



PESHTIGO RIVER STATE FOREST 2008 ANNUAL REPORT



2008 IN REVIEW

2008 was a normal year here on the Peshtigo River State Forest. In previous years, we have been busy working on our Master Plan, land acquisition deals, and drawdowns in addition to our daily operations. In 2008, we could focus on our day to day operations of maintaining facilities on the state forest, greeting visitors to our office, working on forest management, performing law enforcement, and various administrative tasks.

There are only 2 full-time employees at the state forest: Dan Mertz is the Forest Manager and Sara Pearson is the Ranger / Assistant Property Manager. Seasonal employees make up the bulk of the work force on the state forest. In 2008, we welcomed Jim Lentz back for his 3rd season on the maintenance crew. Bruce Konitzer joined our maintenance crew for his first year here. Luke Turner worked as a state forest ranger until July when he was hired permanently by the WI State Patrol. Mandy Kabacinski was hired in September and she worked with us as a ranger until the end of the deer season. Shane Staudenmaier and Nick Jensen both worked on forest management. Kathy Albert and

Jess Magerowski were new faces that worked in the office as visitor's services associates. We work everyday with the Gov. Thompson State Park staff: Maggie Kailhofer, Park Manager; Mindy Gruszynski worked in the office as a visitor's services associate; Adam Grisa and Brent Vreeke worked as state park rangers; and Paul Talaksa and Jim Lentz worked on park maintenance.

Looking forward to 2009, it will be a challenging year. No doubt you've heard about the projected \$5.4 billion state budget deficit. With a shortfall that substantial, we expect to see some cuts in our operating budget. A large amount of our operating budget goes towards vehicle charges, so we will try to drive less to cut costs. This may result in less frequent mowings and maintenance operations at the boat landings and the campground. Beginning in 2009, we have stopped plowing out Old Veteran's Lake Campground to cut down on our

costs. Lastly, we may not be able to hire as many seasonal employees as we normally hire.

In good news, in 2009, ground will be broken on our new visitor's center and maintenance buildings.



Seymour Rapids portion of the Peshtigo River

These buildings will be located in the Gov. Thompson State Park and will house both state park and state forest staff, as well as the local warden. Construction on the buildings is expected to begin in summer of 2009, and we expect to be moved in by the summer of 2010.

The state park and forest do contribute to the local and state economy. Besides providing areas for outdoor recreation, hunting, and relaxation, visitors that come to the park and forest patronize local businesses and establishments. Revenue received by our properties go directly into the general revenue fund that helps fund many state programs. Donations received on property directly support the property. The DNR makes a payment in lieu of taxes to the municipalities

PRSF Annual Meeting

March 10, 2009

6:30 - 8:30 p.m.

State Park and Forest Office

in which DNR owned land is located. In the area of timber harvests, the state forest had 3 Marinette County timber producers harvesting wood on the state forest: Wild Rivers, Wausaukee; Franks Logging, Peshtigo, and Pomeroy Forest Products, Crivitz. Income generated from timber sales does not go into the local state forest budget; rather it goes into the general forestry account for the State of Wisconsin. This account supports forest management activities throughout the state such as fire control, nursery operations, forest health initiatives, and many others.

The following pages will share what we accomplished during 2008. Comments on property operations are always welcome. We value your input concerning the management of your state forest. Please join us for our Annual Meeting on March 11, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m at our office, N10008 Paust Lane, Crivitz.



Eagle soaring over High Falls Flowage

FOREST MANAGEMENT UPDATE

In 2008, the first commercial timber harvesting began on the PRSF since our establishment in 2002. In the fall and early winter of 08/09, 5 different areas of timber were harvested on the state forest: along Parkway Road by Boat Landing #2, at the intersection of Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road, on Duch Lane, on the west side of the Fly Fishing Area, and in the northeast portion of the Fly Fishing Area. All of these harvest areas have been started, except for the Duch Lane sale which is completely harvested. So far, approximately 3000 cords have been harvested from 194 acres, with a value of about \$102,000. This amount of

wood would fill more than 200 semi trucks.

Timber is harvested as a means of practicing sustainable forestry which means forests are managed to provide ecological, economic, social and cultural benefits for present and future generations. Some of the benefits of sustainable forestry are public hunting and outdoor recreation areas and production of recurring forest products.

These harvest areas are typically a mixture of red pine plantations which are thinned to promote larger, healthier trees, and scrub oak/aspens areas which contain overmature, unhealthy trees. These old scrub oak and aspen trees are losing their ability to re-

generate, therefore these stands are clearcut in fall and winter when the trees are dormant, so that they have the best chance of sprouting from the roots and stumps in spring. In this manner, stands of young scrub oak and aspen will be created for wildlife habitat and future forest production. The harvested scrub oak will be used by loggers as firewood, pallet wood and pulpwood and the red pine will be used for lumber and pulpwood.

Particularly noticeable to the public are harvest areas along Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road where all the scrub oak trees were removed and all the branches were collected into large piles. The branches will be

ground up and hauled away for fuel. The forest management goal is to plant these areas to red and jack pine trees. Having the site clean will facilitate planting the trees. A herbicide may have to be applied to kill the brush. A goal of the state forest master plan is to convert 10% of the forest acreage to red and jack pine.

The public can expect to see several hundred acres of timber harvesting occurring annually at many locations on the state forest. Typically, timber sales are sold in the spring and fall, and cut during the fall and winter. For more specific information, contact the forest manager, Dan Mertz.

GOV. THOMPSON STATE PARK UPDATE



Construction is underway at the new Woods Lake Picnic Shelter



2008 showed progress at Gov. Thompson State Park. Over 80,000 visitors enjoyed hiking, fishing, boating, snowshoeing, and skiing at the park. The annual 9-day deer gun hunt was also well attended and successful. Visitors welcomed a new road from Woods Lake to Caldron Falls Flowage that opened in time for the July 4th weekend. This is the first time visitors were able to drive through and see the park. The old north entrance is closed and the only access to South Bay Landing (#13) is from our Ranch Road entrance. This did slow down the use of the boat landing, but visitors are starting to find it and are very happy to launch at a facility with concrete ramps, a boarding dock and restrooms. In

the fall of 2008, construction began on a new shelter on Woods Lake. The shelter will be available for rent for group parties and when not rented out will be available for day users and as a warming shelter for skiers and ice fishermen.

The park, with the help of our Friends Group, hosted several special events this year. In February we held our first annual Candlelight Ski & Hike. The weather was perfect and the event was well attended. In June we again held our annual State Parks Open House and much of the community stopped in for a cook-out lunch. In September we participated in the National Public Lands Day and had a morning of volun-

teers planting trees, followed by a Fall Color Hike and Geocache Hunt in the afternoon.

In 2009 we are expecting construction to start on the new visitor's center and family campground. The new campground will hopefully be open for the 2011 camping season.

Currently, the park is open 6am-8pm daily. Use of motorized vehicles, horses, and pedal bikes on the trails is prohibited. Visitors to the park will need to purchase either a daily or annual admission sticker at the park entrance. For more information check out our website at www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/specific/govthompson/ or call the park at 715-757-3979.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

As seasons change, so does our focus on maintenance work on the state forest. In the spring and summer, the crew keeps busy with maintaining the angler access roads and sites, 15 boat landings, Old Veteran's Lake Campground, canoe sites, sign and gate maintenance and many other various projects. In the fall, our work focuses more on trail maintenance and hazardous tree removal on trails and at the boat landings and campsites. In the wintertime, grooming the ski trails at

Spring Rapids, as well as plowing snow takes up the majority of our time.

Some special projects we worked on in 2008 was the installation of new fire rings at 9 sites at Old Veteran's Lake Campground. New fire rings with cooking grates replaced old fire rings that were cracked and posed a safety hazard. The remaining rings will be replaced at a later date. In addition, much needed work was done to our 10 canoe campsites to make

them more enjoyable for camping.

Large maintenance projects such as renovating a boat landing or building a horse campground will not take place for a number of years yet. Funding for this type of construction work takes years to plan and to be put into the Governor's budget. One project that is currently scheduled to receive funding in 2011 is the renovation of Boat Landing #9. Other projects we are hoping to receive



*Johnson Falls
Canoe Campsite*

funding for in the coming years are an indoor group camp, horse trails, and renovations to boat landings #5, #8, and the Bagley boat landing.

RECREATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Overall visitation to the PRSF seemed down in 2008. However, camping at Old Veteran's Campground was up approximately 10% from 2007. We sold 408 camping permits for a revenue of \$5900.50. The canoe campsites along Johnson Falls and the Peshtigo River also saw a significant increase in use during 2008. In 2009, camping fees will be raised by \$1.

2008 was a great year for skiing and the Spring Rapids

Trail System gets high use from area cross-country ski enthusiasts. In 2008, our annual candlelight ski and hike was held on February 9th. Turnout was poor, due to projected subzero temperatures and bitterly cold winds. This annual event is typically held on the 2nd Saturday in February.

In 2008, the rangers had 1327 law enforcement contacts, with 164 warnings and 23 citations issued. ATV

violations continue to be the most common violations on the state forest.

The 2008 hunting season was slower than in past years. Opening weekend saw morning temperatures below 0 and few reports of deer, and by the second weekend, rangers checked more ice fishermen than hunters.

The rangers assisted Marinette County Sheriff's Department on a number of

issues in 2008, including vehicle accidents, search and rescue efforts, cabin alarm investigations, and boating accidents.



*An illegal ground blind
found on the state forest.
Notice the freshly cut
branches.*

REAL ESTATE ISSUES

Each year, the DNR makes a payment to all municipalities where there is DNR owned land. This program is called "Payment in lieu of taxes" and the payments replace the property taxes that would have been paid if the property had remained in private ownership. The payment is made to the local taxing authority where

the property is located. These funds are to be distributed to its corresponding taxing jurisdiction, such as a school district, vocational school, county, state, or other special districts.

To find out how much your local municipality received in taxes, or for more information on this program, visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/realestate/pilt.html>.

The table represents 2008 payments made to local townships, and includes both GTSP and PRSF land.

If you are interested in selling your land to the DNR, please contact us at the state forest office. We are interested in buying from willing sellers of land within the PRSF project boundary.

2008 Payments

Town of Stephenson:
~ \$422,751.17

Town of Silver Cliff:
~ \$30,565.04

Town of Porterfield:
~ \$41,277.59

Town of Lakewood:
~ \$26,054.61

WISCONSIN DNR

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FOREST HEALTH UPDATE

Two exotic insects and one disease are of particular importance on the state forest. The two insects are the Emerald Ash Borer and the Gypsy Moth, and the disease is Oak Wilt.

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was discovered in WI for the first time in 2008 in the southeastern part of the state in and around Newburg. As a result Ozaukee, Washington, Sheboygan and Fond Du Lac counties are quarantined. The rest of WI is still believed to be EAB free. The upper peninsula of Michigan has EAB at scattered locations and the lower peninsula has severe problems, with millions of ash trees being killed. To prevent the spread of EAB infested wood, special fire-

wood restrictions exist in WI. This means that people visiting all state properties cannot possess firewood that originates more than 50 miles from the property, originates from a quarantined county, or originates outside the state. The location where firewood is most likely to be used is at Old Vet's Campground. We urge campers to purchase the firewood at the campground. This firewood is mostly oak which originated in the state forest.

In 2008, Gypsy Moth Caterpillars caused light to moderate defoliation of oak trees at various locations on the state forest. Three areas were sprayed to kill the caterpillars because these areas have high recreational value

or special forest regeneration concerns, and the egg mass counts in the fall of 2007 predicted a damaging caterpillar population. The sprayed areas were the Stephenson Town Park, Boat Landing 3, and a timber harvest area in the northeast part of the Fly Fishing Area. In all, about 198 acres were sprayed.

In 2009, Gypsy Moth populations are expected to collapse in most areas because of the build up of a certain virus and a fungus which kill the young caterpillars. Also, the extended cold winter weather may help to kill gypsy moth eggs. There is no spraying planned for spring 2009 on the state forest, but the state park will

spray about 128 acres of red oak trees where the new campground will be built in 2009 and 2010.

Another enemy of the scrub oak trees in the Town of Stephenson is Oak Wilt. This disease, along with Gypsy Moths, Two Lined Chestnut Borers, and drought are killing thousands of oaks every year on the state forest. The key to oak wilt management is prevention. This means that living oaks should never be damaged during the spring and summer when trees can be infected. On the state forest, oak wilt prevention is practiced by not cutting hazardous trees, not allowing firewood harvesting, and not conducting commercial timber harvesting from April 1st to October 1st.