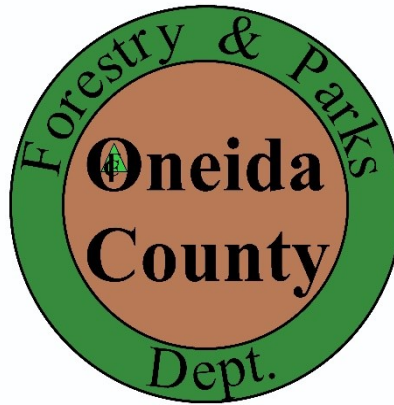


**Oneida County Forestry, Land
and
Recreation Department**



2021 Annual Report

To

Oneida County Board of Supervisors

By

Forestry, Land and Recreation Committee

Committee

**Robert Almekinder, Chair
Chris Schultz
Collette Sorgel
Jim Winkler
Robert Briggs**

Oneida County Board of Supervisors: We submit, for your approval and adoption, a report of activities of the Oneida County Forestry, Land and Recreation Department for the year 2021.

2021 Department Highlights:

- Despite the continued timber market depression, the timber sales revenue exceeded the 2021 budget estimation by over \$500,000 ending the year at \$1,685,629.
- As the pandemic continued into 2021, the department continued work with few disruptions.
- Oneida County continued to see a strong utilization of recreational facilities (campground occupancy, trail passes, etc.) in part due to the pandemic.
- The Forester I position was filled in April 2021; however, the employee resigned in October, leaving the position vacant through the remainder of the year.

FORESTRY

Forest Management & Timber Sale Revenue:

In 2021, the harvesting of timber on Oneida County Forest resulted in gross stumpage revenue to the County of \$1,685,629, far exceeding the budget by over \$500,000. This revenue was realized during a period in which the timber industry was at a historical low, due in part to the closing of the Wisconsin Rapids Verso paper mill which consumed approximately 25% of the state's pulpwood. Additionally, \$10,000 of rental revenue was deposited in the Forestry account for a cell tower located on County Forest in the Town of Woodboro.

The stumpage revenue achieved by the Oneida County Forestry Department in 2021 resulted from the harvest of approximately 38,000 cords of pulpwood and 1,185,000 board feet of saw logs. Approximately 1,800 acres were harvested among 33 active timber sales throughout the year. Timber sales vary with a 2-4 year contract period and typically span multiple years for completion of timber harvesting.

Factors that will continue to affect timber sale revenues and timber harvesting on the Oneida County Forest include:

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 more than 40,000 acres were destroyed. This resulted in a glut of timber product pushed into 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. Salvage efforts diminished in 2021, resulting in additional activity on the Oneida County Forest.
2. The shutdown of the Verso Paper Mills in Wisconsin Rapids and Duluth, Minnesota in 2020, resulted in additional decreases in market demand of pulpwood products. With approximately 25% of the pulpwood market in Wisconsin shut down, mill quotas and timber prices for logging contractors remained significantly reduced. The Duluth mill was purchased and re-opened; however, the Wisconsin Rapids mill remained idle throughout 2021. This has resulted in lower bid prices for timber stumpage and less desirable tracts remain unsold.

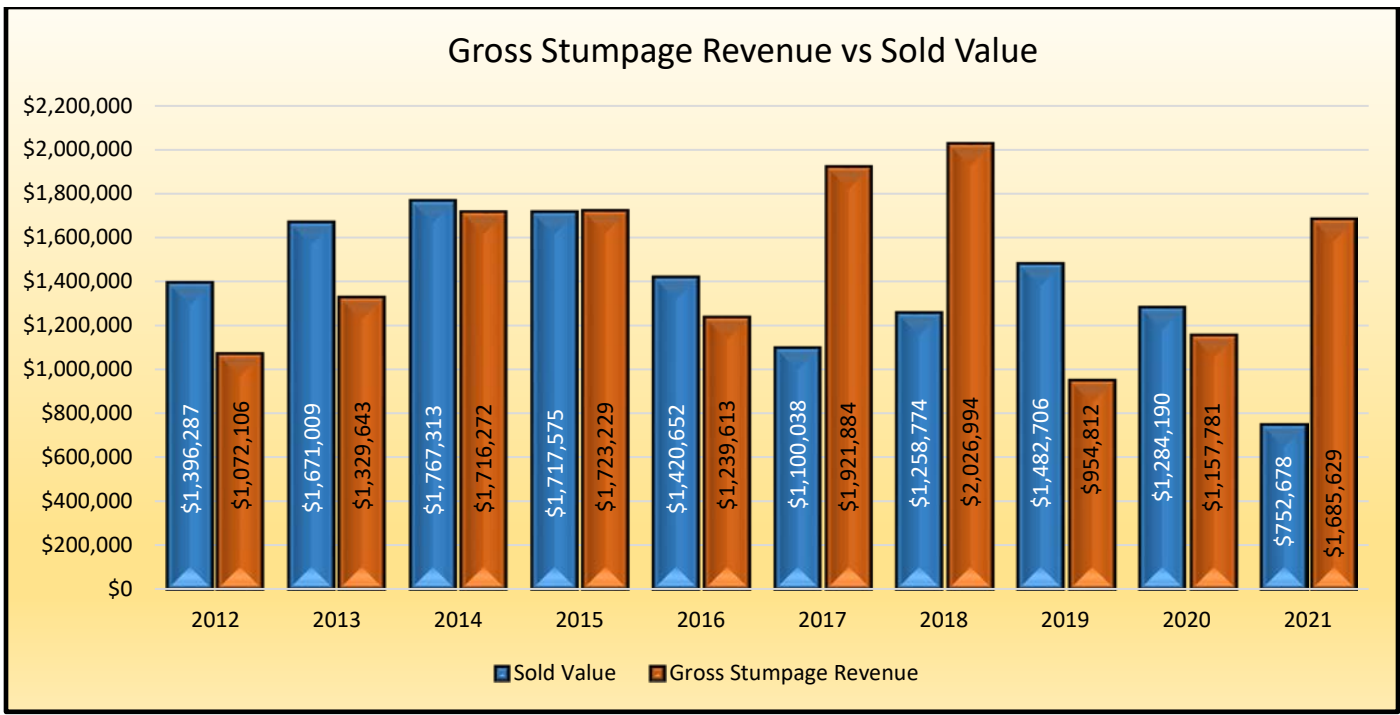
Despite the challenges with the timber markets remaining depressed, the Forestry Department was able to achieve an impressive stumpage revenue of \$1,685,629, exceeding the revenue budget by \$535,000.

The following table summarizes the past three years of timber sale activity and provides a projection for 2022.

Year	Acres Sold	Sold Value	Acres Cut	Cords Cut	Board Feet Cut	Gross Stumpage Income
2019	1,476	\$1,482,706	1,300	20,700	302,000	\$954,812*
2020	1,300	\$1,284,190	1,000	25,200	265,000	\$1,157,781
2021	1,025	\$752,678	1,800	38,000	1,185,000	\$1,685,629
2022**	1,200	\$750,000	1,200	20,000	250,000	\$1,150,000

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

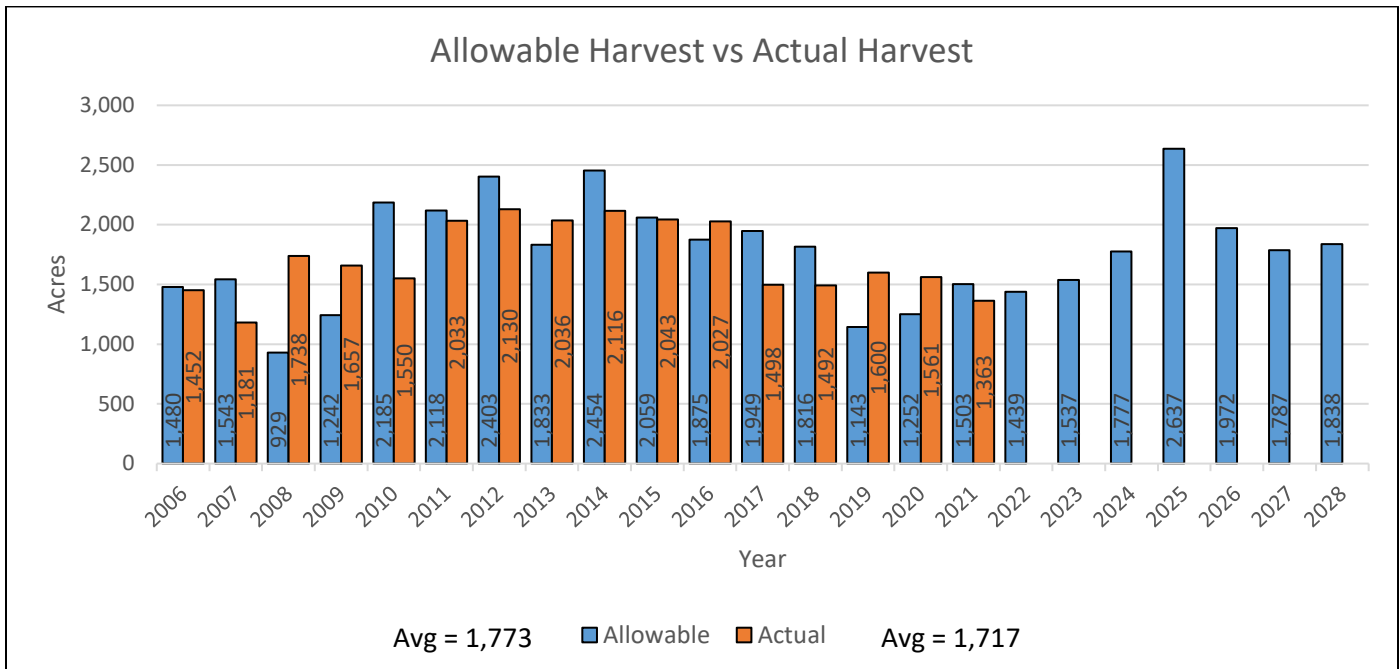
**The 2022 value is an estimate based on projected harvest activity and timber sale acreage to be sold. Estimates are low due to the continued economic situation and the continued closure of the Verso mill in WI Rapids.



Allowable Timber Harvest Projections:

Beginning in 2010, the allowable harvest for the Oneida County Forest increased by approximately 33%, and remained at these higher levels for several years. The allowable harvest spike has since begun to come back down and in response, the projected actual acres established for 2022 will be set at approximately 1,500 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:

As required by state statute, the County returns 10% of the annual gross county forest stumpage revenue to the towns based on the percentage of county forest within each township. 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 in the maintenance of town roads that are vital to the transport of the timber products harvested from the Oneida County Forest.

2021 Gross Stumpage Revenue	\$1,685,629
Less 10% Town Severance Payments	\$ 168,563
Less 2% Road Severance	\$ 33,713
2021 Net Stumpage Revenue – OC	\$1,483,354

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 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. Oneida County has since had two full, on-site audits completed by the SFI auditors. Results of these audits concluded the Oneida County Forest is managed on a sound, sustainable basis. In 2016, with the urging of the wood using industry and logging contractors, Oneida County opted to become certified under the FSC program as well.

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 2021, four counties in the west central part of the state were audited by the two certifying agencies. These audits resulted in two minor Corrective Action Requests (CAR’s) and one Opportunities for Improvement (OFI’s). The Forestry Department will address these findings to ensure Oneida County is compliant for 2022.

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 Forestry Department 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.

Many Red Pine plantations are reaching the age and size class in which their economic value begins to decrease. These plantations will be regenerated through over-story removal and replanting Red Pine as they reach this stage. This process requires budgeting additional funds to prepare the sites for planting (site prep). Site prep may include spraying herbicides to reduce competition and/or creating furrows in which the seedlings will be planted. Following site prep, contract crews are hired to hand plant the seedlings. Follow-up treatments may be required to reduce competition from undesirable plants.

Forest Reconnaissance (Recon.):

Oneida County staff and DNR foresters are responsible for performing Forest Reconnaissance activities to ensure a healthy, vibrant, sustainable forestry program. In 2021, a total of 4,542 acres of the Oneida County forest were examined and recon data updated. The target acreage for reconnaissance is approximately 5,500 acres per year; however, staffing shortages in both the Forestry Department and the DNR, reduced the number of acres updated in 2021.

Forest Health Issues:

In 2021, Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was found on the Oneida County Forest in the Town of Enterprise. This infestation site will be monitored and future harvests will target ash for removal. Regardless of control measures, it is anticipated EAB will continue to spread throughout not only the County Forest, but the entire County.

The EAB quarantine that was 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 Forestry Department is working with the DNR and WI Dept. of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection on this matter. Additionally, the Forestry Department 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.



Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*)



Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria Petiolata*)

Garlic Mustard patches were again monitored, sprayed and/or hand pulled to help control the spread. These areas will continue to be monitored and treated as needed.

Additionally, the increase in dumping of yard waste by the general public, significantly increases the risk of invasive species spreading throughout the county forest.

Forestry Automotive Equipment:

Each year money (typically \$25,000) is budgeted into the automotive equipment line item within the Forestry Account. These funds 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 2021, \$40,000 was budgeted for forestry equipment purchases. The department anticipated purchasing a new truck in 2021; however, the auto industry stopped producing fleet vehicles and a replacement truck is planned for 2022. The Forestry Department did not purchase or sell any equipment in 2021, leaving the non-lapsing equipment fund with \$52,514 available.

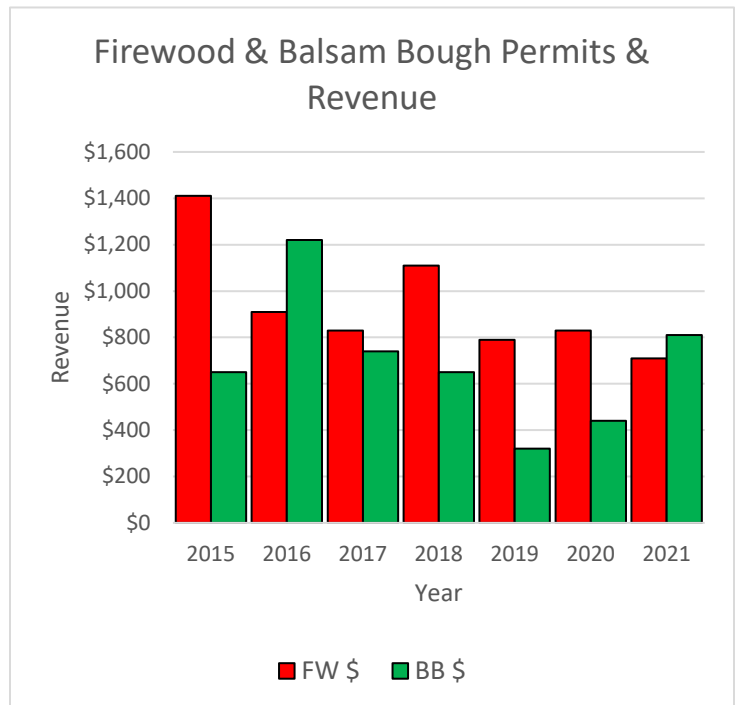
Miscellaneous Forest Product Permits: **Firewood Gathering Permits:**

The Firewood gathering permit system allows the public to gather up to ten cords of firewood for personal home use from designated areas on the County Forest. Firewood permits are generally issued for closed out timber sale areas 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 2021, the Forestry Department issued 33 Firewood Permits, which generated \$710 of revenue.

Balsam Bough and Christmas Tree Permits:

Similar to the firewood permits, balsam bough and Christmas tree permits allow the public to gather boughs and harvest Christmas trees from the County Forest for the holiday season. Balsam bough permits are offered as home use permits or commercial permits (resident and non-resident). In 2021, six bough permits were sold generating \$810 of revenue.

Christmas tree permits were offered in 2021 for \$5 per tree and a maximum of two trees per address. Thirteen permits were sold and 16 trees were harvested for a total of \$80.



FOREST ACCESS

County Forest Roads:

The Forestry Department currently maintains 38.85 miles of forest 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-feet 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. Annually, the WDOT pays County Forest Programs \$351 for each mile of County Forest Road maintained. In 2019, the Wisconsin County Forest Association lobbied to have road aids increased which resulted in a \$15 per mile increase from the prior \$336 per mile. As a result, the Oneida County Forestry Department road aid payment for 2021 was (38.85 miles x \$351) = \$13,617 which included a minimal prorate at 99.86 percent.

In addition to the County Forest Road Aids received from the WDOT, Trout revenue of \$6,914 was received from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources in 2021. The term TROUTE is defined by the WDNR as a hybrid between a (tr)ail and a road r(oute) that is open 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 2021 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 the account until they are spent. Accordingly, this allows deposited revenues to accumulate over time, thus allowing funding for large-scale expensive road projects. Funds of approximately \$20,000 were used to

improve the access road to Gillette-Wickham lakes and gravel a small parking area. A county conservation grant of \$7,200 was received and deposited into the account as partial reimbursement.

A \$50,000 contract to crush 15,000 tons of gravel and 400 tons of breaker run rock in the West Zimmer Pit was awarded to Michels Materials, Inc. in 2021 and is scheduled to be completed in the summer of 2022. This gravel and rock will be used for general county forest road maintenance in the Town of Enterprise.

In 2021, the Forestry Department conducted general road maintenance work throughout the county forest road system. Some of the routine road maintenance activities 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 wind events, the Forestry Department spent more time than normal cleaning up blow down trees from the county forest roads. DNR equipment operators also worked on Cruiser's Road to widen and clear the right-of-way to improve safety and maintenance operations.

LAND

Land Purchase Account:

This is another non-lapsing account within the Forestry Department budget. This means any funds deposited remain in place and intact, year after year, until the funds are spent and/or utilized for their intended purpose. As the account name infers, these funds are utilized for expenses related to the acquisition of new or replacement County Forest land.

The land purchase account had a balance of \$30,360 available at the beginning of 2021. This is the remaining revenue received in 2019 for the withdrawal of 10 acres for the Oneida County Solid Waste demolition site 4 and is designated for land purchases to replace the withdrawn acres.

In June 2020, a private landowner in the Town of Little Rice approached the County regarding the possible sale of his land to the County. The parcel is surrounded by County Forest on two sides, State property on another side and requires a 1.5 mile trip across county forest for access. This proposal was brought to the Forestry, Land and Recreation Committee and subsequently approved by the Committee and County Board. The approval to purchase was contingent on the County receiving 50% of the purchase price through the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant. An appraisal for the property determined the value to be \$32,000 and an application was completed for the Knowles-Nelson Grant. Approval of the grant and final purchase of the property was finalized in 2021. After receiving 50% reimbursement from the grant, the remaining funds came from the Land Purchase account leaving \$13,825 remaining in the account.

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 exclusively 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 \$3,874 in 2021 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.

In 2021, the Forestry Department used \$1,500 of the budgeted State Aid Wildlife Habitat funds received on the 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. An additional \$3,000 was paid to the WDNR for mowing of wildlife openings within the Town of Lynne. At the end of 2021, the Wildlife Account had non-lapsing funds remaining of \$2,621.

OUTDOOR RECREATION

Parks Account:

In 2021, the Forestry Department 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 Forestry Department. 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 remains partially submerged during much of the summer and the water level at the beach continues to breach the top of the retaining wall; however, water levels began to fall in late summer of 2021.



Buck Lake swimming beach and picnic shelter located at Almon Park, in the Town of Pelican

In late 2020, a grant program was presented to the County allowing public entities to receive funding to upgrade facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications. This grant is known as the CDBG-CLOSE grant and presented an opportunity for the Forestry Department. The Department conferred with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation and was able to apply for \$85,200 to replace two picnic shelters by the beach area and create ADA compliant access paths to each shelter. The grant was

approved and work began on engineering plans for the shelter and ADA compliant access path. The project is scheduled for completion in 2022.

Perch Lake Park:

Perch Lake Park is located five miles west of Rhineland 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



Townline Lake Park:

In 2021, a group of dedicated local citizens convinced the County Board to retain ownership of the park and beach as a portion of the property had previously been approved for sale to offset the cost to the County for the 231-acre Gillette-Wickham property in the Town of Enterprise.

This group formed a non-profit organization, Friends of Townline Lake Park (FTLLP), and contracted with the County to resume general maintenance and upgrades at Townline Lake Park and beach area. In late 2021, FTLLP began clean up of the park and beach area including: raking, trash pickup, brushing, mowing and tree removal. The group provided the department with a long-range plan for the park and beach in hopes of bringing it back to a welcoming and regularly used park.

Park Shelter Rental Program:

The Forestry Department 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.

Each shelter is reservable for a fee of \$125/day, which includes a refundable security deposit of \$50 if the facility remains clean and undamaged. In 2021, the Rudolph Shelter was rented 17 times resulting in \$1,275 of revenue, and the Judy Swank Shelter was rented 15 times resulting in \$1,125 of revenue. The Park Shelter Rental Program generated \$2,400 of revenue in 2021. All revenue generated from the Park Shelter Rental Program was



deposited into the Forestry Department Parks Account.

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 building an access path to the lake, installation of a small fishing/boat pier and providing picnic tables at the site.



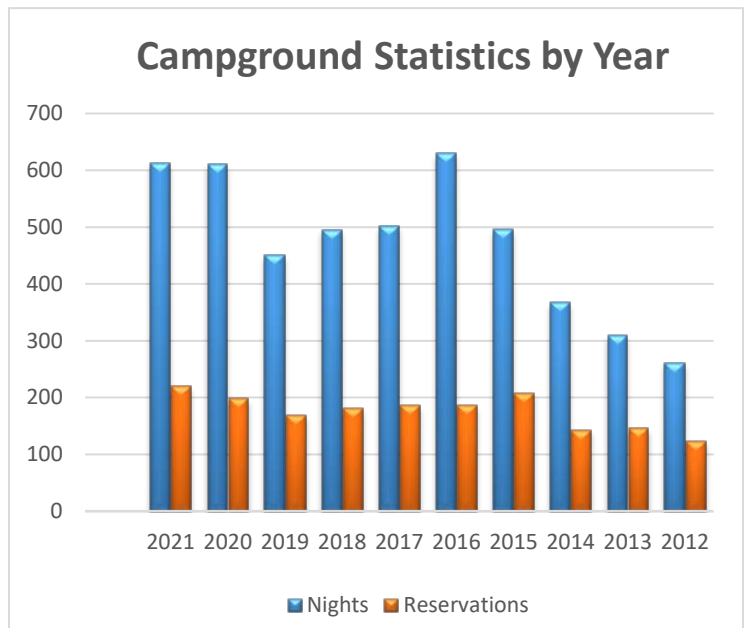
View of Gillette Lake

In late 2020, a grant program was presented to the County allowing public entities to receive funding to upgrade facilities to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) specifications. This grant is known as the CDBG-CLOSE grant and presented an opportunity for the Forestry Department. The Department conferred with the Oneida County Economic Development Corporation and was able to apply for \$20,300 to improve the parking lot and ADA accessible path leading to Wickham Lake. The access road and parking lot improvements were completed in 2021 and the access path to the lake is scheduled for 2022.

Campground Account:

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

When comparing campground occupancy to 2020, the total number of nights that individual campsites were occupied remained about the same; however, the number of reservations increased about 11%. Not surprisingly, the campground's highest occupancy occurs on Friday





and Saturday nights, with Thursday nights a strong runner-up. The length of stay decreased approximately 10% over the prior year (average 2.8 nights from 3.1 nights) with many campers spending an average of three nights and returning frequently.

In 2020, the fee to reserve a campsite at the Enterprise Campground increased to \$15 per night (previously \$10 per night). Camping registration fees and campground firewood donations resulted in \$9,525 of campground revenue. Conversely, the operating costs attributed to maintaining the campground in 2021 was approximately \$1,200, which resulted in a net campground profit of \$8,325 for the year.

Additionally, in conjunction with the 15-year Comprehensive Land Use Plan update, a dispersed camping permit is available to persons wishing to camp within the Oneida County Forests. The permit fee is \$10 per camping unit for a maximum of 14 consecutive days. For 2021, the department generated \$160 in revenue for 16 camping permits.

Motorized Sport Trails:

ATV/UTV Account:

The Forestry Department was responsible for the administration of 45.6 miles of ATV/UTV trails in 2021. 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 on the actual accountable costs they incur, up to a maximum of \$800 per mile. All Oneida County off-road vehicle trails are open to both ATV's and UTV's. In 2021, Oneida County distributed \$34,400 to the four ATV/UTV clubs under contract for services rendered.

In 2021, the Department was awarded an ATV project grant of \$194,475 to rehabilitate approximately 5.6 miles of existing ATV trail in the Town of Little Rice. This project will be completed in 2022.

Two additional ATV grant projects were completed in 2021. Rynders, Inc. completed the rehabilitation of approximately 3.9 miles of trail in the Town of Little Rice.

The Cruiser's Road trail was constructed in the fall by Oneida County Highway Department and will open in the spring of 2022. This trail will add 1.2 new miles of funded ATV trail and will connect to a new segment of ATV trail on the Woodboro Wildlife Area.



Trail in Little Rice Needing Rehabilitation

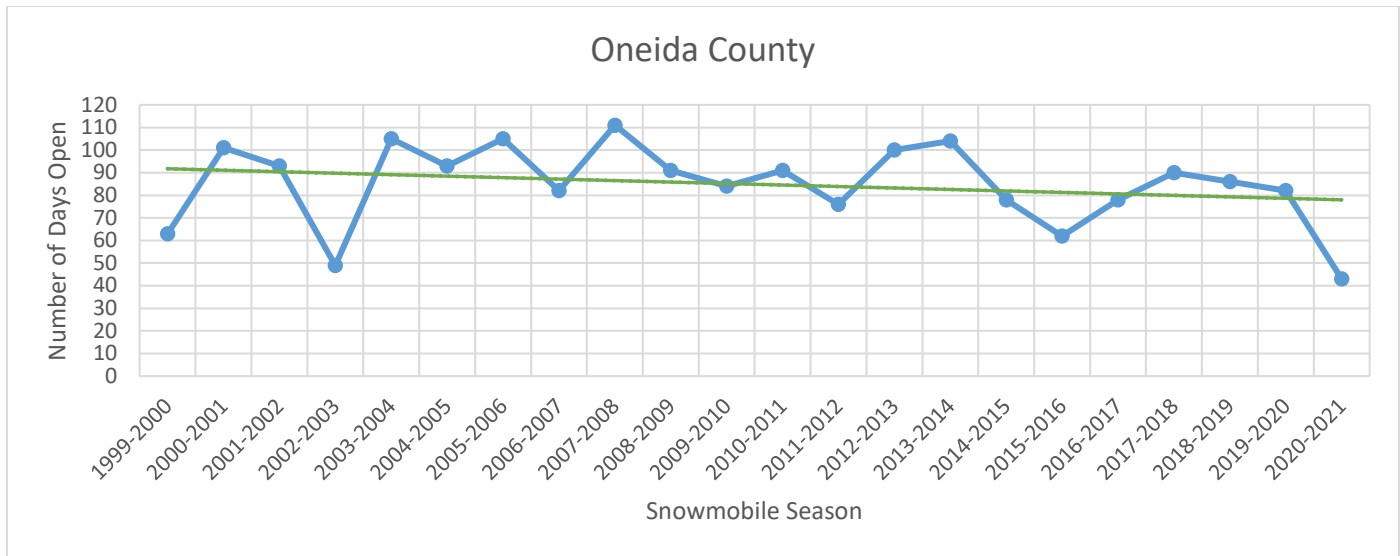
Snowmobile Account:

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 2021, the Forestry Department distributed \$257,089 to the nine snowmobile clubs Oneida County

contracts with for maintenance of the 427.1 mile state-funded snowmobile trail system located in Oneida County.

In 2021, Oneida County was approved for 13.6 additional miles of funded snowmobile trail. These new miles were located within the Northern Trails Unlimited, Northwoods Passage and New-Tom Sno Fleas snowmobile clubs. These newly funded miles act as major connectors for the snowmobile system.

Snowmobile trails were finally able to open in early season condition on January 26, 2021 and closed on March 9, 2021. The snowmobile trails were open to snowmobile enthusiasts for 43 days for the 2020-2021 season, a major decline from the prior 20-year average of 85 days. Mild early winter freezing conditions along with little snow accumulations, contributed to the shortest snowmobile season on record. The short season significantly reduced the amount of maintenance dollars spent on grooming operations for the season.



The 2020-2021 snowmobile season did not encompass any project grants; however, the challenge of retaining private and industrial land use agreements continues to increase, resulting in four funded trail re-routes due to lost land use agreements from landowners.

Silent Sports Trails

Cross-Country Ski Trails:

Starting in the mid-1970's the Forestry Department developed and maintained (signed, groomed, and brushed) cross-country ski trails. Over the years these ski trails continued to grow in popularity. Due to public demand, additional ski trail miles were developed and the Oneida County Forest ski trail network evolved into three signed and groomed ski trail systems that total 30.0 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 12.5 miles long, offering 3.7 miles of trail groomed for tracked skiing, and 8.8 miles of trail groomed for tracked and 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 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.

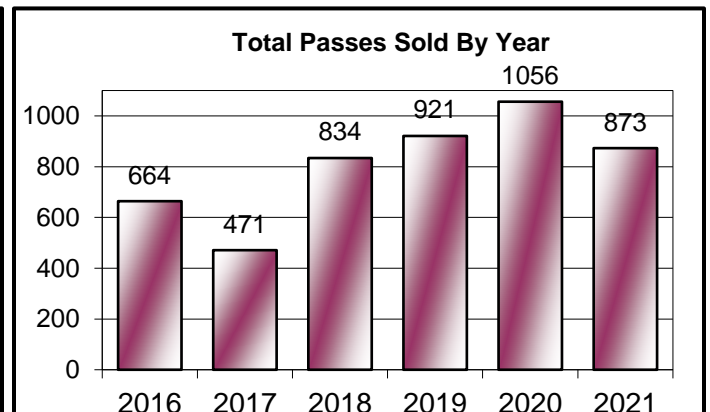
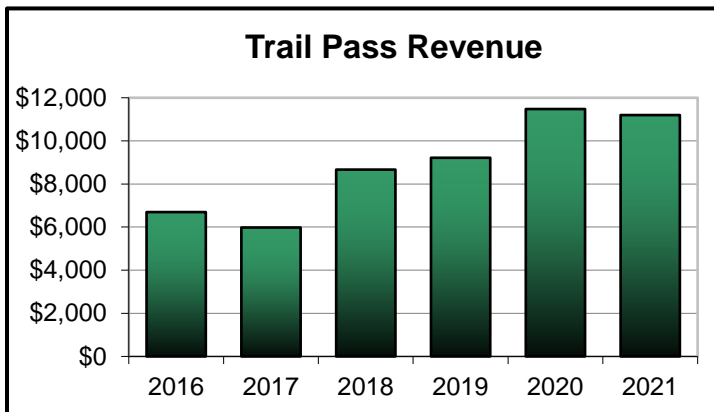
The Cassian Two-Way Ski Trail measures 19.2 miles round trip. As its name implies, the trail is located in the Town of Cassian. The Cassian Trail is located on gently rolling terrain and is designed to accommodate users with a wide range of skills. The Cassian Trail is groomed for traditional tracked skiing. Dogs are permitted on the trail system north of Sheep Ranch Road.

The Enterprise Winter Recreation Trail consists of two one-way loops that together equal approximately eight miles. The trail is groomed for fat-tire biking; however, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are also permitted on the trail.

At its peak, the County spent approximately \$50,000/year on equipment, labor, and supplies to maintain the county forest network of ski trails. In an effort to reduce this expense, the department re-evaluated the trail maintenance process. In 2012, the Forestry Department entered into an annual ski trail maintenance agreement with the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA). Under the terms of the agreement, RASTA is responsible for brushing, signing and grooming the county’s 30-mile ski trail network. In addition to the funds from the County, RASTA utilizes donation, grants and club funds for development and maintenance of the trail systems. By outsourcing these services, the Forestry Department was able to reduce the silent sports trail budget from \$50,000 to approximately \$30,000 annually.

The Forestry Department also utilizes Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grants provided by the WDNR. These grants provide up to 50% reimbursement of costs attributed to development and/or maintenance of recreational trails. The grants are not guaranteed and are awarded by the WDNR by applying a ranking formula to the grant applications received each year. For 2021, the Oneida County Forestry Department received RTA Grants for ski trail maintenance of \$18,831 in reimbursement funds to the Forestry Department for expenses related to the county’s silent sport trail network.

Finally, the Forestry Department implemented a trail pass system that requires individuals over the age of 18 to purchase a daily or annual trail pass to use any designated and maintained silent sport trail located on the Oneida County Forest. In 2021, the annual trail pass fee was \$25 and a daily pass was \$5. The sale of silent sport trail passes for 2021, together with user donations, generated \$11,200 of revenue.



Note: In 2016 and 2021, the number of annual passes sold increased and daily passes sold decreased; therefore, the revenue reduction was not as significant.



Mountain Bike Trails:

In 2021, the Oneida County Forestry Department worked in conjunction with the Rhinelander Area Silent Trails Association (RASTA) to maintain approximately 13 miles of single track mountain bike trail located at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trail facility and approximately 25 miles of mountain bike trails lying on the ski trails at Washburn, Nose Lake and Cassian trail systems.

The Cassian trail and the west loop of the Nose Lake trail were first opened for mountain biking during non-ski season in 2020.

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 eight 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.



Almon Park Wetland Boardwalk & Hiking /Snowshoe Trail

Hiking & Snowshoe Trails:

In 2021, the Forestry Department 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 County 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 County provides 15.0 miles of snowshoe trail at the Washburn and Nose Lake trail systems in addition to 11.0 miles of hiking trail at the Washburn Lake Silent Sport Trails facility.

RASTA Accomplishments:

In addition to regular maintenance of the silent sports trail systems, minor trail re-routes, corner widening, signing and mowing, RASTA completed the following significant projects in 2021:

Washburn Trail System:

- No BS Trail – Development of 1.3 miles of new single track bike/snowshoe/hiking trail and a 0.3 mile of connector trail.
- Tim’s Trail – The addition of 0.5 miles of new tracked ski trail.
- Pump Track – Approximately 500 feet of skill practice trail with rollers, banks and table tops, constructed near the Perch Lake Park area.
- Interpretive Signs – Developed and installed 12 signs describing multiple features of the area surrounding the Washburn trail system.

Nose Lake Trail System:

- Snowshoe Loop – Development of an additional mile of new single track snowshoe trail to expand the 1.2 miles of trail developed in 2020.

Disabled Access Trails:

In 2021, the Forestry Department 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). Use 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 free; however, they require 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 Forestry Department to determine that approximately 80% of Oneida County Forest Land is located within one-quarter mile of a woodland trail or old logging road providing access to the public.

SAFETY

The Forestry Department had one Worker’s Compensation claim in 2021 which resulted in a payment of \$1,359.

In 2021, permanent field employees of the Forestry Department were provided the opportunity to participate in the County steel-toe work shoe program which allows up to \$100 reimbursement per employee. In addition, the following personal protective gear was available to all Forestry field staff (i.e. temporary & permanent employees): hard hats, helmets, safety glasses, ear protection, chainsaw chaps, rubber gloves, and respirators.

Safety items purchased in 2021 include steel toe boots for two employees, tick repellent, work gloves, and safety glasses.

Additionally, the Forest Director, Assistant Forest Director and County Forester attended Wildland Fire Safety training.

