

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### MARATHON COUNTY FOREST 10-YEAR COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

#### Planning Process

The draft plan is a product of nearly two years work by:

- The Forest Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee with representatives from ATV/Motorized, logging, forest industry, hunting, conservation congress, cross country skiing, mountain biking, the environment, county officials, equestrian, bird watching, adjoining landowners, Department of Natural Resources, and Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.
- Wausau and Marathon County Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Staff.
- The Forestry, Recreation, and Zoning Committee
- The Park Commission
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Staff
- Township Officials
- Interested Citizens

The plan will guide the management of the Marathon County Forest through the year 2015. Although the plan specifically addresses needs during the 2006-2015 period, we also considered where these management choices will lead into the future.

This is the final review prior to sending the draft to the DNR Regional Forester. The County Board will consider adopting the plan at their September 27, 2005 meeting. The DNR is drafting a separate programmatic environmental assessment of the plan that will be available for public review following County Board adoption of the plan.

#### **Mission and Goal**

The mission of the Marathon County Forest is to manage and protect these natural resources on a sustainable basis for ecological, economic, educational, recreational, and research needs of present and future generations.

The long-term goal is to administer the Marathon County Forest Program, considering the recommendations of interested citizens, in a manner consistent with the mission statement and the purpose of the County Forest Law:

“ . . . to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the county forests for optimum production of forest products, together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the Towns in which such lands lie.” (Sec.28.11, Wis. Statutes)

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

##### **1. Multi-Use Trail Management:**

- A. Maintain the current trails designated for motorized and non-motorized recreation.
- B. Pursue the purchase of additional park lands for development of an ATV Intensive Use Area.
- C. Minimize development of recreational facilities or programs which exclude users or increase user conflicts.
- D. Regulate existing multi-use trail systems to provide safe and quality experiences.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**2. Timber Management:**

- A. Practice sustainable forestry on 600-650 acres established annually.
- B. Regenerate aspen and promote longer lived oak and hardwood stands using ecologically based management techniques.
- C. Reforest sites where needed and consider conversion to other species where appropriate.
- D. Employ forest technologies such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to aid in the management of the forest.
- E. Use an integrated resource management approach while implementing multiple use, sustained yield management.

**3. Wildlife Habitat and Game Management:**

- A. Provide hunting and fishing opportunities on all County Forest Units subject to DNR regulations.
- B. Collaborate with DNR wildlife biologists to maximize wildlife benefits of proposed management practices.
- C. Maintain aspen forests as habitat for both game and non-game species.
- D. Maintain forest habitat for openings, trails and flowages.
- E. Enter into cooperative agreements with DNR/conservation groups to provide grassland habitat for upland game and songbirds.

**4. Public Information and Education:**

- A. Provide technical assistance on sustainable forestry to private landowners.
- B. Maintain the Bitzke Nature Trail for nature study and interpretive use.
- C. Develop and utilize interpretive displays explaining forestry and other management practices to the public.

**5. Land Acquisition and Forest Boundary Management:**

- A. Purchase an average of 200 acres per year during the plan period.
- B. Pursue high priority purchases to block in ownership.
- C. Monitor forest boundaries to prevent encroachments, illegal uses and trespass.
- D. Monitor any transmission line construction on County Forest Lands to minimize resource damage.

**6. Biodiversity Management:**

- A. Utilize sound silvicultural practices to improve diversity and health of the forest.
- B. Identify and attempt to eradicate invasive or exotic species if found on the forest. (e.g. buckthorn, garlic mustard, gypsy moth, and oak wilt, etc.)
- C. Protect populations of rare or threatened plants, animals, or unique communities.

**7. Forest Administration, Budgets, Intergovernmental Relationships:**

- A. Comply with the Sustainable Forest Initiative (SFI) standards to ensure the sustainability of all resources on the forest.
- B. Monitor plan implementation.
- C. Assist local municipalities in obtaining additional state funds for lands entered under the County Forest law.
- D. Maximize grants, loans or resource aids available to administer the County Forest Program thereby reducing the need for levy dollars.

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8. **Watershed Management:**
  - A. Follow Wisconsin's Best Management Practices for water quality to protect soil and water resources.
  - B. Cooperate with local organizations to improve habitat and water quality.
9. **Tourism:**
  - A. Provide appropriate recreational opportunities on the forest for tourism.
10. **Staffing and Personnel Management:**
  - A. Maintain a permanent forest citizens' advisory committee to provide input on county forest issues.
  - B. Provide sufficient county forest staffing to manage and administer the county forest program as outlined in this plan.
  - C. Utilize volunteers and local service organizations to assist with recreational programs.

These recommendations will help to maintain the sustainable forest programs that Marathon County has enjoyed in the past. Together, we can ensure that the Marathon County Forest continues to provide ecological, economic and social benefits to future generations.

Thomas Lovlien  
Forest Administrator