

Peshigo River State Forest 2006 Annual Report



Winter 2006

2006 in Review

Upcoming Master Plan Meetings

- March 20th - DNR Regional Office, Green Bay, 4-7 pm
- March 21st - Stephenson Town Hall, 4-7 pm

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2006 was another landmark year on the Peshigo River State Forest. The state forest staff stays busy year round dealing with a variety of issues ranging from forest management, master planning, law enforcement, property maintenance, and various administrative tasks. Several of these topics are discussed further in this document.

The state forest welcomed several new and returning staff in 2006: Paul Craney and Joni Kelnhofer returned for their second seasons, and Jim Lentz joined us for his first year. These 3 worked hard during the year on property maintenance. We welcomed Garrett Meader as a state forest ranger who did law enforcement patrols, as well as property maintenance. Katie McMahan and Kristin Shy were new faces that worked on forest management. Betsy Wickman joined us new this year working in the office as a visitor services associate, greeting customers and working on various office projects. Dan Mertz is the Forest Manager and Sara Pearson is the Ranger / Assistant Property Manager.

The Gov. Thompson State Park staff helped us out frequently to which we thank: Maggie Kailhofer, park manager; Israel Deutsch, park ranger; and Joan Stillwell, visitor services.

One of the biggest issues state forest staff dealt with in 2006 was the Peshigo River State Forest Master Plan. This was a monumental task for the staff involved, as time is spent writing the plan, attending and hosting meetings, and field work for the plan. This topic is discussed in more detail on page 6.

Another significant issue in 2006 was in October, the WI DNR and Marinette County entered into a mutual land trade that benefited both the state and county. As a result, Marinette County took over ownership of Twin Bridge County Park and the WI DNR took over management and ownership of Old Veteran's Lake Campground.

Old Vet's has been owned and operated by Marinette County since 1967. With this land trade, Old Vet's will provide the state forest with a ready-made camp-

ground that is contiguous with other PRSF property. Under DNR ownership, visitors to the campground will not notice much of a difference in the day-to-day operation except that slightly different rules and fees are in place, and under state ownership the campground will be open year-round.

Twin Bridge County Park was a Wisconsin Public Service property which had been leased to, and operated by Marinette County for over 40 years. Purchased by the DNR as part of the PRSF meant Marinette County would be leasing from the state. State and county authorities agreed that turning Twin Bridge over to Marinette County in exchange for Old Vet's fit nicely into the future plans of both.

As part of that same land trade, the state forest picked up 120 acres of county forest land in 3 separate 40 acre parcels. These parcels are located along Parkway Road and Johnson Falls Road.

The following pages will share what we accomplished in 2006, and highlight some of our goals for 2007. Comments on property operations are always welcome at our office. We value your input concerning the management of the forest.



First hints of autumn on Old Veteran's Lake

Forest Management Update

In accordance with WI Statute 28.04, state forests are managed for a variety of recreational opportunities, timber management, aesthetics, watershed protection, and habitat for a variety of plant and animal species.

The year 2006 saw the first commercial timber sale sold on the forest since it came under state ownership. The sale was established by LTE Foresters Katie McMahan and Kristin Shy. Through the process of competitive bidding, the 84-acre timber sale was sold to a timber producer from Marinette County. This particular tract contains an estimated 1300 cords of pulpwood and saw logs, and is a combination of thinning planted red pine and clearcutting declining scrub oak. To increase the diversity and productivity of the forest, some of this harvest area will be planted to red and jack pine after the

harvest. Overall, increasing the pine acreage is a goal for the entire state forest which is only about 12% pine now.

Looking ahead, at least two more timbers sales will be sold, and more sales will be established to be sold in 2008. Presently, LTE Foresters Bruce Henderson and Nick Jensen are establishing timbers sales in the Fly Fishing Area and the Potato Rapids Flowage Area. Both of these sales contain overcrowded red pine plantations which will be thinned, and overmature aspen or scrub oak which will be clearcut.



Hiking and Cross Country Ski Trails at Spring Rapids

All timber sales are carefully

evaluated to be sure that the preferred prescription is being applied, water quality and aesthetics are being considered, endangered resources are being protected, and wildlife habitat is being provided. Timber harvested from state forests is "certified" which means that we are growing recurring crops of timber and making all of the above mentioned ecological considerations. Forest certification helps Wisconsin remain competitive in global markets that increasingly demand certified raw materials.

For more specific information regarding timber harvesting on the state forest, contact the forest manager, Dan Mertz.

Does the DNR pay taxes on it's land?

Yes, we do! Each year the DNR makes a payment to all municipalities where there is DNR land. This is called payment in lieu of taxes, and they are equal to property taxes that would have been paid had the land remained in private ownership.

The dollar amount sent to each municipality is dependent upon the number of acres of land the DNR owns, and the time of acquisition. State Statute 70.113 deals with land that was acquired by the Department before July 1, 1969, and on land acquired after July 1, 1969 and prior to January 1, 1992. State Statute 70.114 applies to those lands purchased from January 1, 1992 to present. This is the category the PRSF falls into.

Here's how the program works: property acquired by the DNR comes off the tax roll, and in lieu of the loss of tax base, each taxing jurisdiction received an aid payment equivalent to property taxes. Under State Statute 70.11, a payment is made directly to a municipality (city, town or village) and

then these funds are to be distributed to its corresponding taxing jurisdiction, such as a school district, vocational school, county, state or other special districts.

The only difference between the DNR aid-in-lieu-of-tax program and private land relates to assessed value. To avoid the need for local assessors to continually assess DNR property and for the DNR to review and possibly appeal assessments, the initial assessed value is set at the DNR purchase price of the property, which is based on appraised fair market value. Subsequently, this value is adjusted to reflect the change in the assessed value of land in the taxation district.

This process means that the DNR pays a fair share of aid on all lands. There is no loss of property tax revenue in the taxation district due to DNR ownership. In fact, because the purchase price is often higher than equalized assessed value, the DNR payment is often greater.

The chart below lists the payments made to each municipality in 2006, and includes the Gov. Thompson State Park and the Peshtigo River State Forest.

For more information on this program or to find out how much your local municipality receives, please visit the DNR website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/facilities/pilt/index.html>.

<u>2006 Payments</u>
<u>Town of Stephenson</u>
\$377,485.78
<u>Town of Silver Cliff</u>
\$27,055.41
<u>Town of Porterfield</u>
\$37,173.90
<u>Town of Lakewood</u>
\$26,510.67
TOTAL PAYMENTS
\$468,225.76

Invasive Plants and Pests on the PRSF

Invasive plants and pests are spreading in Wisconsin and the PRSF is no exception. Invasive plants and pests are species that are not native and have negative effects on our economy, environment and human health. Allowing these pests to spread unchecked has serious consequences for the ecological and economic health of Wisconsin's forests.

In 2006, a survey was done to inventory the invasive plants found on the PRSF. In total, 28 exotic species were observed on the property. Many of the species observed are not of great concern at this time because they are not in a position to become troublesome.

The species of great concern that will have a high impact on native vegetation include: **Leafy Spurge**, **Spotted Knapweed**, and **Non-Native Honeysuckles**.

Leafy Spurge is the widespread yellow flowered plant commonly seen along ditches and open areas throughout the PRSF. This species has a deep and vigorously sprouting root system and spreads aggressively, displacing native vegetation and reducing grass-land diversity. This species is a problem for land owners and managers, as areas infested with leafy spurge are unpalatable to animals, decrease forage production and damage property values.



Leafy Spurge

Spotted Knapweed is a thistle-like purplish flower found in open areas. This species invades open sites with well drained soils, and has become a serious problem on



Spotted Knapweed

range and pasture land where livestock will not eat it. It chokes out native plants and reduces diversity. It can also reduce the water-holding capacity of soil, as result sedimentation and runoff often increase in areas infested with spotted knapweed.

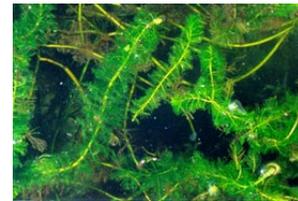
Non-Native Honeysuckles are one of the most common invaders of Wisconsin's forest communities. It is a woody shrub with pink to crimson flowers. These shrubs spread rapidly, and grow in dense thickets. Honeysuckle infestation reduces species richness and density in forest communities and negatively impacts tree seedling establishment.



Bell's Honeysuckle

Methods of control and removal of leafy spurge, spotted knapweed, and honeysuckle vary. Mechanical control (hand pulling or digging) may be effective if the entire root system is destroyed but may not be practical for large stands. Biological controls (insects or animals that feed on the plant) can also be effective, but many are in the experimental phase. Chemical control (herbicides) can also be effective, but may be temporary or the chemicals used can have adverse consequences due to their potency. For more information on the control and removal of invasive plants, and to learn more about species that are threatening Wisconsin please visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/>.

The forest isn't the only area threatened by invasive species, our waters are too! **Eurasian Water Milfoil** is an aquatic invasive plant that is commonly found in both High Falls and Caldron Falls. It has slender stems whorled by submersed feathery leaves. Stands of this species threaten the integrity of aquatic communities by disrupting predator-prey relationships by fencing out larger fish, reducing the number of nutrient-rich native plants for waterfowl, and inhibits recreational activities like swimming, fishing and boating.



Eurasian Water Milfoil

Hand pulling is an effective control method for small colonies. A herbivorous weevil is known to feed on the plant, and 12 lakes in Wisconsin are part of a DNR project to study it's effectiveness on the Eurasian Milfoil populations.

Zebra Mussels were observed in nearby Lake Noquebay in 2006. It is a tiny bottom dwelling clam with a yellowish or brownish D-shaped shell. Once they are established in a body of water, very little can be done to control them. Zebra mussels feed by drawing water into their body and filtering out the plants, animals, and debris for food. This results in a higher water clarity and a depleted food supply for other organisms. The higher water clarity allows more sunlight in to foster plant growth, and while this is good for smaller fish, it may inhibit the larger predatory fish from finding their food. The thicker plant growth can interfere with boaters, anglers and swimmers.



Zebra Mussels

It is crucial that boaters and other water users take the necessary steps to prevent the spread of aquatic invasives. By following these steps each time you move your boat from one body of water to another, you are helping to protect our waters for future generations. Be sure to inspect your boat, trailer and other equipment and remove visible plants, animals and mud. Drain water from your boat, motor, bilge and live wells before leaving the water access.

Wisconsin statutes prohibit launching a boat, boat trailer, or boating equipment if there are any aquatic plants or zebra mussels attached. For more information, please visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/aquatic/> or your current "Wisconsin Boating Regulations."

Emerald Ash Borer, Oak Wilt and Gypsy Moths

In addition to the invasive species that threaten our waters and grasslands, there are pests threatening our trees as well.

2006 was an important year in the fight against **Emerald Ash Borer** (EAB). EAB is a beetle that at the larval stage, feeds under the bark of trees cutting off the flow of water and nutrients. Infested trees gradually die over a 2-4 year period. All sizes and even very healthy trees can be killed. EAB has been found as close as Michigan and two counties near Chicago. Other areas it has been discovered are Ohio, Indiana, and Ontario, Canada. An estimated 20 million ash trees have been killed by EAB in these infested areas. EAB is most commonly spread long distances through the movement of infested firewood, nursery stock or ash logs.

An estimated 717 million ash trees occur in Wisconsin's forestlands. It is difficult to estimate the beetle's potential ecological and economical impacts because this pest has not been observed over long periods in forest settings.

There is a national effort to limit the spread and impact of EAB. Currently in Wisconsin, the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection is currently leading efforts to detect, plan for, and regulate the movement of EAB into Wisconsin. The DNR has developed a permanent rule that prohibits visitors from bringing firewood onto state managed lands from locations further than 50 miles away. For more information on this very important topic, please visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/invasives/firewood/>.

Oak Wilt is another disease that is threatening our forest. Oak wilt is caused by a fungus that ultimately plugs the vessels in the tree and limits that water movement. As water movement in the tree is slowed, the leaves wilt and drop off the tree.

Oak wilt moves from infected trees to healthy trees through roots that have become interconnected. It also spreads when sap feeding beetles feed on the fungus found under the bark of infected trees and then inadvertently carry spores to fresh wounds on uninfected trees.

Oak trees are most susceptible to infection from beetles in the springtime, from bud swelling to 2-3 weeks after full leaf development. **From April 15 - July 1, do not prune, cut or injure oaks.** If an oak is wounded during this time, immediately cover the wound with tree wound paint.



Medicine Brook Road

If oak wilt is allowed to progress, it will spread to healthy trees that aren't infected. An ever-widening pocket of dead oaks will occur.

For more information on this topic, please visit <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/Forestry/Fh/oakWilt/>.

The **gypsy moths** population was low in the PRSF in 2006. The population has declined due to viruses and fungi, as well as cold weather. No spraying was done to control the population in 2006, and none is planned for 2007.

What's Been Going on at Gov. Thompson State Park?

By Maggie Kailhofer, Park Manager

2006 was the first full year the Governor Thompson State Park was open to the public. Over 50,000 vehicles entered the park along with their occupants to hike, fish, ski, snowshoe, kayak, canoe, or to launch their boats. Visitors also participated in the annual 9-day deer hunt held at the park.

The Friends of Gov. Thompson State Park were busy in 2006, recruiting new members and working on various projects in the park. Some activities the group worked on were spring cleanup, tree planting, and staffing the office



South Shore of Caldron

during the Wisconsin State Park Open House Weekend in June. If you'd like to join the Friends Group, please inquire at the park office.

In 2007 visitors will see changes to the South Bay (#13) boat landing on Caldron Falls. The park will be upgrading the launch, adding docks, a toilet facility and a new parking area. Changes will also be seen at the Woods Lake Picnic Area, as a new parking lot was put in over the winter and a new toilet facility and shelter are planned to be constructed this summer.

Currently, the park is open 6am - 8pm daily. There is no overnight camping permitted at this time. Use of motorized vehicles, horses, and pedal bikes on the trails is prohibited. Visitors to the park will need to purchase either an annual or daily admission sticker at the park entrance. For more information



A new bench in the Woods Lake Picnic Area

check out our website at <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/specific/govthompson/> or call the park at 715-757-3979.

Recreation and Property Maintenance

The state forest maintenance crew of Paul Craney, Joni Kelnhofer, Jim Lentz, and Garrett Meader could be seen driving throughout the state forest in an old yellow fire truck, sometimes pulling a lawn mower, tractor or other strange looking equipment, almost daily from April - December.

With 15 boat landings in the state forest, maintaining these landings takes up a great deal of the crew's time. Beginning in April, the crew spent much of its time planting trees, cleaning up the boat launches of hazardous trees, brush, and litter, fighting invasive plant species, and preparing the landings for the fishing and boating season. Renovations were done to Boat Landing #6 (Woods Creek) in early spring due to the filtering in of sand from the flowage. New grass was planted at Boat Landing #1 (West Bay) to make the landing more user-friendly. Throughout the summer, the crew mows and does general maintenance on the landings. Sadly, the signs, bulletin boards and other amenities at the landing experience vandalism throughout the summer, and time is spent making repairs. In

2007, more general landscaping will be done to spruce up the landings, and a project was written in 2006 to replace all of the current boat boarding docks that are currently in poor repair. Due to funding issues, it is not certain when these repairs will be made however.

The state forest has 10 canoe campsites along 3 areas on Johnson Falls Flowage and the Fly Fishing Area. New primitive toilets were installed in 2006 at each area and invasive plants were tackled. General landscaping work is planned for 2007.



New sign along County X

A noticeable project the crew worked on in the fall of 2006 was the installation of a state forest highway sign on County Road X. The sign was made by a vendor in Tomahawk, and the crew cleared the area, built the frame and installed the sign. Landscaping and painting will be done to the sign in 2007.

The state forest has 8 miles of des-

ignated hiking and skiing trails in the Spring Rapids and Seymour Rapids area. Work was spent removing hazardous trees, clearing brush, and mowing the trails. Each year in February, the state forest hosts a candlelight ski at the Spring Rapids Trailhead. This was done in 2006 and already in 2007. At the start of the winter 2006 - 2007 cross-country ski season, the state forest staff began grooming the trails at

Spring Rapids. Previously this had been done by the Marinette County Cross-Country Ski Club Association. The state forest purchased a new Ginzu groomer from a company in West Yellowstone, Montana to groom the trails.

The acquisition of Old Veteran's Lake Campground kept the crew busy in the fall building a firewood shed, installing the kiosk and self-registration area, and removing hazardous trees. In 2007, the state forest will have firewood for sale in the campground. Landscaping and maintenance will continue in 2007.

Law Enforcement Update

The Law Enforcement activities on the PRSF continue to increase each year. The summer and fall months are our busiest with the increase in visitors and the various hunting seasons. In 2006, there were 4 officers who patrolled the state forest on a regular basis, Sara Pearson, Garrett Meader, Maggie Kailhofer and Israel Deutsch.

Illegal ATV operation continues to be the top violation on the forest, with boating violations close behind. Remember, ATV's are only allowed on **designated** trails and routes. Generally, ATV's cannot ride next to the roads or on roads like snowmobiles can. The summary at the end of this article shows the forest's law enforcement contacts and citations for 2006.

The use of permanent tree stands continues to be a problem on state forest land. When stands are found, they

may be confiscated and enforcement action will be taken. These stands harm trees, "stake claim" on public land, and can contribute to other hunting violations like after-hours hunting.

In October 2006, the state forest received 2 2006 Ford F-250's pickup trucks that are fully equipped for law enforcement purposes (red and blue lights, siren and radio). Since staff have begun working on the state forest in 2002, we have worked with either no truck or loaner trucks from other programs within the DNR. The forest was to receive these vehicles back in 2002, but state vehicle purchases are a long, difficult process. Regardless, the staff is pleased to have the new trucks now.

The weekend of July 22 & 23, 2006 (Hog Wrestling Championship Weekend) was a busy weekend for the law enforcement staff. Numerous con-

tacts and citations were issued for open intoxicants in motor vehicles, underage drinking, littering, disorderly conducts, and illegal ATV operation. Boat Landing #9 suffered vandalism when a group of violators hooked up a pickup truck to the picnic table and pulled it out of the ground. They were never apprehended.

Law Enforcement Summary	
Law Enforcement Contacts	1176
Info & Education Contacts	629
Verbal Warnings	160
ATV Citations	15
Boating Citations	13
Hunting Citations	6
All other Citations	7

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Check out our new website:

**[dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/
stateforests/SF-Peshtigo/](http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/stateforests/SF-Peshtigo/)**

Master Plan Update

In 2006, a significant master planning milestone was reached as the *Preferred Alternatives and Options* document as created by the master planning team and presented to the public. This document outlined general proposals for management in recreation, land management, and boundary expansion. Because public input is key to a viable and successful plan, meetings were held in October at Oshkosh, Green Bay, and the Town of Stephenson. At these meetings, members of the public could openly express their opinions to the master planning team and also write their comments on forms to be documented and summarized as part of the master planning process.

While the majority of people had no comment about the land management or boundary expansion proposals, many people had great interest in, and commented about the recreational proposals. Most of the input was favorable, however a large number of ATV

enthusiasts signed petitions to express their dissatisfaction at the lack of new ATV trails being added to the state forest. The reason for this is that the sport of ATV riding is a poor fit for the state forest due to the small size of the property, the poor connectivity of the ownership, and the potential conflict with other uses of the forest and associated flowages. In an effort to help the ATV enthusiasts connect the trails to the south with the trails to the north, the DNR is committed to assist the ATV groups in finding a route, but state forest land may play little or no role in this effort.

Moving forward into 2007, it is intended that the master plan be finalized and approved by the Natural Resources Board by the end of the summer. The draft Master Plan will be released to the public in March and April, and a new round of public meetings will be held to once again get input from those who have an interest in the man-

agement of the Peshtigo River State Forest. See the front page for dates and locations of these meetings.

An important part of the master plan that was completed in early 2007, and has not yet been available to the public is the Environmental Assessment (EA). This section of the plan explains the potential environmental effects of the master plan. In other words, the EA evaluates how implementation of the master plan will affect air and water quality, noise levels, visual and scenic resources, endangered and threatened species, and other components of the environment.

For more detailed information, everyone is encouraged to read the entire master plan and communicate their comments to the master planning team. The master plan for the PRSF is a carefully prepared document, designed to guide the property for the next 15 years, so everyone should be involved in the process.