

FOREST COUNTY FORESTRY DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2026

The following is the complete Forest County Forestry Department Annual Work Plan for 2026. The plan functions as a planning and guidance tool to identify proposed projects, allocate workloads, prepare annual budgets, and fulfill the County Forest Administrator Grant requirement for the Department of Natural Resources. Information has been obtained utilizing information provided in the current Fifteen Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the County's Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, and Annual County/DNR Partnership Meeting while taking into consideration current management needs of the County Forest and various recreation programs. The Forest County Forest is the 3rd smallest County Forest in the state comprising 15,284.54 acres.

TIMBER HARVEST

We propose to continue our existing timber management program with our goal of producing sustained yield of forest products to achieve our annual allowable cut while taking into consideration various aspects which may impact or alter management such as wildlife needs, watershed protection, air quality, recreation, aesthetics, as well as many other non-commercial values. We will continue management of contracted timber sales in all phases from establishment and administration through sale closure.

In 2026, Forest County plans to prepare timber sales from approximately 370 acres comprised of the following timber types: Red Pine/Spruce- 50 acres, Red Oak- 33 acres, aspen—78 acres and northern hardwood 209 acres.

All timber sales will be administered and field/mill scaled by Forestry Department staff. Timber sales will be inspected after scaling and/or weekly while sales are active and documented on sale inspection forms. All final timber sale inspections will be performed jointly with DNR staff with appropriate reconnaissance updated. Forest County will cooperate and provide assistance, personnel, and equipment, when possible, for DNR fire prevention and suppression efforts.

Specific information regarding the current status of the timber sale activities may be obtained by contacting the Forest County Forestry Department, Courthouse, Crandon, WI 54520, phone (715) 478-3475.

OTHER FOREST USES

The Forestry Department will issue on an ongoing basis, bough cutting permits to accommodate utilization of balsam fir boughs (\$20/ton). Firewood permits will also be issued (\$20/permit per every 10 cords) on an ongoing basis to utilize dead and fallen trees for firewood. Fees will be charged for both permits and areas will be established in advance for usage.

The Forestry Department will issue permits on an ongoing basis to eligible Chippewa tribal members to exercise their legal gathering rights to harvest lodge poles, bark, firewood, sap, and boughs on County Forest lands. Forest County has received several inquiries in the past years to exercise gathering rights, but to date, have had no formal requests to issue permits.

The Forestry Department in conjunction with the Crandon DNR Ranger Station will coordinate, schedule, and provide a rental service of a county owned tree planter for use by area residents. The planter must be scheduled in advance and a rental fee of \$10/1000 trees is charged for usage with a minimum charge of \$25.

The Forestry Department issues access permits, upon committee approval, to provide access across county property to private landowners.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

The Forestry Department maintains over 40 miles of roads on the County Forest for forestry access as well as wildlife habitat.

Forest County has six main areas throughout the county forest with hunter-walking trails (maps available in the County Forestry Office). These roads are seeded with wildlife trail seed and mowed annually. The roads provide access for timber sales, fire control, and serve as habitat for ruffed grouse, deer, and many non-game species.

Forestry and Recreation Staff maintain and mow the trails from approximately August 1st through September 15th. County Conservation and Wildlife monies are used to offset costs of mowing (approx. \$3000/year). The County Conservation Grant is a 50% cost sharing program with the Department of Natural Resources.

The Forestry Department owns a Bobcat tractor with a Brush Hog mower to perform the work. The purpose of mowing is to reduce unwanted competition from undesirable weed and shrub species that would quickly invade and take over these sites in a few years.

These roads and trails are also gated and bermed with earth or boulders to prevent motor vehicle traffic that could destroy the road system causing rutting and or bmp issues impeaching Forest County Staff from adequately maintaining the roads to certification standards.

These trails provide a variety of recreational opportunities including hunting, sightseeing, hiking, biking, horseback riding, berry picking, etc.

RECREATION

The Forestry Department will operate and maintain Veteran's Memorial Park on Lake Metonga. The park has 65 campsites available May 1 – October 1 annually with an operating budget of approximately \$85,000, with expected revenues of approximately \$140,000 annually.

Forest County administers 409.6 miles of snowmobile trails Countywide. The Forestry Department will apply for funding, administer and disperse a minimum of \$122,880 of funding for snowmobile trail maintenance. Supplemental snowmobile trail funding is also applied for up to a maximum of \$491,520 per year in additional revenue depending on the length of the snowmobile season and amount of work completed by the snowmobile clubs. All trail maintenance will be contracted to five snowmobile clubs.

Forest County maintains 68.5 miles of public ATV trails. The ATV trails, include the Nicolet State Trail (32 miles) located in eastern Forest County, 7.5-mile trail loop that is located on County Forest Land off of County Highway W, the Wolf River State Trail (14.4 miles) located between the city of Crandon, the Forest/Langlade County line and the Valley Trail (6.9 miles) that is located along Hwy 8 between Crandon and Forest/Oneida County line and lastly 5 miles located on Sokaogon Chippewa Tribe owned land. Additionally, Forest County receives 2.8 miles of Troute funded trails. Forest County receives \$64,520 annually to maintain signs, remove brush, mow and groom the trail as necessary to maintain a safe enjoyable trail system. These trail systems are also maintained for winter ATV use, with Forest County receiving \$13,130 annually for the maintenance of these trails.

The Forestry Department also maintains one boat landing on Lake Metonga at Veteran's Memorial Park.

Forest County maintains two cross-country ski trails. Otter Springs Trail is located 3 miles east of Crandon on U.S. Highway 8 and Otter Creek Road. Approved uses on the Otter Creek Trail are skiing, hiking, biking, snowshoeing, and equestrian use. This trail is 8 miles in length winding through a northern hardwood forest and includes a parking area, shelter, and signed trail. The Hemlock Lake Trail is located 5 miles south of Crandon on County Highway w and Hemlock Lake Road. This trail is 3 miles in length winding through a northern hardwood forest and red pine plantation and includes a parking area.

The Forestry Department will contract survey work as necessary to perpetuate monuments and establish boundary lines on the county forest utilizing funding from project loan money and State Forestry Aid account.

The Forest County Department Annual Work Plan 2026 was prepared by Travis Wollenberg, County Forest Administrator, and was approved and adopted at the November 10, 2025 Forestry Committee meeting.

Ron Karl

Forestry & Recreation Chairman