

2018 Work Plan

Black River State Forest

As a requirement of forest certification state forests annually provide an opportunity for the public to provide input on property activities. The Black River State Forest utilizes an online format including a synopsis of the property's major work plan goals. Annual work goals are directly tied to the property's master plan, which was accepted by the Natural Resources Board in January of 2010. The master plan can be accessed online at <https://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/fr/fr0442.pdf>.

The work plan is divided into sections on land management, development projects, and real estate management. All actions taken by the property are directly authorized under the property's master plan.

This year's work plan has two areas related to recent legislation. The first deals with increasing forest production area acreage. The second area of interest deals with motorized access to public lands.

Forest Management:

Forestry is one of the largest contributors to the state economy accounting for 22.6 billion dollars annually. The Black River State forest meets the highest standards for environmental quality in its forest practices being dually certified by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and the Forest Stewardship Council.

Twice each year the state forest sells tracts of timber to loggers through a competitive bidding process. Each bid opening averages 6-7 sales totaling 500-700 acres. In 2017 \$677,564 in timber were sold on the Black River State Forest. Timber sale revenues are deposited into the state forestry account.

State forest timber sales are a combination of thinnings and regeneration cuts. A thinning is an intermediate treatment where trees of poorer vigor and form are removed to favor higher quality future crop trees. A stand may be thinned once to several times before the final cut when it is regenerated. A regeneration cut removes the majority of the overstory trees at one time. These sites are assessed for regeneration needs at periodic cycles after the harvest is complete. If adequate natural regeneration is not present, then sites are planted or seeded to an acceptable level.

For 2018 the following forest management activities are planned:

1. Timber sales – Thirty stands comprising 1133 acres will be reviewed for harvesting potential. These areas are shown in the proposed timber sale map provided with this document. If you wish to comment on any stand please include the stand numbers indicated on the map.

2. Forest Reconnaissance – On a 20 year cycle the state forest collects information on forest type, tree density, age, and site quality from every stand on the property. This information is used to schedule forest practices such as thinning and regeneration cuts. In 2018 the state forest will update stand information on at least 5% of the entire property.

Forest Regeneration – Two stands (115 acres) will be planted with Jack pine seedlings. Two additional stands (also 115 acres) will be aerially seeded.

Site preparation work will occur on at least three stands totaling 222 acres. One 138-acre stand is a replanting. The other two were recent harvests that will be maintained as jack pine. One of these is located within the Jack Pine Habitat Management Area. These sites will be trenched and sprayed. An additional 52-acre jack pine stand will be pre-sale scarified with DNR dozers.

Two oak stands (60 acres) and 4 jack pine stands (208 acres) will be evaluated for pre-harvest scarification needs. Dozer scarification to prepare a seedbed for natural regeneration could occur in some of these stands.

Two stands will be monitored for potential bud capping work.

3. Timber Stand Improvement – No timber stand improvement projects are planned for 2018.

Invasive Species Management:

Invasive species pose a serious threat to the integrity of forest ecosystems by displacing native species and negatively impacting forest regeneration. Invasives are estimated to cost 125-140 billion dollars a year to U.S. taxpayers. Techniques used to control invasives include a combination of herbicide use, hand weeding, and the use of biological controls such as Larinus beetles to infest spotted knapweed populations. The state forest specific goals for 2018 include:

1. Practice best management practices to prevent the spread of invasive species- <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/InvasiveSpecies/Overview.aspx>
2. Control species of greatest concern along the Black River through the use of a private contractor. These species include garlic mustard, greater celandine, dame's rocket; musk, bull, and Canada thistle; honeysuckle, black locust, buckthorn, and if they are detected wild parsnip, tansy, and Japanese hedge parsley. This is an ongoing project to limit the spread along the river and contain it within the floodplain.
3. Control invasive species in timber sales before and after timber operations. This will be accomplished primarily through contracting with private vendors.

4. Monitor and control invasive species in high quality native community management areas. Monitoring in native community management areas will be focused on forest roads, as they are the most likely vector for introduction.
5. Monitor sites where invasives are most likely to be introduced. Priorities for this year will include Phragmites and highway right of ways, as they serve as a primary vector for species such as wild parsnip, teasel, and yellow toadflax.
6. Aggressively control any newly detected species considered a critical threat to forest health. Controlling any newly detected Phragmites populations will be a high priority.
7. Work with interested groups to monitor the Black River for aquatic invasive species. While control may not be feasible at this point, the property would like to track the spread of species of concern. Also work with Jackson County Forestry and Parks and the Ho-Chunk Nation to contain the spread of invasives across boundaries and share detection and distribution information. This may involve joining the local Cooperative Weed Management Area organization if or when it is revitalized.
8. Monitoring for signs of disease or insect damage to invasive plants, especially buckthorn.
9. Invasive species control may occur on the Dike 17 Wildlife Habitat Management area if invasive species are found. Control of glossy buckthorn, spotted knapweed, black locust, garlic mustard, and other species may occur through foliar spraying or basal bark treatments with an approved herbicide (i.e. triclopyr, glyphosate, etc.). It is anticipated this application will occur in the early growing season (May-July) and will primarily occur along roadways, dike tops, and established fields.

All herbicides/chemicals that the state forest uses are tracked and reported annually. Specific chemicals can only be used if they are approved through forest certification. A new requirement that started in 2016 is to include the list of chemicals to be used in the annual work plan. Any additional chemicals not included on this list must go through a formal Department request process. Invasive species by category along with the chemicals that will be used to treat them are listed below:

Category 1 – Woody species

- Buckthorn (common and glossy), honeysuckle, black locust, multiflora rose, Japanese barberry
- Triclopyr, glyphosate, aminopyralid, metsulfuron; both basal and foliar applications
- Dry habitats property-wide

Category 2 – Biennial and monocarpic perennial herbaceous plants

- Garlic mustard, greater celandine, wild parsnip, spotted knapweed, tansy, dame's rocket, Japanese hedgeparsley, teasel, musk thistle, plumeless thistle, bull thistle, European marsh thistle
- Triclopyr, glyphosate, aminopyralid, metsulfuron; foliar spot applications
- Dry habitats property-wide

Category 3 – Perennial polycarpic herbaceous plants

- Cypress spurge, flowering spurge, common toadflax, orange daylily, Oriental bittersweet, Canada thistle, poison hemlock, birdsfoot trefoil, crown vetch, Phragmites on dry site, Japanese knotweed, poison ivy
- Triclopyr, glyphosate, aminopyralid, metsulfuron, clopyralid, dicamba and 2, 4 D; foliar spot applications
- Dry habitats property-wide

Category 4 – Heterobasidion Root Disease (HRD) Prevention

- Fresh cut stumps of conifer species
- Cellu-Treat, Rotstop
- Dry habitats property-wide

Barrens and Karner Blue Butterfly Management:

Barrens are a globally imperiled ecosystem with Wisconsin, including the state forest, having some of the best potential areas for their restoration. The Black River State Forest currently receives funding for barrens management through a small grant. This funding will be used to maintain a semi-open barrens habitat through selective fecon mowing of high quality sites.

High quality barrens and prairie openings will be maintained and expanded at five sites within the BRSF, including two areas near Palm Road, the Sandpellow Barrens east of Mission Road, an area near Dike 17, and a portion of the Millston Core south of Habelman Road. In 2018, the area near Dike 17, and a portion of the Millston Core south of Habelman Road will be the focus of these efforts. Funding for this work comes from a Turkey Stamp Grant project.

The state forest is also a recovery property for the federally endangered Karner Blue Butterfly. The property has been given a goal of attaining a population of 3,000 butterflies on an annual basis every year for five years. Barrens management provides valuable habitat for the Karner Blue and a host of other endangered and special concern species. In 2017 the state forest will focus on meeting the following goals to improve barrens habitat and maintain a viable Karner Blue Butterfly population:

1. Control spotted knapweed at key barrens restoration sites.
2. Utilize timber sales where appropriate/applicable to increasing the connectivity between barrens areas.

Wildlife Management:

The state forest's wildlife management program is primarily focused on the Dike 17 habitat management area, flowage management, research, population surveys, and habitat management. The following are the main objectives for 2018:

1. Surveys – Department staff will conduct annual surveys for black bear, wolves, deer, turkey, ruffed grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, eagles, osprey, waterfowl, furbearers, and amphibians.
2. Land management – All flowage dikes within the Dike 17 wildlife habitat management area will be mowed to keep them clear of trees and brush. Invasive specie control efforts will be conducted on the Dike 17 area through treatment with herbicides (Transline or Milestone) or possible mechanical control. Black Locust, glossy buckthorn, and spotted knapweed are currently found on this unit. Access roads will be mowed and maintained leading into the fields at Battle Point, Wilson Flowage, Whitetail Flowage, Big and Little Bear Flowages, Tanner and Partridge Crop Flowage. All parking lots will be mowed and property signs will be replaced as needed. Fecon mowing and herbicide treatments may be used to remove brush on the Dike 17 habitat area. Prescribed burn plans will be prepared for several burn units on Dike 17 and burns may be conducted if appropriate weather conditions exist and resources are available. Logging trails and log landings will be reseeded post-harvest with a seed blend that will stabilize the soil and benefit wildlife. Log landings and roads seeded in previous years will be mowed and cleared of brush. A focused effort on identifying and inventorying forest openings was initiated in 2017 and will continue into 2018 with an ultimate goal of managing these openings for early successional habitat. Identified openings may be mowed, treated for invasive, or re-seeded depending on their condition.
3. Research – Wolf research trapping will be conducted in an effort to radio collar and monitor the wolf packs inhabiting the Black River State Forest. All elk released as part of the reintroduction will be radio collared and monitored to evaluate project success. Snapshot WI launched in Jackson County in 2016 and 2017. This large-scale citizen monitoring effort will monitor all wildlife species on the forest through remote trail cameras.

4. Elk - In December of 2012 the Natural Resources Board approved amendments to the Black River Elk Management Plan. The plan calls for the introduction of up to 75 elk to the Black River Elk Range (BRER). The Department identified a source of wild elk in the state of Kentucky and legislative changes were passed in 2013 that allow the importation of elk into Wisconsin. The first group of elk arrived in March 2015 and a second group in 2016. The elk were held in a quarantine facility in Dike 17 for several months and released after all health tests were complete. In total, 73 elk were released over the two-year period. Current elk management efforts are focused on monitoring the survival, movements, and habitat use by the elk. The Department will conduct habitat management projects focused on barrens and opening management that would benefit elk, including tree/brush removal, herbicide application, prescribed burning, and field plantings.

Recreational Operations:

One key development project is planned for 2018.

1. ATV Trails Wildcat Road – A development project has been funded to gravel a 1.2 mile section of ATV trail west of North Settlement Road. Completion of this project will allow for the Wildcat loop to be open more frequently during the Spring-Fall ATV season.

As part of a Department wide realignment all recreation at the State Forest will now be managed by the Bureau of Parks and Recreation and not the Division of Forestry.

Real Estate Management:

1. Land Acquisition – No new parcels were added to the state forest in 2017. The state forest will continue to purchase real estate from willing sellers at the fair market price. However, any potential purchase must meet a series of stringent criteria to assure that limited acquisition dollars are spent on the best parcels for conservation.
2. Power line corridor – A new power transmission line will run along the state forest where it borders Interstate Highway 94. Clearing and construction should both occur in 2018.

Partnership Work:

The state forest works with numerous partners every year to meet mutual goals. Several of these have already been discussed in other more appropriate sections of the work plan. The following are additional partnership events the state forest will participate in during 2016.

1. Cultural Resource Protection – Each year the state forest provides a map of planned timber sales to the Cultural Resources staff of the Ho-Chunk Nation. Preservation staff are provided the opportunity to comment on any sale that could adversely impact important cultural resources.
2. Friends Group – The Black River Forest Trail Foundation is the officially recognized Friends group to the state forest. Each year they plan and provide a candlelight ski, snowshoe, and hike event in late January or early February.
3. Jackson County Correctional Center –The correctional center within the Black River State Forest provides an 8-10 person crew 1-2 days a week to the forest to assist with property operations.
4. Nature Conservancy & Barrens Restoration – Adequate staffing is often a limiting factor in planning for prescribed burning. The state forest has formed a relationship with the Conservancy to address this issue. The Nature Conservancy has available staffing to provide assistance with prescribed burns on high quality barrens areas.
5. Snowmobile grooming and maintenance – The state forest conveyed all snowmobile trail responsibilities to Jackson County starting the winter of 2011. This arrangement has freed up state forest staff to work on other priorities. This relationship will continue in 2018.

Comments:

Comments on the 2018 Black River State Forest Work Plan should be directed to:

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Comments must be received by March 20th, 2018