

Division of Forestry

*Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*

# 2015 Annual Report





## Wisconsin forests – and the Division of Forestry – hard at work for you.

*Thanks for your interest in the work of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Division of Forestry. On the following pages you'll see a few highlights from your investment in our work in 2015. While much of our day-to-day work is not highly visible, all of it provides important and valuable public benefits.*

*Many of our great accomplishments would not have been possible without the important partnerships we enjoy with our stakeholders including the forest industry, family forest landowners, consulting foresters, tribes, counties, fire departments, conservation organizations, communities and many others. In addition to working in partnership, the Division of Forestry continues to emphasize excellent service to our many customers.*

*In addition to focusing our efforts on our highest priority work, 2015 was a year in which the Division of Forestry worked closely with our federal partners in the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to lay out a course of action that has us out front nationally in implementing the newly expanded Good Neighbor Authority. This is enabling us to build on the good work of the USFS and increase the level of accomplishments on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest consistent with their approved management plan.*

*This would not have been possible without strong working relationships and support from the array of stakeholders involved in Wisconsin forestry. Also at the forefront nationally is our work on an urban forest inventory, recognizing the importance of Wisconsin's trees and forests throughout the state.*

*We still face many challenges maximizing the public benefits from the 17.1 million acres of forests in Wisconsin. However, we are confident that by working in concert with others in the forestry community, we can continue to effectively protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin's forests so that they provide the full array of benefits to all those who live, work, and play in Wisconsin.*

Sincerely,

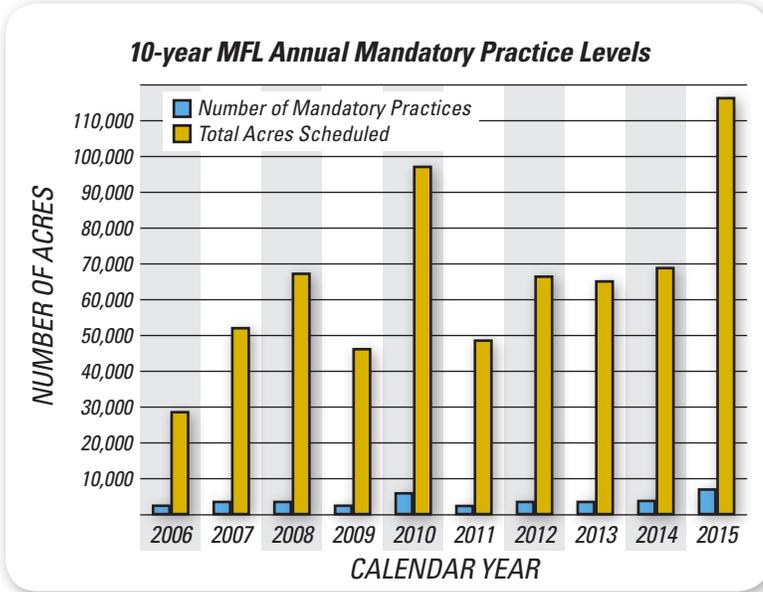


*Paul DeLong  
Chief State Forester*

2015

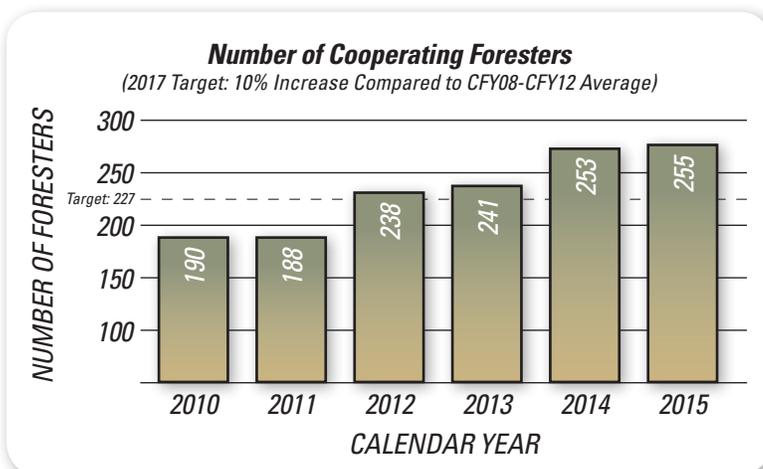
Wisconsin remains the number one paper producer in the nation, a position it has held for more than 60 years.

## A banner year for MFL mandatory practices



There were 7,130 individual mandatory practices scheduled for 2015 on 117,810 acres on Managed Forest Law (MFL) parcels, the highest number in the past five years. Mandatory practices are forest management activities consistent with sound forestry that must be carried out during the length of the MFL entry period (either 25 or 50 years). The most frequent mandatory practices are timber harvests. Others include commercial thinnings, site-preparation for regeneration, artificial reforestation, competition control, and controlling soil erosion. Landowners are notified two years in advance of mandatory practice due dates to give them time to arrange for completion of the practices. Each year, the list of mandatory practices is made publicly available for private-sector foresters, loggers, and wood-using industries to aid them in securing employment and procuring forest products.

The Cooperating Forester Program, started by DNR in 1989, continues to grow. Under this program, private consulting and industrial foresters voluntarily apply to participate and abide by DNR management guidelines. In return, DNR foresters exclusively refer private landowners seeking additional assistance to a cooperating forester. 🍂



## Measuring the benefits and value of our urban forest

Wisconsin will be the first state to implement a statewide urban forest inventory and is recognized nationally as a leader in this area. The first set of 75 Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (UFIA) field plots were established in the Madison and Milwaukee metro areas in 2015. By partnering with the federal government, Wisconsin is expanding the study area to include all U.S. census defined urban areas and clusters. Over the next six years, approximately 1,200 additional plots will be established across the state. The inventory was featured in the October 2015 issue of the *Wisconsin Natural Resources* magazine. 🍂



An urban tree canopy is part of a community's infrastructure, providing valuable environmental, economic and social benefits.



2015

Wisconsin's 29 individual county forests collectively represent the single largest public ownership in the state.

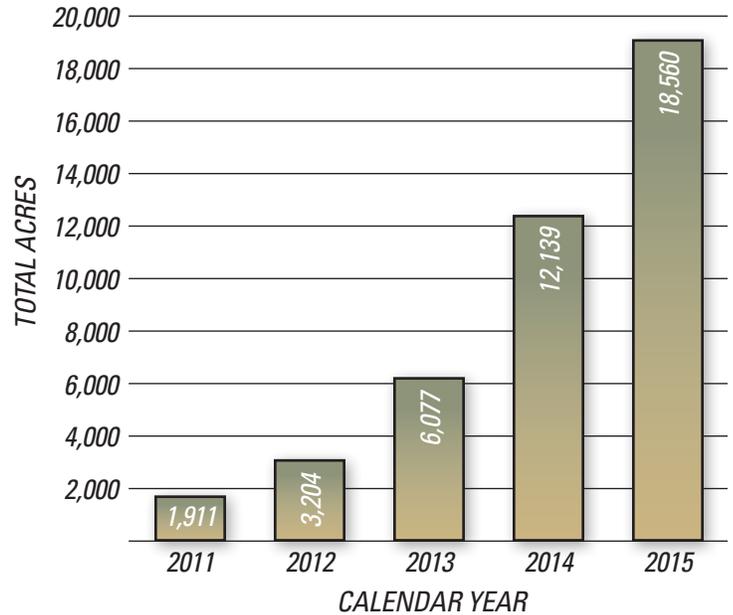
While county forest acreage represents only about 12% of total forested land in Wisconsin, timber harvests from county forests account for about 19% of all timber harvested in the state annually. Wisconsin's county forests sold 49,664 acres of timber sales in 2015, which equates to an estimated harvest volume of approximately 845,000 cord equivalents.

Wisconsin's county forest program is built upon a partnership, which is unique in the nation, between the state and participating counties. The Division of Forestry annually provides technical assistance that directly supports the management of nearly 2.4 million acres of county forest lands across the state.

## County forests continue to thrive with assistance from Division of Forestry

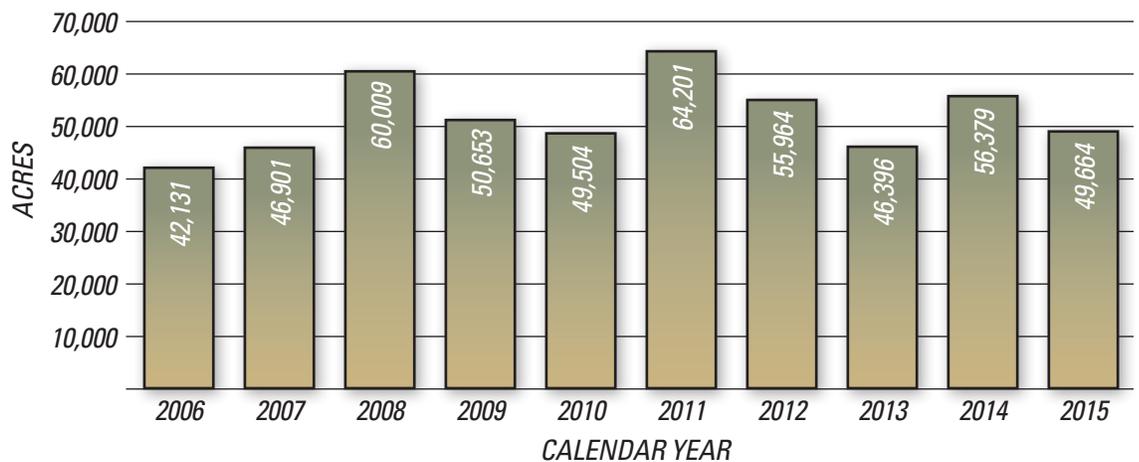
### Acres Purchased Using Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Fund

(Cumulative acres acquired, including county land leveraged to increase purchase power)



Division of Forestry staff has annually provided approximately 49,000 hours of technical assistance in each of the past 10 years that directly contributes to the accomplishments achieved by the county forests. 🍷

### County Forest Acres of Timber Sales Sold



## Wisconsin is a national leader using Good Neighbor Authority

In 2015 Wisconsin became the first state in the nation to implement a newly broadened authority to increase active management on America's federal forests. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF) and the Wisconsin DNR initiated a new partnership using the federal Good Neighbor Authority (GNA). This authorizes the U.S. Forest Service to enter into agreements with states to have them perform forest, rangeland and watershed restoration services (including timber sales).



*A DNR crew marking timber for the Waubee Lake sale on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest.*

For fiscal year 2015, the Division of Forestry facilitated the establishment, selling, and administration of 5,792 acres of timber sales (approximately 25 million board feet) on the CNNF. County forestry staff and consultants are assisting in this work.

As of December 1, 2015, 47% of the projects had silvicultural prescriptions written and submitted to the CNNF and 27% of the projects have timber sales established and are ready to be bid in mid-January. After more sales are established, the second timber bid sales opening will be in spring. ♣

2015

**Wisconsin DNR efforts will likely result in making the CNNF the top timber producing national forest in the country next year.**

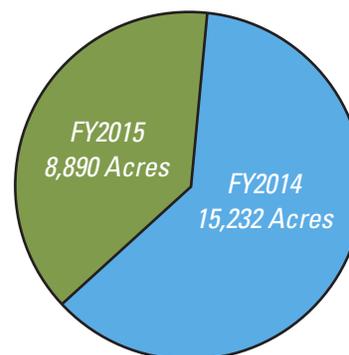
## State forest management is good for Wisconsin

The Department of Natural Resources owns and manages 1.5 million acres of land, of which approximately one million acres is forested. Managing the forest resources is a significant investment in department resources, but that investment has an even higher economic, ecological and social return. An annual return of approximately \$8 to \$10 million per year is realized in timber sale revenue alone.

Here are some 2015 highlights:

- Forest reconnaissance data on state forests is 100% up to date, providing accurate current conditions and providing the necessary data to provide predictable management scheduling.
- Timber sale backlog is well on pace to be eliminated in advance of management planning in 2016 to 2017, providing short and long term predictable harvest schedules.
- All lands scheduled for harvest are being evaluated for regeneration needs. Appropriate regeneration treatments are being scheduled and completed before and after harvests to ensure the desired conditions are achieved.
- Over the last several years the department has accomplished 5% of timber sale establishment using cooperating foresters with a goal of 10% by 2017. ♣

### Backlog of Regeneration Practices (2017 Target: 0 Acres of Backlog)





## Revised guidelines protect oaks from disease

Oak wilt, widespread in southern Wisconsin, moves from diseased trees to healthy trees through roots that have become interconnected, above ground by sap-feeding beetles or when firewood or logs from infected trees are moved. The fungal disease plugs up the water's path through the tree, causing the leaves to wilt and drop off the tree.



protect Wisconsin's valuable oak resource. The focus of the effort was to ensure the guidelines effectively protect the oak resource while minimizing impacts on forest operations.

Site-specific oak harvest guidelines are used in forested settings to address oak wilt. A revision of these guidelines was completed in 2015 to help

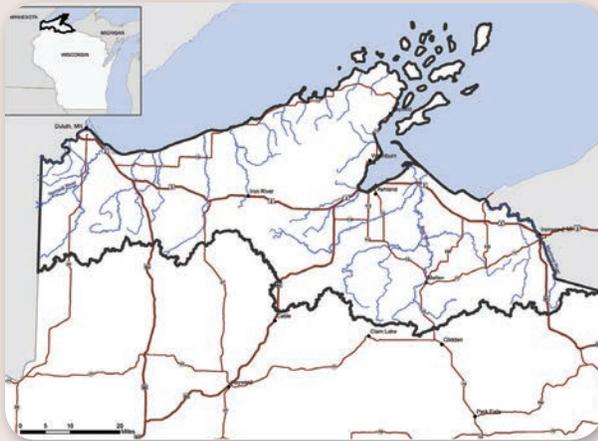
To accomplish this outcome, the oak harvesting guidelines were reviewed by committees with representatives from various affected stakeholder groups, including industry, government, landowners and non-profit groups. The revised guidelines take effect on January 1, 2016. ♣

Red oak species (most prone to oak wilt) are the third most productive species group in Wisconsin after aspen and hard maple.

## Partnership project helps Lake Superior landowners prepare for wildfires



The Division of Forestry is engaged in the Lake Superior Landscape Restoration Partnership, a collaboration between public and non-governmental agencies working collectively toward common goals on all land ownership types in the Lake Superior landscape.



*My Lake Superior Northwoods Program Area*

The partnership is using My Lake Superior Northwoods to reach private landowners in the basin with the goal to guide landowners into action that will benefit the species and areas that are identified as critical on the landscape.

As part of this effort, the Division of Forestry is working to develop a Community Wildfire Protection Plan for the Iron River area. This will engage area communities and landowners in valuable discussion and educate them about their risk of wildfire and how to be prepared. ♣

## Vilas did first fire detection flight 100 years ago

The nation's first fire detection flight was in 1915 in Wisconsin's north woods of Vilas County. This technique of spotting smoke and fire from aircraft is used all over the world today and is *the* most effective method. The Wisconsin DNR is proud to continue this tradition by still using aircraft with trained air attack pilots to patrol the skies. By utilizing this far-reaching detection method, fires are spotted early and kept small. The intelligence that was first demonstrated by Jack Vilas in 1915 is just as vital today as it was then. The eyes in the sky help protect not only the natural resources, but structures as well. 🍂



*DNR foresters visited with landowners at Farm Technology Days about the importance of fire prevention and defensible space around homes in fire prone areas.*



*As part of the 'ember awareness' campaign, television, radio, print, online and movie theater advertising ran throughout the spring targeting homeowners in fire prone areas with the message to reduce risk and minimize losses or damage associated with wildfires.*

## DNR helped fight fires in eight locations beyond Wisconsin

The Division of Forestry provided support throughout the fast-paced 2015 fire season that saw continued hot, dry, windy conditions across much of the west. DNR personnel assisted with 32 different out-of-state wildfire incidents in seven states (Alaska, California, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, Oregon, and Washington) and Manitoba. The fire suppression resources sent out of state included firefighting crews, engines, equipment, and overhead management personnel. Wisconsin supplies firefighting resources nationally through a wildland fire suppression agreement with the U.S. Forest Service that provides full reimbursement of all assistance provided by Wisconsin. The additional training and experience DNR staff members gain at out-of-state fires increases our ability to deploy effectively here in Wisconsin. 🍂

2015

**A proactive approach can prevent many wildfires since more than 98% of Wisconsin wildfires are caused by humans.**

### Number of Fire Adapted Communities

- FY2011 🍂 19
- FY2012 🍂 24
- FY2013 🍂 31
- FY2014 🍂 34
- FY2015 🍂 40

(Target Number: 42)



P. O. Box 7921, Madison, WI 53707  
 dnr.wi.gov (search keyword "forestry")

## Forestry staff learns about challenges faced by industry

Commercial markets for forest products provide more than 60,000 jobs throughout the state and provide economic benefits to Wisconsin's landowners for managing their forests. The Division of Forestry established a Forest Products Services Team in 2014 to support this important industry.

One of the team's 2015 projects was delivering nine workshops throughout the state to help foresters learn about the operational and economic considerations in each link of the forest products supply chain – from standing tree to logger to primary sawmill – and see firsthand what the industry is facing to compete in the wood products marketplace today. Robust conversations and questions between foresters, mill managers, and loggers helped all groups better understand their roles and needs in sustainable forest management.



The Forest Products Services Team fulfilled all of the 56 requests for assistance they received in 2015. ♣

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