

## 2025 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 2025.

Account	Revenue			Expenses			Net
	New	Appl. Cont. Approp.	Total	Personnel	Operating	Total	
51570 Land Purchase	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
55210 Parks	\$44,550	\$40,000	\$84,550	\$282,441	\$83,430	\$365,871	(\$281,321)
55212 Campground	\$8,750	\$0	\$8,750	\$0	\$2,800	\$2,800	\$5,950
55410 St. Aid Snowmobile	\$526,636	\$157,835	\$684,471	\$5,000	\$679,471	\$684,471	\$0
55412 St. Aid ATV	\$144,725	\$271,246	\$415,971	\$4,250	\$411,721	\$415,971	\$0
56110 County Forest	\$1,040,942	\$0	\$1,040,942	\$412,631	\$91,085	\$503,716	\$537,226
56111 St. Aid Roads	\$71,288	\$12,500	\$83,788	\$0	\$83,788	\$83,788	\$0
56116 Wildlife Habitat	\$3,860	\$3,300	\$7,160	\$0	\$7,160	\$7,160	\$0
56210 Mining	\$0	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$5,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$1,840,751</b>	<b>\$489,881</b>	<b>\$2,330,632</b>	<b>\$704,322</b>	<b>\$1,359,455</b>	<b>\$2,063,777</b>	<b>\$266,855</b>

### 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 19, 2024. 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 2024-25 Oneida County Forest Integrated Planning Meeting included OCFD Staff: Jill Nemec, Eric Rady, Jake Truitt, and Jason Fischer, and DNR Staff: John Gillen, Kristina Wells, Curt Rollman, Eric Kroening, Michelle Woodford, Mary Bartkowiak, 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, Forest health and protection issues, Forest certification, and Park/Recreation matters.

## **Forestry Department Staffing**

The OCFD 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. Staffing levels for the department are expected to remain the same for 2025.

## **FOREST MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Timber Sale Establishment**

The annual allowable harvest on the Oneida County Forest has historically been about 1,500 acres, but for the next 15-year period is slightly higher at approximately 1,800 acres. In 2025, a total of 2,574 acres are scheduled for harvest, with the majority scheduled in Aspen or Northern Hardwood cover types.

For a variety of reasons, not all of the scheduled acreage will be established for harvest. Numerous large Aspen stands may be split into smaller harvests to break up the Aspen age class distribution. Lowland timber stands (e.g. Swamp Hardwoods, White Cedar, Black Spruce, Tamarack) will likely be deferred or removed from the harvest schedule due to poor markets, inaccessibility, or in the case of White Cedar, difficulty in reliable regeneration. Deferrals and omission of lowland stands from the schedule should result in an established acreage closer to 1,900 acres. Unforeseen factors such as windstorms, insect or disease outbreaks, and other acts of nature may also influence the harvest acres scheduled above.

Approximately 20-25 separate timber sale tracts will be established throughout the three County Forest Blocks (Enterprise, Cassian-Woodboro and Lynne-Little Rice). Timber sale tracts are offered for sale twice a year – in May and November. The estimated value of these of timber sales is expected to be approximately \$1,100,000.

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

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.

<b>Acres by Forest Cover Type Proposed for Harvest in 2025</b>			
<b>Forest Cover Type</b>	<b>Total Acres on County Forest</b>	<b>Acres Scheduled for Harvest in 2025</b>	<b>Non-Scheduled Acres Proposed For Harvest in 2025</b>
<b>Aspen</b>	<b>32,784</b>	<b>761</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Hemlock</b>	<b>1,272</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Northern Hardwood</b>	<b>13,227</b>	<b>775</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Red Oak</b>	<b>2,580</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Red Pine</b>	<b>2,138</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>White Pine</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Black Spruce-Tamarack-Swamp Conifer-Fir/Spruce</b>	<b>11,455</b>	<b>452</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Swamp Hardwood</b>	<b>1,576</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Acres Scheduled</b>		<b>2,574</b>	<b>---</b>
<b>Total Non-Scheduled Acres</b>		<b>---</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total Acres proposed for harvest in 2025</b>		<b>2,574</b>	

### **Timber Sale Administration**

Between 20 and 30 timber sale contracts are expected to be active during 2025. This contract activity will be distributed throughout the year with fall and winter being the most active times. OCFD involvement includes contract administration, sale inspections, and fiscal record keeping. A harvest of 35,000 cord equivalents with a value of approximately \$1,000,000 to \$1,300,000 is expected. Wood will continue to be scaled using a combination of the haul permit system and stick-scaling on the landing. Weekly timber sale inspections will be conducted by OCFD and DNR personnel when sales are active. Due to volatile market conditions, it is anticipated that stumpage prices will remain depressed for most if not all of 2025.

### **Forest Reconnaissance**

Forest Reconnaissance (recon) work scheduled for 2025 includes updating recon information that is older than 15 years as time permits. Approximately 5,000-6,000 acres of recon updates are anticipated. In addition, the acres reconned during timber sale establishment will be counted toward recon updates. Recon updates are conducted by OCFD 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. Of particular concern on the Oneida County Forest are Oak Wilt, Red Pine Pocket Mortality, and Emerald Ash Borer.

With Oak Wilt present in Woodruff, Lake Nokomis, Woodboro Wildlife Area, Town of Lake Tomahawk, and just south of the Town of Enterprise in Langlade County, the OCFD 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 OCFD will continue to apply restrictions to all timber sales that fall within the Oak Wilt guidelines (e.g. no harvesting from April 15<sup>th</sup> to July 15<sup>th</sup> in stands that fall within the guidelines).

Red Pine Pocket Mortality (often with *Leptographium* and *Armillaria* associates) has become a disease concern in recent years in red pine plantations, and additional pockets were discovered in 2024. OCFD has been managing these on a case-by-case basis by salvaging individual pockets; or in some cases, salvaging the entire plantation if the Pocket Mortality is more widespread. Pockets or dieback areas discovered in 2024 will likely be salvaged in 2025-2026.

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, demonstrating that EAB is spreading. The OCFD 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 OCFD will focus more on harvesting White and Black Ash during normal timber sale establishment especially within a 15-mile radius of the EAB discoveries.

In addition to the concerns above, cooperation with the DNR will also be sought to assist in the monitoring and eradication of non-native, invasive plant species. Glossy Buckthorn and Garlic Mustard plants were found in the Enterprise Block of the County Forest in 2013, and Japanese Knotweed was discovered in the Lynne/Little Rice Block in 2022. A combination of chemical and mechanical treatments to eradicate or control the spread of these invasive species have occurred every year since 2014, and are expected to continue in 2025.

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.

### **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 appear on the harvest schedule, it will be determined which ones may be regenerated through overstory removal and replanting, and which ones may be carried beyond the economic maturity to serve other purposes such as aesthetics. Two such stands were harvested in 2020 & 2021, prepped for planting in 2023, and replanted in Spring 2024 by a contract planting crew. Approximately 68 acres were planted with 2-0 Red Pine stock and 10 acres planted with 2-0 White Pine stock. Periodic plantation survival surveys will determine the need for any mechanical or chemical release in 2025 and beyond.

In addition to stands reaching economic maturity, other red pine plantations may be rotated early due to Red Pine Pocket Mortality decline and dieback. These plantations would also likely be replanted following harvest.

## **Forest Certification**

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

In 2024, four counties in the north central part of the state, including Oneida County, were audited by both SFI and FSC. Preparation for the audit began in the spring of 2024 and continued until the on-site audit in August. Oneida County worked closely with the DNR Public Lands Specialist, DNR Certification Specialist, DNR County Liaison and the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) in preparation for this audit. All county forestry personnel participated in the audit. The audited counties did an excellent job highlighting compliance, which resulted in zero Corrective Action Requests (CARs) or Opportunities for Improvement (OFI).

## **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 2025 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 landings with a mixture of grass/forb seed.
- 3) Promote the establishment and growth of mast producing tree species with scarification techniques that optimize soil conditions for natural seed germination.
- 4) 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**

### **2025 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 \$52,500 was awarded to help fund this project through the Sustainable Forestry Grant program administered by the DNR. The DNR Forest Hydrologist for Oneida County has completed a survey of the river and existing culverts and will draw up plans for the replacement project. Completion of this project is expected in 2025.

Spot gravel and grade ~5.0 miles of County Forest Roads located in the Enterprise block of the Oneida County Forest (Shingle Mill, Zimmer, Camp Six).

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 from County Highway N to Oscar Jenny Rd. The Towns of Nokomis and Woodboro, along with the Oneida County Highway 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 OCFD would work with the Highway Department in 2025 to begin the process of developing the pit.

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 2025. Contract grading of the County Forest Roads in the Town of Enterprise will be explored in 2025. The OCFD'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 and/or brushing activities on the County Forest Roads.

### **Equipment and Facilities**

Each year an amortized allotment of funds is budgeted in a non-lapsing forestry equipment line item. In 2024, the department was able to purchase a 2024 Ski-Doo Renegade to replace a 2018 Ski-Doo used for trail inspections. The old snowmobile was sold for \$4,100 and these funds were used to help offset the cost of the new snowmobile.

The OCFD utilized the Wisconsin Surplus auction to sell miscellaneous items (e.g. snowmobile bridge, portable timber bridge, chainsaws, pole saws) and confiscated deer stands for approximately \$16,000. Some of these funds were used to replace the department's small tool inventory (chainsaws, drills, etc.). Additionally, the OCFD was approved by the capital funding committee to replace a 2016 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 in 2025.

### **Parks**

In addition to the timber and wildlife management programs mentioned above, the OCFD will administer and maintain two day-use parks and one campground in 2025.

At 160 acres in size, Almon Park is the largest and most popular day use park maintained by the OCFD. 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 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 FTLLP. In 2024, they finished the walking trail from the park to the beach area, completed installation of

a memorial bench at the beach area, installation of two additional fishing piers and a ribbon cutting ceremony for the dedication of the ADA fishing pier bench.

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 previously upgraded access road and parking lot, a picnic table was added for users to enjoy the scenic beauty around the lakes.

### **2024 Park Capital Improvement Project Accomplishments:**

- Installation of galvanized pans to replace/repair wetland boardwalks on the nature trails at Almon Park that were previously under water due to high water levels.
- The Friends of Townline Lake Park completed the installation of a permanent pier and a seasonal pier within the park boundaries.
- The OCFD assisted with installation of a memorial bench by the Townline Lake beach area.

### **2025 Park Capital Improvement Project Schedule:**

- Replace / repair the skylights within the bathroom/changing room facilities at Almon Park.
- Paint the bathroom facilities at Almon Park.
- Evaluate available options to repair/replace the retaining wall at Almon Park.

### **Recreational Trails:**

Miscellaneous recreational opportunities provided by the OCFD in 2025 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, 436 miles of state funded snowmobile trail, 315 miles of club & state sponsored snowmobile trails that require some administrative duties and 53 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.

### **2024 Capital Improvement Project Accomplishments:**

- Completed a joint ATV / snowmobile rehabilitation project of the Burrows Boardwalks which provide year round access to ATV and snowmobile enthusiasts.
- Completed replacement of three large culverts on the snowmobile trail in the Town of Piehl,

- Significant engineering progress on a major snowmobile bridge and trail re-route (Pelican River Bridge).
- Engineering plans for the replacement of the Gilmore Creek bridge.

### **2025 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. Construction is anticipated for 2025.
- Construction of the Pelican River snowmobile bridge and trail re-route.
- Re-decking of two snowmobile bridges – Stacks Bay Bridge and Tomahawk River Bridge.
- Develop 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.
- Develop approximately 1.6 miles of ATV in the Town of Schoepke to help connect Oneida, Forest and Langlade county trail systems.
- Rehabilitate approximately five miles of ATV trail in the Town of Little Rice. The trail is 20+ years old and has major erosion issues causing large pot holes.

### **Land Acquisition and Sales:**

It is the 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.

### **2024 Land Acquisition Accomplishments:**

- No land acquisitions were made in 2024.

### **2025 Proposed Land Acquisitions:**

- No land acquisitions are planned for 2025; however, if land that meet acquisition requirements become available, the OCFD will bring proposals to the Forestry Committee and County Board for their consideration.

### **2024 Land Sales:**

- There weren't any land sales in 2024; however, a 1.74 acre parcel in the Town of Little Rice was withdrawn from county forest land for a proposed cell tower in conjunction with the Oneida County Broadband Project.