

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources  
**DIVISION OF FORESTRY**

# WISCONSIN'S TRILLION TREES PLEDGE

**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**



# **WISCONSIN'S TRILLION TREES PLEDGE**

**2025 ANNUAL REPORT**

## FOREWORD

The state of Wisconsin recognizes that healthy forests are one of the best nature-based solutions to the effects of a changing climate.

In January 2020, the U.S. joined the World Economic Forum's Trillion Trees campaign as the first national chapter. In September the same year, Governor Evers was asked to serve on the 1t.org U.S. Stakeholder Council, a multi-stakeholder, bipartisan group of senior representatives, which he joined as the only state-level representative.

On Earth Day 2021, Governor Evers announced Wisconsin's Trillion Trees Pledge to plant 75 million trees and conserve 125,000 acres of forestland by the end of 2030. By the end of 2023, more than 32 million trees had been planted across Wisconsin by public and private landowners, communities, non-governmental organizations and others. With the great strides that partners had made in just three years, Gov. Evers announced on Earth Day 2024 that Wisconsin's pledge would be increased to 100 million trees to be planted by the end of 2030. This new goal reflects Wisconsin's commitment to the Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers (GSGP) pledge, which entails planting 250 million trees collectively in the next 10 years.



The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources is a proud partner of Forests Plus in this work. Forests Plus is the next evolution of the 1t.org U.S. Chapter, hosted by American Forests, and builds on the Trillion Trees movement by connecting leading states like Wisconsin with companies, nonprofits and funders working toward large-scale forest conservation and restoration.

The state of Wisconsin, as a member of Forests Plus, is committed to conserving, restoring and growing healthy and resilient forests and enhancing the countless benefits that Wisconsin communities enjoy from our forests.



<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>5</b>
Pledge Progress	7
<b>TREE PLANTING</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>FOREST CONSERVATION</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>SUPPORTING ACTIONS</b>	<b>12</b>
Sustainable Forestry	13
Nursery Development	15
Data and Technological Tools	15
Science and Technical Assistance	16
Tree Protection Through Management	17
Forest Product Markets and Innovation	18
Environmental Education	20
Conservation Finance	22
<b>PARTNERS</b>	<b>22</b>

Cover: Community member demonstrates how to plant a tree seedling as part of the Door County Big Plant. Photo credit: Jeff Lutsey, Door County Climate Change Coalition.

Photo credits: Wisconsin DNR unless otherwise noted.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**DNR seed orchard, Bell Center**

**T**he fifth year of Wisconsin's Trillion Trees Pledge was a great success, demonstrating how internal and external partnerships are imperative in achieving our pledge and our shared vision and goals.

11.7 million trees were planted in rural areas in 2025. Another 185,000 were planted in urban areas, bringing the total number of trees

planted across the state to almost 12 million last year. Together, we have achieved almost 55% of our state's tree planting goal in five years!

More than 7,800 acres of forestland were conserved in 2025, bringing the total area of forestland conserved to 84,566 acres, almost 68% of the forestland conservation portion of the pledge.



**Governor Evers assists City of Oshkosh staff with tree planting at Lakeshore Park, November 2025**

Work to conserve, restore and grow Wisconsin's urban and rural forests was conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and our many partners in 2025. You will see summaries of these activities throughout this report. Supporting work included:

- » Kicking off a coordinated eDNA monitoring program to detect hemlock woolly adelgid.
- » Cohosting a symposium on mass timber and advancing research on cross-laminated timber.
- » Facilitating a community tree planting event in Brown County as part of the NFL Draft, led cooperatively with Oneida Nation and NFL Green.
- » Advancing education and participation in tree seed collecting by youth and Wisconsin's School Forest Program.

NFL



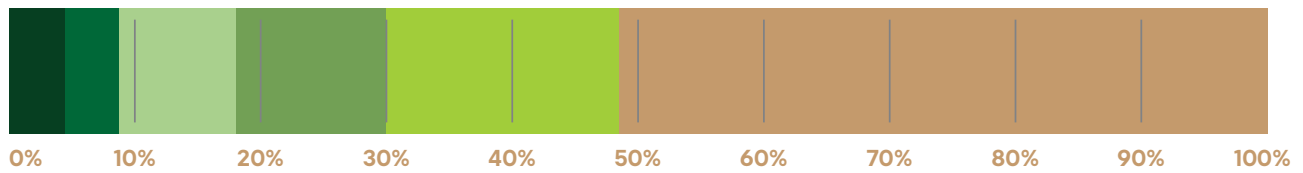
**Governor Evers at the NFL and Oneida Nation Community tree planting event**

# PLEDGE PROGRESS

## URBAN TREE PLANTING

Goal: 1 million trees

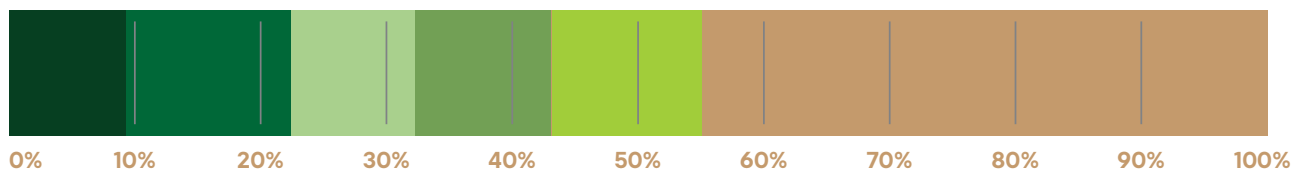
Accomplishment through 2025: 485,411 trees



## RURAL TREE PLANTING

Goal: 100 million trees

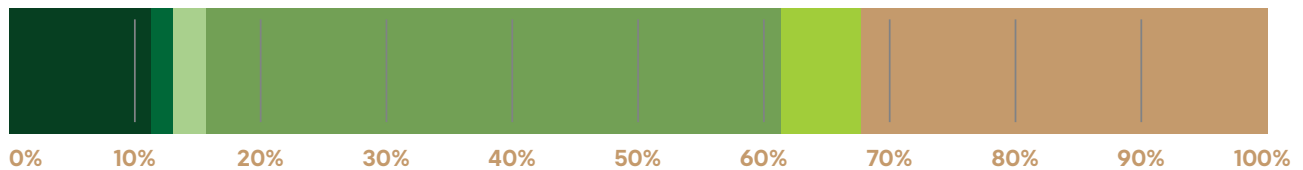
Accomplishment through 2025: 54,265,478 trees



## FOREST CONSERVATION

Goal 125,000 acres

Accomplishment through 2025: 84,566 acres



# TREE PLANTING



**Wilson State Nursery staff lift seedlings from a planting bed**

Nearly 12 million trees were planted in Wisconsin in 2025 for Wisconsin's Trillion Trees Pledge.

The DNR's Reforestation Program supplied over 4.5 million tree and shrub seedlings for planting efforts on public and private lands in 2025. These include:

- » Nearly 2.3 million seedlings for planting on private lands.
- » Nearly 1.7 million seedlings for planting on DNR, Federal, Tribal and other public lands.
- » Over 544,000 seedlings to county forests.
- » Over 25,000 seedlings for school and community forests.
- » Over 56,000 seedlings were provided to fourth-grade students through the Arbor Day Free Seedlings for Fourth Graders program.



Freshly planted tree seedlings using a tractor-towed tree planter

The DNR's Reforestation Program also distributed 257.5 pounds and 166.5 bushels (1,598 gallons) of seeds, which totals over 44 million seeds, resulting in more than 4.4 million seedlings based on current survival estimates.

In addition to trees supplied by the DNR, partners also planted at least 288,471 trees purchased from private nurseries, bringing the total planted on private lands to over 2,582,146.

## COUNTY TREE SALES

Over 25 counties in Wisconsin conduct annual tree and shrub sales through County Conservation Departments, sourcing their trees from a variety of private nurseries around the state and Midwest. County tree sales can be versatile, providing material to farmers and landowners implementing conservation practices while also being accessible to various types of private landowners who require a smaller minimum order. In 2025, county tree sales distributed over 400,000 trees sourced from private nurseries.



Tractor operated tree planter in Burnett County

# FOREST CONSERVATION

Canopy gap with natural regeneration 5 years post-harvest

**W**isconsin continued to progress on permanent forestland conservation in 2025. Building on momentum over the past four years, the DNR conserved over 1,300 acres of forested land through fee-title acquisitions and conservation easements, and over 220 acres by partners both with and without DNR assistance.

Two key ways the DNR protects forestland in Wisconsin, whether by acquisition or conservation easement, are the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (KNSP) and the federal Forest Legacy Program (FLP). These two programs are often used in tandem, helping further leverage the success of forest protection.

The KNSP, created in 1989 and awaiting reauthorization in 2026, is a conservation fund administered by the Wisconsin DNR. The KNSP allows conservation organizations, municipalities and state agencies to protect lakes and streams, conserve working forests, secure critical wildlife habitats and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation across Wisconsin.

The federal Forest Legacy Program, established in 1990, provides federal funding to identify and conserve environmentally important forest areas. In Wisconsin, the DNR works in established Forest Legacy areas to protect private forestlands threatened with conversion to non-forest uses. In 2025, Wisconsin's Forest Legacy Program continued careful consideration and conversations to advance multiple projects towards final acquisitions and easements in the future.

While less prominent in acreage, another federal program, the Wetland Reserve Program, also protects forested land in Wisconsin via conservation easements. Administered by the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, the Wetland Reserve Program often protects forested wetlands. Protecting forested wetlands can have a disproportionately positive contribution to many of the goals of the Trillion Tree Pledge, including protecting water quality, biodiversity, and carbon sequestration.

In addition to KNSP and FLP, Wisconsin's community of nonprofit conservation organizations, including land trusts, are vital partners in protecting forestland. Besides the KNSP, these groups raised significant amounts of private funding to permanently conserve over 6,300 forested acres in 2025. Just as with Knowles-Nelson and Forest Legacy projects, these lands will be protected in perpetuity by the strong land trust community in Wisconsin.



**Tiffany Wildlife Area, Buffalo County expanded in 2025 with funding from the KNSP**

# SUPPORTING ACTIONS



DNR staff collect and record data on post-harvest forest regeneration

In addition to planting trees and conserving forests, Supporting Actions increase the effectiveness of these efforts by promoting healthy forests, supporting a strong forestry sector, providing technical assistance and more. These actions enable the conservation community to build better systems that can further catalyze progress. A description of selected accomplishments by the DNR and our partners under each Supporting Action follows.



Seedling beds at Wilson State Nursery

## SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY

Independent, third-party certification ensures that forests are responsibly managed and safeguards environmental, social and economic benefits. Three major land management programs administered by the DNR are verified under third-party forest certification programs.

MORE THAN

# 1.6 M ACRES

OF DNR-MANAGED STATE LANDS ARE DUAL CERTIFIED UNDER THE FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL® AND SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE® STANDARDS.

ANOTHER

# 2.4 M ACRES

OF COUNTY FOREST LANDS ARE CERTIFIED UNDER THE FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL® AND/OR THE SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY INITIATIVE®.

MORE THAN

# 2.3 M ACRES

OF PRIVATE LANDS UNDER THE MANAGED FOREST LAW PROGRAM GROUP CERTIFICATE, ADMINISTERED BY THE STATE, ARE DUAL CERTIFIED UNDER THE AMERICAN TREE FARM SYSTEM® AND FOREST STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL® STANDARDS.

Additionally, over 75,000 acres of state lands managed by the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands are certified under the American Tree Farm System®.

Sourcing products from certified forests, publishers, building contractors, manufacturers and more can ensure that they contribute to sustainable forest management practices.

Many agencies and programs across Wisconsin offer scientific research and technical assistance for forest conservation, regeneration and tree planting efforts. The UW System is an international leader in forestry and horticultural research. UW-Madison's Division of Extension conducts important research and provides extensive technical assistance.



DNR staff, Tribal staff and partners review forestry practices for ash stands in Iron County



**2025 forest certification audit on the Clark County Forest**



**Red pine stand, marked for a timber stand improvement thinning**

The Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) is a comprehensive system of principles, objectives and performance measures developed by professional foresters, conservationists and scientists that combines the perpetual growing and harvesting of trees with the long-term protection of wildlife, plants, soil and water quality. The SFI program was developed in 1994 to ensure North America's valuable forests are protected and to document the commitment of forest products industry members to keep our forests healthy and to practice the highest level of sustainable forestry.

The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international, nonprofit, multi-stakeholder organization established in 1993 that promotes responsible management of the world's forests via timber certification. This organization uses a market-based approach to mitigate the climate and biodiversity crises by advancing sustainable forest management worldwide.

The American Tree Farm System®(ATFS) is the largest and oldest woodland certification system in America. It is internationally recognized and meets strict third-party certification standards. It is one of three certification systems currently recognized in the United States. ATFS specializes in certifying private forests, primarily those held by individuals and families. The ATFS Standard for Certification is owned by the American Forest Foundation, a national nonprofit organization focused on promoting sustainable stewardship of America's woodlands and related environmental education through Project Learning Tree.

## NURSERY DEVELOPMENT

The DNR's Reforestation Program continues producing seedlings in conjunction with private nurseries to supply demand from the tree planting community while maintaining its ability to increase production at our state-owned nursery facilities. The seed for state nursery production is procured from sources throughout the state to foster genetic diversity in seedlings, seed storage and preservation. This necessitates the Reforestation Program maintain a network of statewide seed collection stations and trained staff to ensure seed is always fresh and in good condition to go into storage or be sown.



Seedling trial at the DNR Forest Health Lab

## DATA & TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS

The state of Wisconsin has benefited for almost a century from a close working relationship with the USDA Forest Service on forest inventories. Though by no means the state's only monitoring and inventory tools, those related to the federal Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program remain vital resources for understanding Wisconsin's trees and forests.

The core FIA program is composed of thousands of sample areas, known as plots, in which data about trees and land use are collected by foresters in the field. These data are then used to produce estimates on the composition, health, productivity and size of the state's forests. Because the plots are revisited, trends of growth, mortality and shifting species patterns can be identified as well.

A similar endeavor to FIA, but particular to Wisconsin's state forests, is the Wisconsin Continuous Forest Inventory program. This effort intensively samples plots on state forest land, enabling more accurate estimates of composition, health and productivity in these areas.

Especially important for the future of the state's forests is to understand and monitor regeneration on recently harvested public and private lands. In response to this need, the Forest Regeneration Monitoring program was established in 2018 and is now within its third three-year monitoring cycle. Results from this project benefit wildlife resource managers, assist in the development of regeneration standards and help monitor long-term changes in structure and composition.

In more developed areas, the state has invested in the national Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis program, an initiative that weds traditional monitoring techniques with urban realities, resulting in urban forestry data novel in its approach and scale. The DNR also compiles communities' street and park tree inventories within the Wisconsin Community Tree Map.

In addition to strictly inventory tools, the DNR also uses the Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System. This allows foresters and habitat managers to track completed work (e.g., prescribed burns, pesticide treatments, timber sales), report accomplishments, connect private forestland owners with DNR foresters and plan for future plantings.

## SCIENCE & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Many agencies and programs across Wisconsin conduct scientific research and provide technical assistance for forest conservation, regeneration and tree planting efforts. The University of Wisconsin (UW) System is an international leader in forestry and horticultural research. UW-Madison's Division of Extension and the Wisconsin Forestry Center at UW-Stevens Point provide extensive technical assistance. The DNR Division of Forestry conducts applied forestry research throughout the state and partners with local, state, federal, tribal and international agencies to provide the best available science to support sustainable forest management.

The DNR shares important knowledge and skills in a variety of ways. Most recently, a research webpage highlighting previous and ongoing research was launched. Another unique way we share information is through SilviCast, a podcast dedicated to silviculture: the science, the practice and the art of forestry. Hosted by DNR Silviculturist Brad Hutnik and retired DNR Silviculturist Greg Edge, the podcast explores current topics in forest management, highlights innovative practices and interviews practitioners and researchers to solve the challenges faced by today's forest resource managers. Now in its seventh season, the podcast has been downloaded more than 90,000 times by listeners from 109 countries on every continent but Antarctica.

The DNR has developed an urban forestry modeling tool that can identify individual trees, delineate tree crowns, identify tree types and discern the genera of some of the most common urban tree species. Very few inventories of parks, open spaces and private properties exist. The modeling tool can fill this gap by counting non-inventoried trees and calculating valuable information such as spatial coverage. This information can be used by communities to inform planting efforts, providing valuable information such as which tree species would be most ideal in a given location.



Monitoring growth of a seedling in the DREAM study

The DNR is working with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) and other partners on two large-scale climate adaptation and assisted migration research projects, Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change (ASCC) and Desired REgeneration through Assisted Migration (DREAM). See the article in the 'Partners' section below for additional details.

Many swamp and floodplain forests in Wisconsin have been severely impacted by introduced insects and diseases, including emerald ash borer (EAB) and Dutch elm disease. Ash and elm trees play an outsized role in maintaining hydrology and ecosystem function, and the loss of these species has led to conversion from forested to non-forested wetlands. The DNR has piloted several trials focused on bottomland and swamp hardwood stands with the goal of identifying planting practices and species that can help maintain ecological function, restore degraded stands and reforest converted stands. In 2025, the DNR completed work on a fourth trial effort at Harrington Beach State Park. To date, these projects have shown some promising results,

although factors including hydrology, deer browse, competing vegetation, invasive species, and availability of planting crews and seedlings can limit success.

Oak forests are important ecologically and economically in Wisconsin. There is increasing concern about the long-term sustainability of white oaks across their range due to regeneration challenges. DNR staff have partnered with the White Oak Initiative (WOI) and the University of Kentucky to compare differences in local adap-

tation and potential for assisted migration across the range of white oak. In 2025, growth and height data were collected from established replicated plantings. Most of the oaks in the study were sourced from Wisconsin, but the plantings also include genetics from trees in neighboring states, as well as southern populations of white oak from Tennessee and Arkansas. Growth and height data will be collected for 10 years and will help researchers better understand local adaptation, genetic variation and assisted migration potential of seed sources for white oak.

## TREE PROTECTION THROUGH MANAGEMENT

The DNR Forest Health Program assists foresters, forest landowners, partners and the public in the identification and management of insect, disease, invasive plant and environmental issues in forests. Forest health staff provide advice to prevent or minimize tree stress and mortality to maintain resilient and productive forests. The Forest Health Program also works with the Reforestation Program to ensure planting stock produced by the state nursery is healthy and free from diseases that could emerge when seedlings are planted.

Forest Health works in collaboration with researchers on many projects to provide practical forest management options:

- » Evaluate novel oak wilt management methods.
- » Determine effective management options for invasive plants including Japanese stiltgrass (*Microstegium vimineum*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*).
- » Determine how soil microbe and fungal communities impact the risk of Heterobasidion root disease (HRD) in pine stands and the survival of white pine regeneration in stands infected with HRD.

Hemlock woolly adelgid (HWA)(*Adelges tsugae*) is an invasive, aphid-like insect that causes mortality of hemlock trees. HWA has not been confirmed in Wisconsin's forests, but infestations exist in nearby states. The Wisconsin DNR and partners are developing an HWA strategy document that will provide information about response options for detections



A trap to detect eDNA of hemlock woolly adelgid

and management. HWA environmental DNA (eDNA) traps were tested at two State Natural Areas in 2025. The traps passively collect material from the environment in petroleum jelly on microscope slides that can be tested for HWA DNA.

### FOREST PRODUCT MARKETS & INNOVATION

Healthy markets are vital to sustainable forest management and keeping forests as forests. Wisconsin's 1,000 forest product manufacturers help maintain forest health by generating economic revenue, incentivizing forest management and discouraging land use changes. A lack of demand for forest resources would reduce the capacity to manage and promote healthy forests for the future. The DNR Forest Products Services program offers technical assistance and training to businesses interested in utilizing and marketing sustainable forestry products. In 2025, the Forest Products Services program hosted local use dimension lumber courses to certify 82 individuals to mill, grade and sell dimension lumber. This unique program allows Wisconsin sawmills to mill structural framing lumber for residential construction using native species without the need for a grade stamp. This certification program supports markets with locally produced wood products that aim to sequester more carbon via wood product utilization, industry growth and sustainable forest management.

The Forest Products Services program continued work with the biochar trial at Wilson State Nursery in Boscobel to support new market development in Wisconsin. The trial was included in a USDA Forest Service publication regarding biochar production. A second round of biochar production at the nursery took place in January 2025. FPS provided technical assistance to train nursery staff on how to produce biochar on their own using the FPS biochar kilns. Additional biochar plots at the nursery will likely take place in the near future, with support from UW-Madison. In April, a technical presentation on biochar use in agricultural soils and a hands-on demonstration of biochar production using the FPS biochar kilns was held in Paoli, Wisconsin, for around 30 members of Wisconsin Farmers Union from two southern Wisconsin chapters.

Wood based construction and urban wood utilization remain a focus. In the fall of 2025, the DNR Forest Products Services staff held an event titled "Wood Based Construction: Mass Timber and Beyond" in Milwaukee. The event hosted a variety of different professionals, including architects, engineers, designers and others. Speakers throughout the day showcased the potential of building and design aspects utilizing urban wood and mass timber. Attendees were given a tour of the Ascent building (currently the largest mass timber building in the world) and the Baird Center, which is home to a one-of-a-kind urban wood staircase.



Biochar processing at Wilson State Nursery

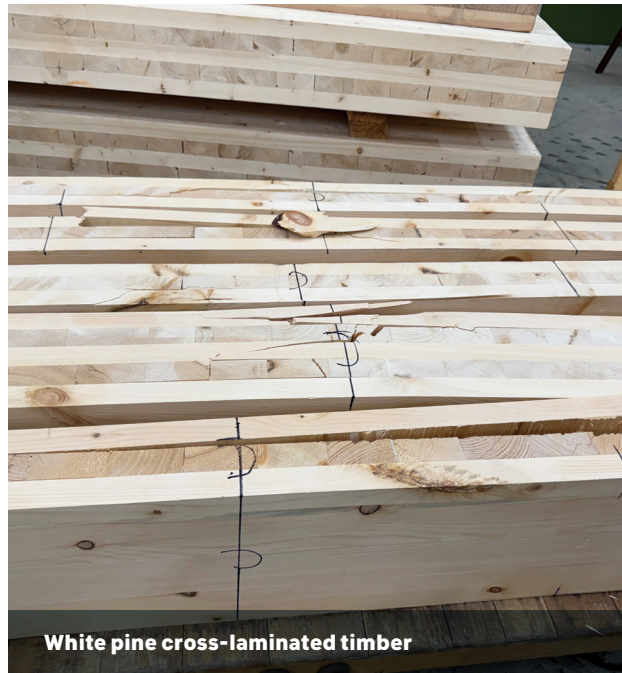


An apartment in the Ascent building in Milwaukee, WI

## EASTERN WHITE PINE IN CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER PANEL CONSTRUCTION

In early 2025, the Forest Products Services team procured several hundred board feet of Eastern white pine (EWP) from an eastern Wisconsin sawmill. The two-inch-thick lumber was kiln-dried and cut down to four-inch widths. From the sawmill, the lumber was hauled to Michigan Technological University in Houghton, Michigan, where panels were constructed under industry standards. Given their research capabilities, testing and panel-building capacity, they were a natural partner for the Wisconsin DNR on this project. Michigan Technological University has conducted significant research in the previous few years, looking at hardwood species in cross-laminated timber (CLT) panel construction, along with hybrid softwood/hardwood panels. The panels were then taken to the USDA Forest Products Lab in Madison to determine their feasibility for commercial applications.

A statistical analysis is currently underway to determine the outcome of the project, and in early 2026, researchers from Michigan Technological University will provide initial conclusions on the



testing results and potential outcomes resulting from this research project. Ultimately, the hope is to demonstrate EWP's viability in mass timber production (specifically CLT), an important first step in potentially opening a new market for the species and increasing the amount of carbon stored in forest products.

## MASS TIMBER & CROSS-LAMINATED TIMBER (CLT)

Mass timber is a generic category of engineered wood products including large panels, posts, columns and beams. Mass timber may refer to the framing styles characterized by the use of these large, engineered wood products that rival steel and concrete in strength and durability. Typical mass timber products include cross-laminated timber (CLT), nail-laminated timber, glued-laminated timber (glulam) and structural composite lumber—all renewable and sustainable engineered wood products.

Cross-laminated timber is a type of mass timber. It is made from gluing together at least three layers of solid-sawn lumber at angles to each other. The grain of each layer of boards is usually rotated 90 degrees from that of adjacent layers and glued on the wide faces of each board.





Rhineland School District students collecting tree seed

## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

Environmental education is an essential function of the DNR, paving the way for greater knowledge of and respect for our natural environment. Throughout the year, DNR staff participate in dozens of educational events, like visiting classrooms, speaking at Arbor Day activities and providing technical assistance or funding coordination for tree planting and maintenance.

As in past years, the DNR funded the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education at UW-Stevens Point, which supports the state's K-12 forestry education program known as LEAF as well as the Wisconsin School Forest Program's network of outdoor classrooms. The DNR also owns and supports the Forest Exploration Center in Milwaukee County, and continues its fourth-grade tree giveaway, with over 56,000 trees given away in 2025. In 2025, the Division of Forestry participated in the Midwest Outdoor Heritage Education Expo, an annual event held at the MacKenzie Center in Poynette and Havenwoods State Forest in Milwaukee, which draws thousands of students.

In addition to these environmental education initiatives, the DNR allocated some of its federal Inflation Reduction Act urban forestry grant

monies for contracts with partner organizations to advance urban forestry education and schoolyard greening at K-12 schools in Wisconsin.

With these funds, Milwaukee Public Schools and the nonprofit Reflo provided five schools with Outdoor Discovery Carts that feature outdoor educational resources and urban forestry related activities. The carts were built partially with urban wood and complemented recently completed schoolyard projects that used newly planted urban trees.

Federal Inflation Reduction Act funds are also supporting the Green and Healthy Schools Wisconsin initiative that aims to grow and teach about urban forests. The "Teaching In and About Urban Forests" program is being hosted in collaboration with Field Adventures and LEAF starting in January of 2026. Program participants include Madison Metropolitan School District, Taft Elementary in Neenah, North Crawford Elementary and Hawley Environmental School in Milwaukee. These funds have enabled LEAF to update its Urban Forestry curriculum. In 2025, lessons for fifth through eighth grade students were completed and will soon be available in printed form. This will have a long-term impact on forestry education in the state.

## CONSERVATION FINANCE

The DNR maintains specific donation programs to aid forest conservation and tree planting efforts. These programs facilitate direct support for reforestation on state-owned lands through the following mechanisms.

- » **Dedicated Gift Funds:** These accounts receive targeted contributions from individuals or organizations designated specifically for tree planting initiatives.
- » **Forest for the Future Fund:** A general fund established to aggregate smaller donations for broad tree planting support.

In Fiscal Year 2025, the DNR received over \$319,000 in donations to support tree planting and other sustainable forestry efforts.

2025 was the third year that the DNR participated in the "Run for the Trees: Happy Little 5K." This virtual race program is inspired by artist Bob Ross, with a portion of the proceeds going to tree planting and forest health efforts in Wisconsin state parks, forests, trails and recreation areas. The "Happy Little 5K" began in 2019 when the Michigan DNR, Bob Ross Inc. and hundreds of volunteers partnered to plant trees in locations across Michigan. The program expanded to 13 states in 2025, with 645 participants representing Wisconsin joining in to raise more than \$12,000 for tree planting efforts!

IN FISCAL YEAR 2025, THE DNR RECEIVED OVER

**\$319,000**

IN DONATIONS TO SUPPORT TREE PLANTING AND  
OTHER SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY EFFORTS



Nursery staff bundling tree seedlings for distribution



Reforestation staff train teachers on seed collection timing and methods

STEVE SCHMIDT/ UW STEVENS POINT

# PARTNERS



Governor Evers with Oneida Nation royalty at the NFL and Oneida Nation community tree planting event

To achieve Wisconsin's Trillion Trees Pledge, the state is working across multiple agencies and with many government, nonprofit and private partners. Participating agencies and partners include:

## State Of Wisconsin Agencies

- » Wisconsin Department of Administration
- » Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection

- » Wisconsin Department of Transportation
- » Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development
- » Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
- » UW—Madison's Division of Extension
- » Universities of Wisconsin
- » Wisconsin Forestry Center
- » LEAF - Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program
- » Wisconsin Technical College System

## Partners

- » Aldo Leopold Foundation
- » Alliant Energy Foundation
- » Forest Exploration Center
- » Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts
- » Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District
- » Savanna Institute
- » The Nature Conservancy
- » Urban Forestry Council
- » Wisconsin Council on Forestry
- » Wisconsin DNR Green Tier Charter for Climate Action participants
- » Wisconsin Land + Water
- » Wisconsin County Forest Association

## COMMUNITY MEMBERS

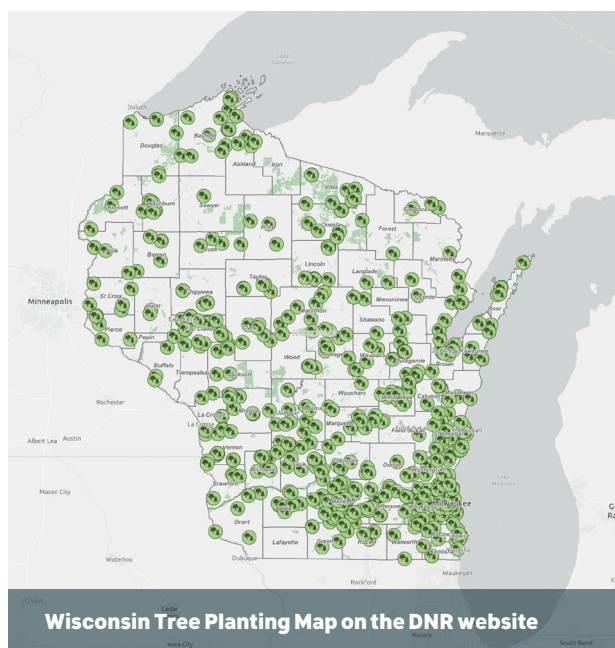
DNR staff continued to promote the interactive Wisconsin Tree Planting Survey and Map, which allows anyone planting a tree to submit the location of their planted trees so they can be counted toward the goal. The survey honors and encourages the involvement of all Wisconsin community members in the Trillion Trees Pledge. In 2025, tree planters submitted 156,789 trees through the map, of which 55,438 were supplied by the state nursery with the remainder provided by other nurseries or grown directly by the planter. When submitting trees to the map, community members are asked to provide additional information about the plantings, including the number, type and source of trees.



**Silvopasture establishment planting of white oak and black walnut, Douglas County**



**Community seed collectors bring cones to a local ranger station**



**Wisconsin Tree Planting Map on the DNR website**



**Volunteers planting trees at Devil's Lake State Park in spring 2025**



**Volunteers install tree straps on a newly planted tree at Devil's Lake State Park in spring 2025**

NICK WILKES PHOTOGRAPHY

NICK WILKES PHOTOGRAPHY

## PARTNER HIGHLIGHTS

Partnerships and collaboration are crucial to achieve the Trillion Trees Pledge. In 2025, many partners organized excellent events, welcomed more community members to become involved in tree planting and advanced ongoing research. There were too many great projects and partners to highlight them all, but read on to learn about some particularly impressive examples of the initiatives that happened across the state in 2025.

### PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP PROVIDES SHADE AND ENERGY REDUCTION FOR TWO STATE PARKS

Arbor Day, 2025, marked the fifth consecutive year of an ambitious, collaborative tree planting effort led by Devil's Lake Climbing Guides (DLCG) and Heartwood Tree Company, LLC (HTC).

The two companies partner to seek funding from Trees Forever, Alliant Energy's Community Tree Planting grant program. DLCG and HTC also receive support from state park supervisors and staff who welcome this initiative to complement and expand on state park management efforts. Together, they have developed an efficient workflow; DLCG owner Nick Wilkes handles grant administration and volunteer recruitment, while state park supervisors select the planting locations and provide staff on planting day. HTC provides expertise, trees and equipment to bring the plantings to fruition. HTC also funds additional trees that the grant does not cover. Nick Wilkes generously donates professional photography services and lunch on planting day.

"We've put in over 500 trees at Devil's Lake State Park" over the program's five-year history, says Nick Wilkes, owner of Devil's Lake Climbing Guides. This program has continued to expand. In addition to the 100 trees planted at Devil's Lake, another 100 trees were planted at Blue Mound State Park in 2025.

This project not only demonstrates DLCG's and HTC's commitment to the health of Wisconsin's public lands, but it also exemplifies community collaboration. In April 2025 alone, 45 volunteers contributed over 220 hours between both parks, with Anderson Windows sending over 30 of those volunteers. Joutras Tree Care and Canopy Climbers provided the remainder of the volunteers on planting day.

In addition to sequestering carbon and providing habitat, the trees will provide shade for campers, visitors and vehicles, reducing energy consumption from air conditioning and noise and improving air quality in the parks.

Park supervisors have not only supported the tree plantings but have helped find funding for pruning and tree care to support the long-term success of the plantings.

"Care when they're small is key and can save a lot of money down the road," notes Brent Valentine, owner of HTC.

This planting effort serves as an excellent model of a sustainable public-private partnership; both HTC and DLCG hope to continue these tree plantings into the future.

## DOOR COUNTY BIG PLANT: GROWING COMMUNITY AND SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

The Climate Change Coalition of Door County (CCDC) has become a powerful force for resilience, bringing together businesses, nonprofits and hundreds of volunteers each spring and fall to mitigate climate change one tree at a time. Over five years, this community-driven initiative, known as the Big Plant, has planted an impressive 58,000 native trees across the Door Peninsula.

The Big Plant, which is just one of the sustainability initiatives led by the CCDC, represents accessible community forestry. Participants can either order native trees and shrubs to plant on their own properties at reduced rates or join community planting events at local parks and natural areas. More than 168 businesses, nonprofits and families have participated, supported by over 200 volunteers. In 2025 alone, 10,120 trees were added to the count with more species diversity than ever before, including pines, firs, spruces, maples, oaks, birches, basswoods, cedars, hemlocks and more.

One thing that sets the Big Plant apart is the commitment to scientific learning, illustrated in part by their Boreal Climate Survivorship Study. The northern part of the Door Peninsula hosts a unique boreal forest community at the southern extent of its range and is home to several rare and threatened species. Increased impacts from drought, flooding, fire, introduced species and insect/pathogen outbreaks as a result of climate change are likely to be most pronounced in boreal and coniferous forest ecosystems. Thanks to The Ridges Sanctuary, Lakeshore Natural Resource Partnership and the Daybreak Fund, the coalition is now observing and recording survivorship of 2,500 of the trees planted in both northern/boreal and southern/temperate-mesic Door County ecosystems.

"This is knowledge we can use to keep learning and improving our tree planting practices and accelerating our impact," notes CCDC Executive Director Jeff Lutsey.

"Is there anything better than planting trees... with your neighbors and friends?!" asks Lutsey when asked about the Big Plant.

After five years, it's clear the CCDC is leading by example on taking climate action and building a healthier, more resilient community.





Representatives from NFL Green, Green Bay Packers, Verizon, join Governor Tony Evers, and Tehassi Hill, Oneida Nation of Wisconsin Chair, to plant a tree during the 2025 NFL Draft



DNR staff assist with tree planting

## NFL DRAFT PROVIDES A GREEN LASTING LEGACY IN GREEN BAY

The 2025 NFL Draft was held in Green Bay in April 2025, and besides the excitement it brought for football fans, a companion event created a lasting environmental impact. After all the draft picks were confirmed and the 600,000 attendees headed home from this historic event, the NFL left something behind. NFL Green collaborated with the DNR, Great Lakes St. Lawrence Governors and Premiers, along with Verizon and Oneida Nation, to plant 90 trees across the Oneida Nation Reservation and Brown County parks. The planting represents a successful collaboration between professional sports, Tribal and state government and environmental organizations.

At Amelia Cornelius Culture Park, the public tree planting kickoff was held on April 21, 2025, where representatives from NFL Green, Green Bay Packers, Verizon, Oneida Nation, DNR (including Secretary Karen Hyun and State Forester Heather Berklund) and Governor Tony Evers, joined with

community volunteers to plant 15 trees. To open the event, the Oneida Nation School System Ohunt-syakehka Kanunyashuha classes, led by Charlie Doxtater, shared traditional songs to honor the land and the trees about to be planted. Governor Evers and Oneida Nation Chairman Tehassi Hill highlighted the importance of community tree planting and the benefits trees bring to our communities.

Additional plantings across the Oneida reservation and four Brown County parks throughout the week brought the total trees planted to 90, many of which replaced tree canopy lost to emerald ash borer.

Over the next 20 years, these trees will capture nearly 54,000 pounds of carbon dioxide, intercept 356,000 gallons of rainfall and remove nearly 560 pounds of air pollutants. Beyond numbers, the trees will enhance green spaces, reduce urban heat and support migratory birds.

This project highlights the value of partnerships in urban forestry and the positive impact trees have in our communities and exemplifies how public-private partnerships can create lasting community benefits.

## THE PEACE TREE PROJECT

Nels Huse (Menominee Tribal Enterprise) and James Flores (Oneida Nation Tribal citizen and manager of Tribal Relations at Milwaukee Public Museum) are promoting peace and conservation throughout Wisconsin by planting trees. Since 2021, the Peace Tree Project has planted over 20 Eastern white pine (*Pinus strobus*) trees in locations throughout the state, targeting areas marked by protests and struggles. The planting events happen in partnership with local groups, such as universities, colleges, schools and justice and religious organizations.

MTE is dedicated to the traditions of responsible forestry and manages the Menominee Nation's 230,000-acre world-renowned forest in northeastern Wisconsin. White pine, once dominant in central and northern Wisconsin, has declined and continues to experience elevated mortality rates. In collaboration with DNR, MTE promotes natural regeneration and planting efforts to help sustain this iconic species.

The Peace Tree Project provides a space for community building by planting a white pine and retelling the historical narrative of the formation of the Great Law of Peace, the foundational constitution of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. The

collaboration consists of Menominee Tribal Enterprises getting white pine trees donated from around the state for each event, and Mr. Flores sharing a summary of how the planting of a white pine signifies the unification of the five nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy (later in the 1700s, the Tuscarora would also join this Confederacy).

To the Haudenosaunee people, the white pine is a symbol of the Great Law of Peace. During a time of great conflict, a prophet known as the Peacemaker brought together five nations that were at odds with each other to form a political and cultural union, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, sometimes called the Iroquois Confederacy by settlers. As a symbol of peace, they buried their weapons and planted a white pine over them to symbolize the Great Law of Peace with the roots of the tree, pointing out in the four directions. The Great Law of Peace would later serve as the inspiration for the creation of the United States Constitution.

According to Huse and Flores, "The planting of a white pine reminds us all that in turbulent times it is possible to come together and remember our commitment to finding peace."

The Peace Tree Project hopes to continue this annual effort as long as they can find organizations to partner with in communities across Wisconsin.



BRYAN PECHACEK/MSOE, VIDEO AND MULTIMEDIA PRODUCER

Little Priest Singers, a Ho-Chunk family drum group, provide cultural context for a Peace Tree planting event in Milwaukee in 2025



Rhineland School District students collecting tree seed

## SCHOOL FORESTS STRENGTHEN THE EFFORT TO PROVIDE SEED TO STATE NURSERY

What began as a pilot program with three school forest programs is taking root across the state. In 2024, Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program (LEAF) and the DNR's Reforestation Program expanded their education initiatives by inviting students to join seed collection efforts through Wisconsin's School Forest program.

Through the pilot activities in 2024, which included schools in Almond-Bancroft, Laona and Rhineland, students were able to learn more about tree reproduction and tree growth by helping collect acorns and pinecones. The seeds they collected are now being grown into seedlings at the state nursery, which will be planted back into school forests during celebrations of the Wisconsin School Forest Centennial in 2027-2028.

In the meantime, the DNR Reforestation program has continued to request more tree seeds, which they depend on to grow seedlings at the state nursery. Since the pilot generated interest and enthusiasm from the initial participants, LEAF, the DNR Reforestation team and educators in the School Forest program have decided to continue their partnership.

In July 2025, Jeremiah Auer, DNR forester, led a workshop at the DC Everest School District for school forest staff from around the state, training them on how to determine the optimal time to harvest pinecones and acorns. Educators from five school districts attended the workshop and hope to begin seed-collecting efforts and contribute seeds to the Reforestation Program in the future.

One of the school districts that has wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to partner with DNR is the School District of Rhineland (SDR). They now run a seed collecting program every fall where students at all grade levels take part in an acorn collecting. Led by School Forest manager Mike Cheslock, students collect acorns from red oak trees, which are abundant at the Cedric A. Vig Outdoor Classroom (CAVOC).

Students receive classroom lessons about seeds, seedlings and different types of trees as well as how to determine whether an acorn has a good chance of growing into an oak seedling. Then, from late September through early November, Cheslock leads students throughout the 160-acre CAVOC to collect acorns and get fresh air and exercise.

"They absolutely love it," shares Cheslock, noting that the activity is run as a competition between the four elementary schools to see what school can collect the most acorns by weight.

In 2025, the elementary students collected a total of 1,475 pounds of acorns at CAVOC. Students place the acorns in water to separate viable from non-viable seed before passing the bins of acorns to local DNR staff. The viable acorns are then transported to the DNR nursery and germinated to grow new oak trees for reforestation as well as for parks and state properties. Depending on need, some of the acorns may also be used in direct seeding efforts.

Steve Schmidt, outreach specialist at LEAF, notes that "there are over 400 school forests in the state, and the more schools that take part in something like this, the better it is for the DNR, for education and for reforestation."

Tree seed collection projects are rich field experiences for students to participate in the DNR Reforestation Program and the Trillion Trees program while celebrating school forests and learning about tree reproduction, habitat, forestry and economics.

## DNR SUPPORTS OUTDOOR CLASSROOM AND SCHOOLYARD GREENING PROJECT

On May 21, Edison Middle School in Green Bay celebrated the grand opening of its new outdoor classroom. The project was a partnership between the school, DNR Urban Forestry, American Transmission Company and LEAF, Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program.

The project began two years ago when Urban Forestry Coordinator Tracy Salisbury (now retired) approached ATC about providing partial funding, along with the DNR, for an outdoor classroom and schoolyard greening project at an underserved school in ATC's service area. The outdoor learning space could help the school meet its goals for STEM education, as well as get the students and teachers outside, more active and learning about the natural environment.

The DNR also partnered with LEAF to provide training and curriculum for the teachers on how to use the outdoor classroom. LEAF and the DNR researched prospective schools, and ATC's community relations team selected Edison Middle School.



**Staff from Edison Middle School, DNR Urban Forestry, LEAF, American Transmission Company, and Johnsons Nursery mark the official opening of the Edison outdoor classroom**

The project was a tremendous success. Edison put an incredible amount of passion and hard work into the project. Every single staff member completed LEAF's Needs Assessment survey about outdoor learning. Lead teacher Scott Stromberger custom designed permanent seating for the outdoor classroom, stretching the project budget. The tree planting day in October with Johnson's Nursery came together flawlessly and was a terrific learning experience for the students. Teachers participated in LEAF's staff training this spring and seemed genuinely optimistic about integrating the new outdoor classroom into their curriculum next year. Last but not least, Edison was recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree Campus K-12 for the first time.

In addition to the outdoor classroom, Edison now has a mini-arboretum of native trees and trees from around the world. Eighteen shade and fruit trees were planted including shagbark hickory, bur oak, yellow birch, Kentucky coffeetree, ginkgo and more. Students will be able to learn to identify different species, learn about the benefits of species diversity and appreciate each tree's unique beauty in the changing seasons.



DNR Foresters assessing black spruce regeneration in Clark County

## DNR TECHNICAL PARTNERS HELP DELIVER KEY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH ON ASSISTED MIGRATION AND ADAPTIVE SILVICULTURE

Adaptive Silviculture for Climate Change (ASCC) and Desired REgeneration through Assisted Migration (DREAM). The goal of this research is to help identify species, seed sources and management practices that can increase the adaptive capacity and resilience of future Wisconsin forests to climate change.

In the Driftless region, the DNR has partnered with the USFS, Iowa State University, Minnesota DNR and Iowa DNR to host and develop a network of demonstration and research sites as part of the ASCC project collaborative. ASCC projects are part of a larger network of research sites throughout the USA and Canada that aim to provide insights into the emerging field of climate adaptation.

As part of the Driftless Area ASCC study, Wisconsin hosts two project sites in the Lower Wisconsin State Riverway in oak-hickory forests representative of the region. Silvicultural treatments focused on resistance, resilience and transition strategies were developed through collaboration with project partners and are now guiding management actions at these sites. Resistance and transition treatments have incorporated climate-adaptive plantings, including using seed collected from warmer climate zones for current species like red oak, bur oak, white oak and black walnut and assisted migration of new climate-adapted species like

Shumard oak, post oak, tulip poplar and shortleaf pine. Trees were planted in the spring of 2025, with data collection planned to continue in future years through a partnership with Iowa State University.

In northern Wisconsin, the DNR has partnered with USFS and others on the DREAM project. The project seeks to identify which species and management techniques are most likely to succeed under future climate conditions in Wisconsin. Wisconsin's two primary DREAM study locations are in northern hardwood stands on DNR and USFS land, with two secondary demonstration sites on USFS land. DREAM is part of a larger international network of sites in Canada and the US that share similar guiding philosophies and experimental designs across the hardwood boreal forest ecotone. Silvicultural treatments were carried out on Wisconsin DREAM sites in 2024, followed by tree planting in 2025. To date, over 23,000 tree seedlings have been planted as part of the project, with additional plantings of American chestnut and American elm seedlings planned in 2026. American elm planted as part of the study is thought to have at least some resistance to Dutch elm disease (DED) and includes seeds sourced from both lingering elms as well as controlled crosses of DED-resistant trees. Data collection began shortly after tree planting and is planned to continue through 2035. The results from Driftless ASCC and DREAM are anticipated to help guide land managers in selecting future adapted species and seed sources that are able to survive and thrive in both current and future climate conditions and serve as references and examples of how to incorporate climate considerations into forest management.



**Wisconsin Department  
of Natural Resources  
101 South Webster St  
Madison, WI 53707**



PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER  
PUB-FR-871-2026

**Equal Opportunity Employer and Americans with Disabilities Act Statement**

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources provides equal opportunity in its employment, programs, services, and functions under an Affirmative Action Plan. If you have any questions, please write to Chief, Public Civil Rights, Office of Civil Rights, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C. 20240.

This publication is available in alternative format (large print, Braille, etc.) upon request. Please contact the Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry at [ForestryWebmail@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:ForestryWebmail@Wisconsin.gov) for more information. Note: If you need technical assistance or more information, call the Accessibility Coordinator at 608-267-7490 / TTY Access via relay - 711