



Peshigo River State Forest 2009 Annual Report

2009 IN REVIEW, 2010 PREVIEW

2009 was an eventful and challenging year for the Peshtigo River State Forest (PRSF). In October, construction began on our new visitor center and maintenance shop. The buildings will be located in the Gov. Thompson State Park (GTSP) and will house state park and forest staff, as well as the local conservation warden. Howard Immel Construction from Green Bay is the contractor, and we expect to be moved into our new buildings by the fall of 2010. Construction of the buildings are on hold during the winter, but once spring rolls around it will resume.



Construction crews looking over our new visitor center, which will be located along Paust Lane in the state park

2009 was a challenging year for Wisconsin and the

rest of the nation as we all struggled under a severe economic depression. The biennial state budget that passed in June was very difficult, given that Wisconsin has a \$6 billion deficit. This resulted in program and personnel cuts within the DNR. The PRSF saw it's operating budget cut, but we are determined to providing the same services to our visitors. One major area within the DNR that saw severe cuts was the customer service program. Most DNR service centers (including Peshtigo and Green Bay) have significantly reduced hours. To continue to offer quality customer service, the DNR has a new toll free number for the public to call with questions (1-888-936-7463), as well as an online chat available on our website, dnr.wi.gov. 2010 will be equally, if not more challenging, as budgets are reduced further.

Looking ahead to 2010, some projects we are looking forward to are the completion of our new visitor center and maintenance

shops, additional timber sales, the installation of a solar-powered drinking fountain at Old Veteran's Lake Campground, and the completion of renovations to the Bagley Boat Landing.

Property Staff

The two full-time employees on the state forest are Dan Mertz, forest manager, and Sara Pearson, ranger / assistant property manager. Our seasonal employees make up the majority of our work force and for who we owe many thanks for their hard work and dedication. 2009 saw many new faces. Tadd Hackbarth joined us as a seasonal ranger and also worked with the maintenance crew. Scott Kamps and Steve Beattie joined us for their first year on the maintenance crew. Jim Lentz returned for his 4th season on our maintenance crew. Kathy Albert returned for her second year as a visitor services associate, and we welcomed Molly Swenty in her first year as a visitor services associate. The Gov. Thompson State Park staff works daily with us: Maggie Kailhofer, park manager;

Upcoming Events

~ **Annual Meeting**,
3/16/10, GTSP and
PRSF office, 6:30
p.m

Stephen Kessler, park ranger; Mindy Gruszynski and Kathy Albert, visitor services; Brian Hutson, Rachel Brown, James Giede, Jim Lentz and Paul Talaska, maintenance crew; and Kylie Schildt was a summer intern in 2009.

We value your input concerning the management of your state forest. Comments on property operations are always appreciated. Please join us for our Annual Meeting on March 16, 2010, 6:30. p.m. at our office.



FOREST MANAGEMENT UPDATE

In 2009, a large amount of timber was commercially harvested on the PRSF. Approximately 8000 cords of wood were harvested from 330 acres, with a value of about \$340,000.00. This amount of wood would fill about 650 semi trucks. The timber producers who harvested this wood are Wild Rivers Forestry, Wausaukee; DeLaet Enterprises, Wausaukee; Franks Logging, Peshtigo; and Pomeroy Forest Products, Crivitz. The majority of the timber that was harvested was scrub oak, which is sold by the loggers as firewood, pallet wood, and pulpwood.

The areas where timber was harvested in 2009 are Bass Bay (on High Falls Flowage), the Fly Fishing

Area (both sides of the river), and at Bagley Flowage. These harvest areas are a mixture of red pine plantations which are thinned to promote larger, healthier trees, and scrub oak/ aspen areas which contain

overmature, unhealthy trees which should have been clearcut many years ago. These old scrub oak and aspen trees are losing their ability to regenerate, 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 generation of income for the state is not the reason timber is harvested, although this income is a useful outcome of good forest management. Rather, 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 soil protection, outdoor

recreation, protection of water quality, production of recurring forest products, native biological diversity, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, and aesthetics. Income generated from timber sales does not go into the local state forest budget. It is deposited into the conservation fund.

Looking ahead through the year 2010, more timber harvesting on the PRSF will occur. Some areas where harvesting is planned for 2010 are Johnson Falls Road, Seymour and Spring Rapids, near High Falls Dam, near the Potato Rapids Dam, and in the Boat Landing 12 area. For more specific information about forest management, contact Dan Mertz.

FOREST HEALTH UPDATE

Two exotic insects and one introduced disease are of particular importance on the PRSF. The two insects are Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) and Gypsy Moth, and the disease is Oak Wilt.

In 2008 there was only one known location of EAB in WI. In 2009, EAB was discovered in more locations, including Vernon and Crawford Counties (SW WI), and Brown and Milwaukee Counties. The upper peninsula of Michigan has EAB at scattered locations and the lower peninsula has severe problems, with millions of ash trees being killed. In WI, thousands of large purple traps were hung throughout the state to catch EAB adults and discover where they are located. Traps were visible on the PRSF in 2009, but fortu-

nately no EAB adults were found. Ash trees are uncommon on the PRSF's sandy upland soils, but the lowland soils have abundant black ash that is threatened by EAB.

To prevent the spread of EAB infested wood, special firewood restrictions exist in WI. This means that people visiting the PRSF cannot possess firewood that originates more than 50 miles from the forest or originates outside the state. The location where firewood is most likely to be used is at Old Veteran's Lake Campground. Campers must follow the firewood restrictions at Old Vet's. We urge campers to purchase firewood locally.

In 2009, Gypsy Moth caterpillars caused light to moderate defoliation of oak trees at various locations on the PRSF. High populations were reported at some loca-

tions in the southwest part of the Town of Stephenson and the Crooked Lake area. The only state land which was sprayed in 2009 was 128 acres in GTSP where the campground is being developed. No spraying is planned for 2010 on either the PRSF or GTSP. Generally, the only areas of state land which are sprayed for Gypsy Moths are high recreational value areas which have a high enough population of moths to cause significant weakening of the trees. Since the PRSF and the Town of Stephenson are prime Gypsy Moth habitat (lots of scrub oak trees) we can expect that every year there will be areas of building caterpillar populations, and areas where the population is declining. Fortunately, natural controls such as a virus and a fungus which are present in the for-

est are doing a pretty good job of preventing large scale Gypsy Moth population buildups.

Another serious enemy of the scrub oak trees in the PRSF and 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. 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 PRSF, oak wilt prevention is practiced by not cutting hazardous trees, pruning oak trees, allowing firewood harvesting, or conducting commercial timber harvesting where oak is present from April 1st to October 1st.

PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

Maintenance on the forest's 15 boat landings, family campground, canoe sites, trails, and angler access roads are our top priority, even as we face fiscal challenges. In addition to regular maintenance, we added some additional amenities for our visitors to enjoy.

At Old Veteran's Lake Campground, we added a trail from the campground to High Falls Flowage, called Sweet Fern Trail. It features a bench on the shores of High Falls. Several more benches were

added at Boat Landings #1 and #2, on the shore of Old Vet's Lake, and along the Big Oak Trail at Spring Rapids. Other projects the maintenance crews worked on include adding more toilets to the canoe campsites, trail maintenance and signing at the Spring Rapids Trail System, gate installation, and making firewood for the camp-



New bench along the Big Oak Trail overlooking the river

ground. Additionally, a contractor was hired to make repairs to the Medicine Brook and Seymour Rapids roads.

One major project that was worked on in 2009 was the renovation of the Bagley Boat Landing on Bagley Flowage in the Town of Porterfield. The flowage was drawn down in the fall of 2009 to make repairs to the dam. The drawdown provided an opportune time to make repairs to the launch.

Marinette County Highway Department was contracted to do the renovation. There will be some finishing work to be completed in the spring of 2010, as well as the installation of a new boarding dock, but the work should be completed in the spring of 2010. In addition, WI DNR fisheries crews worked with the highway department to excavate some of the old railroad bed in the flowage that was a navigation hazard to boaters. A picnic table and fire ring were also installed at the landing.

RECREATION AND LAW ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

The PRSF offers a wide variety of recreation. From snowmobiling and cross-country skiing, to hunting and camping there is something for everyone to enjoy all seasons of the year. There isn't enough room to cover each type of recreation, so we'll just highlight a few.

Camping visitation at Old Vet's campground was up 22% in 2009 from 2008. Since 2006, when we took

over the campground, use has gradually increased every year. Use also increased in 2009 at our canoe campsites. Visitors to our website will find we have added specific canoe campsites maps and information to our webpages.



What you may encounter along the PRSF's trails

2009 was another great year for cross-country skiing at the Spring Rapids Trail System. Good snow conditions meant we were able to keep the trails groomed from early December '08 to mid-March of '09. We held our annual candlelight ski on February 14th and had a great turnout.

In 2009, rangers had over 1,553 law enforcement contacts with the public, resulting in 195 verbal warnings and 23 citations. Boating and fishing violations were the most common violation on the PRSF.

If you haven't visited our website, please do. You can find maps and more specific information on the forest. <http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/StateForests/SF-Peshtigo/>

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 had the property remained in private ownership. The payment is made to the local taxing authority

where the property is located. These funds are 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 pro-

gram, visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/realestate/pilt.html>. The table represents 2009 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.

2009 Payments

Stephenson ~ \$373,809.74
Silver Cliff ~ \$18,014.49
Porterfield ~ \$36,004.65
Lakewood ~ \$36,151.69

Wisconsin DNR

Peshtigo River State Forest
N10008 Paust Lane
Crivitz WI 54114

Phone: 715-757-3965
E-mail: Dan.Mertz@Wisconsin.gov
Sara.Pearson@Wisconsin.gov

Visit our webpage:
[http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/
StateForests/SF-Peshtigo/](http://dnr.wi.gov/forestry/StateForests/SF-Peshtigo/)

GOV. THOMPSON STATE PARK UPDATE

We started the major construction projects at Gov. Thompson State Park in 2009. Ground was broken for the visitor center and for the first phase of the new campground. Construction on the new campground road is continuing through the winter. The new campground will hopefully be open for the 2011 camping season.

In spring of 2009, construction ended on our new shelter/pavilion on Woods Lake. The shelter is available for rent for group par-

ties and when not rented out, will be available for our day users and as a warming shelter in the winter for skiers and ice fishermen.



The new fishing pier at Boat Landing #13

In July we installed our new fishing pier on Caldron Falls. The pier has been a wonderful addition to our boat launch facilities. In October, our staff completed a vista overlooking Huber Lake and Thunder Mountain off of the Sunset Trail.

Over 34,000 visitors

enjoyed hiking, fishing, boating, snowshoeing, and skiing at the park. Our 6 miles of groomed ski trail was well received as we had good snow cover all season. At the request of our visitors, we opened a 2.5 mile packed snowshoe trail, and we opened a ¾ mile more difficult, hilly section of ski trail. The annual 9-day deer gun hunt was also well attended this year with many deer taken off the park. The park again with the help of our Friends Group, hosted several special events this year. In February we held our second annual Candlelight Ski & Hike. The weather was a little cold but the event was well attended. In June we again had our

annual State Parks Open House and much of the community stopped in for a cook-out lunch in the new shelter. In September we held a Fall Color Hike and Geocache Hunt. Many geocache teams participated in the event.

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.

