

## Uses of Wisconsin's Forests

### *Traditional Forest Uses Defined*

The State Forest Stewardship Committee recognizes the many traditional uses of the forests. While no one site can support all uses, the idea of multiple compatible uses taking place in a single forest is a valid management framework. This point of view is also appropriate for the Forest Legacy Program.

Traditional uses are uses that have a history of sustaining communities or industries, or uses customary to an area. They include the maintenance of forest ecosystems and their biological resources in order to sustain their full array of species. These include: maintaining fish, game, and nongame wildlife, and plant populations; providing wood products; providing habitats for endangered, threatened or rare species; providing quality outdoor recreational experiences; improving and protecting soil productivity; providing protection of water quality and quantity; and enhancing the biological diversity and aesthetic quality of the landscape.

### *Past and Recent Uses*

Wisconsin's forests are storehouses of vast biologic, cultural, aesthetic and economic treasures. Through Wisconsin's history, forests have played a primary role in supporting her people. The forests of Wisconsin are dynamic, living systems that change with the human demands placed on them as well as through natural occurrences such as succession and severe weather events. People have shaped and defined the location, density, diversity and abundance of flora and fauna in the area since the diminishing of the last glaciers.

In Wisconsin the forests have sustained communities and industries through forest products and associated industries. Specifically these include: harvesting timber for firewood, pulp, veneer, lumber and specialty products; gathering of materials and foods, such as honey, maple syrup, nuts, berries, and other plant parts such as boughs and roots; and pursuing recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, sight-seeing, nature study, photography, cross-country skiing, hiking and camping. Some well-regulated motorized recreation, such as snowmobiles on established trails and providing sites for scientific research can be included as well.

As mentioned earlier, many of the past uses have been disruptive and destructive on a large-scale. These include the massive land-clearing and burning for agriculture establishment and the intense lumbering of the early 1900's. Other uses, such as maple syrup production, and Christmas tree production have had local influence in the habitat.

Before European settlement, native people used forests for many of their day to day needs. As new ethnic groups settled Wisconsin, they too, incorporated the forest into their culture. We now enjoy many cultural benefits from the forests of our state. Enjoying festivals centered on our forest communities, food created from forest products, even naming our towns and landmarks after forest features all contribute to building the culture of Wisconsin.

Forests are an especially potent force in many Native American cultures. Many native cultures developed around harvesting plants and animals and living among the forests. Wisconsin hosts a number of Native American communities. The Bad River Ojibwe, Lac du Flambeau, Potawatami, Mole Lake, Lac Courte Oreilles, St. Croix, Stockbridge-Munsee, Oneida, Ho-Chunk, Red Cliff, and Menominee all have long-standing historical ties to Wisconsin's forests. Forest resources continue to play an important role in maintaining the peoples' cultures and spirituality.

A trend that is having a major effect on forest recreation is the increasing use of motorized vehicles. Snowmobiles, ATVs, 4x4 trucks, and motorbikes are seen in Wisconsin forests increasingly often. From 1990 to 1997, snowmobile licenses in the state increased 33%, and ATV licenses increased 50%. Although these participants comprise a relatively small portion of all forest recreationists, their growing number has an impact throughout the forest. The detrimental impacts of motorized vehicles in the forest may include soil erosion and compacting, damage to regeneration and other plant life, destruction of sensitive species, and degradation of habitat.