

Juneau County Land, Forestry & Parks Department

650 Prairie Street, Mauston, WI 53948

2022 Annual Work Plan



Photo by Ashley Bell

Juneau County
Land, Forestry, Parks & Zoning Committee

Scott Wilhorn (chair)
Jerry Niles
Jim Parrett
Joe Lally
Jack Jasinski

Land, Forestry & Parks Department Personnel

Brian Loyd, Administrator
Pat Cowan, Assistant Administrator
Courtney Curran, Administrative Assistant
Ashley Bell, Forest/Parks Technician
Lynn Martin, Office Clerk

DNR Forester

Rob Anderson, Liaison

JUNEAU COUNTY LAND, FORESTRY & PARKS
2022 WORK PLAN

The following is the proposed 2022 Juneau County Forest Work Plan. The plan is a requirement of the County Forest Administrator Grant Program implemented by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The plan supplements the County Forest 15-year Comprehensive Land Use Plan and focuses on the present needs of the County Forest and Recreation Programs for the current year.

OUR MISSION:

The public resources contributing to the Juneau County Forest and Park system provide a major component for addressing the ecological and socioeconomic needs of the community. The mission of the Juneau County Land, Forestry and Parks Department is to manage, conserve and protect this natural resource base on a sustainable basis for present and future generations. The Department strives to provide quality recreational opportunities for the public while balancing broader State and National concerns for wildlife, endangered resources, water quality, soil conservation, and cultural heritage preservation.

Establish timber sales to meet our allowable cut acres and management objectives

The Juneau County Land, Forestry and Parks Department implements forestry practices that promote sustainability and multiple use of the forest. Timber sales on County lands are the main source of revenue for the County’s Forest and Parks Program and also contribute towards reducing the tax levy. Harvesting timber is also very important for maintaining the health and vigor of the forest resources under County ownership. Protecting the local ecological integrity in the area of a timber harvest is carefully considered before and during sale establishment.

The long-term goal or desired future condition for the Juneau County Forest is to plan for and maintain the current distribution of cover types and age classes. Ensuring that native tree species are promoted and occupy their preferred sites. Productive tree plantations will be rotated and replanted back to valuable pine species that are native and have historically done well. The Department also anticipates that overtime some change in specie distribution will occur naturally due to forest succession or changes in environmental conditions. When encountering a disease or pest infestation, consideration will be given to seed areas to jack pine after harvest to promote a species that benefits wildlife and has seen decline in Juneau County. Below the past, present and projected future conditions by acre of the Juneau County Forest timber types are presented in report # 207.



Forest Structure - Past, Present, Future

Print Date: 1/7/2022
Report 207

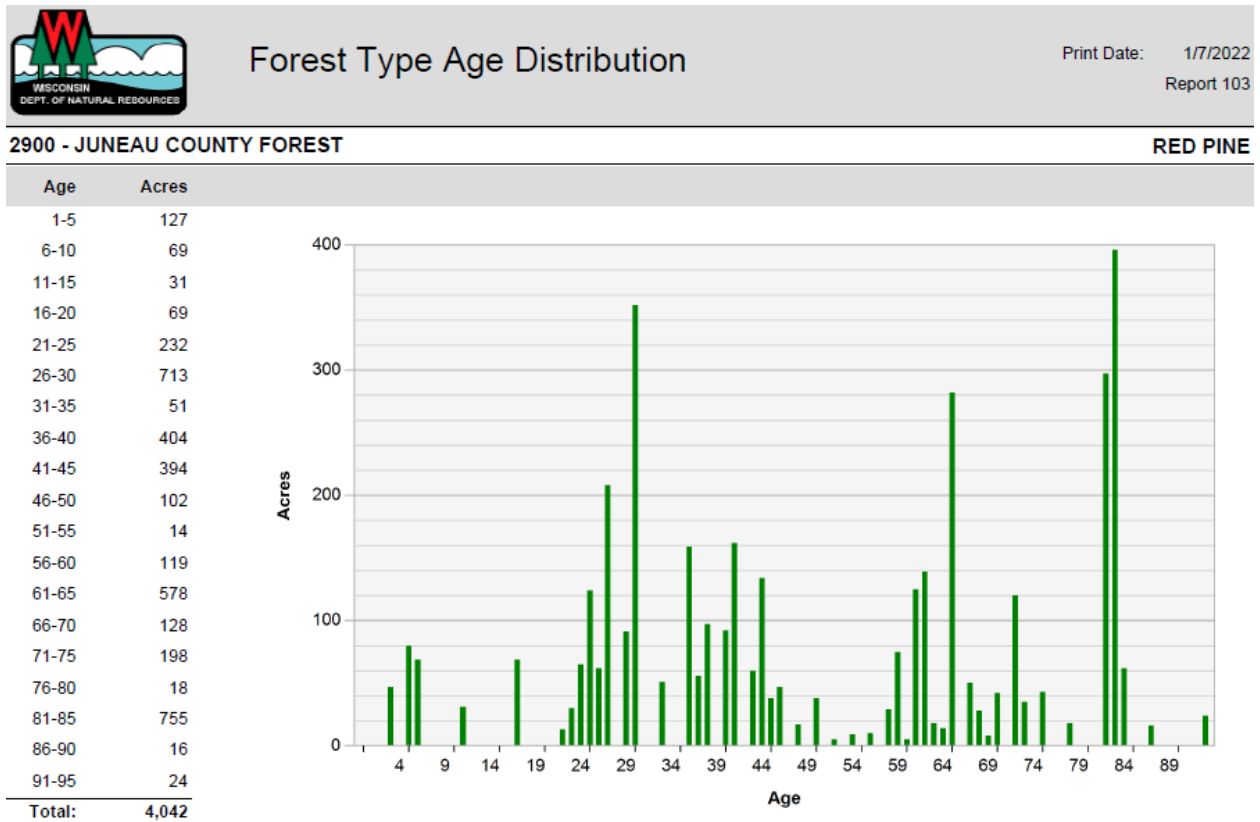
2900 - JUNEAU COUNTY FOREST

Timber Text	Acres Past (1977)	Acres Present (2022)	Acres Future
ASPEN	2,360	1,890	1,890
BOTTOMLAND HARDWOODS	0	971	971
CENTRAL HARDWOODS	0	294	405
JACK PINE	4,348	2,388	2,824
NORTHERN HARDWOODS	0	0	126
OAK	646	1,784	1,460
RED MAPLE	0	237	320
RED PINE	2,396	4,042	4,094
SCRUB OAK	1,791	2,812	2,254
SWAMP HARDWOODS	0	129	129
TAMARACK	0	21	21
WHITE BIRCH	10	0	0
WHITE PINE	0	860	938
Total :	11,551	15,428	15,432
CAMPGROUND	0	174	174
EMERGENT VEGETATION - *OLD CODE, RECODE	0	326	326
EMERGENT WETLAND	0	129	0
FARMLAND	0	5	5
HERBACEOUS VEGETATION - *OLD CODE, RECODE	43	6	6
LOW - GROWING SHRUBS - *OLD CODE, RECODE	8	7	7
LOWLAND BRUSH - *OLD CODE, RECODE	0	42	42
LOWLAND BRUSH - ALDER - *OLD CODE, RECODE	0	14	14
LOWLAND BRUSH -WILLOW - *OLD CODE, RECODE	127	9	9
LOWLAND GRASS - *OLD CODE, RECODE	0	380	380
MARSH - *OLD CODE, RECODE	523	764	764
MINOR STREAM	0	22	22
MOTORIZED VEHICLE TRAIL	0	5	5

PARKING AREA	0	11	11
RECREATIONAL	0	124	124
RIGHT OF WAY	0	281	281
TRUE GRASSES - *OLD CODE, RECODE	1,443	18	14
UPLAND GRASS - *OLD CODE, RECODE	35	22	22
WATER	0	52	52
Total :	2,179	2,391	2,258

Another major consideration in planning forest management on the Juneau County Forest is the rotation age of red pine plantations. There are approximately 3,957 acres of red pine standing on the forest with 20% over 70 years old and another 25% of the acres between 50-70 years old.

Based on our own observation and discussions with colleagues, we suspect overall volume growth in our 75+ year old red pine plantations have slowed, leveled off or even gone into decline. To capture the value of the timber before it is lost we have begun implementing a plan to target these mature stands and then to replant those acres within 2 to 3 years. Report 103 below shows the age distribution of red pine planted on the Juneau County Forest. Pine plantations planted in the 1940s are nearing rotation age.



When looking at which County Forest compartments and stands may need management in the near future we consider timber type, age, species longevity, stand density and forest health. A tool developed by the WI DNR to assist foresters pinpoint eligible stands based on forest reconnaissance data is the Wisconsin Forestry Inventory and Reporting System or WisFIRS. The WisFIRS forest inventory system was used establish a 2022 harvest schedule by selecting out stands across the county forest that are nearing the age where management action or a timber harvest may be needed. The next step is to evaluate the forest stands selected in the harvest schedule to verify the results on the ground and to develop an appropriate action. After the harvest schedule is confirmed and any other forest management, wildlife, or aesthetic needs are considered, we establish multiple timber sales to meet the harvest schedule and management objectives recommended by the inventory system. Below is a list of forest stands evaluated for harvest in 2022.

2022 REGENERATION HARVEST:

COMPARTMENT	STAND	ACRES	FOREST TYPE	TOWNSHIP
9	2	78	83 yr. old Red Pine	Armenia
11	5	67	46 yr. old Oak	Armenia
18	11	79	72 yr. old Oak	Armenia
18	1	40	75 yr. old Red Pine	Armenia
18	22	3	75 yr. Red Pine	Armenia

COUNTY FOREST REGENERATION HARVEST ACRES -- **Total Acres - 267**

2022 THINNING OR IMPROVEMENT CUTTING

COUNTY FOREST THINNING ACRES

COMPARTMENT	STANDS	ACRES	FOREST TYPE	TOWNSHIP
11	4	38	2 nd Thinning Red pine	Armenia
18	4	58	1 st Thinning Red pine	Armenia
27	10	30	1 st Thinning Red pine	Clearfield
27	36	42	1 st Thinning Red pine	Clearfield
28	12	20	1 st Thinning Red pine	Clearfield

Total Thinning Acres – 188

Five timber sales will be established from the harvest and thinning treatments for a total of 455 acres. County and DNR Forestry staff will prepare all timber sales for a competitive bid opening to occur during the Land, Forestry and Parks Committee March meeting.

Monitor harvest activity to ensure timber sales are following contracts, avoiding damage and are paid for in accordance to our policies

Timber sale administration and contract compliance is primarily the responsibility of the Juneau County Forestry staff, with help from DNR Foresters when needed. The Forestry Department will actively seek to ensure compliance with the cutting prescriptions developed for each timber sale when harvest activity is occurring to reduced mistakes and avoid excessive damage.

Juneau County receives 534 hours of forestry assistance from our DNR Liaison Forester and local Forestry Technicians each fiscal year. Currently over 317 hours (59%) of forestry assistance has already been provided in fiscal year 2021-2022. This has mainly been in the area of timber sale establishment, marking, cruising and reconnaissance. Approximately 217 hours remain to be completed before June 30th, 2022. The remaining hours of technical assistance will be dedicated to preparing timber sale cutting notices, updating field reconnaissance and kerner blue butterfly surveys.

To regenerate harvested areas back to fully stocked stands when needed

Reforestation is an important management activity that helps to assure that desirable timber species return to areas that have been harvested. In the fall of 2020 DNR Forestry/Fire Technician Scott Wilhorn and colleagues seeded approximately 25 acres of County Forest to jack pine after it was harvested. Equipment and operators to complete the seeding project were donated by the WI DNR. Additional jack pine seeding in 2022 is probable and will depend on sites being harvested before the fall.

During the spring 2021 planting season 125 acres were replanted to red pine in Armenia Township. The Department received a sustainable forestry grant award worth \$8,150.00 that was put toward tree seedlings in 2021.

In the spring of 2022 our goal is to replant a 79 acre site in Armenia that was harvested two years ago. Approximately 62,000 tree seedlings will be needed for the spring planting effort and the trees this spring will be donated by Alliant Energy who have committed to planting 1 million trees over the next 10 years in their service area (parts of Wisconsin and Iowa). This commitment will save Juneau County approximately \$16,000 in seedling costs in 2022.

Update the Juneau County 15-year County Forest Land Use Plan

During the past year and a half the Department has worked to update the current County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2006-2020) for the next 15-year period (2021-2035). The Plan is the official County Forest authority and provides policy guidance for management, recreation and protection. All of the Plan Chapters have been updated and posted on the Juneau County Forestry Department website for public review. The WI DNR will review the Chapters in the coming weeks for completeness and to offer adjustments. The final Plan is anticipated to be sent to Committee and County Board for approval in February.

To provide for protection of the Juneau County Forest Lands and uphold forest certification standards

In 2022 we will focus on the spread of invasive species on the Juneau County Forest and work to map their locations and concentrations. The more pressing concerns currently are with the spread of Buckthorn on County Forest Land in Necedah and Cutler Township, as well as Black Locust and Spotted Knapweed around the Wilderness Park grounds and surrounding County lands. During the new year we plan to work with our County Forest Liaison and WI DNR partners to develop strategies that will help control and reduce these invasive species before becoming well established.

The Juneau County Forest was audited in late summer of 2020 by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), two of the most widely recognized forest certification systems in North America. The Forestry Department organized a tour of ten different sites across the Juneau County Forest demonstrating different timber harvest, recreation and reforestation projects. The results for Juneau County and 3 other counties involved in the audit was a 2nd consecutive clean sheet for the Wisconsin County Forest Association. There were no negative findings or mandatory corrections reported between the two SFI and FSC auditors. The value of forest certification means that these forests conform to strict environmental, social and economic standards.

Last year 4 different County Forests were audited under some new standards and a few minor areas of improvement were documented. When the final SFI and FSC audit report becomes available the Wisconsin County Forest Association will work with County Forests to improve upon the areas identified in the report to better management.

To ensure that the County Forest Roads are maintained in a safe and useable condition

Juneau County has two permanent primary forest roads, 3.25 miles in Armenia and 2.34 miles in Cutler and Necedah Township. In total, the 5.59 miles of County Forest road qualify for the County Forest Road Aids Program and receive funding to maintain the road surface in an open and safe condition for the public. These roads often serve a variety of uses including forest management, fire protection and recreation. During 2022 we plan to inspect each road in the spring and fall, perform any grading or maintenance needed and mow back the road shoulders before the deer hunting season.

The 3.25 miles of County Forest road in Armenia Township was signed and opened to ATV and UTV riders during the summer of 2021. The Department will continue to monitor the use of the forest road by users to see if any additional maintenance or issues evolve. The Petenwell ATV Club requested use of the forest road and were active in signing the trail.

To oversee the Juneau County's Snowmobile trail system and work closely with the Juneau County Snowmobile Council to provide safe snowmobile riding opportunities

The Juneau County Snowmobile Council helps maintain 247 miles of snowmobile trail in the county. The partnership between the council and Juneau County Land, Forestry and Parks Department will continue to work towards improving the trail system for safety and enjoyment.

In 2021, we applied and received funding for the snowmobile trail maintenance grant totaling \$74,220.00 dollars. This grant will fund trail clearing, grooming, signing and minor bridge repairs throughout the 2021 – 2022 winter snowmobiling season.

The Department applied for and are anticipating a Snowmobile Grant from the WI DNR that will retro-fit a former railroad bridge in the City of Elroy. The railroad bridge deck boards are in poor condition and cannot be used further to connect the snowmobile trail through Elroy. The snowmobile clubs are rerouting the trail for the current snowmobile season to make do. When the grant award is received the Department will bid out a project to retro-fit the bridge with a new snowmobile recreational bridge that will enable use of the original trail once more.

To ensure that Juneau County's park and trail facilities are maintained in a safe, clean, and useable condition

Each year the Juneau County parks and trails provide tremendous opportunities for recreational pursuits and benefits to the local economy. The Department staff will continue to maintain these facilities, and improve on safety and public enjoyment. Among our many park goals will be to work on fixing the heavily travel park roads at Castle Rock and Wilderness. Many reoccurring potholes have begun to plague both park entrances and most heavily traveled roadways. Coordination and help from the Highway Department will hopefully address this concern and lead to a plan to repave park roads in the near future.

At Kennedy Park we look to install a new vault pit toilet near the pavilion, a project that has been on hold. This will be the first major improvement to the park in decades. Another goal for Kennedy Park will be to develop a winter parking area for the public. The need for a nearby winter space to snowshoe, hike and dog walk has been growing and a space for winter parking is not currently available at Kennedy. This improvement would see more people take advantage of the park in the off season.

Developing a canoe/kayak access on the Yellow River has been discussed but not put into development as of yet. County Forest land in Finley that runs to the Yellow River will be assessed for a possible access point in hopes of connecting to the river corridor. Another canoe access is also being investigated in Union Center. The Department will work with Land and Water Conservation and others to help develop a river access in Union Center if possible.

In 2022 there is also a need to continue work in the area of maintaining and improving our current park facilities. Examples of this include replacing old fire rings, replacing boards on picnic tables, painting and repairing signs throughout the campgrounds and parks. These tasks are ongoing and will see more of a focus this year to refurbish and repair infrastructure that has aged.

Summary:

In the New Year, the Department looks forward to building on past successes, continuing the work of sustainable forestry and expanding outdoor recreational opportunities for the public. We also look forward to working with the County Treasurer and Corporation Counsel's Office to return tax delinquent property to the tax roll. And lastly, the Department wishes to recognize and show appreciation to the Land, Forestry and Parks Committee and County Board for all the support and direction it provides.

This report has been respectfully submitted for the LAND, FORESTRY, PARKS AND ZONING COMMITTEE.

Brian Loyd
Juneau County Land, Forestry & Parks Administrator

Scott Wilhorn – Chairperson

Joe Lally

Jack Jasinski

Jerry Niles

Jim Parrett