

2024 WORK PLAN ONEIDA COUNTY FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

Forest and recreational management activities scheduled for the Oneida County Forest will be accomplished with the aid of funds described below and approved for use by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2024.

Account	Revenue			Expenses			Net
	New	Appl. Cont. Approp.	Total	Personnel	Operating	Total	
51570 Land Purchase	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
55210 Parks	\$50,650	\$40,000	\$90,650	\$307,476	\$83,880	\$391,356	(\$300,706)
55212 Campground	\$8,750	\$0	\$8,750	\$0	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$5,950
55410 St. Aid Snowmobile	\$549,686	\$453,488	\$1,003,174	\$5,500	\$997,674	\$1,003,174	\$0
55412 St. Aid ATV	\$219,831	\$197,393	\$417,224	\$3,000	\$414,224	\$417,224	\$0
56110 County Forest	\$1,017,542	\$0	\$1,017,542	\$343,844	\$98,283	\$442,127	\$575,415
56111 St. Aid Roads	\$64,890	\$10,000	\$74,890	\$0	\$74,890	\$74,890	\$0
56116 Wildlife Habitat	\$3,870	\$1,000	\$4,870	\$0	\$4,870	\$4,870	\$0
56210 Mining	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000
57144 Capital Projects	\$20,000	\$0	\$20,000	\$0	\$225,000	\$225,000	-\$205,000
TOTAL	\$1,935,219	\$706,881	\$2,642,100	\$659,820	\$1,901,621	\$2,561,441	\$80,659

Annual County Forest Integrated Planning Meeting

The Annual County Forest Integrated Planning Meeting between the Oneida County Forestry Department (OCFD) and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was held on September 14, 2023. The planning meeting provides a forum for both departments to jointly establish and agree on County Forest Management Goals for the upcoming year.

Individuals present at the 2023-24 Oneida County Forest Integrated Planning Meeting included Oneida County Staff: Paul Fiene, Eric Rady, Jake Truitt and Jason Fischer and DNR Staff: John Gillen, Kristina Wells, Curt Rollman, Eric Kroening and Joe Schwantes. The main items discussed at the meeting included: County forest time standards, Timber sale and harvest acreage goals, Forest reconnaissance, Reforestation, Wildlife Habitat program and funds, County Forest Roads, Forest health and protection issues, Forest blocking, Forest certification, and Park/Recreation matters.

Forestry Department Staffing

The Forestry Department currently is at full staff with six full time employees – Director, Assistant Director/Snowmobile Coordinator, Forester 2/ATV Coordinator, Forester 1, Office Coordinator and Maintenance Technician/Equipment Operator. In addition to the six FTE's, the department employs three Limited Term Employees for parks maintenance, trail/road mowing and recreation area patrol. It is anticipated the staffing level for the department will remain the same for 2024.

In May of 2024, the Forestry Director will be retiring after nearly 30 years of employment with the Oneida County Forestry Department. A search for a replacement for this position will likely begin in March of 2024. If a current department employee is promoted to this position, a new employee search to fill the vacancy will be started late spring of 2024.

FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Timber Sale Establishment

The Oneida County Forestry Department has established a target goal of approximately 1,500 acres of timber for sale in 2024. A total of 2,577 acres of timber are scheduled in 2024 for harvest in Sec. 202 of WisFIRS. It is anticipated that not all of the 2,577 acres will be ready to harvest. In addition, there are numerous large Aspen stands that may have partial harvests established in order to break up the age class. Due to market conditions, most swamp associated timber stands (Black Ash, Black Spruce, Tamarack) will likely not be looked at for sale establishment at this time. Deferrals and omitting the swamp species should result in an established acreage of approximately 1,500 acres. The sale areas will be distributed throughout the three County Forest Blocks (Enterprise, Cassian-Woodboro and Lynne-Little Rice). The established value of the 1,500 acres of timber sales is estimated to be approximately \$1,100,000.

The labor required to establish the aforementioned timber sale acreage will be provided by the Oneida County Forestry Department with assistance from DNR Forestry personnel.

Approximately 25 separate timber sales will be established to address the scheduled acres to be harvested.

Due to unforeseen factors such as wind storms, insect or disease outbreaks and other acts of nature, the above scheduled acres may change.

For more detailed information regarding the acres scheduled for harvest, such as which compartments/stands are scheduled, contact the Oneida County Forestry Office at (715) 369-6140.

Acres by Forest Cover Type Proposed for Harvest in 2024			
Forest Cover Type	Total Acres on County Forest	Acres Scheduled for Harvest in 2024	Non-Scheduled Acres Proposed For Harvest in 2024 Acres
Aspen	32,761	760	
Hemlock	1,358	72	
White Birch	195	21	
Red Maple	1,25	68	
Northern Hardwood	13,226	537	
Red Oak	2,523	287	
Red Pine	2,182	118	
White Pine	535	14	
Black Spruce-Tamarack-Swamp Conifer-Fir/Spruce	8,392	281	
Swamp Hardwood	1,579	419	
Total Acres Scheduled		2,577	
Total Non-Scheduled Acres			
Total Acres proposed for harvest in 2024		1,500	

Timber Sale Administration

It is anticipated that between 20 and 30 timber sale contracts will be active during 2024. This contract activity will be distributed throughout the year with fall and winter being the most active times. Department involvement will include contract administration, sale inspection, and fiscal record keeping. A harvest of 25,000 cord equivalents with a value of approximately \$1,100,000 is anticipated. The haul permit system will continue to be used for pulpwood, and wood scaling will be utilized for saw logs. Weekly timber sale inspections will be conducted by both County and DNR personnel when sales are active. Due to current market conditions including the closing of the Verso Mill in Wisconsin Rapids, it is anticipated that stumpage prices will remain depressed for at least the first quarter if not all of 2024. Recent reports suggest the Verso Mill in Wisconsin Rapids will not re-open, as much of the equipment is being removed/salvaged. Logging activity may in turn, be less than prior to the mill closing and economic downturn.

Forest Reconnaissance

Forest Reconnaissance (recon) work scheduled for 2024 includes updating recon information that is older than 15 years as time permits. A total of approximately 5,000 acres of recon update is anticipated. In addition, the acres recon'd during timber sale establishment will be counted toward recon updates. Recon updates will be conducted by both County and DNR personnel.

Forest Protection

Cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will be utilized to protect the forest from insects, disease, and forest fires. Cooperation from the DNR will also be sought to assist in the eradication of Glossy Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard. These two non-native invasive plant species were found in the Enterprise Block of the County Forest in 2013. A combination of chemical and mechanical treatment was performed on these non-native invasive species in 2014-2024. An LTE was hired in 2016 to do a more intensive survey of the County Forest for invasive species and to begin eradication measures on populations. This survey located numerous populations of invasive species. The LTE and Oneida County Forestry personnel developed a management plan to monitor and conduct control measures on those populations deemed most threatening. The LTE continued with established control measures on the Garlic Mustard population, along with initiating control on newly located populations of Garlic Mustard, Glossy Buckthorn, Canada Thistle and Wild Parsnip. This included application of herbicides and hand pulling of plants. These efforts, along with additional monitoring of invasive species populations, will continue in 2024.

With the recent discovery of Oak Wilt in the Woodruff, Lake Nokomis and Woodboro Wildlife Area, and the Town of Lake Tomahawk, the Oneida County Forestry Department will continue to monitor oak stands for any signs of Oak Wilt. If found, all attempts will be made to isolate the infection and prevent additional spread. The Forestry Department will continue to apply restrictions to all timber sales that fall within the Oak Wilt guidelines (e.g. no harvesting until after July 15th in stands that fall within the guidelines).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Animal Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), will be contracted to help control nuisance beaver damage. Isolated beaver colonies that have been identified as posing a threat to timber productivity, or causing damage to County Forest Roads, recreation trails and Trout Streams will be targeted for capture and removal.

Forest insects and diseases already in our area, and/or projected to emerge or migrate into our area were discussed. Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was found in Oneida County in October of 2014. Several White Ash trees on Oneida County Forest in the Town of Enterprise were found to be infested with EAB. These trees are being monitored and timber sales in the area will remove the majority if not all ash. In 2023, additional white ash trees in the Enterprise block with symptoms of EAB infestation were located. This shows EAB is spreading. The Oneida County Forestry Department will continue to work with the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) and the DNR to devise a strategy to minimize the environmental and economic impact this discovery may have on the County. The Forestry Department will focus more on harvesting White and Black Ash during normal timber sale establishment especially within a 15-mile radius of the EAB discoveries.

Reforestation and Plantation Release

Several red pine plantations have reached economic maturity and will begin losing value as the trees exceed 20" diameter on the stump. As these stands show up on the harvest schedule, it will be determined which ones may be regenerated through over-story removal and re-planting and which ones may be carried beyond the economic maturity to serve other purposes such as aesthetics. One pine stand had a final harvest completed in 2020. In addition to this 36 acre stand, an additional 45 acres was harvested in 2021 and is scheduled for site prep and planting. These two stands had site prep done on them in the summer of 2023. Both sites are scheduled to be planted in spring of 2024. The sites will be hand planted with 2-0 red pine and a small area of 2-0 white pine by a contract planting crew in April or May of 2024.

Forest Certification

The Oneida County Forest is certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) programs. These certifications require periodic random audits of certified forests.

Oneida County joined the FSC Certification Program in late 2016. In order to be compliant with this program, several amendments to the 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan (15-Year Plan) had to be made. These changes dealt with stating Oneida County's commitment to the FSC program along with numerous small changes dealing with High Conservation Value Forest (HCVF) nomenclature, acreage of the HCVF's, along with the deletion of previously maintained day use areas that are no longer maintained. No significant change to the management of the forest is anticipated due to these 15-Year Plan amendments.

In 2023, four counties in the eastern part of the state were audited by both SFI and FSC. The following Corrective Action Requests (CARs) and Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs) were made following this audit:

SFI – 2023

NO CARS

Opportunities for Improvements (OFI)-

- 1) 3.2.1: Program addressing management and protection of water quality of rivers, streams, lakes, wetlands, other water bodies and riparian areas during all phases of management.
 - Please review sold timber sales prior to operations starting to ensure BMPs particularly for RMZs, buffers and such are being applied/applicable and no changes to the sale since established. More guidance to come from WCFA Legislative/Certification committee.

FSC – 2023

NO CARS

Observations (OBS)- same as SFI OFI above

- 1) 6.5b- Forest operations meet or exceed Best Management Practices (BMPs) that address components of the Criterion where the operation takes place.
 - Please review sold timber sales prior to operations starting to ensure BMPs particularly for RMZs, buffers and such are being applied/applicable and no changes to the sale since established. More guidance to come from WCFA Legislative/Certification committee.

- 2) 8.3a & FM-COC 2.5- When forest products are being sold as FSC-certified, the forest owner or manager has a system that prevents mixing of FSC-certified and non-certified forest products prior to the point of sale.
 - CF Specialist will work with WCFA to provide guidance on contracts/haul tickets and such to properly point at DNR website where license and COC is publicly housed.

Oneida County will ensure that all CARS and Observations are met in 2024.

All CAR's, OFI's and Observations identified in previous audits were addressed and/or corrected by Oneida County.

Oneida County is scheduled for a full re-certification audit in August of 2024. Preparation for this audit will begin in the spring of 2024 and will continue until the audit is complete. The county will work closely with the DNR Public Lands Specialist, DNR Certification Specialist, DNR Liaison and the WCFA in preparation for this audit. All county forestry personnel will participate to some degree in this audit.

Wildlife Management

In cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, wildlife management activity on the County Forest will center on forest openings maintenance and rehabilitation, habitat trail mowing, control of terrestrial invasive species through chemical application, hand-pulling and burning, and designing timber sales that incorporate wildlife habitat needs for both game and non-game wildlife species.

In addition to those projects listed above, State Aid Wildlife funds have also been budgeted in 2024 for the following wildlife habitat projects:

- 1) Control encroachment of undesirable vegetation into wildlife openings and hunter hiking trails with a combination of prescribed burns and mowing.
- 2) Seed logging roads and landing with a mixture of grass/forbe seed.
- 3) Promote the establishment and growth of mast producing tree species with scarification techniques that optimize soil conditions for natural seed germination.
- 4) Purchase and install interpretive/educational signs describing various forest management techniques; where, when, and why different forest management techniques are used, and how the different techniques benefit a wide range of wildlife species.
- 5) Work with the DNR Wildlife Biologist and Technician to develop strategies for the harvesting of large blocks of aspen for Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock habitat.

County Forest Roads

2024 County Forest Roads, Capital Improvement Schedule:

Contract for the replacement of two large culverts where Rozell Road crosses the Little Rice River in the town of Little Rice. A grant for \$46,000 was awarded to partially pay for this project through the Sustainable Forestry Grant program administered by the DNR. The DNR Hydrologist for Oneida County will survey the river and existing culverts and draw up plans for the replacement project. Completion of this project is anticipated by fall/early winter of 2024.

Spot gravel and grade ~5.0 miles of County Forest Road located in the Enterprise block of the Oneida County Forest (Bass Lake Road and Zimmer Road).

Continue to utilize the McNaughton Correctional Facility crew to prune and brush overhanging vegetation along the County Forest Roads in the town of Enterprise as time and availability permit.

Explore the possibility of opening a gravel pit along Cruiser's Road in the Town of Nokomis. This pit would be used for maintenance of Cruiser's Road and potentially for supplying material for a new ATV/UTV trail running from Co. Hwy N to Oscar Jenny Rd. The towns of Nokomis and Woodboro, along with the Oneida County Hwy Department, have expressed interest in utilizing a pit in this location if ever developed. If it is determined that opening a gravel pit in this area is feasible and beneficial, the process of developing the pit would begin in 2024.

In addition to the specialized projects mentioned above, annual road maintenance projects, including, but not limited to: grading, signing, wash-out repair, spot graveling, brushing, mowing and beaver flood control, will take place throughout the County Forest Road system in 2024. Contract grading of the County Forest Roads in the town of Enterprise will be explored in 2024. The Forestry Department's dump truck with belly blade makes grading edges of the roads difficult. If it is determined to be fiscally advantageous, either the Highway Department or a private company may be contracted to perform grading activities on the County Forest Roads.

Equipment and Facilities

Each year an amortized allotment of funds is budgeted in a non-lapsing automotive equipment line item. In 2023, the department was able to purchase a new Ford F-150 to replace a 2011 Chevrolet 4x4. The old truck was sold for \$8,500 and these funds were used to help offset the cost of the new truck.

The Forestry Department also utilized the Wisconsin Surplus auction to sell a 2012 Tundra snowmobile, 2013 Polaris Ranger ATV as well as other miscellaneous equipment and confiscated deer stands for approximately \$12,000. The Forestry Committee approved the department to sell the equipment and use the proceeds toward the purchase of a new ATV with tracks with the understanding that any additional funds would come from the Forestry Equipment Continuing Appropriations Account.

Additionally, the Forestry Department was approved by the capital funding committee to replace and sell a 2002 Sterling dump truck in 2024. The proceeds of this sale will offset the purchase of a new dump truck.

Parks

In addition to the timber and wildlife management programs mentioned above, the Oneida County Forestry Department will administer and maintain two day-use parks and one campground in 2024.

At 160 acres in size, Almon Park is the largest and most popular day use park maintained by the Forestry Department. Some of the more popular features offered at Almon Park include a

large swimming beach, 18-hole disc golf course, picnic shelters and several miles of picturesque hiking trails.

Townline Lake Park and beach area are currently maintained by volunteers of the Friends of Townline Lake Park (FTLLP) which includes routine maintenance (mowing, raking, trash receptacles and portable toilets). The park has a swimming beach, two picnic areas and a disabled access kayak/canoe/fishing dock that was purchased and installed by the FTLLP. Development of a walking trail through the park was completed in 2023 by FTLLP in consultation with the Forestry Department. Additional fishing docks may be installed by FTLLP in 2024. The boat landing may be upgraded to repair deteriorating asphalt at the waterline.

Perch Lake Park is open year round and offers a heated shelter building, lakeshore picnic facilities, an ADA compliant fishing pier, and serves as the main trail head for the Washburn Silent Trail System.

The Enterprise Forest campground features 11 oversized campsites, two bathroom buildings, onsite firewood, potable water, and connects directly to the Oneida County ATV/UTV Trail System.

The Gillette/Wickham property, consisting of 230 acres surrounding Gillette and Wickham Lakes in the Town of Enterprise remains a pristine property for Oneida County. In addition to the upgraded access road and creation of a parking lot, additional facilities planned for this property include: the purchase and installation of an ADA compliant fishing/boat launching pier and an ADA compliant access path from the parking lot to the pier. It is not anticipated that these improvements will be completed in 2024.

Work will be coordinated with the Land and Water Conservation Aquatic Invasive Specialist (AIS) to all lakes within the County forest system that have either trailer boat access or reasonable carry-in access. These lakes include Gillette, Wickham, Bass, High and Hildebrand Lakes in the Town of Enterprise; Muskellunge and West Lakes in the Town of Lynne; Spruce, Timber and Goodyear Lakes in the Town of Cassian; Newbold Lake in the Town of Lake Tomahawk; and Perch Lake in the Town of Woodboro.

The purpose of this survey will be to obtain baseline data on the aquatic plant populations and water quality, and the possible presence of aquatic invasive species. Periodic monitoring and resurveying of the lakes will be coordinated with the AIS to determine if aquatic plant populations and the health of the lakes are changing and if aquatic invasive species are being introduced. In the event invasive species are found, a plan to manage, minimize or remove the invasive species will be implemented with assistance from the AIS. In addition to surveying and monitoring, the required state and local "Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species" informational signs will be posted at the access points to these lakes.

2023 Park Capital Improvement Project Accomplishments:

- The Friends of Townline Lake Park completed the installation of the kayak/fishing pier and gravel pathway at Townline Lake.

2024 Park Capital Improvement Project Schedule:

- Repair the existing wetland boardwalks located at Almon Park.
- Paint the bathroom facilities at Almon Park.
- Spot stain the Judy Swank pavilion at Perch Lake Park.
- Repair the boat landing at Townline Lake Park.

Recreational Trails:

Miscellaneous recreational opportunities provided by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2024 will include: 35+- miles of cross country ski trail, 25 miles of hiking trail, 12 miles of mountain bike trail, 10 miles of snowshoe trail, 6 miles of Fat tire bike trail, 428 miles of state funded snowmobile trail, 315 miles of club & state sponsored snowmobile trails that require some administrative duties and 47 miles of off road ATV/UTV trail and 39 miles of ATV/UTV road routes. In addition to the trail systems mentioned above, the Oneida County Forest offers hundreds of miles of unimproved woodland trails open and available to the public for recreational use.

2023 Capital Improvement Project Accomplishments:

- Completed the “Forest County Connector” ATV/UTV trail, which will run adjacent to US Hwy 8 from the Town of Monico to the Forest County line.
- Rehabilitation of ~6 miles of ATV/UTV trail in the Little Rice trail system.

2024 Capital Improvement Project Plans:

- Continue process of replacing the Gilmore Creek snowmobile bridge in the town of Woodruff. Due to its age, width, weight restrictions and degraded structure the bridge needs to be replaced to continue use as a snowmobile bridge. Design specification to be drawn up and application for grant funding to be made. Construction is likely to take place in 2023.
- Due to a lost land use agreement within the Town of Pelican, a 3.3 mile snowmobile trail re-route is needed, including the engineering and construction of a major bridge. The process of constructing the re-route and bridge will begin in 2023.
- Culvert project in Town of Piehl to include the replacement of three large culverts on a snowmobile trail.
- Grant application for new ATV trail in Towns of Minocqua and Lynne. Approximately six new miles of off-road ATV trail. This trail will go from Flowage Road in the Town of Lynne to Manhardt Road in the Town of Minocqua.
- Grant application for re-decking / re-construction of the four Burrows elevated boardwalks.

Land Acquisition:

It is a policy of Oneida County to consider the acquisition of parcels of land located within the formal boundaries of our existing county forest blocks, as said parcels become available for purchase. The rationale for this policy is largely rooted in the concept that land management becomes more efficient with the elimination or reduction of privately owned inholdings.

2023 Land Acquisition Accomplishments:

- No land acquisitions were made in 2023.

2023 Proposed Land Acquisitions:

- There aren't any land acquisitions planned for 2024, however if lands that meet acquisition requirements become available, the Forestry Department will bring proposals to the Committee and County Board for their consideration.

2023 Land Sales:

Tompkins Encroachment at a price of \$19,500.00 plus expense reimbursement for survey, appraisal, recording fees and administration fees. All proceeds from the sale of this parcel will be placed in the land purchase account for future purchase of lands to be entered in the County Forest Program. Any new parcels purchased will provide more benefits to the County and the general public.