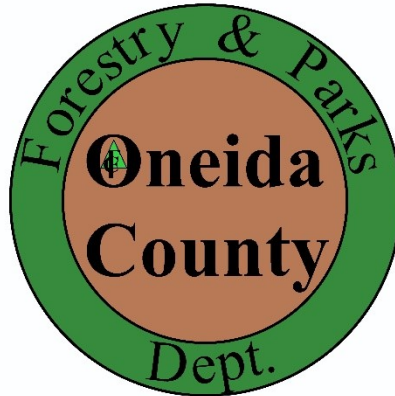


# Oneida County Forestry, Land, and Recreation Department



## 2019 Annual Report

To

Oneida County Board of Supervisors

By

Forestry, Land, and Recreation Committee

### Committee

Jack Sorensen, Chair  
Alan Van Raalte  
Robert Almekinder  
Bob Mott  
Greg Pence

**Oneida County Board of Supervisors:** We submit, for your approval and adoption, a report of activities of the Oneida County Forestry, Land, & Recreation Department (FLRD), for the year 2019.

# 2019 Department Highlights:

- Director John Bilogan retires, Assistant Director Paul Fiene appointed new Director. Forester 1, Joe Renik resigns, and Ben Broquard is hired.
- The Forestry Department had zero Worker's Compensation claims in 2019.
- Additional 6.7 miles of Enterprise ATV/UTV trail development was completed along with 5 miles of trail rehabilitation to help prevent erosion.

## **DEPARTMENT STAFFING UPDATES**

On September 10, 2019 long-time Forestry Director John Bilogan retired after a four-month leave of absence. This resulted in a short-staffed department for much of the year.

Assistant Director Paul Fiene was appointed interim Director on April 25, 2019 and was officially appointed to the position on November 16, 2019. Eric Rady, Forester 2, was promoted to Assistant Forest Director and recruitment to fill his vacated position was approved.

In addition to the retirement of the Director, Forester 1 Joe Renik resigned in September to take a position with the DNR leaving the department with two vacant positions. An LTE forester was hired using grant funding for the fall and winter of 2019 to assist with timber sale and recon duties during this period. Approval was granted to hire a new forester to replace Renik and on November 1, 2019 Ben Broquard joined the department still leaving the department down one full-time position.

## **FORESTRY**

### **County Forest Account**

**Forest Management & Timber Sale Revenue:** In 2019, the harvesting of timber on Oneida County Forest resulted in gross stumpage revenue to the County of \$954,812 which includes forfeited performance bonds of \$47,704 and NCF stumpage of \$6,925. The stumpage revenue achieved by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2019 resulted from the harvest of approximately 20,700 cords of pulpwood and 302,000 board feet of saw logs. Approximately 1,000 acres were harvested. An additional \$78,356 in revenue from Non-county forest timber sales and miscellaneous programs such as firewood and balsam bough permits and cell tower payments was deposited in the Forestry account in 2019. Stumpage revenues for 2019 dropped significantly due to several factors including:

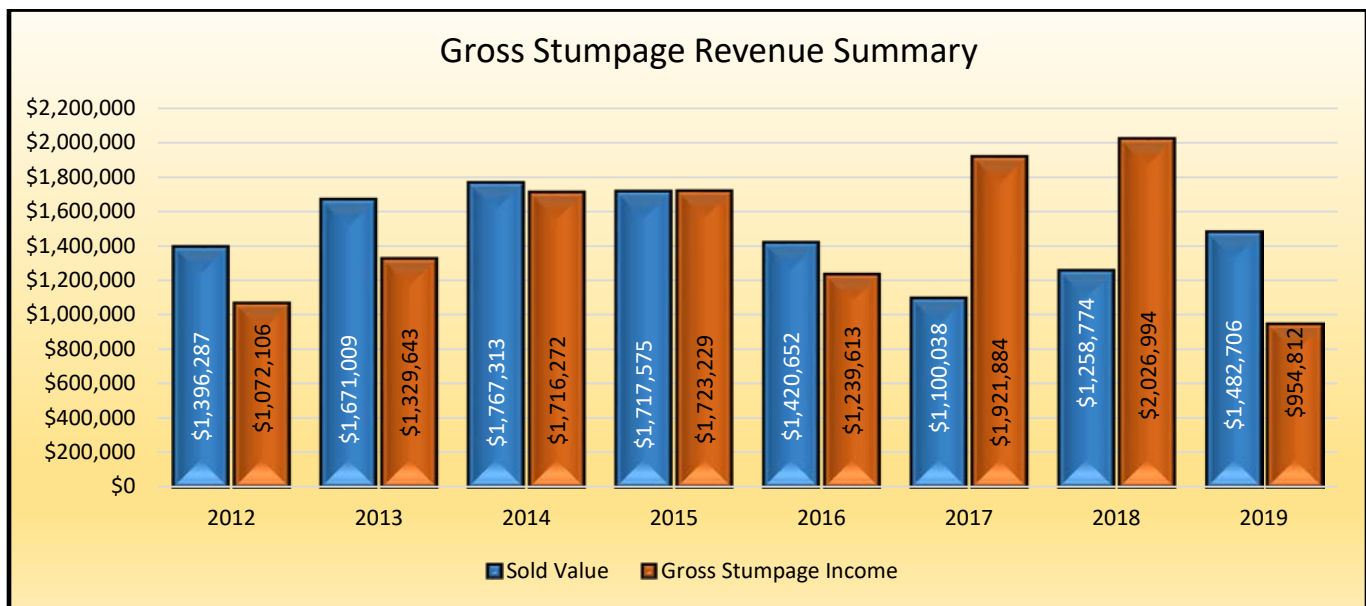
1. A very widespread wind event hit the state on July 19, 2019. This storm resulted in the wind damage of tens of thousands of acres of forestland throughout the state. One of the hardest hit areas was neighboring Langlade County where 40,000 acres or more were destroyed. This resulted in a glut of timber product being put on the market during the salvage of the damaged timber. These salvage efforts took precedence over the harvesting of standing timber on Oneida County sales as many loggers moved to neighboring counties to harvest blowdown.
2. A very wet summer resulted in difficult harvesting conditions due to wet ground. Loggers were often unable to harvest sales on Oneida County lands due to continuous rain throughout the summer.
3. The early winter of 2019 also saw significant snow depths making harvesting difficult and freezing of lowland, wet areas difficult or impossible.

The following table summarizes the past three years of timber sale activity including a projection for activity in 2020.

Year	Acres Sold	Sold Value	Acres Cut	Cords Cut	Board Feet Cut	Gross Stumpage Income
2017	1,498	\$1,100,038	2,000	36,000	814,000	\$1,921,884
2018	1,492	\$1,258,774	2,200	40,800	775,000	\$2,026,994
2019	1,476	\$1,482,706	1,300	20,700	302,000	\$954,812*
2020**	1,500	\$1,200,000	1,300	25,000	350,000	\$1,000,000

\*Includes forfeited performance bonds of \$47,704 & NCF stumpage of \$6,925

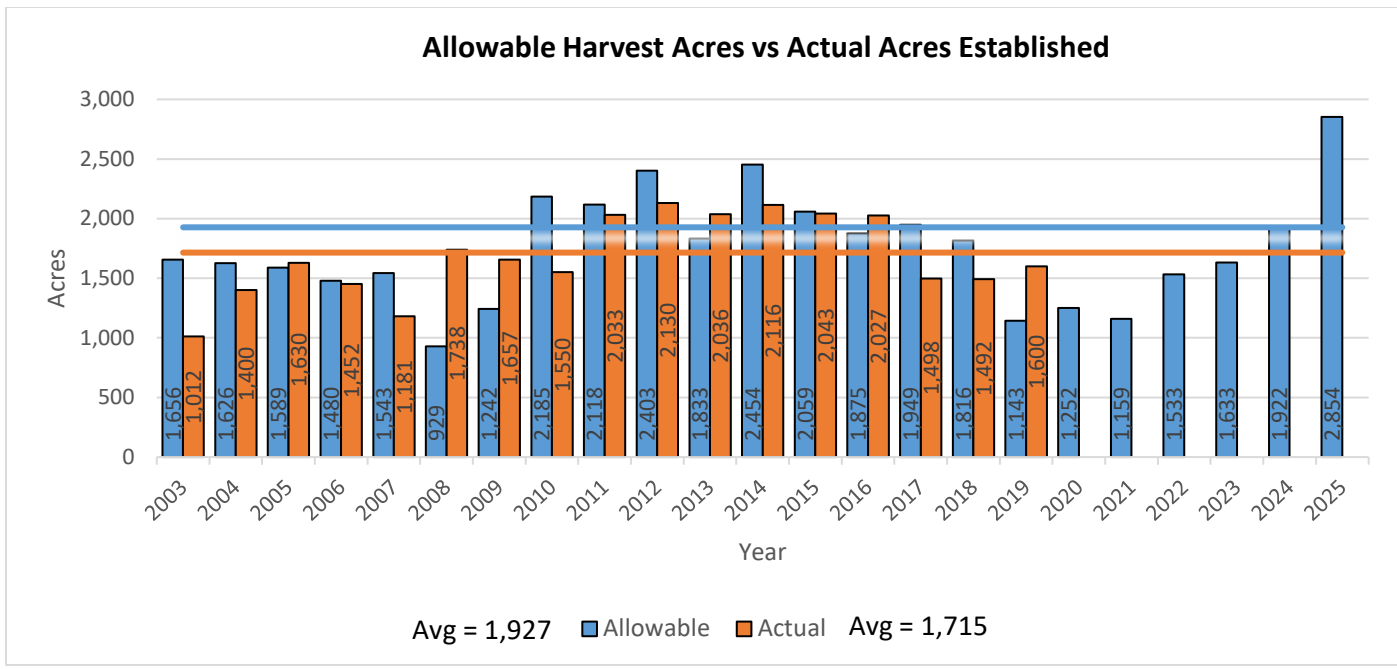
\*\*The 2020 value is an estimate based on projected harvest activity and timber sale acreage to be sold. Estimates are low due to the continued economic situation, the closure of the Verso mill in WI Rapids and the Covid 19 situation.



## Allowable Timber Harvest Projections

Beginning in 2010, the allowable harvest for the Oneida County Forest increased by approximately 33%, and remained at such levels through 2016. The allowable harvest spike has now begun to come back down and in response, the projected actual acres established for 2020 will be set at approximately 1,600 acres.

It is anticipated that some timber sales may not sell due to the depressed wood market and mill closure, however, it is the intention of the Department to establish and offer for sale the allowable harvest acres.



## Severance Payments

Each year the County returns 10% of the gross stumpage revenue to the towns in which the County Forest lies. The state requires these severance payments and they are calculated on the total stumpage revenue received in the calendar year (January 1 – December 31). In 2015, the County Board approved an additional 2% of the gross stumpage revenue be distributed to Towns in which the County Forest lies to assist the Towns in maintaining roads that are vital to the transport of the timber products harvested from the Oneida County Forest.

2019 Total Stumpage Revenue	\$954,812*
Less 10% Town Severance Payments	\$90,018
Less 2% Road Severance	\$18,004
<b>Stumpage Revenue Retained By OC</b>	<b>\$846,790</b>

\*Includes forfeited performance bonds of \$47,704 & NCF stumpage of \$6,925

## Forest Certification

In 2004, the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) began to explore the possibility of entering into a third party certification system. The purpose of this certification is to ensure the forests are managed in a sound, sustainable manner. In 2005, the WCFA entered third party certification through two certification programs: The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC).

Oneida County elected to become certified under the SFI program at that time. The Oneida County Forest has since had two full, on-site audits done by the SFI auditors. The results of these audits concluded the Oneida County Forest is indeed being managed on a sound, sustainable basis. In 2016, with the urging of the wood using industry and logging contractors, Oneida County elected to become certified under the FSC program as well as the SFI program.

The benefits of certification by a third party are many. A financial benefit is the wood products produced by the Oneida County Forest is able to be sold as “certified wood products”. Certified wood products command a higher price in the open market and provides logging contractors preference for selling wood products harvested from Oneida County timber sales to mills requiring a certain percentage of wood purchases be certified. Additional benefits include: reassuring the general public that Oneida County does take into consideration other forest values such as wildlife habitat, watershed protection, cultural resource protection and recreational pursuits during the management of the forest.

In 2019, four counties in the northcentral part of the state were audited by the two certifying agencies. These audits resulted in zero Corrective Action Requests (CAR’s) or Opportunities for Improvement (OFI’s). Oneida County continues to be in good standing with both certifying agencies as all previous CAR’s and OFI’s have been addressed by the Department.

**Future Desired Conditions of the Forest:** The Oneida County Forest is made up of a diverse array of plant communities. It is the intention of the FLRD to maintain the acreages of the existing plant communities at or near their current acreage. Due to the recent discovery of Emerald Ash Borer (see Forest Health Issues), it is anticipated that in the future, the White Ash and Black Ash components of the forest will decline and possibly disappear. These species will be replaced naturally or through planting/seeding with other suitable native species.

**Forest Reconnaissance (Recon.):** Forest Recon activities in 2019 were performed by Oneida County staff, including an LTE grant funded forester, and DNR foresters. A total of 6,913 acres of the Oneida County forest were examined and the recon data updated.

**Forest Health Issues:** In 2019 no new significant insect or disease problems arose in Oneida County. However, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) continues to spread. EAB has not been detected on County Forest lands to date. The EAB quarantine that had been imposed on Oneida County when the first instance of EAB was found in the county has been expanded to the entire state. This allows Oneida County to ship hardwood from our timber sales to mills anywhere in the state year round. The FLRD is working with the DNR and WI Dept of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on this matter. The FLRD will begin to target more ash stands for harvest (primarily Black Ash) in anticipation of the spread of EAB. As the infestation progresses and becomes more defined, an action plan will be developed. Garlic Mustard patches were again monitored and sprayed to control the spread. Late season checks of the areas showed no new plants.



## Forestry Automotive Equipment:

Each year \$25,000 is budgeted into the County Forest Account within the automotive equipment line item. The funds within the line item are used to purchase new and replacement equipment. The size and specialized nature of some of the equipment and/or vehicles used by the Forestry Department can be rather expensive to purchase. Accordingly, the automotive equipment line item is non-lapsing. This allows the Forestry Department to build up sufficient funds within the line item over a period of years, so when an expensive piece of equipment requires replacing, the necessary funds are available. In 2019, \$25,000 was budgeted for forestry equipment purchases. The following equipment purchases occurred in 2019:

<b>Purchased / Sold Equipment</b>	<b>Trade in/Sold Value</b>	<b>Net Cost</b>
2019 Chevrolet Silverado – 2WD – Parks Trucks	\$800	\$25,498
2019 Gravely Lawn Mower		\$ 4,528
2011 Ski-Doo MXZ 600 Sport Snowmobile	\$2,100	
2018 Chilton Single Axle Trailer	\$1,000	

At the end of 2019, the non-lapsing equipment fund had \$2,514 remaining.

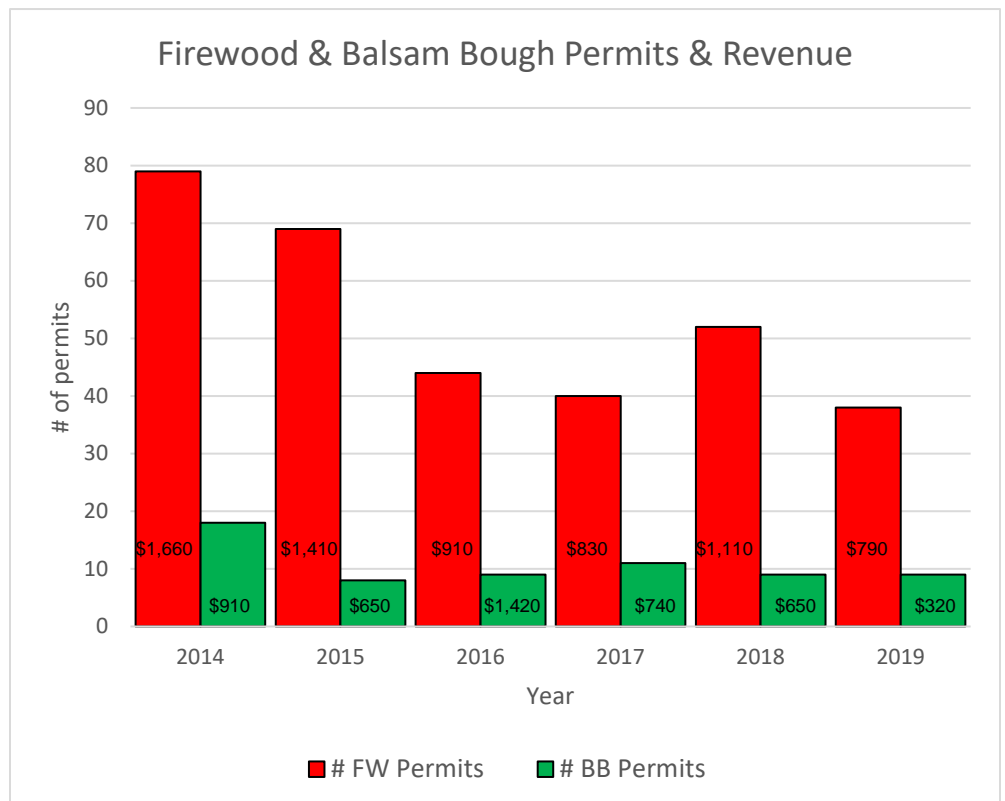
## Miscellaneous Forest Products Permits:

### **Balsam Bough Permits:**

The Balsam Bough Permit system is a fee-based program whereby private citizens can harvest balsam boughs from the County Forest. There are three categories of permits. In 2019, the FLRD issued two Home Use Permits, one Resident Commercial Permits, and one Non-Resident Commercial Permits. In total, the 2019 Balsam Bough Program generated \$320 of revenue for Oneida County.

### **Firewood Gathering Permits:**

The Firewood Gathering Permit system allows private citizens to gather up to 10 cords of firewood for personal home use from designated areas on the County Forest. Firewood Gathering permits are generally issued on closed out timber sales so as to allow for the collection of any tops and limbs remaining after logging activities have been completed. The permit fee for Oneida County Residents and/or Oneida County landowners is \$20. The permit fee for non-resident individuals who do not own land in Oneida County is \$30. In 2019, the FLRD issued 38 Firewood Gathering Permits, which generated \$790 of revenue.



## **FOREST ACCESS**

**County Forest Roads Account:** The FLRD maintains 37.46 miles of road located in isolated areas of the county forest. The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WDOT) formally classifies these roads as "County Forest Roads". By definition County Forest Roads must be a minimum of 16-ft. wide, have an improved gravel surface, and must be seasonally maintained (i.e., the WDOT does not require this type of road to be plowed in winter). The primary purpose for maintaining these roads is to aid in the removal of timber products from the County Forest. Secondly, these roads provide the public with vehicular access routes into otherwise isolated areas of the County Forest.

The funds needed for maintaining the County Forest Road system are primarily obtained through the WDOT. Each year the WDOT pays County Forest Programs \$336 for each mile of County Forest Road maintained. In 2019, the WDOT prorated their county forest road aid payments due to insufficient funds. As a result the Oneida County Forestry Department road aid payment was  $(37.46 \text{ miles} \times \$336 \times 92.27\%) = \$11,677$ . In 2019, the Wisconsin County Forest Association lobbied to have road aids increased. The result was that the road aids increased \$15/mile to \$351 with no future pro-ration.

In addition to the County Forest Road Aids received from the WDOT in 2019, \$1,238 of Trout revenue was received from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. The term TROUTE is defined by the WDNR as a hybrid between a (tr)ail and a road r(oute) that is opened for use by both off-road vehicles (i.e. registered ATV's and UTV's) and motor vehicles (i.e. registered cars and trucks and street legal motorcycles) for the purpose of connecting two trail segments. All of the above described road aid received by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2019 was deposited into the County Forest Roads Account.

The County Forest Roads Account is non-lapsing, meaning the funds deposited into the account remain in place until they are spent. Accordingly, the non-lapsing account mechanism allows deposited revenues to accumulate over time, thus allowing large-scale expensive road projects to be addressed. With the exception of a \$600 expense for gravel pit permit fees, \$363 for brushing by the McNaughton work crew and \$364 for signs/barricades, most of the revenue deposited into the County Forest Roads Account in 2019 was intended to remain in place and/or saved for a future road gravel crushing contract.

In 2019 the Forestry Department conducted general road maintenance work throughout the 37.46 mile road system. Some of the road maintenance activities routinely conducted by the FLRD include grading, signing, wash-out repair, spot graveling, brushing, shoulder mowing, small culvert installation, storm damage clean-up, vandalism repairs, and garbage collection. Due to numerous heavy rain events, more time was spent on washout and culvert repairs than normal. In 2019 application was made to the DOT to add an additional 0.9 miles of road to the County Forest Road system. This application has been filed and is pending approval by the DOT.

## **LAND**

**Land Purchase Account:** The vast majority of accounts used to make up the annual Oneida County budget must be fully reconciled and/or zeroed out at the end of each fiscal year. With that said, Oneida County also recognizes that under certain circumstances some accounts must be non-lapsing. This means any funds deposited into such an account remain in place and intact, year after year, until the funds are spent and/or utilized for their intended purpose. The Forestry Department's Land Purchase Account is designated as a non-lapsing account. As the account name infers, the funds within this account are intended to be used on expenses related to the acquisition of new or replacement County Forest land.



The land purchase account had a zero balance available at the beginning of 2019. Revenue of \$31,200 was received for the withdrawal of 10 acres for the Oneida County Solid Waste demolition site 4 to use for land purchase to replace the acres withdrawn.

## **Gillette/Wickham Lakes Property**

In 2018 Oneida County purchased 231 acres of land containing two lakes: Gillette Lake and Wickham Lake. A small cabin was located on this property and, in 2019 the Department contracted with the Highway Department to remove the cabin. In addition to the removal of the cabin, approximately 1,200 red pine seedlings were planted in open areas on this property. Future plans for the property include improving the access road, creating a small parking lot, installing a small fishing/boat pier and placing picnic tables at the site.



*View of Gillette Lake*

## **WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT**

**Wildlife Habitat Management Account:** The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides county forest programs with an annual allotment of funds that are to be used for wildlife habitat improvement projects on county forest land. The formula used to calculate payment for each eligible county is as follows: Number of County Forest Acres x \$0.05 = Payment. Oneida County received \$3,860 in 2019 for nickel an acre wildlife habitat funds.

All state funds received by Oneida County through the above-described program are deposited into a non-lapsing, State Aid Wildlife Habitat Management Improvement Account. The non-lapsing account provides the Forestry Department with the flexibility to build up state funding over a period of several years to pay for larger, more expensive projects, use the entire allotment of funds annually or a combination of the above-described methods. Additionally, the County received grant reimbursement of \$629 for expenses incurred for development of the Bowman Road Ruffed Grouse Management area located in the Town of Enterprise.

In 2019, the FLRD used \$3,618 of the budgeted State Aid Wildlife Habitat funds received on the following projects, services, equipment, and supplies: 1) Cooperative Service Agreement with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), to provide technical and operational assistance in identifying and controlling nuisance beaver on the Oneida County Forest, \$1,300; 2) Bulldozing and gates, \$1,231; and 3) gate materials and seed, \$1,087. At the end of 2019, the Wildlife Account had a balance of \$871.

## **OUTDOOR RECREATION**

**Parks Account:** In 2019 the FLRD maintained two day-use parks for picnicking, swimming, family gatherings, and general recreation.

**Almon Park:** Almon Park is the largest and most popular day use recreation area managed by the Oneida County FLRD. Located just five miles south of Rhinelander, Almon Park offers a combination of highly developed recreational facilities and undeveloped natural areas. This area is primarily utilized in the summer months for swimming, picnicking, family gatherings and general recreation. An 18-hole disc golf

course is also located on the property. Historically high water levels at Buck Lake has caused issues at the park. The wetland boardwalk on the nature trail was partially submerged during much of the summer and the water level at the beach continues to breach the top of the retaining wall.



*Buck Lake swimming beach located at Almon Park, in the Town of Pelican*

**Perch Lake Park:** Perch Lake Park is located five miles west of Rhinelander on the north shore of Perch Lake. The diversity of recreational opportunities available in the Perch Lake area make this park a popular year-round destination. During winter months, the facility serves as a trail head for a large network of winter silent sport trails. During spring, summer, and fall, Perch Lake Park is popular for picnicking, fishing, hiking, and biking. Some noteworthy attributes of Perch Lake include its largely undeveloped scenic shoreline, and the depth, clarity, and temperature of the lake, which makes it one of the few lakes in Oneida County capable of supporting trout.



*Perch Lake high water shoreline and  
ADA accessible fishing pier*

**Park Shelter Rental Program:** The FLRD allows residents to reserve the Rudolph Shelter at Almon Park and the Judy Swank Shelter at Perch Lake Park for private gatherings such as family reunions, graduation and birthday parties, weddings, and similar gatherings.



*Photo of the Rudolph Shelter located at Almon Park, in the Town of Pelican.*

Each shelter can be reserved for a fee of \$125/day, which includes a refundable security deposit of \$50 if the facility is left clean and undamaged. In 2019, the Rudolph Shelter was rented 14 times resulting in \$1,050 of revenue, and the Judy Swank Shelter was rented 13 times resulting in \$975 of revenue. The total Park Shelter Rental Program generated \$2,025 of revenue in 2019. All revenue generated from the Park Shelter Rental Program is deposited into the Forestry Department Parks Account.

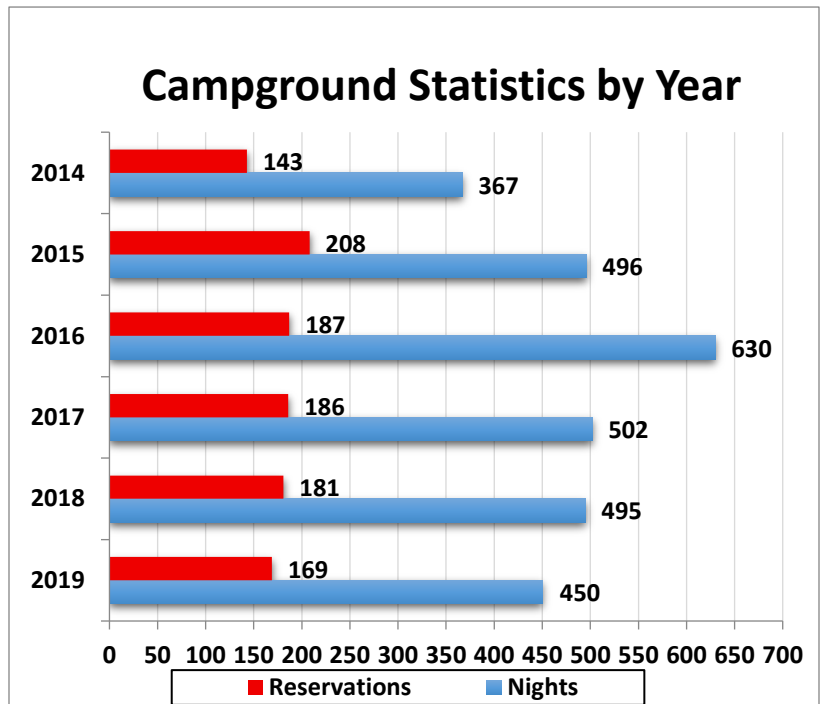


*Photo of the Judy Swank Shelter Building at Perch Lake Park, Town of Woodboro.*

### Campground Account:

The Oneida County Forest Enterprise Campground opened for public use the summer of 2008. The Enterprise Forest Campground is officially open for camping from May 22<sup>nd</sup> to December 1<sup>st</sup>. Although the campground was designed to accommodate ATV's, the campground is open to all members of the general public, with or without an ATV. The campground contains 11 campsites, two toilet buildings and two hand pumps.

When comparing campground occupancy to 2018, the number of reservations and total number of nights that individual campsites were occupied decreased about 10%. This decrease is presumably due to the late spring/summer weather considering August and September had the highest reservations for the year. Not surprisingly, the campground's highest occupancy occurs on Friday and Saturday



nights. The length of stay is consistent to the last couple years (average 2.7 nights) with many campers spending three nights and returning frequently.

In 2019, the fee to reserve a campsite at the Enterprise Campground remained unchanged at \$10/night. Camping registration fees and campground firewood donations resulted in \$4,524 of campground revenue. Conversely, the operating costs attributed to maintaining the campground in 2019 was \$2,048, which resulted in a net campground profit of \$2,476 in 2019.



*Campsite #2*

## **Motorized Sport Trails**

**ATV/UTV Account:** The Forestry Department was responsible for the administration of 33.3 miles of ATV/UTV trails in 2019. Most of the trails are located on county forest land in the south-central and western portions of the county. The Forestry Department contracts out the maintenance of these trails to ATV/UTV clubs. In turn, these clubs receive reimbursement for their work based upon the actual accountable costs they incur, up to a maximum of \$700 per mile. All Oneida County off-road vehicle trails are open to both ATV's and UTV's. In 2019, Oneida County distributed \$23,310 to the two ATV/UTV clubs under contract for services rendered.

Over the last few years, the Forestry Department secured a \$633,000 grant to expand the existing Enterprise ATV trail system by constructing a new 6.7 mile long trail segment and 2.2 miles of connecting County forest road routes. With club-hand help, many hours of County labor, equipment time and donations, this project's estimated total cost is over \$800,000. The new east/west oriented trail segment includes three bridges, ten culverts, and many miles of trail grading, erosion control and resurfacing. The new trail segment will serve as an off road vehicle connection to the original Enterprise ATV trail system on the west side and the Pelican Lake area to the east by linking to a series of town and county road routes that are open to ATV/UTV use. Much of the above-described trail development began in 2017 and continued throughout 2018 with final completion in 2019. The Enterprise ATV/UTV trail system now totals 18.8 miles in length, while the entire Little Rice ATV trail system is 21.2 miles, increasing the total funded ATV miles administered by the Forestry Department to 40 miles.

A few smaller projects occurred in 2019 including the rehabilitation of 5.2 miles of Enterprise (north) ATV trail. This project was phase 2 of resurfacing the degraded Enterprise trail system. This project focused to help reduce erosion, level ruts and pot holes, allow grading of trails, installation of best management practices and maintaining sustainable trails. Many loads of gravel and rip-rap were used for this \$100,000 project.



*Enterprise Rehab 2*

Additionally, the Bowman ATV project included construction of an additional trail around the Bowman Road route to help ATV enthusiasts with trail riding and less road riding. This 0.6 mile connector trail utilized a \$16,000 grant to connect this portion of the Enterprise trail system trail to trail.

With the completion of the expansion of the Enterprise trail system, Oneida County was approved for a grant of \$1,800 which funded the printing of 2,500 Enterprise ATV trail maps and 2,500 Little Rice ATV maps.

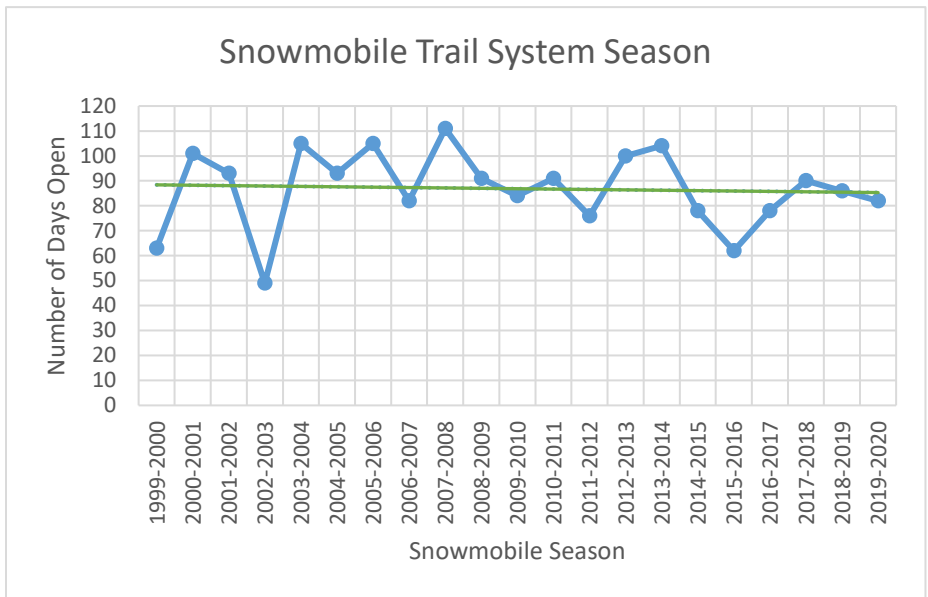
Administratively, the various ATV/UTV clubs worked together and partnered with Oneida County to establish the Oneida County ATV/UTV Council in the spring of 2019. The Council is comprised of ten ATV/UTV clubs of which four receive state funding for trail maintenance. The objectives of the Council include acting as the liaison between clubs and all bodies of local, county, state and federal government regarding matters affecting the sport, encouraging cooperation between the various clubs, and developing an understanding and communication of information so the image of ATV/UTV usage will be enhanced.

**Snowmobile Account:** The Oneida County Forestry Department is also responsible for the administration and supervision of the county’s state-funded snowmobile trail network. Similar to the ATV/UTV program described above, the Forestry Department contracts out the maintenance of this trail system to snowmobile clubs throughout the County. In 2019, the Forestry Department distributed \$242,100 to the ten snowmobile clubs that are under contract with the Forestry Department to maintain the 413.5 mile state-funded snowmobile trail system located in Oneida County.

In 2019, Oneida County was approved for funding of ten additional miles of snowmobile trail. These new miles were split between the Three Lakes and Willow Region Snowmobile clubs. These newly funded miles act as major connectors for the snowmobile system.

Additionally, the Oneida County Forestry Department partnered with snowmobile clubs and landowners to implement six minor trail re-routes. The Willow Region had a reroute on the Willow Spillway due to a safety concern for snowmobile traffic. The Minocqua Forest Riders had two reroutes and Hodag Sno-Trails had three reroutes due to loss of private land use agreements from property owners.

No major projects were funded or completed in 2019. The snowmobile trails were open for 82 days for the 2019-2020 season which is a slight increase from the prior 5-year average of 79 days.



## Silent Sports Trails

**Cross-Country Ski Trails:** Starting in the mid-1970's the FLRD began a program where by cross-country ski trails were developed and maintained (signed, groomed, and brushed) by the department. Over the years these ski trails grew in popularity. Due to public demand, additional ski trail miles were developed by the

FLRD. The Oneida County Forest ski trail network evolved into three signed and groomed ski trail systems that total 27.4 miles.

The Washburn Trail, which is the largest and most popular of the three ski trails, is located adjacent to Perch Lake Park in the Town of Woodboro. The Washburn Ski Trail is 12.0 miles long, offering 4.0 miles of trail groomed for tracked skiing, and 8.0 miles of trail groomed for ski skating. Due to the hilly topography found throughout the Washburn Lake Area, these trails are best suited for skiers possessing an intermediate to advanced skill set.

The Nose Lake Trail is also located in the Town of Woodboro and offers 7.9 miles of trail groomed for traditional tracked skiing. The gentle topography upon which the Nose Lake Trail is located makes this system very popular with skiers possessing either a beginner or intermediate skill set. Another popular feature of the Nose Lake Trail is that dogs are permitted.

The Cassian Two-Way Ski Trail measures 15 miles, round trip. As its name implies, the trail is located in the Town of Cassian. The Cassian Trail is also located on gently rolling terrain, and is designed to accommodate users with a wide range of skills. The Cassian Trail is groomed for traditional tracked skiing.



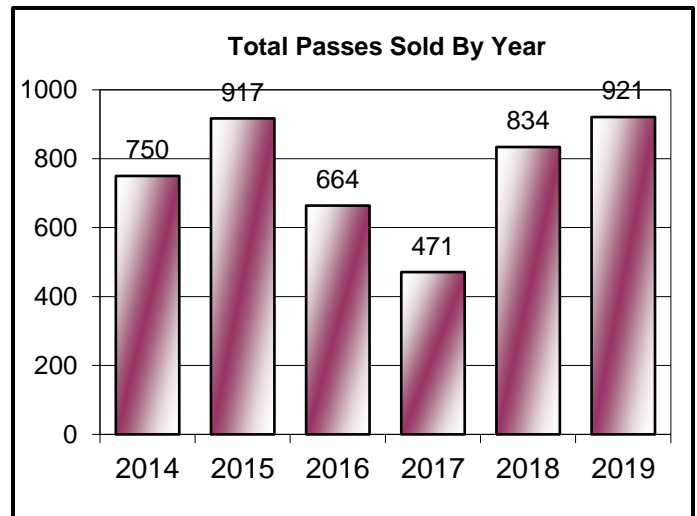
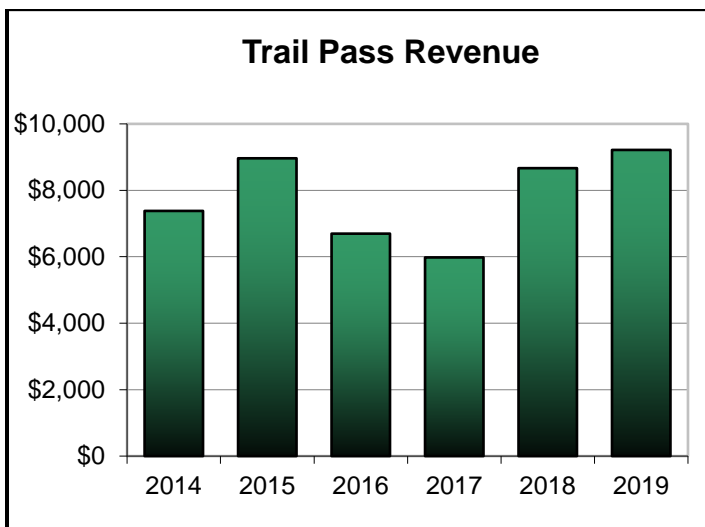
The increased popularity of these trails required the Forestry Department to groom the trail network more frequently. Unlike motorized recreational trails, which generate revenue to fund trail maintenance activities from the state's gas tax formula and the registration of ATV's, UTV's, and snowmobiles, no such mechanism exists for ski and other silent sport trails. Consequently, all of the costs associated with the development and maintenance of the county's silent sports trail network were supported with tax levy funds budgeted into the County Forest Parks Account.

At its peak, the Forestry Department spent approximately \$50,000/year on the equipment, labor, and supplies needed to maintain the county forest network of cross-country ski trails. In an effort to reduce the expense attributed to maintaining the county's ski trail network the Forestry Department re-evaluated the trail maintenance process.

**Ski Trail Maintenance Agreement:** Beginning in 2012, the Forestry Department entered into a ski trail maintenance agreement with the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA). Under the terms of the trail maintenance agreement, RASTA is contracted by the FLRD for brushing, signing, and grooming the county’s 26.5 mile ski trail network. By outsourcing these services, the Forestry Department was able to reduce the ski trail budget from \$50,000/year to approximately \$30,000/year.

**Recreational Trail Aid Grants:** To further reduce the expense attributed to providing the county’s ski trail network, the Forestry Department utilized the Recreational Trail Aid (RTA) program provided by the WDNR. The RTA program was designed to reimburse municipalities for up to 50% of the cost attributed to the development and/or maintenance of recreational trails. Each year RTA grants are awarded by the WDNR by applying a ranking formula to the applications received. For 2019, the Oneida County Forestry Department received RTA Grants for ski trail maintenance providing \$13,300 in reimbursement funds to the Forestry Department for expenses related to the county’s silent sport trail network.

**Trail Pass Program:** The final measure taken by the Forestry Department to reduce the expense attributed to the Forestry Departments ski trail program was the implementation of a trail pass system. The trail pass system requires individuals over the age of 18 to purchase either a daily or annual trail pass in order to use any designated and maintained silent sport trail located on the Oneida County Forest. In 2019, the annual trail pass fee was \$25. The sale of silent sport trail passes for 2019, together with user donations, generated \$9,216.



Note: In 2016, the number of annual passes sold increased and daily passes sold decreased; therefore, the revenue reduction was not as significant.

**Mountain Bike Trails:** In 2019, the Oneida County Forestry Department worked in conjunction with the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA) to maintain 13 miles of mountain bike trail located at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trail facility.



*Photo of the Washburn Lake Silent Sports Trail, located in the town of Woodboro*

**Fat Tire Bike Trail:** A formally designated and maintained fat tire bike trail was approved on the Oneida County Forest in December 2014. The trail is located within the Enterprise block of the Oneida County Forest and measures approximately 8 miles in length. In addition to fat tire biking, the Enterprise Forest Winter Recreational Trail is also open for cross-country skiing and snow shoeing.



**Hiking & Snowshoe Trails:** In 2019, the FLRD maintained two hiking/snowshoe trails at Almon Park that total 2.25 miles in length. These trails travel through a variety of habitats, some of which require the use of wetland boardwalks to traverse. For those snowshoe enthusiasts looking for a more isolated experience, the FLRD also provides 8.0 miles of trail located in the Enterprise Block of the Oneida County Forest. Finally, for individuals seeking a more challenging hiking and/or snowshoe experience, the FLRD provides 5.0 miles of snowshoe trail and 11.0 miles of hiking trail at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trails facility.



*Photo of Almon Park wetland board & hiking/snowshoe trail, located in the Town of Pelican*

**Disabled Access Trails:** In 2019, the FLRD maintained three trail systems specifically developed to provide disabled residents reasonable access to the County Forest. These trails are distributed throughout the Oneida County Forest with one trail located in each of the three County Forest Blocks (i.e. Enterprise, Cassian/Woodboro and Lynne/Little Rice). Uses of these areas include, but are not limited to, hunting, berry picking, bird watching and sightseeing. In order to qualify for a Disabled Access Trail Permit, a person must hold a valid WDNR Class A or B disability identification card as defined by WI state statutes. County Forest Disabled Access Trail Permits are valid for one year and are free, with a \$50 refundable key deposit.

**Miscellaneous Forest Access:** In addition to the trail opportunities and County Forest Roads described in this report, the Oneida County Forest has hundreds of miles of woodland trails and old logging roads that have not formally been designated with recreational purpose, yet remain open year-round for general public use. The primary function of these woodland trails and old logging roads is to provide public access deep into the County Forest. Computerized forest-mapping projects have enabled the FLRD to determine that approximately 80% of Oneida County Forest Land is located within one-quarter mile of a woodland trail or old logging road allowing access to the general public.

## **MINING**

**Mining Impact Account:** Funds of \$5,000 were budgeted into the Mining Impact Account in 2019 for educational purposes. As the majority of residents voted against mining exploration, accordingly, there were no expenses attributed to the Mining Impact Account in 2019.



## HEALTH & SAFETY

The Forestry Department had zero Worker's Compensation claims in 2019.

In 2019, permanent field employees of the FLRD were provided the opportunity to participate in the County steel-toe work shoe program. In addition, the following personal protective gear was available to all FLRD field staff (i.e. temporary & permanent employees): hard hats, helmets, safety glasses, ear protection, chainsaw chaps, rubber gloves, and respirators.

2019 Expenses Related to Employee Safety		
Expense Item	Total Expenditure	# of Staff Benefiting from expense
Steel Toe Shoes	\$400.00	4
Tick Repellent	\$ 90.00	6
High Visibility Mesh Vest	\$ 65.00	1
Safety Glasses	\$ 35.00	7

Name of Training Class/Course	Forest Director	Asst. Forest Director	Forester/ Recreation	Forester 1
Wildland Fire Safety		X	X	X

