

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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100 **MISSION STATEMENT**

Natural resources, such as those provided by the County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the County Forestry Department is to manage, conserve and protect these resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable forest management practices.

105 **GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN  
(Hereafter referred to as the “Plan”)**

To administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate

the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats s. 1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This County Forest plan will complement, and should be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts. There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. In an effort to ensure that the values of the Oneida County Forest are fully recognized, protected and infused into local planning, the County Forest Director/Assistant Director and staff will identify and participate in local planning efforts being undertaken to assure that these plans mesh with the County Forest plan.

#### **110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE**

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Oneida County Forest.
2. To provide the reader of the plan with background information regarding the County Forest.

#### **115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Law (s 28.10 and 28.11 Wis. Stats.) provides the authority to establish, develop, and manage a permanent County Forest Program. (For the full text of the County Forest Law refer to Chapter 900 (905.1).

#### **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Forestry, Land and Outdoor Recreation Committee of the County Board (hereafter referred to as the “committee”) enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

## 120.1 ORDINANCES

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Oneida County Forest can be found in Chapter 900 (905.2.1).

## 125 HISTORY

### 125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within county forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the county forest. In return for this aid, the state originally collected a seventy-five percent severance tax on the products cut on county forests. This was reduced to fifty percent in 1937 and then to twenty percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20% of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment to towns is currently \$.30/acre. In addition, towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Stumpage revenues exceed \$18,000,000 annually.

Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin now own approximately two and one third million acres

entered under the County Forest Law.

### 125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in over harvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

### 125.3 ONEIDA COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

Oneida County first participated in the County Forest Crop Law in 1932 with the entry of 26,387.9 acres of forest land. In that year Oneida County received a State aid payment under the program of \$2,618.79. Administration of the program on the County level was to be handled by the land agent. The duties of the land agent were incorporated into other positions such as that of the County agricultural agent and later to the tax lister. In 1949, a separate full time department was set up. The Forestry Department, now headed by the County Forest Director, is staffed by six full time employees and two seasonal employees. The County Forest is comprised of approximately 82,130 acres.

Early phases of development of the county forests consisted largely of planting open areas. Much of the early planting was done by hand using Works Projects Administration (WPA) and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor.

### 125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Oneida County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (WCFA). This Association was incorporated on May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of ten delegates elected from the County Forestry Committees who are members of the

Association.

This corporation provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s. 28.11 and Chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues.

## **130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST**

### **130.1 NATURAL FEATURES**

#### **130.1.1 Topography**

The Oneida County Forest, located in the north-central part of the state, lies primarily within the Northern Highlands physiographic region of Wisconsin. The topography of the forest and surrounding area has glacial origin. The glaciers eroded hilltops and filled valleys, thus reducing relief. Elevations range from 1460 feet in the southwest (Little Rice) part of the county forest to 1750 feet in the southeast (Enterprise). The terrain ranges from flat in the west (Lynne/Little Rice Block) to hilly in the central (Woodboro Block) and the southeast (Enterprise Block) part of the forest.

#### **130.1.2 Geology and Soils**

Oneida County is in the Northern Highlands physiographic region of Wisconsin, a gently arched dome underlain by crystalline rock. In the glacial area the basic soils are weathered sedimentary deposits and outwash materials over a granite bedrock. A wide variety of soils occur on Oneida County forest lands. They range from droughty sands to wet, poorly drained organic soils -- from steep, stony moranic soils to those on level outwash plains. This intricate pattern and variety of soils determines to a large degree the site quality. The County Forest in the western portion of the County has relatively poor site quality due to the presence of an underlying hardpan layer and to the fact that the unit was so severely burned in the past that the topsoil was largely destroyed. The soils of the central and eastern units

are better drained moranic soils with good to medium site quality. A generalized soils map is found in Chapter 900 (900.1). Complete soils information can be obtained by reviewing the "Soils Survey of Oneida County, Wisconsin" as published by the U.S. Department of Agriculture -- NRCS .

### 130.1.3 Geography

Oneida County is the 9th largest county in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 723,251 acres, plus another 68,096 acres of water included in lakes and streams. Approximately 95 percent of the land in the county is classified as forest land. The County Forest, which contains approximately 82,130 acres, is the 14th largest County Forest in the state.

### 130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger ecoregion. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and land type associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and potential plant communities. The Oneida County Forest is encompassed within the Laurentian Mixed Forest province including subsections Northern Highlands Pitted Outwash, Glidden Loamy Drift Plains and the Perkinstown End Moraine. Land Type Associations (LTA's) within the subsections include: Chequamegon Washed Till and Outwash, Vilas Oneida Outwash Plains, Jump River Ground Moraine, Vilas Oneida Loamy Hills, Northern Highlands Outwash Plains, Rhinelander Moraines, Elcho Moraines, Flambeau Silt Capped Drumlins and the Oneida Sandy Moraines. LTA's, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses. See Ch 900 (900.5) for a map and listing of NHFEU's found in Oneida County.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species,

living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. The following biological communities are found on the Oneida County Forest:

Northern Forest: contains mixed deciduous and coniferous forests found in a distinct climatic zone that occurs north of the tension zone (a line running from the north west to the south east part of the state where climatic and physiographic changes occur thus causing the change from the southern broadleaf forest to the northern mixed forest).

Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water.

Aquatic Communities: including springs, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers.

#### 130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately 75 percent of the Oneida County Forest land base is forested. Forested uplands are comprised of primarily mixed hardwood (14,812 acres), aspen (32,691 acres), oak (2,218 acres), balsam fir (812 acres), red, white and jack pine (2,243 acres) and hemlock (596 acres) while white and black spruce (5,618 acres), lowland hardwoods (1,144 acres), tamarack (965 acres) and cedar (2,492 acres) occupy the forested lowlands. The remainder is classified as non-forested, including types such as open water, wetlands, rights-of-way, grass openings, shrubs and bogs. The different cover types present on the 82,130 acre County Forest are detailed under “Forested Communities” in Chapter 800 (820.1).

The Lynne/Little Rice block is the largest block of the forest (56 percent). This block is located in the western part of the county and is comprised of approximately 46,000 acres. The Enterprise block located in the southeast part of the county is comprised of approximately 20,000 acres (24 percent) and the Cassian/Woodboro block located in the south-central part of the county is comprised of approximately 15,000 acres (18 percent).

Chapter 900 (900.2) contains maps showing the location of the County Forest.

### 130.1.6 Wildlife

The Oneida County Forest is habitat for wildlife common to Wisconsin. No formal survey has been conducted to identify or inventory the fauna occurring on the Forest.

Numerous species of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish and mammals frequent the forest. Each species, or interacting group of species, do best under different conditions, ranging from recently disturbed ground to old growth. A diversity of plant communities is key to providing a niche for a variety of wildlife species. For example, two very popular wildlife species in the county are the white-tailed deer and the ruffed grouse. The aspen forest type is recognized as key habitat for these species and is important in maintaining biological diversity across North America. Longer rotation forest communities, such as unevenaged northern hardwood, similarly provide important habitat for other, less well-known species, such as pileated woodpeckers or northern goshawk.

Permanently sodded, grassy openings within the forest, many originating from old log landings, camps, old burns, or frost pockets are vital components of forest wildlife habitat. An effort is being made to maintain and improve the quality and, in some cases, the quantity of openings.

### 130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities and unique natural features on the Oneida County Forest. See Chapter 900 (900.6) for a map and listing of threatened and endangered species in the Forest.

### 130.1.8 Water

Oneida County has 68,096 acres of open water involving 406 named lakes, and 830 miles of streams. Of this total, 192 miles are classified as trout streams.

Within the County Forest boundaries there is a variety of fishery resources. Approximately 23 named and 22 unnamed lakes have all or portions of their

shoreline under county ownership. In addition, the county owns frontage on over 10 named and 13 unnamed trout streams totaling over 49 miles.

Within the Oneida County Forest Boundary there are also 12 streams totaling 12 miles which are classified as Outstanding and Exceptional Resource Waters.

A map showing the location of these waters and a listing of these waters can be found in Ch. 900 (900.8)

Note: An entire listing of the outstanding and exceptional resource waters can be found in Wisconsin Admin. Code NR102.10 and 102.11.

## 130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

### 130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Oneida County. Recreational opportunities with developed facilities include picnic areas, parks, beaches, boat landings, fishing bridges, and snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle, hunter/walking, mountain bike, and cross country ski trails. The county forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, and sightseeing.

### 130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and spin-off industries derived from the recreational opportunities on the Forest and the forest products it produces are vitally important to Oneida County's economic well being. The Forest and Recreation based industries in Oneida County are two major employers of Oneida County citizens. The quality of life in many counties is heavily dependent on the traditional resources the County Forest provides.

### 130.2.3 Roads & Access

All Oneida County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. In

addition to the town and county roads that access the forest, the county also maintains 37 miles of County Forest roads. A number of gated or bermed special use trails and roads are also available. Access management remains a controversial issue on the Forest. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation are provided for within the Forest. See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access.

#### 130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Oneida County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

#### 130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Oneida County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs now and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the Forest in coming years in many ways:

- a. Greater demands are being placed on the Forest by people using it to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has lead to user conflicts. In particular, dramatic increases in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATV's) has pressured County forests into providing trails for their use and resolving access conflicts on the County Forest. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are commonplace.
- b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forest land is being lost to residential development, and forest landowners are decreasingly interested in managing land primarily for timber values.
- c. Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid 1900's. Mid to late successional northern

hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock. A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on Wisconsin's National and State forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the county forests. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

d. Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clearcutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.

e. Oneida County may experience funding problems, as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.

f. Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

g. Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 800 (830.4) for specifics on this subject.

h. The Forest is considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

### 130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest is composed of 111 management compartments ranging in size from 340 acres to over 1,300 acres. Within the county forest boundaries approximately 85 percent of the land is county owned with most of the remaining 15 percent in small private holdings. A map of these compartments can be found in Chapter 900 (900.3).