

POLK COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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**CHAPTER 100**

Rev.3/25/2020

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**100 MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the Polk County Forest is to provide, protect and manage forest resources for the environmental and social benefits, 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 land lie.”

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

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 such as the Polk County Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Outdoor Recreation Plan and the development of Local Zoning Regulations.

#### 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.

Polk County's public participation process includes the following:

- Completing an update to the 2006-2020 Polk County Forest Comprehensive Land use Plan in conjunction with the Environmental Services Committee.
- Posting the draft plan on the Forest Web page for 30 days

- Conducting an open house to facilitate public input
- Revision of the draft plan in consideration to public comments
- Final Approval from the Environmental Services Committee
- County Board and DNR approval.

### 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. DNR approval 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 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, with the exception of 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 including but not limited to:

Polk County Zoning

Polk County Comprehensive Land Use Plan

Polk County Outdoor Recreation Plan

Northwest Sands Regional Planning

Forest Transition Regional Planning

### 115 FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING

The Committee will utilize procedures 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 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. [Public Forest Lands Handbook](#).

## 115.2 FOREST CERTIFICATION

*Polk County is certified to the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® SFI-01617 SFI 100%. For more information on certification standards please refer the SFI performance standards located in Chapter 1000.*

### **Polk 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. Polk County believes that accomplishing such sustainable forestry requires a commitment and partnership from all the groups and individuals that benefit from these public lands.

#### **Polk County's Commitment**

Within the scope of the Wisconsin County Forest Law and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Polk County will implement forestry practices that promote forest sustainability and multiple use. Forest Management activities will occur to promote the long term benefit of: sustainable harvest of forest products, protection of special sites, wildlife, plants, water quality and aesthetics.

All forestland owners have a responsibility to provide sound forest stewardship. Polk 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 Polk 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 Polk County is committed to The Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFI)

## **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Environmental Services Committee of the County Board enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

### **120.1 ORDINANCES**

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Polk County Forest can be found in Chapter 1000. In addition, the following will be considered in planning process.

- Zoning ordinance
- Floodplain - Shoreland Zoning ordinance
- Motorized recreation ordinance
- Parks and Forestry Ordinances

## **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. Polk County currently pays all Townships that contain Polk County Forest Land 30% of the stumpage revenue.

In 2020, thirty counties in Wisconsin owned approximately 2.4 million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

Polk County made its first resolution to enter non-revenue (tax delinquent) forest lands under the Forest Crop program on November 19, 1935. The majority of this land was cutover and / or burned over forestland but some former crop or pasture land was included. The first County Forest ordinance was passed on November 13, 1936. The first state aid payment was received for the year 1937. In the same year county appropriations from the general fund began to operate the County Forest.

*In the first three years expenditures were:*

<i>1937</i>	<i>Hazard Reduction</i>	<i>\$260.00</i>
<i>1938</i>	<i>Timber Stand Improvement</i>	<i>\$10.00</i>
	<i>Hazard Reduction</i>	<i>\$144.36</i>
	<i>Truck trails</i>	<i>\$126.18</i>
	<i>Fire Protection</i>	<i>\$20.72</i>
	<i>Administration</i>	<i>\$16.30</i>
<i>1939</i>	<i>Planting</i>	<i>\$415.00</i>
	<i>Hazard Reduction</i>	<i>\$363.11</i>
	<i>Fire Protection</i>	<i>\$4.74</i>

## 125.2 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Polk 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 of 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 Polk 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. Polk County began planting red pine in 1939. The first plantation was 33 acres of burned and cutover land utilizing 38,327 two year old trees. 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. The Polk County aspen resource has increased from 1,900 acres in 1977 to 3760 acres in 2019.

- Conflict 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.
- Polk County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Polk County already pays a 30% severance tax to Towns even though 10% is required statutorily. 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 for specifics on this subject.
- Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the Polk County Forest. 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. Polk County staff will have more time involved in treating these invasive species.
- The Forest is considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.
- The Public is interested in more outdoor recreational facilities. Balancing the demands of producing forest products while growing forest products will become more challenging.

#### 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.”