

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Highlights

Five Year Update on National Priorities
2015-2020

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Introduction

The Statewide Forest Action Plan guides the work of Wisconsin's forestry community – including those in non-profit, private industry or government roles. A lot of work goes in to producing a 10-year plan that, through collective effort, protects and enhances the forest resources that play such a vital role in the social, economic and environmental well-being of our state.

As part of the Forest Action Plan requirements, the State and Private Forestry (S&PF) organization of the U.S. Forest Service asked all states and territories to provide a 2020 review that showcases forestry success stories that have had a meaningful impact in key areas. This review is tied to the 2010-2020 Forest Action Plan. You can review the 2010 Forest Action Plan and the 2015 review on the DNR's website by visiting dnr.wi.gov and searching: *Forest Action Plan*.

The following report highlights the excellent work that has been accomplished in Wisconsin between 2015 and 2020. The report is organized by the three National Priorities set out in the Farm Bill and includes selected success stories that combine informative performance data with a short description of what was accomplished. The interconnected nature of Wisconsin's forestry community means that, in most cases, these successes are not owned by one entity alone but were only possible through the collaboration of many partners.

This is how the report is organized:

NP: [National Priority]



[Success Story Title/Topic]

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme A:
Strategy 1:

[Where each success story fits within Wisconsin's FAP]

NP1: Conserve and Manage Working Forest Landscapes

▶ My Wisconsin Woods and WoodsCamp Partnerships

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme D: Landscape Scale Management

Strategy 7: Increase the functional size of forest blocks by encouraging coordination of management of clusters of forest ownerships.

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme E: Sustainably Managed Forest

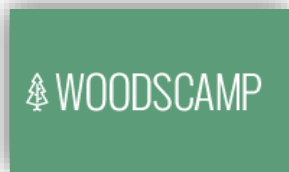
Strategy 9: Increase acreage of privately owned forests managed based on generally accepted forest management practices.

Launched in 2019, My Wisconsin Woods and WoodsCamp are programs focused on increasing landowner engagement throughout the state of Wisconsin, allowing for landowners to manage their land based on their goals.

My Wisconsin Woods offers free services that connect landowners to trusted sources of information, property visits, technical and financial assistance, and events and workshops where you can meet like-minded landowners. It is a partnership of public agencies and private organizations lead by the Aldo Leopold Foundation and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.



Additional partners include the U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and private organizations including the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, American Forest Foundation, and National Wild Turkey Federation.



WoodsCamp is an internet tool that helps private woodland owners in Wisconsin connect with programs, services, and professionals to help them care for their land. Partners include WI DNR, NRCS, U.S. Forest Service, and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



1,831 property visits on **91,497** forested acres



2,224 followers on My Wisconsin Woods Facebook Page

19,000 website hits on MyWisconsinWoods.org



213 requests for free information

Sustainable Management of Non-Industrial Private Forest Lands

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme E: Sustainably Managed Forest

Strategy 9: Increase acreage of privately-owned forests managed based on generally accepted forest management practices.

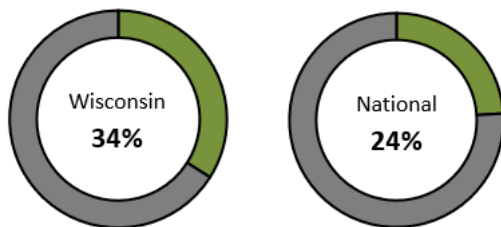
Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme P: Capacity

Strategy 44: Increase the number of private businesses that provide high quality goods and services to effectively and efficiently reach more forest landowners and sustainably manage more forest.

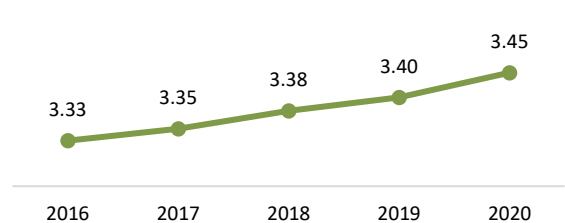
Cooperating Foresters sign a Cooperating Forester Agreement to comply with DNR standards for responsible forestry and provide a variety of services to landowners including developing management plans. The number of cooperating foresters in WI has remained stable over the last 5 years, with 200 participating businesses, including 290 individual Cooperating Foresters.

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) program, a landowner incentive program that encourages sustainable forestry on private woodlands and continues to increase in enrollment and acres managed sustainably.

% of Family Forest Acres with Management Plans



Millions of Acres Enrolled in MFL



Green Tier – In 2016, the Department entered a long-term Results Charter with the Wisconsin Consulting Foresters (WCF) for the purpose of improving forest management practices. All private-sector consulting foresters who are WCF members agree to follow the Green Tier Environmental Results Charter, a voluntary program that recognizes and rewards environmental performance.



Conservation Easements on Private Land

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme A: Forest Land

Strategy 2: Reduce the rate of conversion of forestland to alternative uses.



In Wisconsin, over 800,000 acres of land and water are collectively protected through conservation easements. Since 2015, WI DNR, Gathering Waters – Wisconsin’s alliance for land trusts and The Nature Conservancy have effectively increased conservation on nearly 75,000 acres through the acquisition of conservation easements.

Good Neighbor Authority

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme C: Large Blocks of Forests

Strategy 5: Pursue the conservation and protection of large, unfragmented blocks of forest lands.

Strategy 6: Strengthen collaborative and large-scale planning at the town, county, state and federal levels.

In 2015, the USDA Forest Service and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources entered into a Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) agreement on the Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest (CNNF). The GNA provides an opportunity for the state and others in the forestry community to work with the CNNF to help increase the level of accomplishments on the national forest and see the benefits of increased forest management.



GNA sales to date have an estimated market value of \$8.9 million



GNA supports jobs



GNA supports and maintains healthy forest conditions



Over 14,000 acres of GNA timber sales have been sold



GNA connects federal, state, and county forest managers

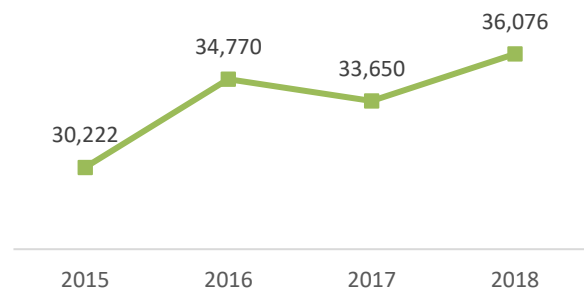
Prescribed Fire

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme F: Improving Forested Communities

Strategy 14: Encourage the use of disturbance mechanisms to maintain diverse forest communities

Prescribed fire allows for revitalized growth of native plants and wildflowers, reduction of non-native and/or invasive plants, and regeneration of fire-dependent species such as oak, jack pine, and red pine. Since 2010, there has been an upward trend in acreage treated with prescribed fire. This is truly a joint effort, with roughly 25,000 acres conducted on state lands and the remainder occurring within the federal, county, private, and non-government organization community.

Acres of treated with prescribed fire
(as tracked by Wisconsin DNR)



NP2: Protect Forests from Harm

Forest Regeneration Monitoring

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme H – Deer

Strategy 17: Increase scientific knowledge needed to understand the economic, ecological and social impacts of various deer populations (and associated deer herbivory) on forests.

Strategy 19: Adapt forest management practices to sustainably manage forests with locally high deer

The WI DNR's Forest Regeneration Monitoring program (FRM) was initiated in 2018 to evaluate regeneration on recently harvested public and private forests across the state. This program provides county-level data, which was requested by resource managers, forest researchers, and the County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs). Several county forests and other state properties have also begun to do more widespread FRM monitoring to better inform management strategies and quantify deer damage impacts. At a large scale, this information can be used to assess impact of deer browse to inform the County Deer Advisory Committees and create Wisconsin-specific regeneration guidelines. At a small scale, data can inform managers whether they have established adequate regeneration of desired species in a given stand and help determine if other practices are necessary to ensure adequate regeneration.

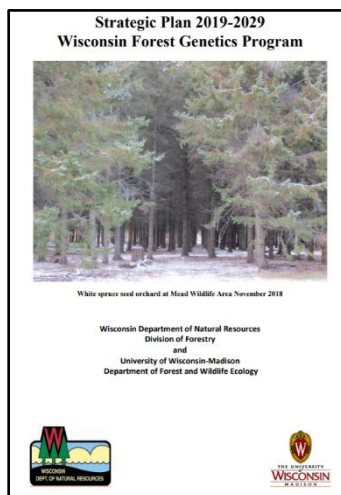


Stump sprouts severely browsed or "hedged" by deer.

Forest Genetics Strategic Plan

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme L: Adaptation

Strategy 29: Attempt to improve the defenses of the forest and increase the resilience of natural systems to future climate change impact



Wisconsin Forest Genetics Program's 2019-2029 Strategic Plan was published in March 2019. The plan was written in collaboration with the Wisconsin DNR, University of Wisconsin – Madison and the USDA – Forest Service, and more recently Minnesota DNR, Michigan DNR and the Hardwood Tree Improvement and Regeneration Center at Purdue University. The plan will guide the development of biologically sound tree improvement practices that leads to increases in forest productivity and forest health in Wisconsin. It also provides the framework for the conservation of forest genetic resources in long-term breeding programs in order to maintain a broad genetic base that can provide future ecological benefits and accommodate potential future changes in climate, pest pressures, forest management practices, or demands for products. Lastly it explores new partnerships and initiatives and allows the program to be adaptive in a dynamic reforestation climate.

Managing EAB in Wisconsin's Forests

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme J: Invasives

Strategy 23: Work to detect new infestations early and respond rapidly to minimize impacts to forests.

Strategy 24: Control and management of existing infestations.

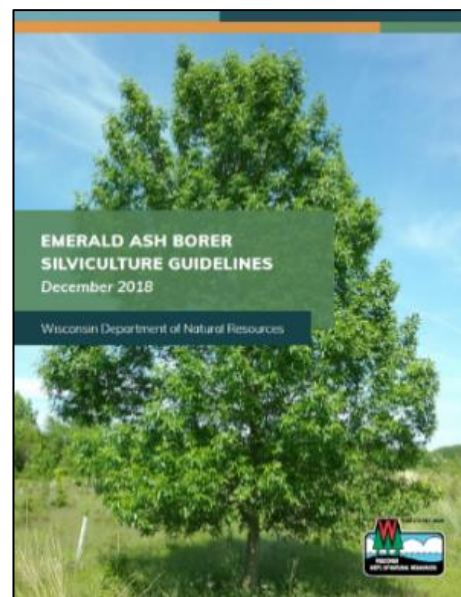
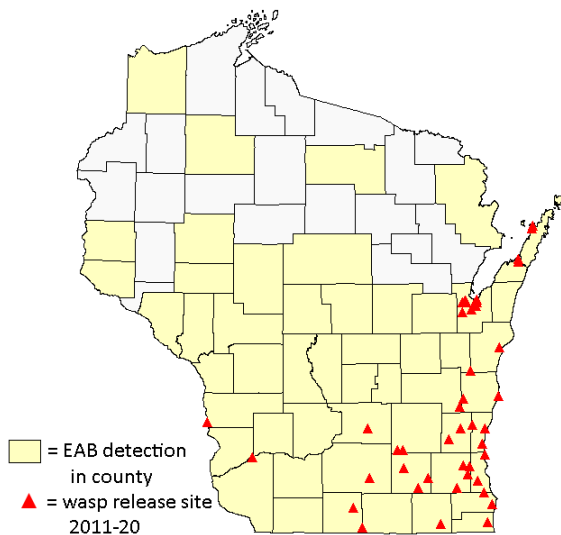
Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*, EAB) is an invasive beetle that is expected to kill more than 99% of susceptible ash trees (*Fraxinus* spp.). Emerald ash borer has now been found in 52 of Wisconsin's 72 counties. There are an estimated 898 million ash trees (over 1" in diameter) in Wisconsin's forestlands and 3.2 million ash trees in Wisconsin's urban and community forests. DNR staff work with private landowners, communities and public land managers to prepare for EAB infestation, reduce EAB spread, and manage impacted forests.

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Biological Control Releases

Tiny wasps that are specific natural enemies of EAB have been released at 37 sites since 2016, in collaboration with USDA APHIS, local governments and DNR-managed parks, forests and wildlife areas. One species, *Tetrastichus planipennisi*, has been recovered from sites in seven southeast Wisconsin counties, indicating that the species is established and helping to reduce EAB populations.

Revised Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Silviculture Guidelines

Stand-level EAB silviculture guidelines have been revised to prepare for and respond to the arrival of EAB. A small team of DNR forestry staff worked with a stakeholder advisory committee that represented forest landowners, the forest industry, foresters, local governments and others to revise the guidelines. Final guidelines were released in 2020.



Fire Prevention Media Kits

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme R: Fire, Safety and Law Enforcement
 Strategy 50: Reduce wildfire ignition and minimize loss from fire.

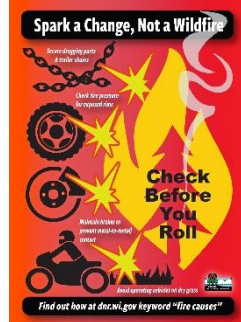
In 2016, WI DNR staff partnered with meteorologists across the state of Wisconsin to increase public awareness of current fire activity. Prior to the start of the spring fire season, media kits are sent to all media outlets with a request to promote fire danger during the weather segments of daily news. Each year, the media kits have a theme and consist of promotional material, literature and talking points to support the key messages. Since creating this partnership, news outlets have been showing the current fire danger map and the fire occurrence map, which has led to greater public awareness of the daily fire danger and the public is making decisions to avoid burning on the days with elevated fire risk.

Fire Weather Awareness



2016-2017

Spark a Change, Not a Wildfire



2018-2019

Smokey's 75th Birthday – Cheers to 75 Years!



2019

FIRE. Keep it Safe – Keep it Clean

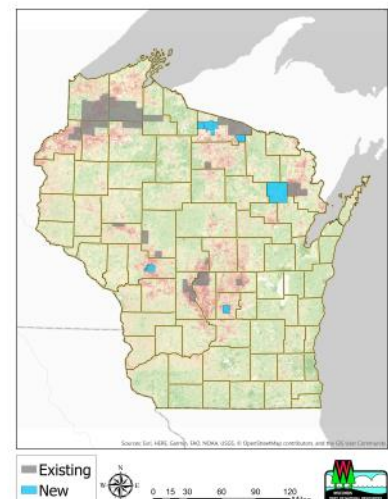


2020-2021

Community Wildfire Protection Plans

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme R: Fire, Safety and Law Enforcement
 Strategy 50: Reduce wildfire ignition and minimize loss from fire.

A Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) identifies and prioritizes areas for hazardous fuel reduction treatments and recommends the types and methods of treatment that will protect one or more at-risk communities and essential infrastructure and recommends measures to reduce structural ignitability throughout the at-risk community. Six new CWPPs were created between 2016-2019, increasing the total of CWPPs in the state to 21. CWPPs are a partnership between town board officials, fire department members, Wisconsin DNR, and other stakeholders (e.g., US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, county emergency management, county forests, homeowner associations, etc.).



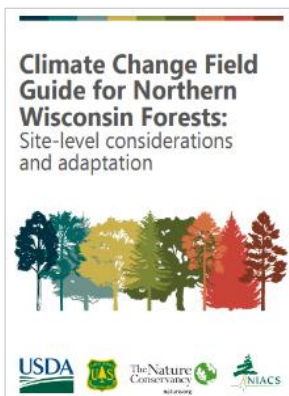
Climate Change Initiatives

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme L: Adaptation

Strategy 28: Seek to understand the probability and severity of future climate change impacts

Since 2015, many there have been a number of initiatives aimed at working on climate change research and planning efforts in adaptation and mitigation.

- The forestry working group, a subset of the Wisconsin Initiative on Climate Change Impacts (WICCI), published “Climate Wisconsin 2050 – Scenarios of a State of Change: Forestry” in 2016.
- Forest ecosystem and vulnerability assessment and the Climate Change Field Guide for Northern Forests: Site Level Considerations and Adaptations was completed in 2019.
- WI DNR and numerous partners have been exploring various aspects of climate change adaptation and mitigation including selecting ash replacement species, assisted migration of tree species and assessing frost depth for extending operability for management that is required to be done when the ground is frozen.
- In October 2019, Gov. Tony Evers signed Executive Order #52, creating a Task Force on Climate Change. The task force is charged with advising the governor in developing a strategy on climate change.



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

EXECUTIVE ORDER #52

Relating to the Creation of the Governor's Task Force on Climate Change

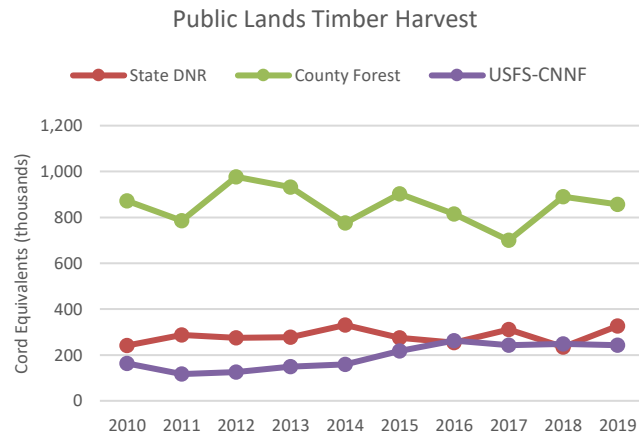
NP3: Enhance Public Benefits from Trees and Forests

Increased Timber Supply Sent to Market

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme O: Markets

Strategy 40: Support existing forest products companies so that they are competitive domestically and internationally.

The volume of wood produced by timber harvesting that has occurred has been steady, predictable and trending slightly upward on Wisconsin's public forests. The Division of Forestry's cooperative efforts with county, state, federal, and private landowners ensure a predictable flow of wood to industry, while sustainably managing forests to provide a variety of ecosystem services.



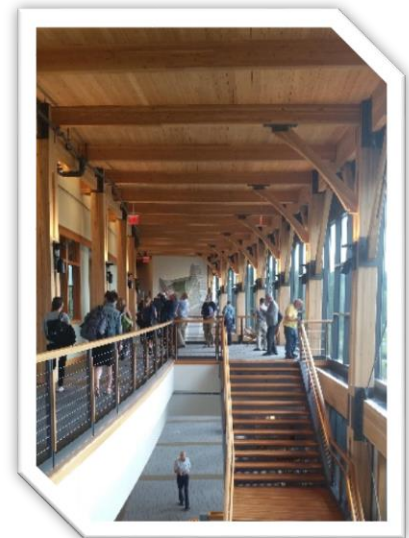
Forest Products Seminar

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme O: Markets

Strategy 40: Support existing forest products companies so that they are competitive domestically and internationally

Strategy 41: Encourage the development of new markets and companies that leverage sustainable (e.g. third-party certified) supply and ecosystem services in emerging markets.

On September 20, 2017, the Forest Products Services Program, in partnership with Forest Stewards Guild, American Institute of Architects, Structural Engineers Association, and the Wisconsin Wood Marketing Team (USDA Forest Service), organized and hosted an educational seminar to expand the use of forest products in building design and construction. Attendees gained perspectives from state and national experts on topics ranging from the environment performance of wood, innovations in wood products and mass timber, tall wood structures and related building codes, urban wood sourcing, and wood products research. Over 70 architects, structural and civil engineers, forest products industry representatives, and researchers participated in the event.



Urban Forest Assessment

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme I: Urban

Strategy 20: Characterize and assess urban and community forests and

Strategy 21: Expand and manage a diverse urban tree canopy cover to provide multiple public benefits.

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme N: Forest Value

Strategy 38: Encourage communities to invest in their urban forest canopy as part of a long-term plan for a community's quality of life.

The WI DNR continues to invest in a comprehensive Urban Forest Assessment (WisUFA) program to report on the condition of Wisconsin's urban forests across ownerships in a statistically sound manner. WisUFA consists of the following components:

- an urban tree canopy (UTC) assessment derived from aerial imagery (made available to almost 600 municipalities in 2018);
- the Wisconsin Community Tree Map (WCTM) including inventories from 119 communities and non-profit organizations throughout the state totaling nearly 800,000 individual tree records (launched in 2017); and
- a plot-based continuous inventory through the Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis Program (UFIA) (started in 2015, with 100-200 new plots established each year since).

These data are used to produce community factsheets, prioritize tree planting efforts and assess urban forest species and structure diversity. It allows staff to assist community and non-profit partners in managing their urban forest resource to provide multiple public benefits, increase resiliency, and communicate the value of urban forests of their residents. Over the past 5 years there have been over 150 requests for WisUFA data, and thousands of visits to the online tree map and interactive canopy map.



County Forest Program – Stewardship Grant Acquisitions

Wisconsin Forest Action Plan Theme E: Sustainably Managed Forest

Strategy 10: Increase acreage of publicly owned forests managed based on generally accepted forest management practices.

Already a vast resource of nearly 2.4 million acres, county forests have steadily increased in area. That growth has accelerated in large part due to county forest eligibility for Knowles – Nelson Stewardship grants for land acquisition. Since 2016, county forest stewardship grants have been awarded that will result in an additional 11,984 acres being enrolled in the County Forest Program. The grants provide money for the purchase of high-quality forest land for forest management, conservation and recreation uses.

