

2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Wisconsin Counties Association



1:00 – 2:00 PM

**Exploring Wisconsin's Forest Sustainability:
Insights from the County Forests Association**



Wisconsin County Forests

The History, Value and Uniqueness of the
County Forest Program in Wisconsin

September 23, 2024

History of Wisconsin Forests

Late 1800s – Early 1900s

- Massive timber operations and land clearing occurring across the State. In 1900, Wisconsin led the nation in timber production but by 1915, the forests were gone.
- Afterwards, attempted conversion to farmland fails in the north ½ of the state.
- Companies and governments try to entice new settlers to WI with little success.
- By 1927, over 4.5 million acres had become tax delinquent at least once, leaving counties cash poor.



Establishment of the Wisconsin County Forest System

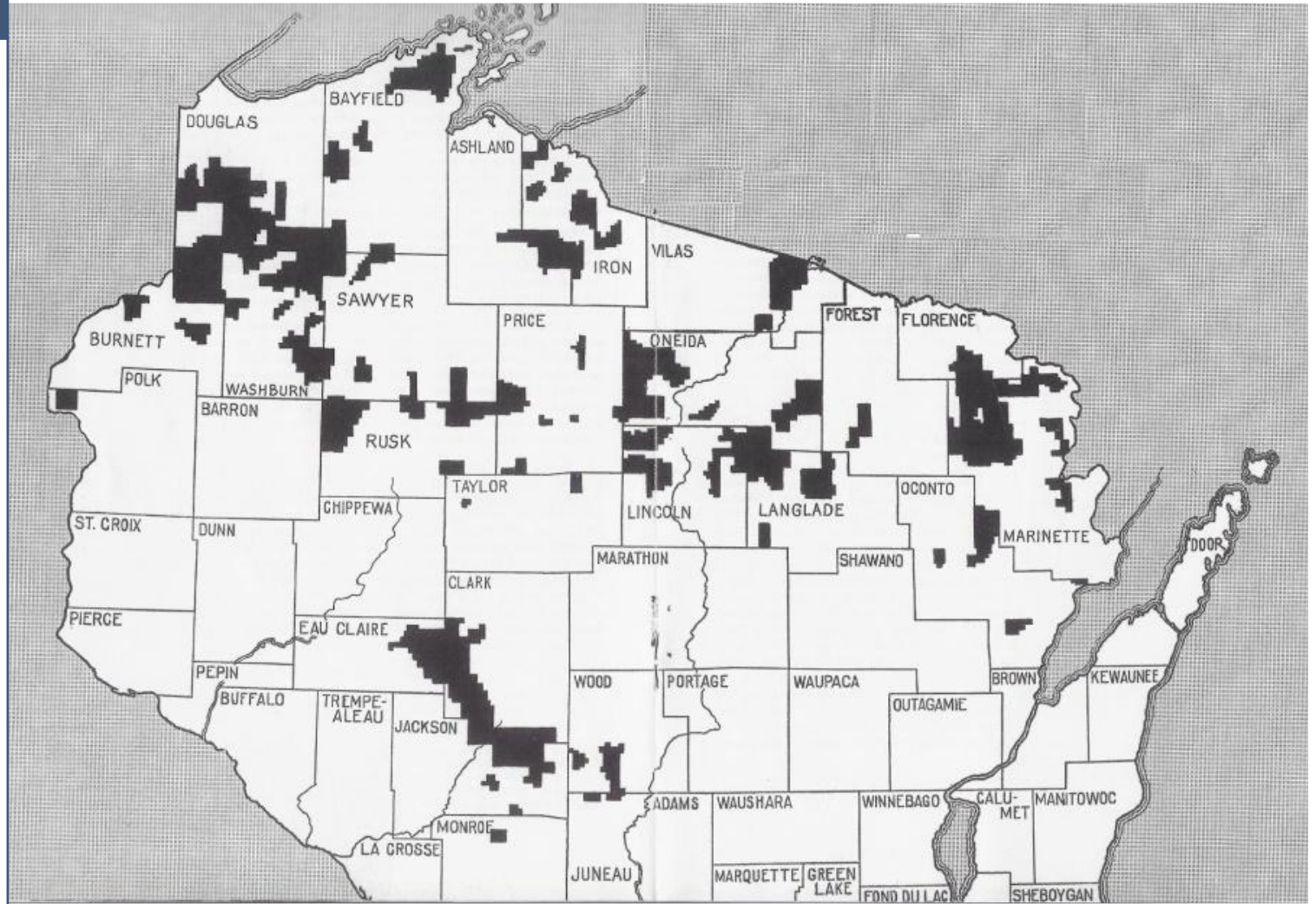


1920s

- Introduction of the Forest Crop Law in 1927 and County Forest Reserve Law in 1929.
- Forest Crop Law allowed the counties to acquire the tax delinquent lands for their own use.
- First County Forest was established in Langlade County in 1928
- Initial wave of 4 counties established county forests for 38,000 acres

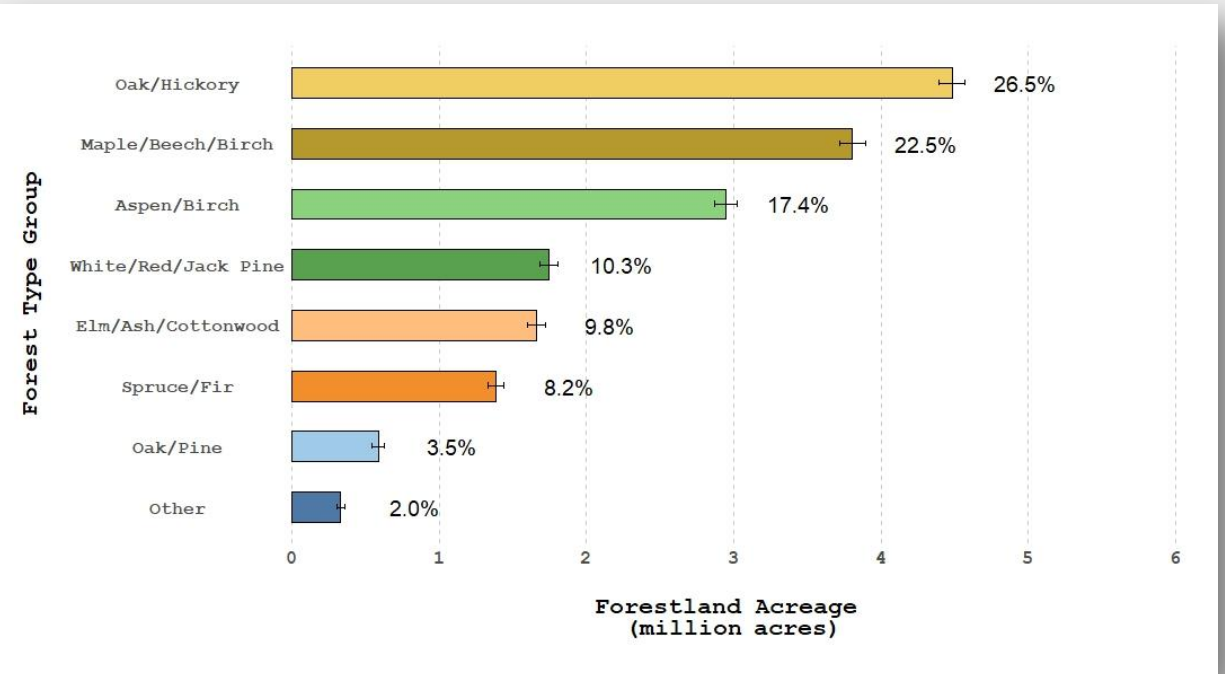
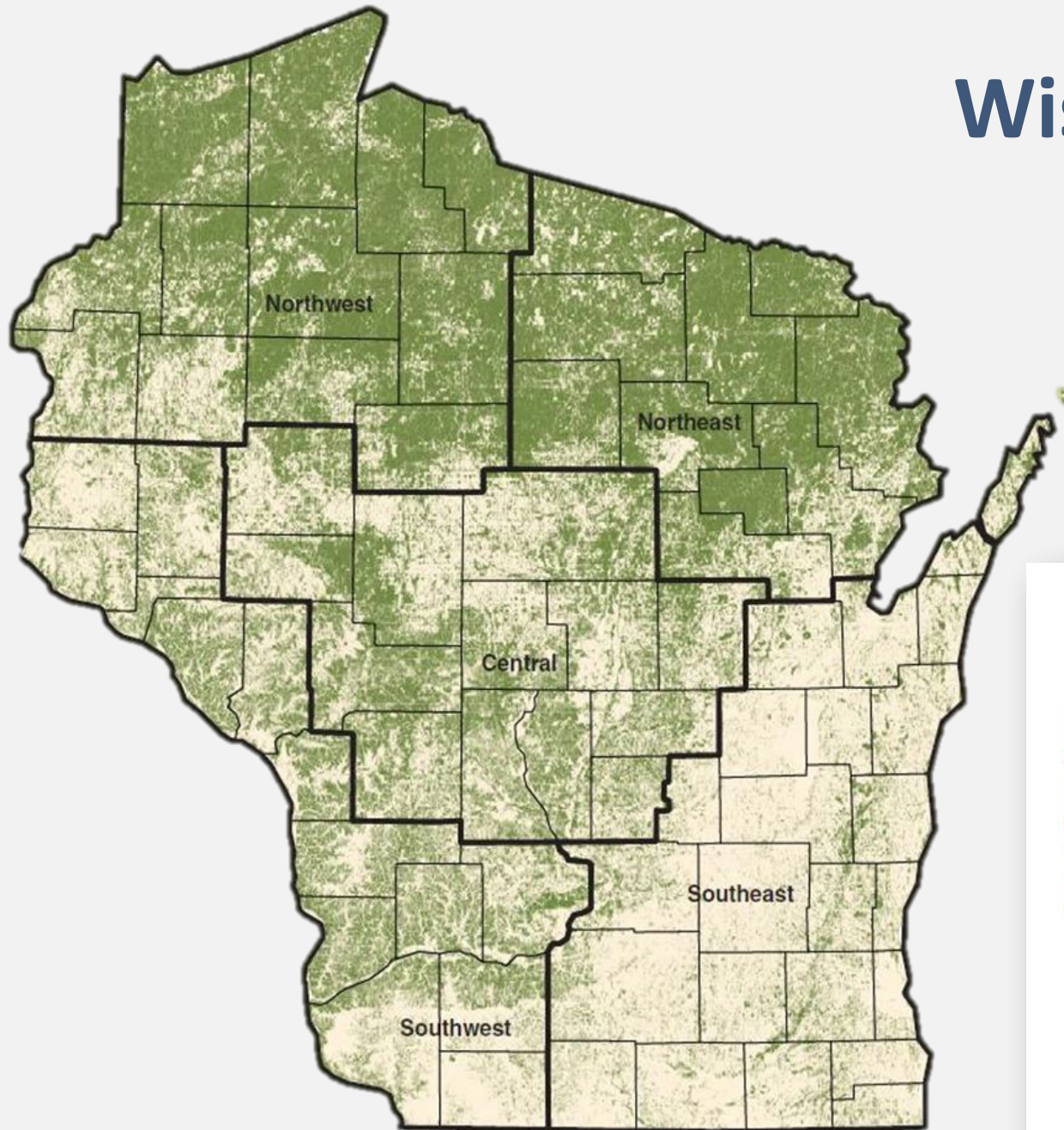
1930s - 1960s

- By 1938, 24 County Forests were established totaling over 1.7 million acres.
- Governor John Reynolds signs the new County Forest Law (WI § 28.10 & 28.11) on September 19, 1963
- Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) was established in 1968 to help the counties with growing pains.

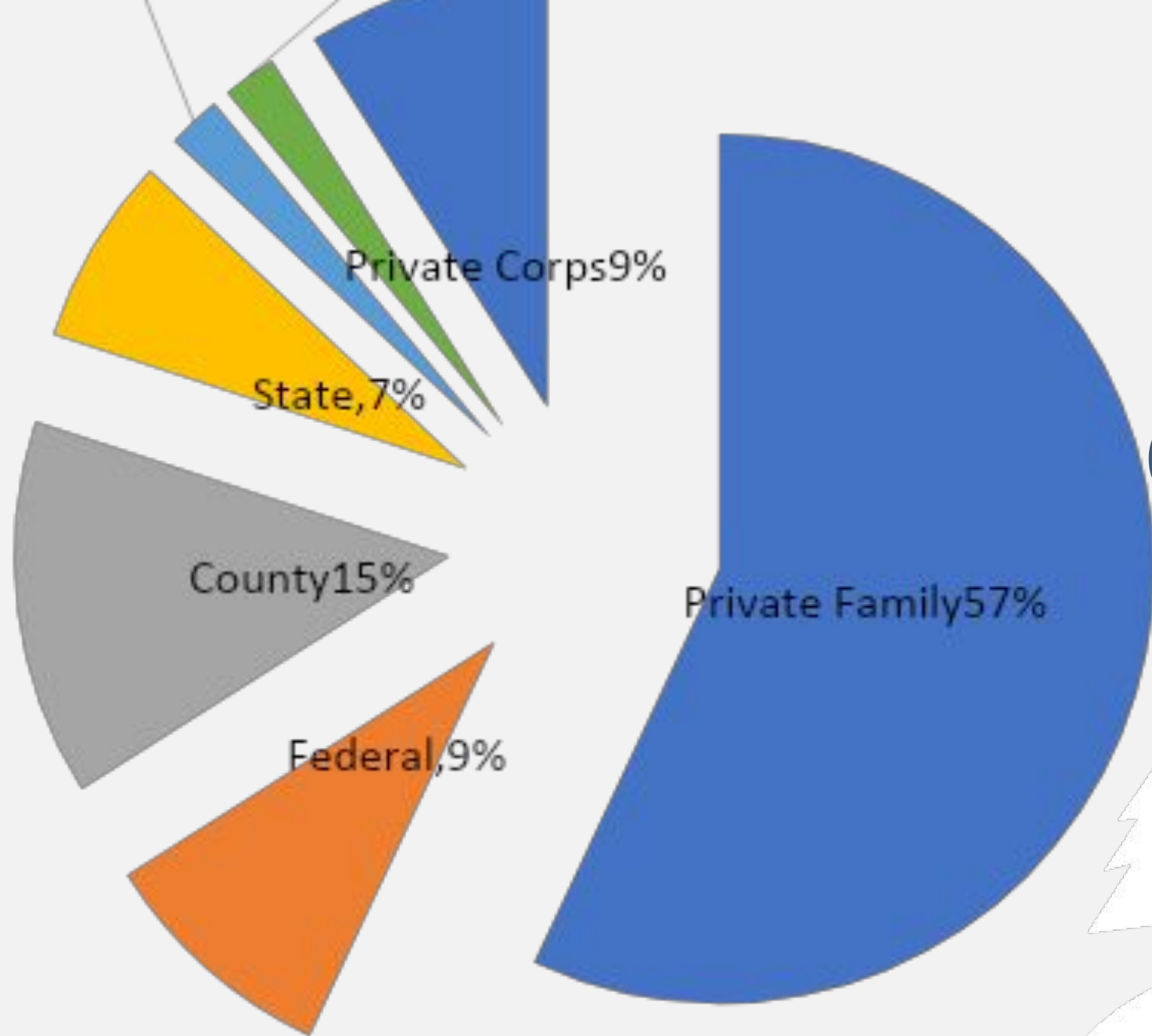


Wisconsin's Forests of Today

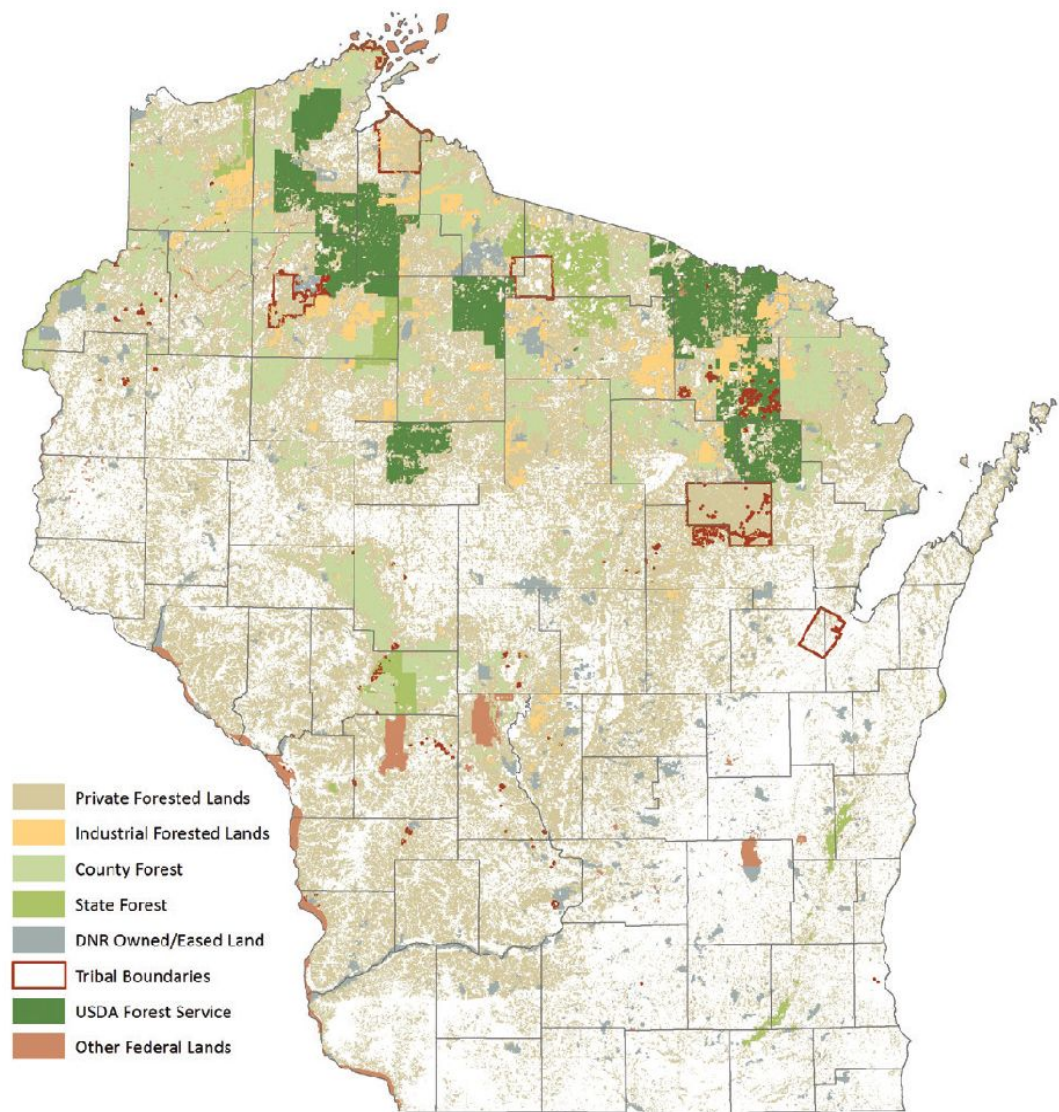
- Forests cover roughly 17 million acres in Wisconsin, about 50% of the State's land base.



Forest Land Ownership



Forest Land Ownership



0 50 Miles

N
Jan 28, 2020 PA
Division of Forestry



State and Local Economic Benefits

Direct Economic Impacts			
	Employment	Output	Value Added
Forestry and Logging	4,528 jobs	\$407.0 million	\$272 million
Pulp and Paper	29,329 jobs	\$17.6 billion	\$4.5 billion
Sawmills and Wood Products	27,435 jobs	\$6.3 billion	\$2.1 billion
Total	61,291 jobs	\$24.4 billion	\$6.8 billion

Every 100 jobs in forestry supports 120 additional jobs in the state

Every million dollars of output from forestry creates \$550,000 in other sectors

State and Local Economic Benefits

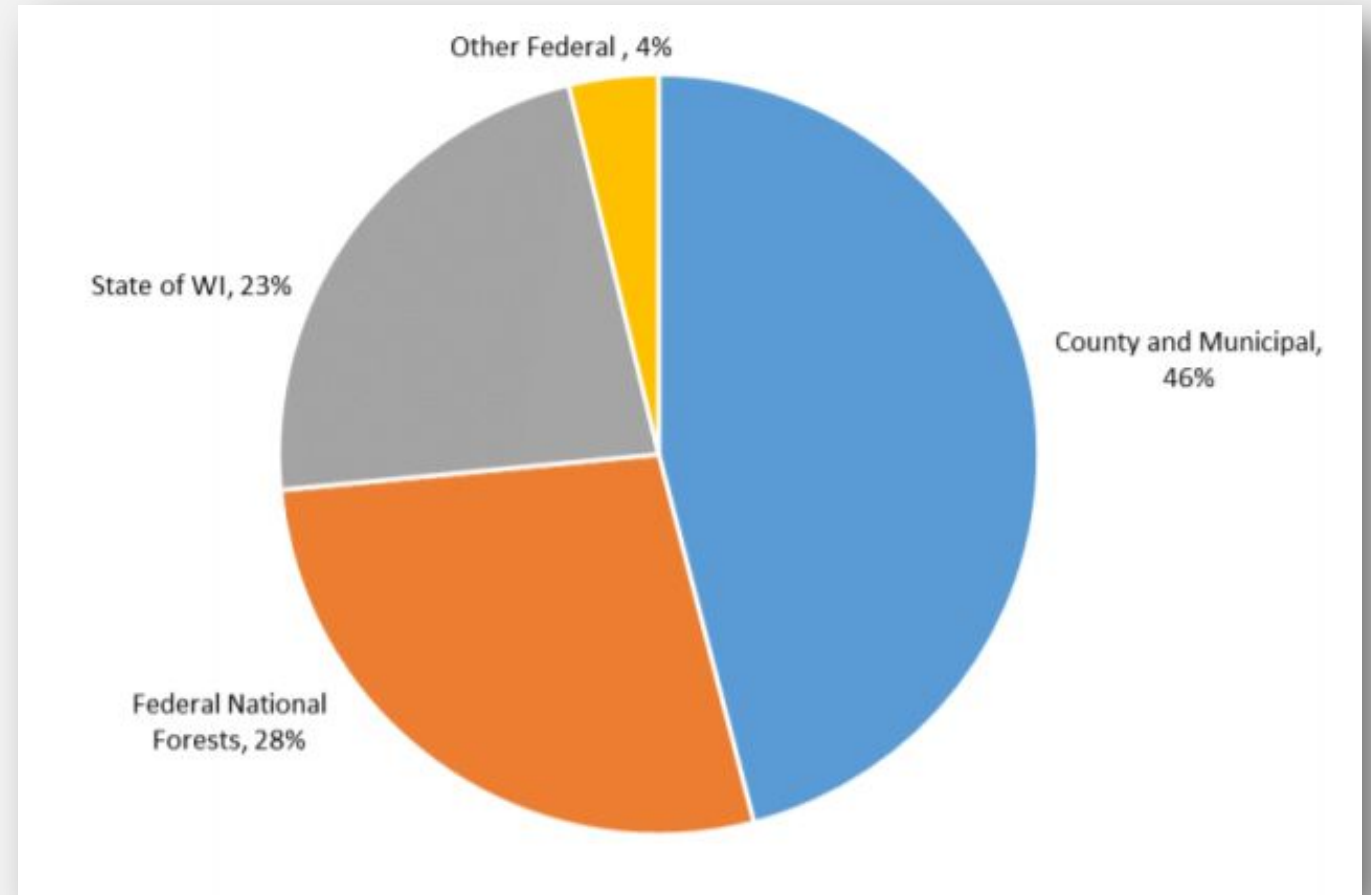
- \$1.3 billion in Foreign Exports
- \$17.05 billion in domestic exports
- Forestry is 2nd in industry output in Wisconsin
- Number 1 paper producing state in the US
- More than 1,200 companies in Wisconsin's forestry sector



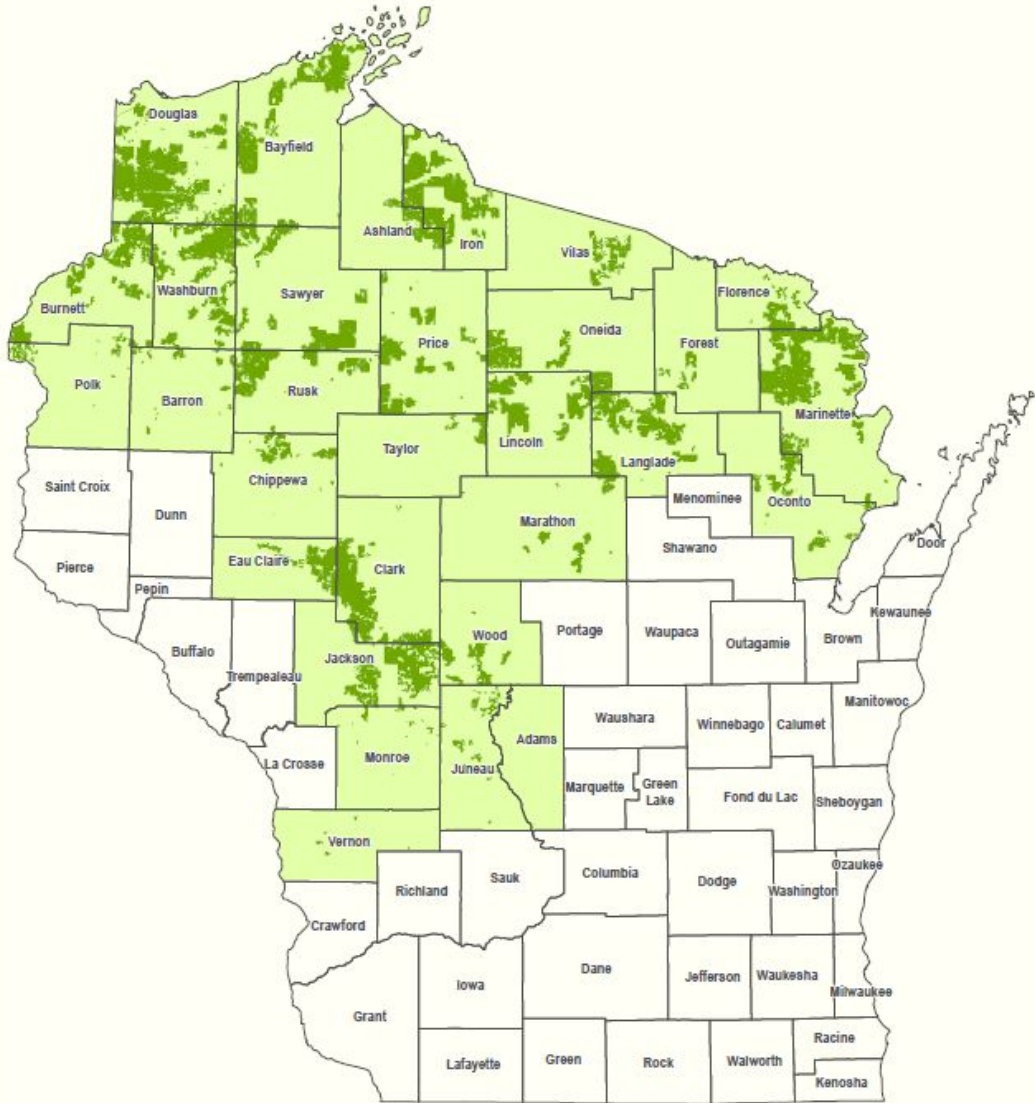
Wisconsin County Forest System - Today

Largest public land base in Wisconsin

- 30 Counties for over 2.4M acres
- Forestry is the #1 employer in 11 counties.
- Forestry is #1 in output in 31 counties statewide.
- Adams County became 30th County Forest in June 2020.



Wisconsin County Forests



County Forest Land
County with County Forest

COUNTY	TOTAL ACRES	COUNTY	TOTAL ACRES
Adams	140.00	Lincoln	100,843.05
Ashland	40,305.19	Marathon	30,194.79
Barron	16,304.69	Marquette	229,938.51
Bayfield	175,749.41	Monroe	7,440.99
Burnett	111,145.92	Oconto	43,766.33
Chippewa	34,653.84	Oneida	82,939.70
Clark	134,702.08	Polk	17,182.82
Douglas	280,144.41	Price	92,302.45
Eau Claire	52,712.10	Rusk	89,323.57
Florence	36,394.80	Sawyer	115,196.50
Forest	14,822.84	Taylor	17,687.92
Iron	175,305.03	Vernon	1,886.90
Jackson	122,492.81	Vilas	41,141.41
Juneau	17,798.79	Washburn	150,196.03
Langlade	130,517.06	Wood	37,826.21
Total: 2,401,316.15			



COUNTY	TOTAL ACRES	COUNTY	TOTAL ACRES
Adams	140*	Lincoln	100,843
Ashland	40,305	Marathon	30,714
Barron	16,304	Marinette	229,779
Bayfield	178,387	Monroe	7,637
Burnett	111,518	Oconto	43,792
Chippewa	34,738	Oneida	82,871
Clark	134,742	Polk	17,183
Douglas	282,908	Price	92,279
Eau Claire	52,702	Rusk	89,997
Florence	37,003	Sawyer	115,199
Forest	15,251	Taylor	17,848
Iron	175,448	Vernon	1,942
Jackson	122,684	Vilas	41,151
Juneau	18,636	Washburn	150,196
Langlade	130,839	Wood	37,823
Total:		2,410,854	

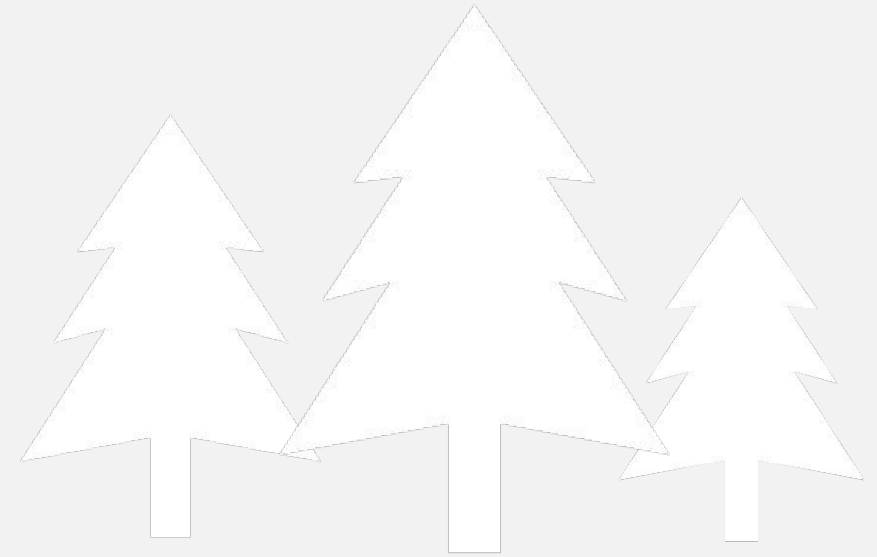


Purpose of Wisconsin's County Forests

§28.11(1) The purpose of this section is to provide the basis for a **permanent program of county forests** and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the county forests for **optimum production of forest products** together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of **multiple-use** to assure **maximum public benefits**; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to **compensate the counties for the public uses**, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will **provide a reasonable revenue to the towns** in which such lands lie.

One of a Kind

- 5.4 million acres of county forest nationwide
 - 95% can be found in Minnesota and Wisconsin
 - 2.8+ million acres in Minnesota, owned by the State
 - **2.4+ million acres in Wisconsin, owned by the counties**
 - 5% in Oregon (78,100), Michigan (62,200), New York (45,000), Washington (28,000), and Pennsylvania (10,000)
- The Wisconsin County Forest System is unique.
 - Largest public landholder
 - County owned lands
 - Dovetail relationship with DNR
 - Robust and active association

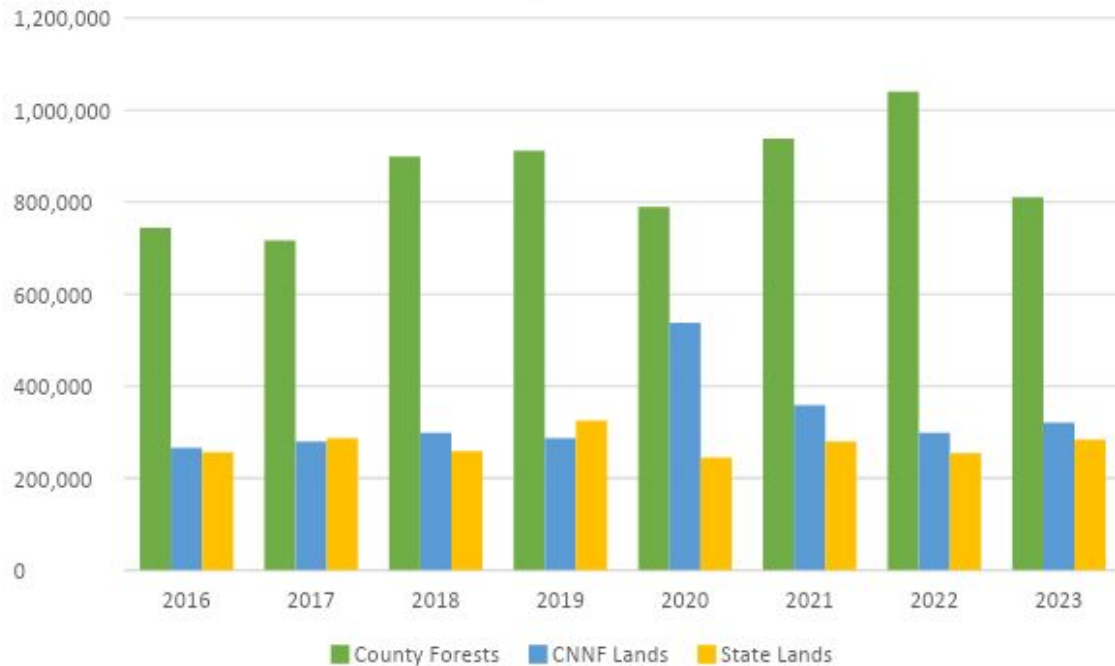


	WISCONSIN	MINNESOTA
Land Base	35 M acres	56 M acres
Forested	16.9 M (47%)	17.6 M (33%)
Federal	1.6 M (10%)	3.4 M (19%)
State	1.5 M (9%)	5.6 M (21%)
County	2.4 M (14%)	2.8 M (18%)
Private	10.4 M (57%)	6.4 M (37%)

Timber Production (2023)

- **\$36.0 M receipts received**
 - Compared to State Lands - \$11.3M
 - +/- \$3.6 M given to Townships
- **809,799 cord equivalents closed out**
 - 563 closed sales for 40,634 acres

Volume of Completed Timber Sales



Value of Completed Timber Sales

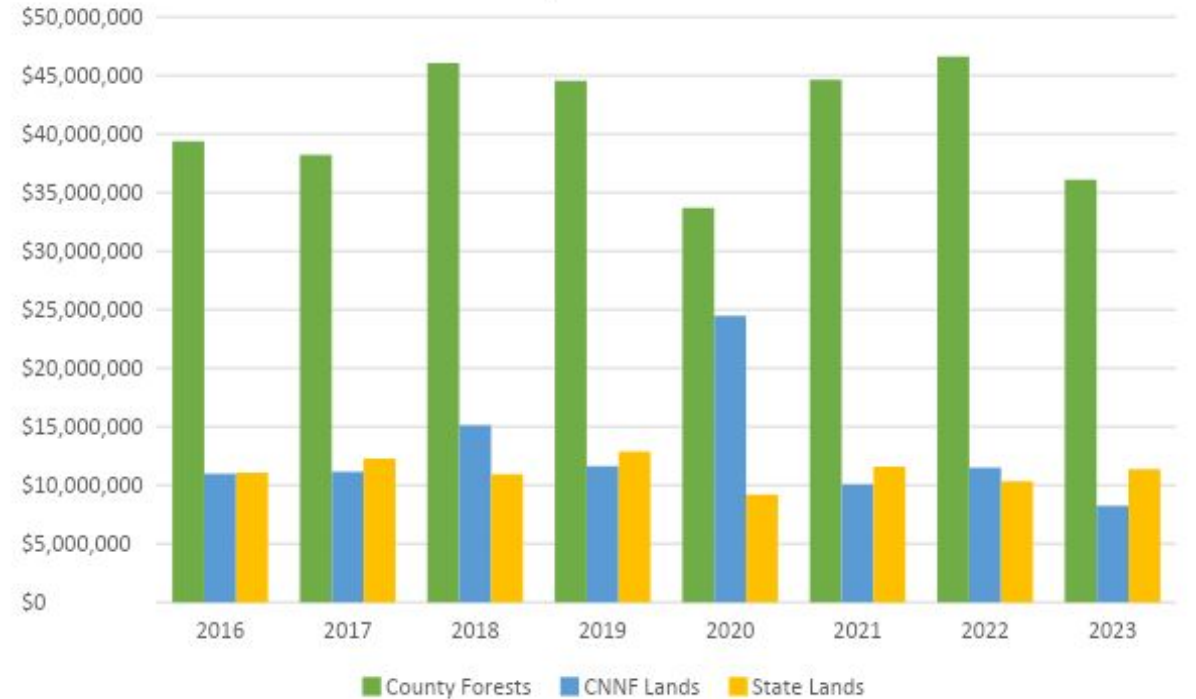


Figure left: Timber sale volume of completed sales on County, State & CNNF owned forest lands.

Figure above: Annual timber sale revenues for County, State, and federally owned forest lands.

Recreation Opportunities

Motorized

- Nearly 1,800 miles of ATV trails (85% of public trails)
- Over 8,400 miles of snowmobile trails
- Nearly 300 constructed boat landings

Non-Motorized

- Ice Age National Scenic Trail crosses 9 county forests
- Over 1,800 miles of hiking, snowshoe, cross-country skiing, horse and bicycle trails
- Over 3300 campsites
- Nearly 200 day use areas with 54 public beaches
- Too many others to mention!

Outdoor tourism in WI depends on County Forests!



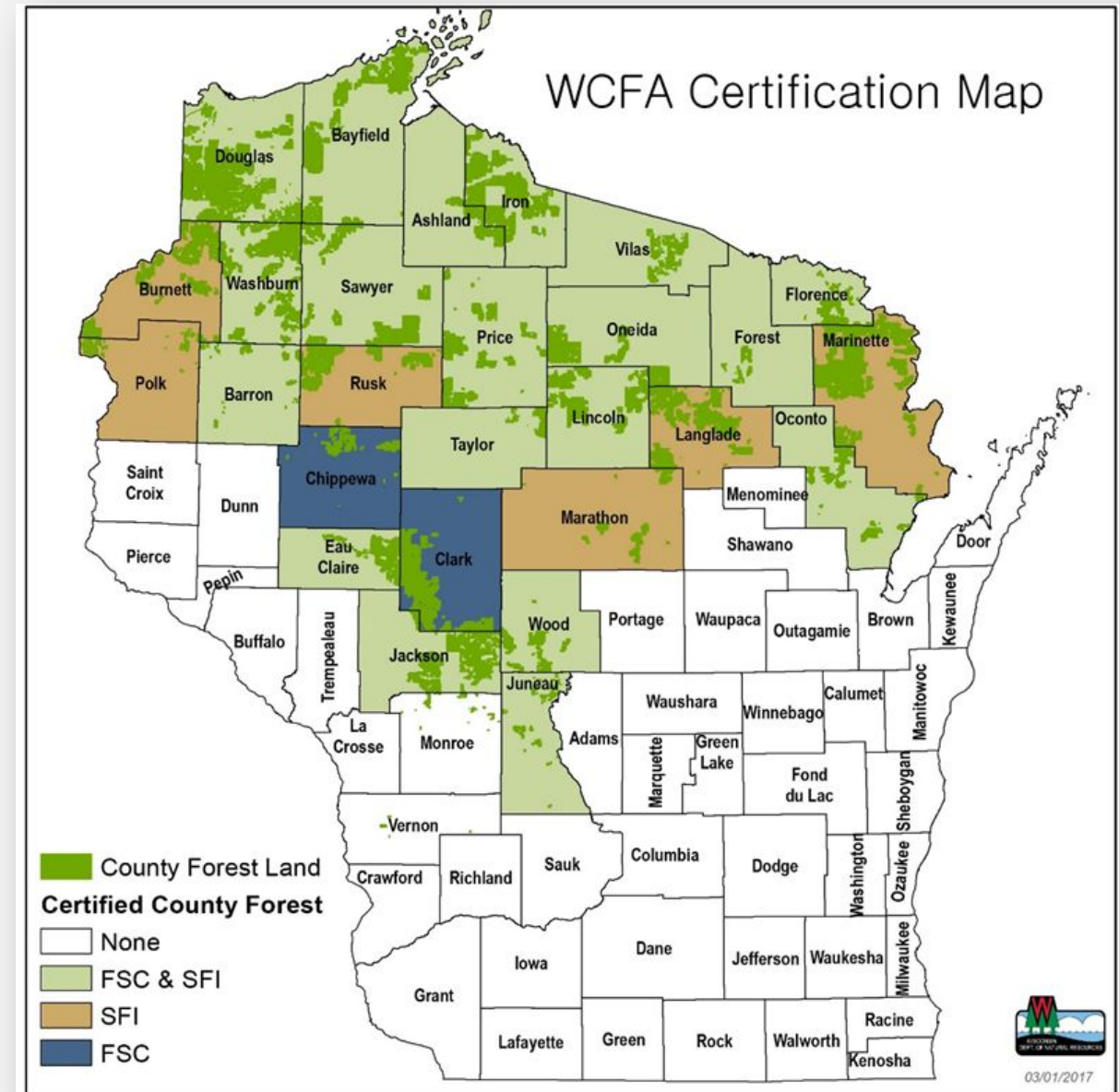
Forest Certification

27 Counties became certified in 2005

- 19 Counties are dual certified.
- 6 Counties are SFI only certified.
- 2 Counties are FSC only certified.
- 3 Counties have chosen not to be certified.
- 2,231,654 acres Under SFI
- 1,791,104 acres Under FSC
- 2,401,135 acres certified (*out of 2,410,854*)
- The DNR holds the certificate for the Counties.
- Back to back clean audits in 2019 & 2020

~~In 2010, the Certification audit results boasted~~
Hot off the presses: CLEAN AUDIT FOR 2024!!
Wisconsin's County Forest Program was "the model"
for public land management in the US.

- Mike Ferrucci



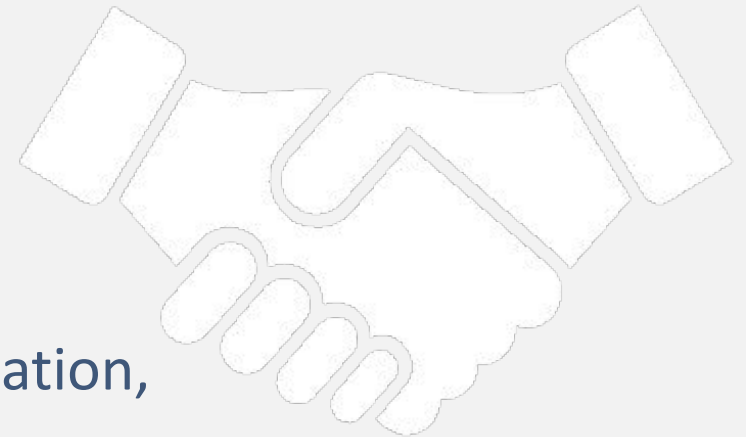
State Responsibility to Compensate Counties

DIRECT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE	
1. Administration Grant Program	\$1.65 Million
2. Variable Acreage Share and Project Loans	\$1.22 Million
3. State Nursery Stock Discount (5 yr avg)	\$85,000
4. Aid to Towns (\$.63/ac)	\$1.515 Million
5. Sustainable Forestry Grant	\$210,000
6. Forest Certification	\$36,000
7. Wildlife Habitat Grant	\$112,200
8. KN Stewardship Grant	\$3 Million
9. County Forest Road Aids	\$320,600
TOTAL	+/- \$8.15 Million/ year

State Responsibility to Compensate Counties

DNR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

- **Department of Natural Resources** provides 46,000 staff hours annually, equivalent to 26 FTEs, dedicated to county forests at no cost to the counties.
- **Liaison Forester** - Every County Forest program has one
 - Main DNR contact for each County
 - Most critical DNR technical role
 - Fundamental to DNR – County relationship
- In addition (with no cost or towards time standards) – **DNR Specialists** – County Forest Specialist, Forest Certification, Health, Ecologist, IT/GIS (WisFIRS), Silviculturists, Forest Products Specialists, Hydrologist, Forest Economist, Wildlife Biologists, etc.



DNR Authority on County Forest Lands

Founded in Law

- Review/approve/deny annual work plans (required to receive Administration Grant)
- Review/approve/deny Comprehensive Land Use 15 Yr Plan
 - Includes approving amendments to Plans
- Approve/deny entry of lands into CFL
- Approve/deny withdrawals of County Forest lands from CFL
- Approve/deny Timber Sale establishments (to allow to be sold)
- Approve/deny Closeout/Completion of Timber Sales
- Ensure Town Stumpage Severance Payments are made (10% to Towns)
- Ensure Counties remain compliant with WI §28.11

Wisconsin County Forests Association

STRUCTURE

- Not for Profit est. 1968
- Board of Directors
- Strategic Plan & Operating Budget
- Committees
- Staff
 - Executive Director
 - Asst. Executive Director
 - Technical Resource Advisor
 - Contract Lobbyist
- Member and grant funded – all 30 County Forests are members

PURPOSE & OBJECTIVES

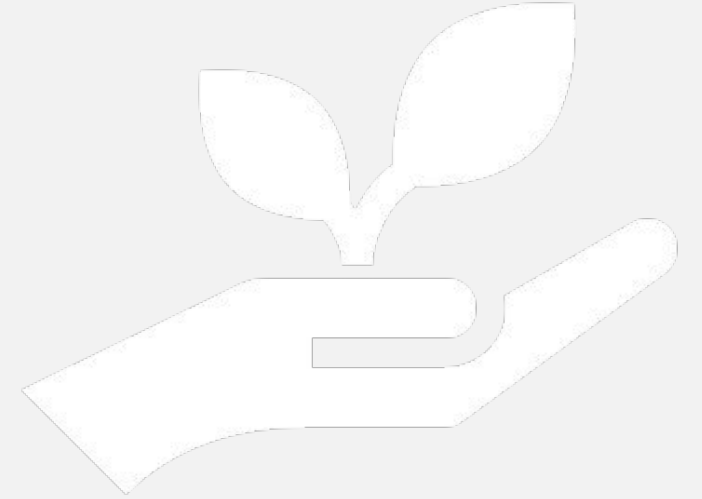
- Provide a forum for the consideration & collaboration of issues, programs, and policies of the county forests. WCFA works with and represents interests of Committees of County Boards responsible for forestry programs in each of its 30 member counties.
- Provide leadership and counsel to Counties.
- Advocate for counties on proposed forestry legislation & matters affecting forestry and forest land use in WI.
- Be a liaison and serve as a representative, working with several agencies and organizations on behalf of the member counties to strengthen forestry and forestry related programs in WI.
 - USFS, DNR, COF, WCA, GLTPA, TFT, FSFC, WYFP, State Legislature
- Be a champion for county forestry and sustainable forestry in WI.

Mission: *The Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long-term forest health and sustainability.*



Current WCFA Priorities

- Upcoming State legislative/ budget cycle
- Wood markets
- Outreach and Education
- Support of county committees (presentations, handouts, etc)
- Forest Certification
- Supporting and participating with other organizations & initiatives
- Continuing education & networking
- General health and financing of WCFA



State Budget Priorities for County Forests

- County Forest programs depend heavily on the DNR for technical and financial assistance, including grants and aids
- The Legislature has supported County Forests most recently with the increase to road aids, increase of the county forest acreage share payments, provided aid to increase the direct sale threshold (Act 128), increase to the county forest administration and sustainable forestry grants
- Upcoming Budget Priorities*
 - Support of DNR Forestry budget and increased funding for grants and aids
 - \$300-500k for County Forest Administrator Grant, Sustainable Forestry Grant
 - Increased technical assistance through time standard hours
 - * No new funding but requires increased spending authority
 - Increase aid for forest transportation/ infrastructure

30
Counties

DNR/CF Relationship

WI §28.11
NR Code
Handbooks
Agreements

WCFA/CF Relationship

Facilitator
Liaison
Lobby
Continuing education
Represent
Negotiator
Conduit
Information sharing
Networking
Technical assistance

DNR

WCFA

**DNR/WCFA
Relationship**

Point of contact
Cooperative support
Conduit of information
Partnership
Stakeholder



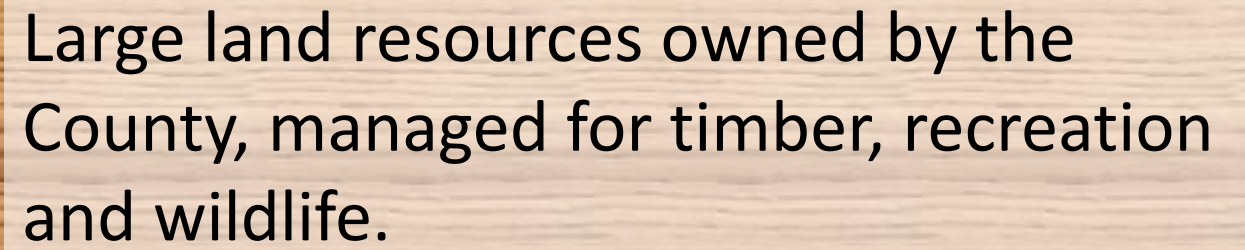
WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

MANAGED IN COOPERATION WITH
WISCONSIN CONSERVATION DEPT.

TIMBER RECREATION WILDLIFE

WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST
REGULATED BY
COUNTY OWNED LAND ORDINANCE

ADOPTED BY WASHBURN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS



149,956 acres
- 27% of county
- 16 of 21 towns



MISSION STATEMENT – WASHBURN COUNTY FOREST

The mission of the Washburn County Forest is to manage, conserve, and protect natural resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. Natural resources, such as those provided by the Washburn County Forest, are the base for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society.

Washburn County Forestry Department

Department Responsibilities:

- Forestry / Timber Sales on County Owned Lands
- Parks, Campgrounds, Recreation Trails
- Forest Protection
- Permits

Economics – Washburn County Forest

- WCF – avg. \$2.50 – 3.5 million per year
- Return \$1.75 – 2.75 million to Capital Fund (roads, highway equipment, department vehicles, building upgrades, etc)
- Timber industry 4th largest employer in Washburn Co.
- Forest products = \$23 billion industry in Wis
- Huge tourism draw and associated revenues

Recreation Programs

- 3 campgrounds – 140 campsites total
- 1 Youth Camp with lodge and 6 cabins
- 244 miles snowmobile trails
- 155 miles winter ATV trails
- 116 miles summer ATV trails
- 21 miles mountain bike
- 32 miles horse
- 2 ski trails
- 2 canoe portage trails
- Rifle range
- Hunting fishing, biking, hiking, bird watching....
Green space for outdoor activities in general.



Forest Management

Sustaining Wisconsin's Forests through Dedicated Management

Wisconsin's 30 County Forests manage over 2.4 million acres, focused on sustaining healthy and productive forests for future generations, while providing essential raw material to the State's forest products industry.



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