Prairie River Restoration

Objectives:
Restore and enhance 0.5-1.25 miles of stream channel annually for smallmouth bass, sucker species, Wisconsin River warmwater species, and Prairie River coldwater species. This activity will take place in the former flowage basin of the Ward Papermill dam. The dam was removed in October 1999. This activity plans to start at the upstream end of the former flowage and work downstream. The channel will be shaped with a hydraulic excavator working in the stream. Large boulders and woody debris will be placed in the channel to provide cover. We will enhance the pool-riffle ratio and increase the diversity of microhabitats within the channel. The present channel left after dam removal is wide, flat, and shallow. The restored and enhanced channel will be a narrower and deeper channel with pools, riffles, and meanders. The site is about 2 miles from the Wisconsin River and will likely be colonized by the species found in the Wisconsin River that have been stopped by the former dam. Fish species expected to colonize the Prairie River in the project area include: Northern Pike, Muskellunge, Large Mouth Bass, Small Mouth Bass, Redhorse spp., Sucker spp., Walleye, Brook Trout, numerous forage and minnow species.

We plan to manage riparian vegetation by planting white cedar, soft maples, white ash, and white spruce trees on the banks to provide shade to the channel and habitat for non-game avian species. Native grasses, sedges, and wetland plants will be established on the stream banks and on any newly constructed current deflectors or islands. Wetland scrapes adjacent to the channel will be made to enhance habitat for amphibians, songbirds, furbearers, and waterfowl. Restoration of riparian areas and adjacent (small) wetlands is planned as is construction of osprey nesting platforms.

Accomplishments:
The 2-year project was completed and more than 2 miles of Prairie River stream channel had 1200 large boulders added, 7000+ trees and shrubs planted along the corridor, and 225 pieces of large woody debris placed in the channel. Six wetland scrapes were constructed along the river channel in the old flowage basin. One severely eroding bank was stabilized using a tracked excavator and 200 yards of rip-rap rock.