forestry Department to groom the trail network more frequently. Unlike motorized recreational trails, which generate revenue to fund trail maintenance activities from the state's gas tax formula and the registration of ATV's, UTV's, and snowmobiles, no such mechanism exists for ski and other silent sport trails. Consequently, all of the costs associated with the development and maintenance of the county's silent sports trail network were paid for with tax levied funds budgeted into the County Forest Parks Account. At its peak, the Forestry Department spent approximately

\$50,000/year on the equipment, labor, and supplies needed to maintain the county forest network of cross-country ski trails. In an effort to reduce the expense attributed to maintaining the county’s ski trail network the Forestry Department reinvented the trail maintenance process.

Ski Trail Maintenance Agreement: Starting in 2012, the Forestry Department entered into a ski trail maintenance agreement with the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA). Under the terms of the trail maintenance agreement, RASTA is reimbursed by the FLRD for brushing, signing, and grooming the county’s 26.5 mile ski trail network. By contracting out the services, the Forestry Department was able to reduce the ski trail budget from \$50,000/year to approximately \$30,000/year.

Recreational Trail Aid Grants: To further reduce the expense attributed to providing the county’s ski trail network, the Forestry Department utilized the Recreational Trail Aid (RTA) program provided by the WDNR. The RTA program was designed to reimburse municipalities for up to 50% of the cost attributed to the development and/or maintenance of recreational trails. Each year RTA grants are awarded by the WDNR by applying a ranking formula to the applications received. In 2015, the Oneida County Forestry Department was awarded three RTA Grants for ski trail maintenance—one grant for each of the county’s 3 cross country ski trails. In total these 3 grants provided \$14,379 in reimbursement funds to the Forestry Department for expenses related to providing the county’s ski trail network. By pursuing these 3 grants, the Forestry Department was able to reduce the 2015 ski trail budget from \$30,000 to approximately \$15,500.

Trail Pass Program: The final measure taken by the Forestry Department to reduce the expense attributed to the Forestry Departments ski trail program was the implementation of a trail pass system. The trail pass system requires individuals over the age of 18 to purchase either a daily or an annual trail pass in order to use any designated and maintained silent sport trail located on the Oneida County Forest. In 2015, the sale of silent sport trail passes, together with user donations, generated \$8,964.



At year’s end, by applying the funds generated by the trail passes program and the RTA grants, the Forestry Department was able to reduce the initial 2015 ski trail budget from \$30,000 to approximately \$6,500.

Mountain Bike Trails: In 2015, the Oneida County Forestry Department worked in conjunction with RASTA to expand, repair, and/or relocate the mountain bike trail located at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trail facility. The project was funded in part with a RTA grant from the WDNR, and donations provided by RASTA. As a result of said project, the overall length of the Washburn Lake Mountain Bike trail was increased by 2 miles, which now makes the total trail 13.0 miles long. In addition, approximately 2 miles of the existing mountain bike trail were either rehabilitated or relocated to provide a more sustainable trend.



Photo of the Washburn Lake Silent Sports Trail, located in the town of Woodboro.

Fat Tire Bike Trail: In late 2014, the Forestry Committee received a request from a sub-group of the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA) for permission to use and maintain the entire 8-mile length of the Enterprise Forest Winter Recreational Trail for fat tire biking. The Forestry Committee granted the request for a one-year trial period with the following contingencies: 1) previously designated trail uses (i.e. cross-country skiing, and snow shoeing) would not be disrupted or displaced by the addition of the new user group, 2) all grooming and maintenance activities would be covered under the existing RASTA insurance policy. Furthermore, the Forestry Committee stated that if upon the conclusion of the one-year trial period no problems or issues were identified by allowing the Enterprise Forest Winter Recreational Trail to be maintained for and used by fat tire bikes, said use would be formally recognized as a permanent designated use of this trail. Upon the conclusion of the 2015 trial period, no issues or problems were identified as a result of adding fat tire bike activities on the Enterprise Forest Winter Recreational Trail. Public support has been positive. In fact, the Enterprise Trail received an Honorable Mention by the Singletrack.com website, which is dedicated to information and reviews of national biking trails.



Enterprise Forest Winter Recreation Trail, located in the Town of Enterprise

Hiking & Snowshoe Trails: In 2015, the FLRD maintained two hiking/snowshoe trails at Almon Park that total 2.25 miles in length. These trails travel through a variety of habitats, some of which require the use of wetland boardwalks to traverse. For those snowshoe enthusiasts looking for a more isolated experience, the FLRD also provides 8.0 miles of trail located in the Enterprise Block of the Oneida County Forest. Finally, for individuals seeking a more challenging hiking and/or snowshoe experience the FLRD provides 5.0 miles of snowshoe trail and 11.0 miles of hiking trail at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trails facility.



Photo of Almon Park wetland board & hiking/snowshoe trail, located in the Town of Pelican

Disabled Access Trails: In 2015 the FLRD maintained three trail systems that were specifically developed to provide disabled citizens reasonable access into the County Forest. These trails are evenly distributed throughout the Oneida County Forest with one trail being located in each of the three County Forest Blocks (i.e. Enterprise, Cassian/Woodboro, and Lynne/Little Rice). Uses of these areas include, but are not limited to, hunting, berry picking, bird watching and sightseeing. In order to qualify for a Disabled Access Trail Permit a person must hold a valid WDNR Class A or B disability identification card as defined by WI State Statutes. County Forest Disabled Access Trail Permits are valid for one year and are free, with a \$50 refundable key deposit.



Photo of a power-driven mobility device (PDMD)

Miscellaneous Forest Access: In addition to the trail opportunities and County Forest Roads described in this report, the Oneida County Forest has hundreds of miles of woodland trails and old logging roads that have no formally designated recreational purpose, yet remain open year-round for general public use. The primary function of these woodland trails and old logging roads is that of providing public access deep into the County Forest. Computerized forest-mapping projects have enabled the FLRD to determine that approximately 80% of Oneida County Forest Land is located within one-quarter mile of a woodland trail or old logging road that is open to the general public for use.

MINING

Mining Impact Account: No previously existing funds or new funds were budgeted into the Mining Impact Account in 2015. Accordingly, there were no expenses attributed to the Mining Impact Account in 2015.

HEALTH & SAFETY

In 2015, permanent field employees of the FLRD were once again provided with the opportunity to participate in the County steel-toed work shoe program. In addition, the following personal protective gear was made available to all FLRD field staff (i.e. temporary & permanent employees): hard hats, helmets, safety glasses, ear protection, chainsaw chaps, rubber gloves, and respirators.

All members of the Oneida County Forestry Department, including LTE's, whose job descriptions include field work and/or the operation of a chainsaw, were required to participate in a chainsaw safety course offered by the Forest Industry Safety Training Alliance (FISTA). The course provided training in the safe use of a chainsaw, the personal protective equipment that should be worn while operating a chainsaw; chainsaw safety features, reactive forces, as well as best tree felling, limbing and bucking techniques to use to insure personal safety while operating a chainsaw. Seven members of the Oneida County Forestry Department completed the above described training in 2015.

Only one workman compensation claim was filed by FLRD employees in 2015. The claim pertained to treatment for Lyme's Disease symptoms. After treatment was sought and completed the claim was rejected, as the physician could not state with medical certainty that the condition was work related.