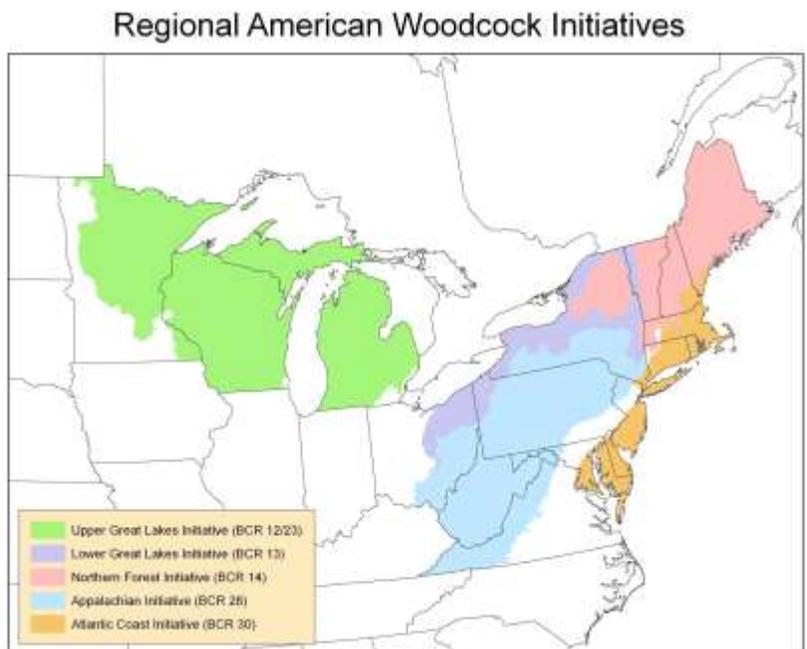
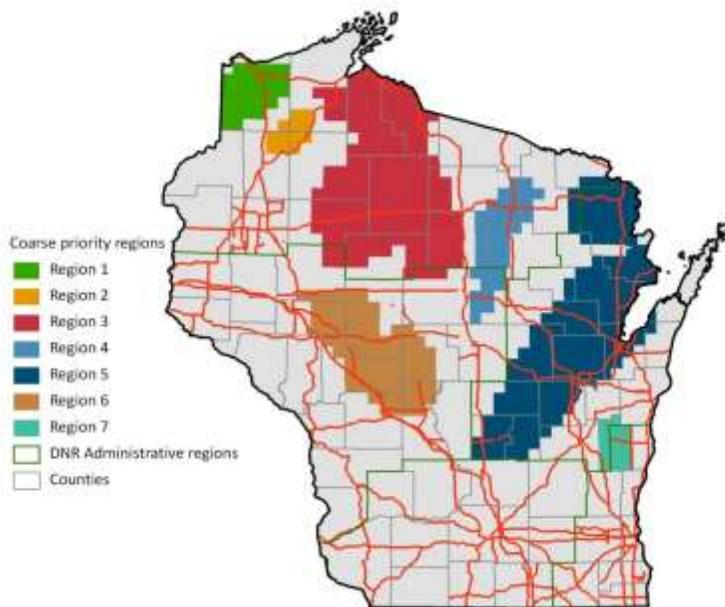


History of the north central Wisconsin young forest initiative

This story really starts with the American woodcock, a migratory bird that lives in young forest and shrubby areas – also called "early successional habitat" – near streams, rivers and wetlands. Historically, woodcock and young forest were both abundant. But due to human development, land use changes and aging of the brushy areas, the American woodcock population in Wisconsin has fallen by 1 to 2 percent each year since the 1960s.

In 2001, a group called the Woodcock Task Force came together with members from federal and state wildlife agencies, the Wildlife Management Institute, the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the Ruffed Grouse Society, and others. They laid the groundwork for the Woodcock Conservation plan, which was published in 2008. The plan sets targets for woodcock populations and acres of habitat to be created and restored. To implement the plan, managers have set up regional habitat initiatives; Wisconsin joined Minnesota and Michigan in developing the Upper Great Lakes Young Forest Initiative.





Conservationists and scientists have identified high-priority management zones in the three-state region, based on predicted woodcock abundance, potential habitat, proportion of landscape in aspen and land-ownership patterns.

[Map generated by Brad Potter, USFWS]

Wildlife biologists have developed a set of Best Management Practices presenting optimum methods of creating young forest habitat on the landscape. Logging, mowing, shearing and other management techniques keep habitat in early successional forest, benefiting many different kinds of wildlife.

In the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Bureau of Wildlife Management, wildlife biologists work with county and state forest managers striving to meet the habitat restoration goals on public land. However, it was clear that for this recovery initiative to be successful, we would need an organized outreach program for the private forest landowners in these priority areas. In 2011, the Wisconsin DNR hired a wildlife biologist charged with developing an outreach program aimed at educating landowners about private lands management techniques to benefit early succession habitat (young forest) and the wildlife that uses it. This biologist was to focus on

- Developing a forest management program in Oneida, Langlade, Lincoln, Taylor, Rusk and Price counties for grouse and woodcock.
- Emphasizing early successional forests and shade intolerant tree species wherever appropriate.
- Assist and encourage landowners practicing elements of the Wisconsin Managed Forest Law program to practice aspen and alder regeneration wherever appropriate.

The proposal included the development of one demonstration area per county, where intensive management plots of 500-1000 acres would allow workshops and tours to show real life products of management activities and best management practices. Wildlife Management Institute provided funding to develop demonstration areas in Lincoln, Oneida and Price Counties. In addition, Wildlife Management Institute and the Ruffed Grouse Society provided grant funding to put on landowner workshops incorporating these demonstration areas. Workshops will be scheduled throughout 2013.

More information can be found online at dnr.wi.gov keyword “young forest” or by contacting:

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