

DIVISION OF FORESTRY

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

2012 ANNUAL REPORT



THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY

In Service to Wisconsin's People and Forests



Paul DeLong, Wisconsin's
Chief State Forester

The Division makes a large investment in newly-hired foresters with both classroom and in-the-woods training.



Thank you for your interest in the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources-Division of Forestry accomplishments in 2012. The new strategic direction for the Wisconsin DNR-Division of Forestry shaped our work this year. Division employees and our partners invested untold hours developing implementation plans for the strategic direction, transitioning to a new organizational structure and initiating elements of the change in direction the Division has undertaken.

Due to budget constraints over the past years and the organizational restructuring, the Division of Forestry had a very high vacancy rate heading into 2012. We spent a lot of effort this year filling positions and laying the groundwork for filling even more in 2013. The Division is able to better serve our customers and the forest resource after hiring new classes of foresters. We are committed to further reducing our vacancy rate in the coming year and to addressing work priorities we have had to defer while attention was focused on accomplishing our highest priorities during the time of reduced staff resources.

Good customer service continues to be a high priority for the Division and was a motivator for the LEAN project completed by the Forestry Research and Development Center in Tomahawk. We will be completing several additional LEAN projects in 2013. The Division also contracted with a consultant to study our administration

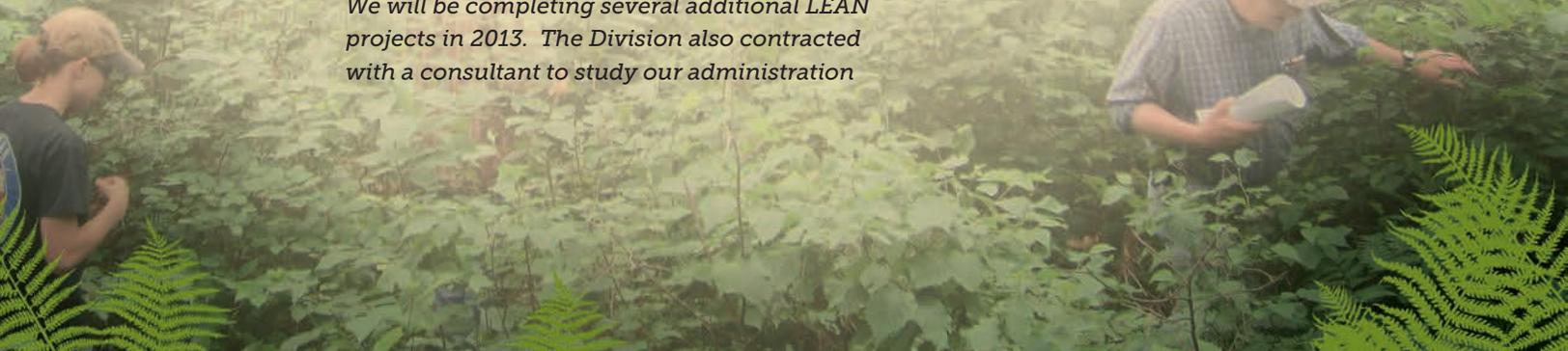
of the Managed Forest Law program and recommend efficiencies that will keep this vital forest landowner program functioning and delivering value to Wisconsin, despite the stresses caused by the continuous growth of the program.

I'm very proud of our work to meet annual allowable harvest levels on state lands and make progress on the backlog that had built up due to other workload. On private forest lands, Division employees continue to facilitate accomplishing the growing list of mandatory Managed Forest Law practices.

The Division's work not only crosses state borders as we cooperate on fire prevention and suppression efforts with other states, but also extends internationally. In 2012, the Division secured two export market grants in cooperation with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. These projects have a focus on connecting Wisconsin companies with potential markets in India and China.

The Division's list of 2012 accomplishments is impressive, and reflects on our dedicated staff and committed partners. I hope you enjoy reading a sampling of these on the following pages.

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1 Conservation Easement Secures Working Forests and Public Recreation

DNR made the largest recreational and forest land acquisition in state history in 2012 with a conservation easement on 67,346.8 forest acres in Douglas, Bayfield, Burnett and Washburn counties from the Lyme St. Croix Forest Company. The property is located at the headwaters of the St. Croix and Bois-Brule rivers in the northwest sands area and contains 80 small lakes and ponds, 14 miles of streams, and a globally significant pine barrens habitat. About 20,000 acres of the purchase are located within the Brule River State Forest boundaries. The easement ensures that the acreage will continue as working forests, in addition to providing recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat and protecting water quality and other public benefits. This was the first of a two-phase project supported by the state's Stewardship Fund and the federal Forest Legacy Program.

2 Partnership with Green Bay Packers Supports Urban Forest

USDA Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell, Green Bay Packers President/CEO Mark Murphy, DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp, and others, plant a tree at Lambeau Field. The First Downs for Trees program reduced the Packer's carbon footprint by planting more than 850 trees in Brown County in 2012.

3 Division Provides Technical Assistance to the Forest Products Industry

The Division's Forest Products Services team provides technical assistance on the availability of the forest resource to support proposed and existing wood manufacturing firms. The team's work helped many companies survive the economic recession by providing expanded markets for their products. The team also offers education and outreach programs for the wood using industry. Workshops this year included combustible dust education, lumber grading, continuous process improvement strategies and exporting seminars.

4 Inspiring Forest Landowners in Southwest Wisconsin

The Driftless Forestry Network (DFN) – a broad collaborative of private and public entities with a common goal of engaging more private woodland owners in sustainable management of their woodlands – has been testing new systems, messages, tools and strategies to more effectively reach woodland owners and move them to action. As a result of this partnership, Wisconsin was able to mobilize private woodland owners in SW Wisconsin and fully utilize in less than 3 weeks a \$300,000 grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to the Driftless Landscape Conservation Initiative for forestry practices on private lands. Work by the DFN has resulted in 1,000 landowners responding to the outreach efforts, 90% of who had not previously been involved.

5 Program Reaches Across State Borders

Wisconsin's wildland firefighting program works closely with other states to coordinate efforts and provide resources when needed. Under a special cooperative agreement with Minnesota, our Forestry Equipment Research and Development Center completed production and delivery of five Type 4x Engines for the state of Minnesota DNR in 2012, bringing the total delivered to 10 units.

6 It Takes a Village to Grow a Forest

The Division of Forestry works cooperatively with many partners to engage forest landowners and provide training and technical advice to assist them in caring for their woodlands.

Mother Nature didn't give us a break in 2012 as the worst drought in years resulted in an extended fire season throughout much of the state and also caused a high mortality rate among recently planted seedlings.

DNR Private Forestry Specialist Carol Nielsen reads from Aldo Leopold's *Sand County Almanac* as representatives of several partner organizations listen.



TIMBER SALE GOALS MET

on State and County Forest Lands

Timber from state and county forest land provides a stable and predictable contribution of certified wood to Wisconsin's \$18-billion forest products industry.

Since 2002, the acres of timber established for sale on DNR owned properties has increased 150% to more than 21,000 acres on approximately 950,000 acres of forested land. Timber sale revenues from state lands have averaged \$10 million in direct revenue for the past three years.

County forest timber sale establishment has increased by more than 15% during the past five years compared to the five years prior to that, totaling more than 52,000 acres in 2012 on 2,000,000 acres of forested lands. Similarly, county forest timber revenues for completed sales reached record highs in 2012 at more than \$37 million. County forestry departments complete the majority of this valuable work, with some assistance from DNR.

The increase in forest management activity has been conducted in a thoughtful and sustainable manner. DNR and county timber management is guided by management plans which consider ecological, economic, social and cultural elements. County forest management is guided by County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plans on all 29 forests. DNR has expedited master plan updates and developed interim forest management plans to guide future use and management of forests in the short term on state lands. As an additional "seal of approval" for sustainable management, the vast majority of all DNR forested lands and county forest lands are third party certified to the forest management standards of either the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI), or both systems.

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Caring for Wisconsin's Forests

Governor Knowles Master Plan Approved

An update of the 1988 master plan for the 20,000-acre Governor Knowles State Forest located in Polk and Burnett Counties was approved by the Natural Resources Board in September of 2012. The revised master plan will guide future use and management for recreation, land management and land acquisition for the next 15 years. Governor Knowles was the last State Forest Master Plan to be revised so currently all Division-managed state forest lands—totaling almost 500,000 acres—are being managed under updated master plans.

Private Donation Boosts Forest Regeneration

2012 marked the second year of implementing a state lands regeneration effort using new fiscal resources targeted for regenerating DNR lands conducting timber sales. Over 21,000 acres were established for harvest in 2012 and assurances are in place to regenerate all managed lands to meet future desired cover types identified in master plans. Another boost came with a donation from A. Finkl & Sons (a Chicago-based company) to support the planting of 400,000 seedlings annually on Wisconsin's state forests over the next ten years. This company's partnership with Wisconsin DNR began in 1990 and has already assisted with the planting of more than three million tree seedlings since then.



Jim Staples (right) from A. Finkl & Sons Co. and Steve Petersen, Superintendent of the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, inspect some of the seedlings planted on the forest using the company's donation.

County Forest Partnership Goals Exceeded

The Division of Forestry contributed 47,821 hours in technical assistance to our county forest partners in 2012. The division's time commitment for fiscal year 2012 was met or exceeded for each of the 29 counties. In 2012, timber sales were established on 52,476 acres of county forest lands. Timber sale revenues generated on completed county forests sales reached a record \$37 million.

Backlog of Managed Forest Law Mandatory Practices Reduced

The backlog of mandatory practices for lands enrolled in the Managed Forest Law program is continually being reduced as DNR and Cooperating Foresters, loggers and landowners work together to get timber sales established. In 2002, there were 11,637 backlog practices for 202,587 acres. At the end of 2012, there are 3,246 backlog practices for 47,988 acres—a reduction of 70% of practices and 75% in acreage. An additional 65,000 to 75,000 acres of new practices are added to the mandatory practice list each year.

Cooperating Forester Program Grows

Wisconsin has 180 firms with 241 foresters participating in the Cooperating Forester program and 71% of these foresters have taken the extra steps to be Certified Plan Writers. In 1989 when the program began there were 83 firms with 152 foresters. In 2012, cooperators prepared 1,760 forest management plans for 110,000 acres. They also established 1,550 timber sales on 52,300 acres that produced 490,000 cords and 68,100 MBF.



Since 2006, "Learn About Your Land" programs have reached 3,423 households managing 218,290 acres. In 2012, 518 households attended the 80 sessions around the state. More than 80 percent of attendees did at least one woodland activity because of attending a class.

ONLINE MAPPING APPLICATION DEVELOPED

Private Forest Lands Open for Recreation Now Easier to Locate

For years, the DNR had been providing a listing of private forest lands open to public hunting, hiking, fishing, cross-country skiing and sightseeing in a report form, and a map-based product was available for a fee from a couple of private services. However, news media reports in 2012 stated that these lands were hard to find and that the DNR didn't provide a comprehensive mapping solution.

Forestry took immediate action and proposed the development of a web mapping application displaying the approximate locations of these lands. The project team consisted of six staff from the Division of Forestry, with assistance from other forestry staff, the Bureau of Technology Services and the Office of Communications. Days later, an application was installed on the server and within two weeks additional staff began testing.

The "Private Lands Open for Public Recreation" application went into production on October 30, 2012 depicting approximate polygon locations of the lands. Based on public comments, the representation of the data needed to be modified in order to avoid misinterpretation of the information. The team once again jumped into action and made significant changes to how the information was being shown on the map, along with a YouTube video to help our customers interpret the information. This update was released on November 9th, six weeks after the initial conversations occurred.

Within the first month, more than 95,000 people logged onto the application, 20,000 of whom were return customers! To better serve the needs of the customers, Forestry is working on a plan to convert the 60,000 historic records from microfiche into an electronic format, which will display the actual boundaries open to the public, rather than approximate ones.

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Protecting Wisconsin's Forests and People

Oak Wilt Spreads to Three Additional Counties

In 2012, Oak Wilt was confirmed by the DNR for the first time in Lincoln, Sawyer and Vilas Counties. All diseased oaks were located on privately-owned riverfront or lakeshore properties. Forest Health staff advised property owners of their control options and made local outreach efforts for disease prevention. Oak Wilt has been now detected in 58 of Wisconsin's 72 counties.

Forest Health Damage Survey Data Improves

The DNR received a letter of appreciation from the US Forest Service for the Forest Health team's improvements this year in quality and format of forest damage mapping data. The team's efforts result in showing forest damage in Wisconsin at a national level in a more accurate and visible way and also improves the consistency of USFS forest health data.

Invasive Species Training and Control

The Division of Forestry continued a partnership with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association to provide training on forestry invasive species and best management practices through the Forest Industry Safety Training Alliance, training 220 loggers and foresters from Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota in 2012.

The Division of Forestry hires contractors to conduct invasive inventory and control work on state forests. Contracting has enabled the state forests to maintain an invasive species program, achieve sustainable forestry goals and certification requirements. In 2012 the Division also coordinated a similar inventory effort on county forest lands.

Wisconsin Experiences Uptick in Emerald Ash Borer Discoveries

In 2012, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was found in four new counties (Rock, Trempealeau, Walworth and Waukesha), and on several DNR properties, (Richard Bong State Recreation Area, Big Foot Beach State Park, and Perrot State Park). Pockets of ash mortality were mapped around Newburg and in southern Milwaukee County. DNR released three natural enemies of EAB near Victory in Vernon County.

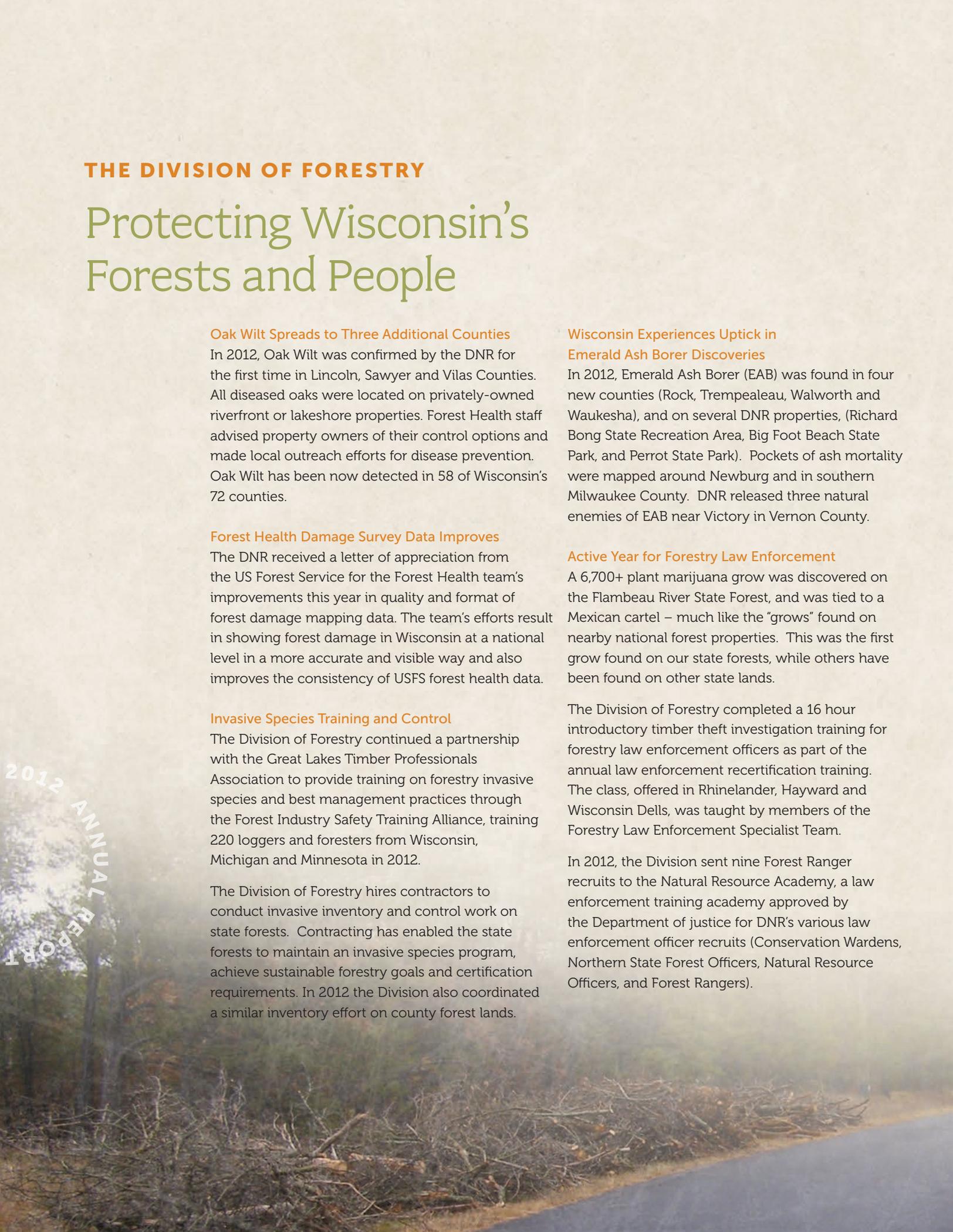
Active Year for Forestry Law Enforcement

A 6,700+ plant marijuana grow was discovered on the Flambeau River State Forest, and was tied to a Mexican cartel – much like the "grows" found on nearby national forest properties. This was the first grow found on our state forests, while others have been found on other state lands.

The Division of Forestry completed a 16 hour introductory timber theft investigation training for forestry law enforcement officers as part of the annual law enforcement recertification training. The class, offered in Rhinelander, Hayward and Wisconsin Dells, was taught by members of the Forestry Law Enforcement Specialist Team.

In 2012, the Division sent nine Forest Ranger recruits to the Natural Resource Academy, a law enforcement training academy approved by the Department of Justice for DNR's various law enforcement officer recruits (Conservation Wardens, Northern State Forest Officers, Natural Resource Officers, and Forest Rangers).

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The aeronautics team acquired a second FLIR (Forward Looking Infrared Radar) system—this one on DNR’s Cessna 182 aircraft based in Rhinelander—in 2012. Sensors on the FLIR cameras detect infrared radiation, typically emitted from a heat source, to create a “picture” assembled for video output. The equipment can transmit imagery in real time to personnel on the ground allowing those involved in a fire or other incident to see in real time the same thing the flight officer is seeing. Funding from Port Security/ Homeland Security Grants covered the majority of the cost of the two DNR units with partner agencies providing the remaining funds.



Through Wisconsin’s Firewise Communities program, community members work together to mitigate wildfire hazards in their neighborhoods.

A curbside chipping program established in 2008 in the Town of Rome (Adams County) was part of their Community Wildfire Protection Plan. The biomass that was potential fuel for a wildfire has instead been converted to energy through its use as boiler fuel. By the end of 2012, every property owner in the Town had the opportunity to participate at least once.

STORM RECOVERY

in Northwest Wisconsin

Timber salvage and other recovery efforts from a devastating windstorm that damaged woodlands on July 1, 2011 in portions of Polk, Douglas, Burnett and Washburn counties were ongoing in 2012. The storm affected a footprint of more than 250,000 acres (2 million cords of wood). The storm recovery work was complicated by the worst drought in years. In light of the dry conditions and the large amount of flammable wood on the ground due to the 2011 storm, the Division of Forestry prepared for the 2012 spring fire season by planning a series of activities geared toward preventing and mitigating wild fires in the blow-down area.

The Division’s Northwest Wisconsin Fire Management Plan was successfully implemented, thanks to the cooperation of many partners. We received extraordinary compliance by the public with emergency burning restrictions (put into place on April 6 and rescinded on May 24) in the storm damaged area as most people understood the seriousness of the situation.

This public awareness of the dangerous circumstances was boosted by the Division’s fire prevention campaign, called “Wildfire: The Next Storm.” In addition to partnering with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation on electronic message boards along roadways, the Division used news releases, radio announcements, newspaper inserts and advertisements, fliers, billboards, signs and direct mailings to reach residents and visitors of this area.

Extra training for DNR firefighters and local volunteer fire departments also helped ensure everyone was prepared to protect people and the forest resource. Thankfully, the prevention efforts were successful as a total of five fires burning 1.35 acres were reported within the storm damaged area during the spring 2012 fire season. Under normal fire season conditions, this area averages 30 fires burning 75 acres for the same time period.





About the cover: Pine Barrens managed in a shifting mosaic of successional stages on Lyme St. Croix Forest Company property where DNR acquired a conservation easement in 2012
Photo by Coldsnap Photography.