

COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REV: 5/18/2021

**CHAPTER 100**

**BACKGROUND**

<u>Section</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Page</u>
<b>100</b>	<b>MISSION STATEMENT .....</b>	<b>100-2</b>
<b>105</b>	<b>GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN.....</b>	<b>100-2</b>
<b>110</b>	<b>COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN .....</b>	<b>100-3</b>
	110.1 MANAGEMENT PLANNING OBJECTIVES .....	100-3
	110.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN .....	100-3
	110.3 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN.....	100-4
	110.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLAN.....	100-4
	110.5 UPDATING THE PLAN.....	100-4
	110.6 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING .....	100-5
<b>115</b>	<b>FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING.....</b>	<b>100-5</b>
	115.1 FOREST CERTIFICATION GROUP ADMINISTRATION.....	100-5
	115.2 FOREST CERTIFICATION .....	100-6
<b>120</b>	<b>COUNTY AUTHORITY .....</b>	<b>100-7</b>
	120.1 ORDINANCES .....	100-7
<b>125</b>	<b>HISTORY.....</b>	<b>100-7</b>
	125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT.....	100-7
	125.2 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION.....	100-9
	125.3 TRENDS.....	100-10
	125.4 PROTECTING THE PUBLIC RESOURCE .....	100-11

**100 MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Eau Claire County Forest is to manage, conserve and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. These resources, such as those provided by the County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect, and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation, and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection and maintenance of biotic diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including the production of raw materials for wood-using industries that provide a wide variety of products fulfilling consumer demands, and provisions for recreational opportunities.

**105 GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN  
(Hereafter referred to as the “Plan”)**

To administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... 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.”

## **110 COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN**

### **EAU CLAIRE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN POLICY**

This plan shall incorporate or reference all official County Forest policies, pertinent county regulations, planning documents and the needs and actions for the period 2021 through 2035.

This plan is the authority for management on county forest lands enrolled under Wisconsin County Forest Law s.28.11. This plan may be encompassed within required local planning efforts.

#### **110.1 MANAGEMENT PLANNING OBJECTIVES**

Management planning shall be used to establish objectives, policies, procedures, rules, and regulations, and to promote an efficient and orderly program of development and management of the County Forest in the interest of:

1. Determining needs and priorities.
2. Achieving goals set forth in the mission statement of this plan.
3. Satisfying the statutory requirements of s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.
4. Satisfying requirements for participation in various state and federal aid programs.
5. Providing broad long-term and detailed short-term guidelines for actions.

#### **110.2 DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAN**

Section 28.11, Wis. Stats., places the responsibility for the plan development on the Committee with technical assistance from the Department and other agencies. The County Forest Administrator will take the lead at the committee's request. During development of the plan public participation should be utilized to provide for public participation throughout the planning process. Public participation and inputs into the plan should consider s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., which governs the County Forest program and provides the sideboards to which this plan must adhere.

Eau Claire County’s public participation process originally included a series of meetings with the Eau Claire County Parks and Forest Citizens Advisory Committee to review draft chapters prior to being approved. And a series of three (3) in-person open house forums were scheduled for the months of June and July 2020. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, all in person meetings have been canceled.

A modified public participation process will still include a review of draft chapters by the Parks and Forest Citizens Advisory committee, review and approval from the Parks and Forest Committee, and then a 30-day period for open public comment once the draft chapters have been placed on the Eau Claire County government website.

#### 110.3 APPROVAL OF THE PLAN

Comments received should be given consideration during plan development. The Committee will then present the plan to the County Board for their approval. Following County Board approval, the plan will then be forwarded to the Department for approval of the plan by the DNR is required by s. 28.11(5)(a), Wis. Stats.

#### 110.4 DISTRIBUTION OF THE PLAN

Each member of the County Board will have access to a copy of the plan at the time of initial review and approval. Updated official copies will be maintained by the Forest Administrator and available electronically.

Plan and future amendments will be: Electronic versions of the plan or plan amendments or electronic links to the documents will be distributed to the following:

1. Department of Natural Resources - Liaison and County Forest & Public Lands Specialist.
2. Executive Director- Wisconsin County Forest Association.

#### 110.5 UPDATING THE PLAN

Necessary changes in policy and procedure will be incorporated into the plan by amendment as required. Amendments to the plan will require approval by both the County Board and

the Department of Natural Resources as stated in s. 28.11(5)(a), Wis. Stats. Changes to official County Forest Blocking map require County Board approval. The annual county board approved work plan, budget, and annual accomplishment report are appended to the plan and do not require official DNR approval. In addition, changes to Chapters 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000 do not require a plan amendment or official DNR approval, except for the official County Forest Blocking map.

#### 110.6 COORDINATION WITH OTHER PLANNING

The development of this plan and any future amendments to this plan will include considerations, and if warranted, participation in other local and regional planning efforts.

### 115 FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING

The Committee will utilize procedure as set forth in the Department of Natural Resources Public Forest Lands Handbook no. 2460.5. Silviculture Guidance supported by Wisconsin's forestry community and Silvicultural Guidance Team may be referenced in forest management activities WisFIRS will be utilized as the primary tool for forest management planning decisions. Additional resources such as forest habitat type classification, soil surveys, and DNR's Best Management Practices for Water Quality guidelines may be utilized in management decisions.

#### 115.1 FOREST CERTIFICATION GROUP ADMINISTRATION

As the certification group manager, the Department of Natural Resources will be responsible for overall administration of third-party certification efforts. The DNR County Forest & Public Lands Specialist will work in close cooperation with the Wisconsin County Forests Association in coordinating this effort. The group manager's responsibilities will include:

- Record keeping of certification
- Coordinating communication with the certification auditing firms
- Reporting and payment of fees
- Processing new entries and departures from the groups

- Internal compliance monitoring
- Dispute resolution

Detail on the certification group administration is maintained in the Public Forest Lands Handbook.

## 115.2 FOREST CERTIFICATION

### **Eau Claire County's Commitment to Sustainable Forestry**

Our county forests provide a vital contribution to the State and the world by providing economic, environmental, and social benefits important to our quality of life. Eau Claire County believes that accomplishing such sustainable forestry practices requires a commitment and partnership from all the groups and individuals that benefit from these public lands.

#### **Eau Claire County's Commitment**

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Eau Claire County will implement forestry practices that promote forest sustainability and multiple use of the forest. In the management of the forest that will include the sustainable harvest of forest products, the protection of special sites, wildlife, plants, water quality and aesthetics.

All forestland owners have a responsibility to provide sound forest stewardship. Eau Claire County will work in cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and other natural resources groups / agencies in providing sustainable forestry information to those landowners and individuals impacting forest sustainability in Wisconsin. We will support research efforts to improve the health, productivity, and management of forestlands both internally and through cooperative efforts. In managing the Eau Claire County Forest a spectrum of forestry practices will be employed to achieve our sustainable forestry objective. Both intensive and more extensive forest management techniques will be used to provide for wildlife, forest products, recreation, aesthetics, water quality, aesthetics, and ecosystem maintenance.

In keeping with this responsibility Eau Claire County is committed to Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI).

## **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Parks and Forest Committee of the County Board review the regulations governing the use of the County Forest. Eau Claire County staff, law enforcement, and corporation counsel help to enforce the use and regulations of the County Forest.

### **120.1 ORDINANCES**

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Eau Claire County Forest can be found in Chapter 16.30. In addition, the following will be considered in planning process.

- Zoning ordinance
- Floodplain - Shoreland Zoning ordinance
- Motorized recreation ordinance

## **125 HISTORY**

### **125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT**

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. In 1929 the law was amended to create the County Forest Reserve Law. In 1963, several major revisions were made, creating the County Forest Law s28.11. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. Several grants and loans were created and remain available to counties to compensate for public uses of these county forest lands as stipulated in s28.11. To fulfill additional statutory obligations acreage share payments to towns are currently \$.30/acre, and towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the

stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Eau Claire County provides payments to towns of 15% of stumpage revenue currently. This payment amount will be reviewed on every five-year basis, beginning in 2021. In 2020, thirty counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

At one time, the eastern side of Eau Claire County was covered with significant stands of large white pine mixed with hardwoods on the uplands, and bottomland hardwoods along the river floodplains. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in overharvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Pine and other logging slash provided fuel for large wildfires. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the settlers left the light, droughty sand to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left barren and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

By 1933, Eau Claire County had acquired over 30,000 acres of tax delinquent lands in the county. On May 3, 1933, the County Board adopted a resolution to establish the Eau Claire County Forest “since establishment of county forests offers the best opportunity to make these lands once more productive”. The resolution directed the mapping of forest boundaries for those lands which were “better in forestry than agriculture”, and later resulted in a listing of legal descriptions of county forest reserves. On May 10, 1934, the County Board adopted the Forestry Ordinance. This action granted specific powers relative to the establishment, management, protection, and extension of County Forests. The ordinance authorized exchange of lands for the “purpose of blocking out county owned forest lands” and registered the official original county forest map. In 1952 a Policy Statement was developed giving the Forestry and Zoning Committee power to purchase land within the forest boundary. In following years, the County has acquired land either by tax deed, outright purchase, trade, or donation.

Early phases of development of the county forests consisted largely of investment of planting open areas. Much of the early planting was done by hand using Works Projects



Administration (W.P.A.) labor. Most of these plantations have been harvested 2-3 times easily repaying the initial investment, providing fiber to forest industry and income to Eau Claire County. Many of these plantations are now saw timber size of significant quality and value to the county.

The first timber sale on record for the Eau Claire County Forest was in 1942. Two sales totaling 78 cords generated \$176 in revenue for the county. As of January 30, 2020, there were 52,712 acres in the Eau Claire County Forest.

## 125.2 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Eau Claire County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (WCFA). This Association was incorporated on May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of fifteen delegates elected from County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association and two members at large.

WCFA provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s. 28.11 and chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues. WCFA develops and implements a strategic plan. The organization's mission statement is as follows:

*Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long term forest health and sustainability.*

## 125.3 TRENDS

The values and uses of the Eau Claire County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs now and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the Forest in coming years.

- Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid-1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak, and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's.
- The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.
- Concern over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clearcutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.
- Climate change may impact future forest composition, forest productivity, some habitats may disappear or shift northwards, and fire activity may increase due to shifting climates. These some of the climate change impacts that Eau Claire County will monitor in the coming years.
- Eau Claire County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.
- Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to

improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species.

Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Some species such as Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, garlic mustard, buckthorn, honeysuckle have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 600 for specifics on this subject.

#### 125.4 PROTECTING THE PUBLIC RESOURCE

As stated in State Statute 28.11 (1), the county forest program enables and encourages “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.”