Conservation Corner

*Conservation Corner is a weekly article produced by the Forest County Land &Water Conservation Department. For more information contact Steve Kircher, County Conservationist-Land Information/GIS Director at 715-478-1387 or by e-mail at* *lcc@co.forest.wi.us**.*

 I recently attended a Webinar put on by the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science. They are stationed at Michigan Tech in Houghton, Michigan and study the climate of Northern Wisconsin and the Western UP.

 With our recent cold snap and snowfall, people tend to think Climate Change is a farce. What we just experienced is Weather. Weather plus Time equals Climate. And yes, our Climate is changing, even in the Northwoods. Average temperature has increased by about two degrees since 1950. Precipitation on the other hand has gone down in the Northern half of Wisconsin during the summer and gone up in the Southern half of the State. This is kind of a mystery and a good explanation hasn’t been found yet. Large rain events (3 inches +) have become more frequent and more violent. Our growing seasons in the Northwoods are becoming longer. You may think that would be a good thing, but it’s not necessarily the case. The combination of temperature, precipitation and growing season can cause a ‘threat multiplier’ and cause more stress on our forests, more insect pests, freezing/thawing of buds and more invasive species.

 Here in the Northwoods, Climate change can mean increased drought risks, extreme weather events (remember Mountain last summer), less frozen ground (which actually protects our trees), increased fire risk and a shift in species ranges.

 More information will follow in future Conservation Corner articles. If you’d like to read more, I have a link to the *Climate Change Field Guide for Northern Wisconsin Forests* on our website: forestcountylandandwater.org.