

# WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

## DIVISION OF FORESTRY 2013 ANNUAL REPORT



*Photo by Dean Sauvola*

# FROM OUR CHIEF STATE FORESTER



**PAUL DeLONG**  
Wisconsin's Chief  
State Forester

Thanks for your interest in the Wisconsin DNR-Division of Forestry and the work we do in partnership with stakeholders to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin's forests.

After a snowy and wet spring kept forest fire danger low throughout much of Wisconsin, the fire season sparked to life in mid-May with Wisconsin's third largest wildfire in recent history. I am very proud of the way Division staff and our many internal and external partners supported the local residents devastated by the Germann Road Fire, both during the incident as well as throughout the longer-term recovery.

This fire was a prime example of collaboration with 37 fire departments, DNR staff from several Divisions, Minnesota DNR, Michigan DNR, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, USDA Forest Service, state patrol, sheriff's departments, Wisconsin Department of Transportation, state and county emergency management, Red Cross, the Drummond High School and many others assisting. Thanks to the rapid response, good communication and suppression efforts, no injuries or fatalities resulted and more than 77 structures were saved.

Other key accomplishments this year included steps the Division took to further implement our Strategic Direction, the five-year plan that defines our role relative to others within the diverse forestry community. The Strategic Direction describes the actions we are taking to leverage our limited resources and maximize the value the Division delivers toward protecting and sustainably managing Wisconsin's forests.

In 2013, our steps towards implementing the Strategic Direction, included:

- Continuing to align our fire protection resources with Wisconsin's fire risk landscapes;
- Working to identify ways that the Division can further streamline the Managed Forest Law (MFL) program;
- Filling many key Division vacancies from field foresters, technicians, and field supervisors to Private Forestry, Resource Management Partnership, IT/GIS, and Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) program specialists and supervisors; and
- Continuing to develop the framework for an Urban Forestry program that focuses on a multi-community scale rather than on individual communities.

In addition to making progress in many strategic areas of work, we continued to produce a lot of accomplishments, many working with our partners, on both public and private forest land. The Division also continued the effort to modernize, streamline, and align each of the Division's management systems with the Strategic Direction. A major focus of that effort was on building a performance management system that included developing performance measures for Forestry's Strategic Direction and making clear linkages to work planning, accomplishment reporting, and the agency's performance review process.

Journey through 2013 with us on the following pages as we highlight key accomplishments of the Division of Forestry and visit us online for more information at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) (search keyword "Forestry").

*Paul DeLong*



*A horse camp on the Black River State Forest that received almost no use in 2011 and 2012 was converted to a group camp in 2013. After reopening on June 7, 2013, the revamped facility was rented nearly every weekend through the fall hunting season.*



# SERVING PEOPLE AND FORESTS

## Customer Feedback Survey

The Division of Forestry launched a web-based survey to quickly and easily collect customer service satisfaction feedback from internal and external customers. The survey is part of a larger Department effort to solicit feedback to gauge how we were doing with customer service. Each employee was provided with a link to the survey, to include in their email signature line, and cards to hand out. The survey was launched in July, and the Division has received 326 responses, 97% indicating that they were either Very Satisfied (93%) or Satisfied (5%) with customer service they received. When a customer was dissatisfied and provided contact information, a supervisor followed up with a personal contact to understand and resolve the problem, if possible, and to coach the employee.

## Improvement Initiatives

The third year of Lean Government projects kicked off in 2013. Lean Six Sigma is a quality improvement method that uses data to identify and eliminate process problems. "Lean" projects are aimed at reducing DNR staff workload, reducing the time it takes for a customer to receive a product or service, improving customer satisfaction, simplifying a process or ensuring staff and customer safety. In year one, the Division applied Lean Six Sigma principles to the Forestry Equipment R&D Center stockroom operations and continued to improve customer service based on study results. Year two Lean projects included Accessibility to MFL Open Lands and Forestry Program Review Phase 1. In 2013, the Division began these Lean studies that will be completed in 2014: Karner Blue Butterfly HCP; Fire Equipment Maintenance; IQS Updating Process; Public Safety Radio Inventory; and State Land Timber Sale Administration.

## School Forests Now In Every County

With the 2013 addition of a school forest in Waukesha County, Wisconsin's school forest program has school forests registered in every county of Wisconsin! The program now has 385 registered school forest parcels containing more than 27,000 acres.

Also in 2013, a community event in Laona celebrated the 85th anniversary of Wisconsin's first school forest. School forests were also established in Crandon and Wabeno later on that same day in 1928. On December 4, students of the Laona School District spent three hours in the snowy 80-acre school forest learning about the timber sale taking place there before joining a community celebration of the forest in the school auditorium.



*Students enjoy the 85th anniversary celebration of the Laona School Forest in December.*

## Partnership Funds Tree Planting In Brown County Communities

First Downs for Trees, a cooperative effort with the Green Bay Packers, the U.S. Forest Service, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and Wisconsin Public Service, completed a successful third year in 2013. One of the Packers' Green Team initiatives, the program donates trees to



*DNR secretary Cathy Stepp (middle) joined other dignitaries at a ceremonial tree planting to kick off the fourth season of First Downs for Trees, a partnership program with the Green Bay Packers.*

participating Brown County communities based on the number of first downs achieved by the Packers in the previous season. Two additional partners – Green Bay Packaging, Inc. and SCA – were added in 2013 to help fund the program's continuing tree planting work in 2014. Since 2010, First Downs for Trees has planted more than 2,000 trees, providing total lifetime benefits in excess of \$9 million through stormwater runoff reduction, CO<sub>2</sub> reduction, energy savings, air quality improvement and property value increase. Over their lifetime, the tree benefits exceed the costs of planting and care, representing a 300 percent return on investment. Tree benefits increase over time, highlighting the importance of not only planting trees, but of providing ongoing maintenance and protection.

## New Seedling Ordering System

An antiquated system was put to rest and replaced with a more efficient tree ordering program just in time for the start of fall 2013 tree seedling sales. The new program is more customer-friendly and a time saver for nursery staff as well.



*An improved ordering system makes it easier for the more than 360,000 individual families who own forestland in Wisconsin to purchase tree seedlings grown by the DNR nurseries.*

## INTERNET APPLICATION ASSISTS PRIVATE FORESTRY PROGRAM

The plan writing component of the Internet application known as WisFIRS Private Lands Management allows Certified Plan Writers and DNR staff to enter new tax law plan data and provides for an online DNR review process. This eliminates the need for DNR to re-enter that data multiple times, improves data quality through online checks and decreases the time needed for DNR to process plans. The plan document itself is a report printed from the data entered through WisFIRS.

The plan maintenance component of WisFIRS replaces an outdated application called Plantrac. DNR foresters will be able to edit all aspects of the forest plans (reconnaissance and practices data), track events and generate letters. All existing data, located on hundreds of desktops statewide, is being migrated to the WisFIRS Private Lands Management located in a centralized database. Where possible, the system will include screens to assist with the processing of transactions (e.g., splitting stands and practices on a transfer).

## Root, Root, Root For The Brewers

The state nursery program partnered with the Milwaukee Brewers' for a third consecutive year to distribute 7,500 white spruce seedlings to enthusiastic fans on May 1, 2013 as part of a tree planting awareness campaign. As part of the project, the Brewers also contributed funds to plant 56 trees along the Hank Aaron State Trail and 96 street trees within four communities near Miller Park.

## Vacancy Rate Reduced

The Division hired a talented class of 17 foresters and 10 technicians in 2013 to continue to better serve our customers and the forest resource. The Division will continue to reduce our vacancy rate in 2014. The class of 2013 is completing extensive training to better accomplish our work priorities.



*DNR nursery manager Jim Storandt had the privilege of throwing out the first pitch during the Milwaukee Brewers game featuring a DNR tree planting promotion.*

# CARING FOR WISCONSIN FORESTS

## EAB FOUND IN ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

In 2013, emerald ash borer (EAB) was found in six additional counties (Dane, Dodge, Douglas, Fond du Lac, Sauk, and Winnebago) and at four additional DNR properties (Harrington Beach State Park, Kettle Moraine State Forest-Northern Unit, Mirror Lake State Park and New Munster State Wildlife Area). Nineteen of Wisconsin's 72 counties now have known infestations.

The Douglas County detection in the City of Superior is about 120 miles from any other known infestation, and DNR has been working with the forest industry and other partners to address silviculture, transport, education and marketing concerns. At previously known infestations, aerial and ground surveys found that EAB impacts continued to increase in both rural and urban forests. Dramatic increases in tree mortality were observed at many sites, due to a rapid buildup of EAB populations aided by the 2012 summer drought. The thinning canopies of infested ash trees could be seen at many locations, most notably in southeast Wisconsin.



*The small emerald ash borer (actual size is smaller than a penny) can cause large damage.*

DNR worked with private landowners, communities and public land managers to detect EAB infestations, manage current infestations and prepare forests so that future impacts of the insect are reduced. Reducing EAB impacts can be accomplished through timber harvests, urban tree removals, insecticide treatment of high-value ash, and encouraging the growth of tree species not susceptible to EAB infestation. In addition, DNR continued to release natural enemies of EAB at multiple locations and to educate the public about the risks of spreading forest pests through firewood movement.

## New Model For Silviculture Guidance

In January 2013, the Council on Forestry supported a shift to a new model for developing and reviewing Silviculture Handbook revisions and other Department silviculture guidance. This new model uses a Silviculture Guidance Team (SGT) comprised of primarily external partners, as well as subject-specific Ad Hoc Teams, which include both DNR staff and external partners. The SGT met for the first in June 2013 in Black River Falls, setting the stage with an overview of Jack Pine management.



*External partners are now helping shape the Division's silvicultural guidance.*

## Annosum Guide

A guide to reduce the risk of the introduction of root rot was implemented on state lands in May, 2013. This risk-based guide determines whether a fungicide treatment is warranted at the time of harvesting. It was developed by the Division's Forest Health Team, working with internal and external partners and recommendations from the Council on Forestry. The guide is also available online for use by public and private landowners and property managers.

## Certification Audit Of County Forest Program

The 2013 Wisconsin County Forest program's Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) forest certification audits were a resounding success. The audit team issued numerous positive findings for the program, which they regard as a model for public forest management. The SFI audit resulted in no corrective action requests (CARs) for the third year in a row and the FSC audit resulted in no CARs, a first for the county program and both remarkable accomplishments according to the auditors.



## Feedback Sought For Future Direction Of State Nursery Program

The Department sought input from the public and staff on plans to broaden the scope of its reforestation program with a Request for Information (RFI). Recommendations resulting from the RFI highlight future opportunities and complement the existing nursery program which focuses on producing high quality, native stock at reasonable prices for conservation purposes for Wisconsin landowners.

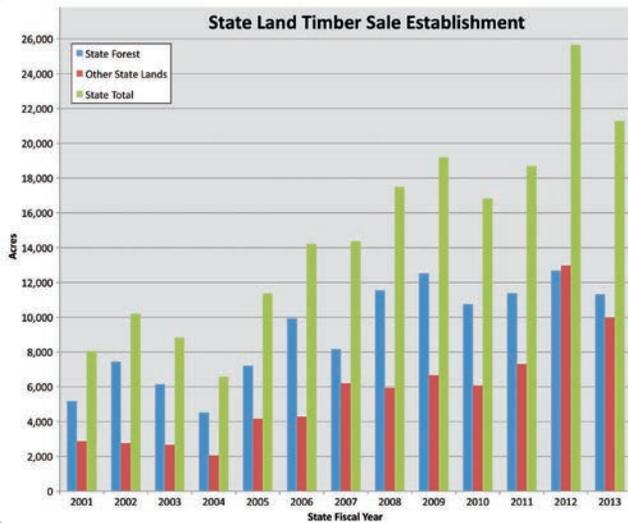
## Invasive Plant Management

Plans created in 2008 for each state forest outline priorities for the inventory, control, monitoring and education regarding invasive species. A 2013 inventory of northern state forest campgrounds and timber sales found new occurrences of invasive plants. Control work on buckthorn, barberry and garlic mustard was accomplished by hiring contractors. Training and education for staff and local schools on identification and management were also part of a multi-focused approach to invasive species management on our northern state forests.

## Master Plan Amended

The Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest (NHAL) and the Willow Flowage, located in Vilas and Oneida Counties, completed two significant master plan amendments in 2013. The NHAL amendment specified future use and management for appropriately 4,000 acres of land acquired since the plan approval in 2005. The Willow Flowage reviewed and modified public access with an amendment to provide additional access to motorized vehicles and ATVs during the fall season.

## UPDATED RECONNAISSANCE HELPS MEET TIMBER HARVEST GOALS



The Division of Forestry has made great strides in completing and updating forest reconnaissance data for Department lands over the past several years. Along with updated recon data came improved calculated allowable timber harvest goals and the Division has worked diligently to evaluate timber stands scheduled for harvest and to establish timber sales to meet economic, environmental and social goals.

As of January 1, 2007, 76% of the department's lands had recon data, totaling 1.1 million acres. Approximately 350,000 acres had no recon data and staff focused on acquiring this information over the next two years. Within two years, 99% of the department's lands had recon data, totaling nearly 1.5 million acres contained within more than 800 properties. The Division refocused recon efforts on updating data on forested stands with data older than 20 years, with a two year goal to eliminate recon over 20 years old on state forests and a five year goal to eliminate old recon on other department properties. Currently, state forests have essentially eliminated old recon data (less than 1% exceeds 20 years old), and on all department lands combined only 68,261 acres (4% of total) still have recon data in excess of 20 years old.

The Division and its county forest partners have also increased timber sale establishment levels over the past decade and are now at levels near the calculated long-term goals. Further, foresters are now working on the backlog of harvests called for in the state forest master plans.



# PROTECTING OUR FORESTS AND PEOPLE

## Video Focuses On Ember Awareness

In the shadow of the Germann Road Fire (see back cover for more information), a four-minute video was released to educate homeowners in Wisconsin's high risk fire communities about the danger of embers and potential for home loss. This message ties into the Great Lake Forest Fire Compact (GLFFC) wildfire prevention campaign for 2013-2014. A full media campaign on the topic of ember awareness is set to launch in April 2014.

## Recovery From 2011 NW Wisconsin Storm Continued

Fire prevention education, community planning, and fuels reduction activities continued in the area of northwest Wisconsin damaged by a 2011 storm. Projects completed in 2013 included radio spots, a newspaper insert, newspaper ads, posting fire danger signs, Town Firewise programs, the creation of brush collection sites, the creation of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Towns of Jackson and Webb Lake, and ongoing support for the removal of large brush piles in the area. Activities were supported with National Fire Plan grant funds acquired to assist with storm damage recovery and community awareness of the potential wildfire hazard that remains.

## New Teams Formed For Emergency Response

Wisconsin formed two interagency Type 2 Incident Management Teams (IMTs) in 2013. Made up of state, local and tribal personnel, these IMTs will be responsible for managing large, complex incidents resulting from floods, tornadoes, fires and hazardous material spills. The IMTs are receiving team training and are expected to be fully operational by June of 2014.

## Burning Permit Success

Burning permit issuance continues to improve through the usability of the online burning permit system. The Emergency Fire Warden workforce was reduced solely to businesses and DNR offices to create better efficiency through a web-based system. All business fire wardens are now listed by county on the DNR website for customers wishing to obtain permits in person. Customers self-issued 16,000 burning permits online or through Customer Service and Licensing agents over the phone (a 23% increase from 2012). Debris burning activity resulted in 700,000 web hits and phone calls to the daily fire restrictions webpage and hotline.

## Cooperative Fire Department Training

In 2013, 91 cooperative area fire departments were trained in various aspects of wildland fire suppression and management. A total of 1,509 firefighters were directly impacted through the efforts of four part-time instructors.

## Law Enforcement Training For Deputy Forest Rangers

Training for deputy forest rangers began in 2013 and the recruit rangers attended sessions on defense (not arrest) tactics, professional communications, situational awareness, timber theft, report/citation writing, court room testimony, fire related violations and tax law enforcement. Before being credentialed the recruits will need to attend training on constitutional law and the basics of interviewing. A dozen recruits are expected to be credentialed by the spring 2014 fire season. Deputy forest rangers will be able to issue civil forfeiture citations for common forestry violations such as burning without a permit, setting fire and failing to extinguish before leaving, basic timber theft, and tax law violations.

## FLIR Sensor Recon Exchange With Minnesota

Wisconsin DNR pilots provided assistance to Minnesota while demonstrating how the Forward Looking Infrared (FLIR) sensor can be used to observe large areas and/or many dispersed sites. Through the Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact exchange partnership, the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center requested the Wisconsin DNR Cessna 337 equipped with a FLIR sensor to recon hold-over fires from the fall of 2012. After looking at six fires that had burned more than 31,650 acres and flying 108 miles of fire perimeter, the WDNR pilots were able to report that no heat was detected on any of the areas.

## Division Outfits Trucks

The Forestry Equipment R&D Section, located in Tomahawk, completed and delivered 18 new law enforcement half ton trucks to staff. Several of the old trucks were converted to Type 8x engines and delivered to forestry staff to meet the needs of vehicle resource assignments per the Division's Strategic Direction. Ten new Type 8x engines were built and delivered and all 8x engines featured a new slip-on tank design with a removable pump platform that interchanges with 6x tanks. The Tomahawk shop also has 21 6x engines in production as well as preparing 11 new dozers and trailers for the Division.



## Germann Road Fire

The Germann Road Fire, our largest forest fire in 33 years, occurred on May 14, 2013 in the Town of Gordon (Douglas County), and caused extensive loss and damage to natural resources and structures. A formal After-Action-Review (AAR) will identify recommendations to improve overall program management, and develop 'lessons learned' for the benefit of sharing the successes of the incident so that others may learn from the experience.

The fire began around 2:45 p.m. and burned a swath nearly 10 miles long and a mile and a half wide consuming 7,442 acres before being declared contained on May 15 at 9 p.m. Dense pine, high winds and dry conditions contributed to the fire's rapid growth.

The Northwest District Incident Management Team was mobilized to manage the tremendous volume of responding resources, including both ground and aerial assets, to provide much-needed organization and support to the suppression effort. As a consequence of the teams' interagency make-up, the value of DNR's relationship with partners and cooperators proved hugely beneficial in the suppression of the Germann Road Fire. Through extensive training and preparation, the response and suppression of the fire involved a tremendous cooperative effort as DNR firefighters, local fire departments and numerous other federal and state agencies worked diligently together to suppress the fire, containing it in less than 30 hours.



## Largest Use Of Aircraft On Any Wisconsin Fire In History

Over the course of those two days, 14 separate aircraft were utilized in conducting the air attack of the fire, the largest use of aircraft on any fire in Wisconsin history. All air operations were conducted in accordance with Fire Suppression Handbook - Standard Operating Procedures resulting in an orderly and safe air attack.

Initial attack aerial resources consisted of a DNR fixed wing aircraft (Cessna 180) and a contracted Single Engine Air Tanker (AT 802). A second SEAT aircraft located at the Siren SEAT base was available but not immediately dispatched. A second DNR aircraft (Cessna 182) from Siren also responded to the fire as it became available. Through our Great Lakes Forest Fire Compact partnership, the Minnesota Interagency Fire Center was able to provide two Fireboss amphibious, water scooping aircraft and a lead supervisory aircraft (Cessna 310).

On the second day the DNR aircraft from Siren was again used. Resources from Ontario were requested and they provided a 'package' for one operational cycle consisting of a Bird-dog (lead) aircraft and two CL-415s. Additionally, the Wisconsin National Guard provided two Blackhawk helicopters equipped with buckets. The DNR FLIR aircraft, a Cessna 337 based in Oshkosh, was requested and flew a visual and infrared survey flight.



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