

**Peshtigo River State Forest
2018 Work Plan
March 2018**

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Comments on the 2018 Peshtigo River State Forest Work Plan will be accepted until April 30, 2018. Comments can be directed by phone, mail or email to:

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Introduction:

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 major work plan goals for the property. This has replaced a public meeting which was previously held in late winter/early spring of each year. Annual work goals are tied to the PRSF master plan, which was approved by the Natural Resources Board in September, 2007. The PRSF master plan can be accessed at <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/fr/FR0404.pdf>. All actions taken by the property are directly authorized under the master plan.

The following work plan is divided into five sections:

- Staffing
- Forest Management
- Development Projects
- Real Estate Management
- Recreation Operations

Staffing:

The DNR implemented major changes to the structure of the agency in 2017.

- In November 2017, a Forester / Property manager position was filled. This position also has fire suppression responsibilities as a Forester Ranger for the Peshtigo area, as will potentially provide forestry services to private landowners in southern Marinette County.
- In 2018, all PRSF recreation-related duties have been shifted to the division of Parks and Recreation, but remain under the guidance of the Property Manager and shall be a collaborative effort between divisions.

- Two new Park and Forest Rangers were hired in January of 2018. Park and Forest Rangers are no longer credentialed law enforcement officers within Wisconsin DNR.
- Approximately 9-10 LTE staff will now split time between forestry and parks/rec. work on the state forest and Governor Thompson State Park. This includes laborers, visitor services associates and one LTE forestry/parks specialist.

Forest Management:

- 1. Timber sales:** In 2017, five timber sales were completed, totaling \$215,976.75 in stumpage revenue.

In 2018, Four sales are currently active and represent 322 acres. Four other sales, representing 254 acres are currently prepared and could become active if a buyer is found during the 2018 spring and fall bidding windows. One 98 acre sale is located within Governor Thompson State Park and will be administered by the PRSF forester/property manager.

Together, these eight timber sales encompass 576 acres and are estimated to generate approximately \$401,319 in stumpage revenue. One 25-acre timber sale was established in 2015 and failed to sell during two consecutive bidding windows. In 2018 this sale may be able to be sold directly.

Sales include a variety of timber types and employ coppice, clearcut with reserves, and single tree selection silvicultural regimes.

Firewood permits will continue to be sold for cutting and gathering wood on the state forest. Maps and permits have been made available on the forest website.

For a map of current and proposed timber sales, please visit the forest website.

- 2. Forest Reconnaissance:**

50 acres is scheduled for commercial harvest treatment in 2018. 2019 treatments total approximately 60 acres. Local experience suggests not all scheduled stands will be ready for a harvest during this time. One harvest within GTSP is expected to be established in 2018 by area forestry staff. A few scheduled treatments on PRSF sites which require wetland crossings for access via state land have been deferred, due to the likelihood of warm winters preventing adequate freeze-down. PRSF timber sales lie predominately on well-drained sandy soils and weather has not had a significant impact on the timber sale program.

In general, the state forest has caught up on a backlog of scheduled harvests since the forest establishment in 2001. Annual harvest goals are expected to represent relatively low acreages in the coming years. Harvest planning will continue to accommodate weather, timber markets, forest pathogens and other interests.

3. Forest Regeneration:

Natural regeneration is the primary method by which trees are re-established following a timber harvest on the PRSF. Most of the forest's timber types are well suited to regenerate naturally when proper silvicultural methods are employed.

Recon data reports approximately 81 acres requiring regeneration checks of aspen and hardwood stands recently harvested.

No planting was conducted in 2017.

No planting is scheduled for 2018.

Opportunities for planting will continue to be evaluated where appropriate. Areas recently planted will be monitored for survival and success.

4. Invasive Species Management:

Several areas of the forest have documented infestations of invasive vegetation. Recent vacancies on the forest and the need to keep up with other work has shifted planning away from control efforts. Forest staff will casually monitor and inventory invasive populations in 2018 but will not conduct large-scale (areas >1ac.) invasive species work until priority can be shifted away from training new staff. When other needs have been satisfied, a more proactive approach will be taken to dealing with invasive species on the PRSF.

Recreation staff, however, will monitor invasive species within designated recreation areas as part of their annual maintenance and inspection of these designated areas. Recreation staff will not monitor or treat invasives in non-recreation areas.

Natural Heritage Conservation staff will continue to monitor and treat invasive populations during 2018 within designated state natural areas on the state forest.

5. Pesticide Usage on State Lands:

Due to forest certification standards, the Division of Forestry is now required to post signage on any sites where large-scale chemicals are being used to control vegetation, insects or other pathogens. This includes timber sales where red pine stumps are being treated with fungicides for heterobasidion root disease (HRD). HRD is a common red pine pathogen in most parts of Wisconsin.

6. Prescribed Fires

There are no prescribed fires planned for the property.

7. Wildlife Habitat Management

Grant funding has been secured by area biologists for seeding and planting projects to enhance grouse and deer habitat on state lands. Areas of the PRSF will be evaluated by department staff in 2018 for potential implementation.

Capital Development Projects:

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

1. 2018 will use the remaining funding for road maintenance to improve trouble areas within the property.
2. Remaining funding for Boat Landing 8 will be used to repair the gravel road that approaches the launching area.
3. Funding has been granted to upgrade Boat Landing 11. This project involves replacing the boat ramp and grading of the parking lot. PRSF staff will work with department engineers to move the project forward.
4. A shoreline stabilization project at boat landing 9 has been funded by fisheries. Remaining supplies will be purchased in 2018 and work is expected to be completed in the fall/winter of 2018/2019.
5. Additional projects will be announced on the website if funding is granted

Real Estate Management:

The PRSF is 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.

1. The PRSF accepted a donation of 1,300 feet of Peshtigo River frontage on Hwy C in Marinette County. This property is intended to be used as an additional access point to the Peshtigo River for the public. Staff are evaluating plans to develop an access trail, camping platform and parking area.
2. The state forest is continuing to clean up property line conflicts, encroachments, and trespass issues with neighboring landowners.

Property and Recreational Operations:

Maintenance of recreational areas on the property continues throughout the year. During 2018 recreation staff will work to accomplish all necessary work while focusing on training new staff and navigating new responsibilities on the state forest.

- Old Veteran's Lake campground and all other camping areas will continue to be maintained for cleanliness and safety. Hazard trees will be removed as necessary. Hiking trails in this area may require additional attention in the upcoming year due to recent timber harvest activity. The forest is also evaluating road work on the campground access road.
- Boat-in sites will be getting updated seasonal piers as time permits for installation.
- Boat landings will be maintained regularly along with maintenance and cleaning of bathroom facilities. Areas will be mowed as necessary throughout the summer season.
- Non-motorized trails will be maintained as necessary with planned improvements to some. Grooming will continue to be a priority for cross country ski season.
- A local snowmobile club has work planned for portions of trail which traverse the state forest. Work includes pulling stumps, widening and grading problem areas.
- Picnic and beach areas will be maintained with minor installation of new amenities planned for some areas.
- New gates and berms will be evaluated in problem areas.
- Office maintenance such as mowing, cleaning, plowing snow, and any other duties will be carried out by parks/rec staff.

Partnership Work:

The State Forest will work with partners to meet objectives and improve the property.

Some of the forest partners include:

- Governor Thompson State Park
- Mole Lake Band of Lake Superior Chippewa Cultural Resource Staff
- Wisconsin Public Service
- ATV and Snowmobile Clubs
- Town of Stephenson and Town of Silver Cliff
- Wisconsin DNR