

Peshtigo River State Forest

2016 Work Plan

State forests are required to annually provide an opportunity for the public to provide input on property activities. In 2014, the Peshtigo River State Forest (PRSF) began utilizing an online format including a synopsis of the property's major work plan goals. This has replaced the public meeting we used to hold in late winter / early spring of every year. Annual work goals are tied to the property's master plan, which was approved by the Natural Resources Board in September 2007. The PRSF's master plan can be accessed online at <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/fr/FR0404.pdf>.

This work plan is divided into sections on forest management, development projects, recreation operations, real estate management, and staffing. All actions taken by the property are directly authorized under the property's master plan.

Lastly, two recent legislation items have affected the northern state forests, which include the PRSF. The first deals with increasing forest production area acreage, and the second deals with motorized access to plan. You can read about these two items below.

Forest Management

Forestry is one of the largest contributors to the state's economy accounting for \$22.9 billion dollars annually and the forestry industry provides more than 59,000 jobs statewide (2012 data). Wisconsin is the top state in the US in paper production and wood furniture manufacturing. Hitting closer to home, forestry is one of the top ten employers in Marinette County and it is the number 2 output in the county (output being the total value of the industry on the local economy).

The PRSF meets the highest standards for environmental quality in its forest practices, being dually certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). DNR resource managers in wildlife, fisheries, water quality, and endangered resources are actively involved in review of our timber sales.

In 2015, approximately \$236,340.24 in timber was harvested on the PRSF, and timber sale revenues are deposited into the general forestry account; they do not remain with the state forest. The general forestry account supports forest management activities statewide such as fire control, nursery operations, forest health initiatives, and many others.

The timber sale program has been very active on the PRSF in the past few years due to overdue forest management practices. Twice each year the state forest sells tracts of timber to loggers through a competitive bidding process. PRSF timber sales utilize improvement thinning and regeneration harvesting methods. An improvement thinning is where trees of poor health or form are removed to favor higher quality trees. A regeneration harvest is intended to assist regeneration already present or to make regeneration possible, often accomplished by removal of the majority of overstory trees. Sites

are assessed for successful regeneration periodically after harvest to ensure that the forest of the future is established. If adequate natural regeneration is not present, the sites are planted or seeded to an acceptable level.

For 2016, the following forest management activities are planned:

1. Timber Sales: In 2016, there could be up to 11 active timber sales occurring on the state forest. These 11 sales encompass 822 acres. Please review the timber sale map that accompanies this document for the locations of these sales. We will also be establishing new timber sales during 2016 to take place in subsequent years.
2. Forest Reconnaissance: The state forest maintains a database of forest conditions for every timber stand on the property. Information within this database is updated on a 20 year cycle in order to provide a snapshot in time of current characteristics of the forest including tree density, age, timber volumes, prevalence of invasive species, and others. This information is used to monitor and plan forest management practices. Since the PRSF is a relatively new property, our data is for the most part up to date; however we will continue to update stand information annually.
3. Forest Regeneration: Generally we rely on natural regeneration on the state forest to establish the next timber stand following a harvest. There are no plans to plant new trees on the PRSF during 2016. In 2014, approximately 61 acres of red, white and jack pine trees were planted around the Johnson Falls area, and we will continue to monitor their growth as well as evaluating new opportunities to plant in other areas throughout the state forest.

Forest Production Areas

Legislation was passed in 2015 requiring that all northern state forests, minus the Governor Knowles, have a combined 75% of their land classified as forest production areas (where the main objective is the sustainable production of forest products). Currently 66.3% of all state forest acreage is in forest production management areas. On the PRSF approximately 67% of the property is currently classified into a forest production area.

The remaining acres in state forests are classified into other land classification types such as native community, habitat management, recreation areas, and scenic management areas. While these classifications do allow forest management, the production of forest products is not necessarily the primary goal.

In 2016 the PRSF will work with other state forests to identify acreage that can have its classification changed to forest production management areas. The expected completion date for this is March of 2017.

Motorized Access Project

Legislation was passed in 2013 requiring the Department of Natural Resources to inventory and map all state owned roads within property boundaries. For the past two years the state has worked towards accomplishing this goal. In 2016 the state forest and all other state properties will release maps showing current road locations and conditions, and draft guidance on how Department roads will be managed for public comment. This is expected to occur in 2016 with final implementation planned for early 2017.

Invasive Species Management

Invasive species pose a serious threat to the integrity of forest ecosystems by displacing native species and negatively impacting forest regeneration. The PRSF recently completed an invasive species plan that outlines management strategies. Techniques used to control invasives include a combination of herbicide use, hand weeding, and the use of biological controls. The PRSF's specific goals for 2016 include:

1. Practice best management practices to prevent the spread of invasive species <http://www.wisconsinforestry.org/initiatives/other/invasive-species-bmps/forestry-bmps>
2. Monitor sites where invasives are most likely to be introduced.
3. Monitor European marsh thistle in the native communities and state natural areas found within the PRSF. In 2014, 145 acres of European marsh thistle was treated in the PRSF's 3 State Natural Areas: Kirby Lake, Johnson Falls, and Lack Lackawanna.
4. Monitor and control Eurasian honeysuckle. In 2014, this invasive plant was treated on approximately 2 acres near Boat Landing #8, and we will continue to monitor this area and likely complete follow-up treatment in 2016.
5. Monitor and control buckthorn. In 2014, this invasive plant was hand-pulled in an area off of Eagle Road, and will be monitored in 2016. Additionally, buckthorn was discovered in a very large area off of Bagley Road in the Town of Porterfield.
6. Monitor and control Japanese Barberry. In 2013, this invasive plant was treated in an area off of Meeders Lane. We will continue to monitor and treat this area as needed.
7. Monitor and control Japanese Knotweed. In 2013, this invasive plant was treated in an area near the High Falls Dam. We will continue to monitor and treat this area as needed.

Capital Development Projects

Capital development is the system within which the WI DNR develops, maintains and improves its facilities (i.e. boat landings, roads, campgrounds, buildings, etc...) at WI DNR properties across the state. These projects generally cost more money than the PRSF's general operating budget can manage, so the project is funded from a variety of state and sometimes federally funded sources. This is a competitive process, as the PRSF competes with all DNR programs for capital development funding, which is limited.

2016 will see the completion of some much needed repairs to 2 boat landings that are in poor condition, as well as another minor improvement to another boat landing. Each project is described below:

1. **Boat Landing #5 Improvements:** This boat landing will receive a complete redesign during 2016. It was anticipated this landing would be renovated in 2015, but due to construction issues, it was delayed until 2016. The boat landing will be closed and not available for use during the renovation. At the time of writing, June 30, 2016 is the scheduled completion date of the boat landing. The improvements will include a dual concrete launch ramp, accessible boarding dock, vault toilet, paved parking for 17 car / trailers, and 8 cars. There are future plans to develop an overflow parking lot to the south of the landing to accommodate approximately 20 additional car / trailers; however the development of the overflow parking lot is unknown at this time.
2. **Boat Landing #14 Improvements:** This boat landing will receive much need improvements to the landing. Specific improvements include a paved ADA car / trailer stall, paving in front and around the ramp, replacing rip rap along the sides of the ramp, and resurfacing the entire access drive. This landing will also be closed and not available for use during the renovation.
3. **Boat Landing #8 Retaining Wall:** The retaining wall along the shoreline of the boat landing will be replaced in 2016. The current wall is in very poor condition, and shoreline erosion is apparent. The wall will be replaced and site grading will be done to prevent further shoreline erosion.

Property and Recreational Operations:

Maintaining the state forest keeps staff busy all seasons of the year with the following:

- Campsite maintenance: maintaining Old Veteran’s Lake campground and its facilities, hazard tree removal, maintaining 18 canoe and boat-in campsites
- Boat landing maintenance: regular mowing and litter pick-up of 15 boat landings, road grading as needed, hazard tree removal
- Trail maintenance: trail mowing and brushing, hazard tree removal, regular grooming of the cross-country ski trails during the ski season
- Day use area maintenance: maintaining picnic areas, beach areas, and fishing piers
- Signs and gates installation and upkeep
- Office and shop maintenance and upkeep: building maintenance, snow plowing, mowing

Real Estate Management

Currently, the PRSF has no plans to purchase any property, however we are always interested in purchasing real estate from willing sellers at fair market price. Any potential purchase must meet a series of stringent criteria to assure that limited acquisition dollars are spent on the best parcels for conservation.

The state forest continues to work on clearing up property line conflicts, encroachments, and trespass issues with neighboring landowners.

Partnership Work:

The state forest works with numerous partners every year to meet mutual goals. The following are partners, agencies or issues the PRSF collaborates with:

1. Cultural Resource Protection: Each year, the PRSF provides a map of planned timber sales and our annual work plan to the Cultural Resources staff of the Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Preservation staff are provided the opportunity to comment on any sale and capital development project that could adversely impact important cultural resources.
2. Wisconsin Public Service Corporation: Annually, the WI DNR and WPSC consult on proposed land and wildlife activities, land disturbing activities, any variances from the 200-foot no cut zone, and discuss any new, threatened or endangered occurrences.
3. Governor Thompson State Park: The state park and forest share their offices, facilities, and sometimes staff. Sharing offices and facilities is more efficient and cost-saving than having separate facilities. We are the only state park and state forest in Wisconsin that share their facilities. Sharing staff allows us to accomplish more goals and work plans. Additionally, we each offer complimentary experiences to our visitors to give a wide variety of nature-based experiences.
4. Regional ATV Trail Networks: The WI DNR supports the development and maintenance of ATV riding opportunities that contribute to regional trail networks. The PRSF will continue to work with US Forest Service, Marinette County, local units of government, and local ATV clubs to evaluate potential trail connectors.

Staffing Update

2016 will bring some staffing changes to the permanent staff on the state forest:

- Lucas Vold, the state forest forester, left the WI DNR to pursue a career in the private forestry field. In March 2016, Derek Nellis transferred into the state forest forester position.
- Sara Pearson, the forest superintendent, has taken a new position with the WI DNR and will be moving to Woodruff, WI in April 2016. At the time of this writing, a new superintendent has not been hired; however any questions on the state forest can be answered by the staff at the state forest, 715-757-3965.

Comments

Comments on the 2016 Peshtigo River State Forest Work Plan will be accepted until April 8, 2016.
Comments can be directed via phone, mail or e-mail to:

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