

BARRON COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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**100 MISSION STATEMENT**

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

Barron County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect and disease outbreaks, and from human threats such as encroachment, over-utilization, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managed for environmental needs including watershed protection, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity. These same resources must also be managed to provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for local and statewide wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable forest management practices.

**105 GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN**

To administer the Barron County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... 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.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning) s. 1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This Barron County Forest plan should complement, and may be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts (e.g. Smart Growth). There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the Barron County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. In an effort to ensure that the values of the Barron County Forest are fully recognized, protected and infused into local planning, the Barron County Forest and Recreation Director and the Barron County Property Committee will participate in and contribute to Barron County’s planning process.

## **110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE**

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Barron County Forest.
2. To provide the reader of this plan with background information regarding the Barron County Forest.

## **115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Law (s 28.11 Wis. Stats.) provides the authority to establish, develop, and manage a permanent County Forest Program. (For the full text of the County Forest Law refer to Chapter 900 (905.1).

## **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Property Committee of the Barron County Board of supervisors (*hereafter referred to as the "committee"*) creates policy for the governing of the Barron County Forest.

### **120.1 ORDINANCES**

The Barron County ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Barron County Forest can be found in Chapter 900 – 905.2.1.

## **125 HISTORY**

### **125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT**

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within county forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the county forest. In return for this aid, the state originally collected a 75 percent severance tax on the products cut on county forests. This was reduced to 50 percent in 1937 and then to 20 percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20 percent of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment from the state to townships is currently \$.30/acre. Additionally, Barron County pays townships with County Forest acreage 30 percent of forest revenues. Stumpage revenues statewide exceed \$18,000,000 annually from county forests. Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin now own approximately two and one third million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

## 125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

Historically much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in over-harvests of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated from the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

## 125.3 BARRON COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

The Barron County Board approved the establishment of a county forest, to be made up largely of county-owned lands in the townships of Bear Lake, Cedar Lake, Doyle, and Maple Plain. The County Board approved the entry of 3,242 acres of forested lands under the Forest Crop Law in 1940 after a presentation by Fred Wilson, DNR's Superintendent of Cooperative Forestry, to the board. Ralph Hill, County Clerk and County Forest Administrator from 1943 to 1970 increased forest acreage from 3,980 acres to nearly 11,000 acres during his terms in office. A County Zoning Ordinance and a County Forest Ordinance were both passed in 1978. As of June 30, 2004, there were 15,685.11 acres in the Barron County Forest.

## 125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Barron County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (WCFA). This Association was incorporated on May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of ten delegates elected from the County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association.

This corporation provides a forum for consideration of issues and policies that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s.28.11 and Chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues.

# 130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST

## 130.1 NATURAL FEATURES

### 130.1.1 Topography

The Barron County Forest, located in the north western part of the state, lies primarily within the Central Plain physiographic region. With small areas in the southwest corner of the county in the Western Upland physiographic region and in the 'Blue Hills' in the Northern Highlands physiographic region of Wisconsin. The topography of the forest and surrounding area has glacial origin. The glaciers eroded hilltops and filled valleys, thus reducing relief. Elevations range from 1,620 feet above sea level in the eastern part of the county to 1,000 feet in the Southwest. The terrain ranges from hilly to gently rolling throughout the forest.

### 130.1.2 Geology and Soils

The soils of Barron County have been derived largely from the weathering of the glacial drift deposits and show a great variation within relatively short distances. Since the glacial period, Barron County's soils have been modified by water action, wind, and the accumulation and incorporation of organic material. A generalized soil map can be found in Chapter 900 – 900.1. Detailed soils information is available in the soil survey for Barron County.

### 130.1.3 Geography

Barron County is 30 miles square with a land area of approximately 576,000 acres. Approximately 30 percent of the land in the county is classified as forest land. The Barron County Forest, contains 15,685.11 acres.

### 130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger ecoregion. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and landtype associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and potential plant communities. The Barron County Forest is encompassed within the Laurentian Mixed Forest province including subsections Forest Transition and North Central Forest. Landtype Associations (LTA's) within the subsections include: Poskin Moraines, Barron Dobie Plains, Sumner Plains, Lake St. Croix Moraines, Birchwood Lakes, Blue Hills, and Meteor Hills. LTA's, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species, living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. The following biological communities are found on the Barron County Forest:

Northern Forest: contains mixed deciduous and coniferous forests found in a distinct climatic zone that occurs north of the tension zone. Commonly found in the following LTA's:

1. Douglas Lake – Modified Till Plain
2. Poskin Moraines
3. Sumner Moraines
4. Argone Plains
5. Chetek Plains
6. Barron-Dobie Plains

all are located in the northern and eastern portions of the County Forest (Map, Chapter 900).

Grassland: characterized by the absence of trees and large shrubs and the dominance of grass and forb species.

Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water.

Aquatic Communities: including springs, ponds, lakes, streams, and rivers.

#### 130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately 86 percent of the Barron County Forest land base is forested. Forested uplands are comprised primarily of mixed hardwood and aspen. Fir-Spruce and Tamarack occupy the forested lowlands. The remainder is classified as non-forested, including types such as open water, wetlands, rights-of-way, grass openings, shrubs, and bogs. The different cover types present on the Barron County Forest are detailed under “Forested Communities” in Chapter 800 - 820.1.

The great majority of the forest is located within the northern tier of Barron County’s Townships. The remaining portions are scattered in small blocks throughout the county. Chapter 900- 900.2 contains maps showing the location of the County Forest.

#### 130.1.6 [Wildlife](#)

The Barron County Forest is habitat for wildlife common to Wisconsin. No formal survey has been conducted to identify or inventory the fauna occurring on the Forest. Numerous species of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, and mammals frequent the forest. Each species, or interacting group of species, do best under different conditions, ranging from recently disturbed forest to old growth forest. A diversity of plant communities is key to providing niches for a variety of wildlife species. For example, two very popular wildlife species found in the forest are the White-tailed Deer and Ruffed Grouse. The aspen forest type is recognized as key habitat for these species and is important in maintaining biological diversity across North America. Longer rotation forest communities, such as uneven-aged northern hardwoods, similarly provide important habitat for other, less well-known species, such as Pileated Woodpeckers or Northern Goshawk.

Permanently sodded, grassy openings within the forest, many originating from old log landings, camps, or old burns are vital components of forest wildlife habitat. Efforts are being made to maintain their quality, such as mowing every third year.

#### 130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities and unique natural features on the Barron County Forest. See Chapter 900 – 900.7 (page 50) for a listing of threatened and endangered species in the Forest.

#### 130.1.8 Water

Barron County Forest has within its boundaries 1,936 acres of water resources involving 11 named lakes and 8.85 miles of streams. Of this total, 6.75 miles are classified as trout streams.

Within the County Forest boundaries there is a variety of fishery resources. Approximately 11 named and 27 unnamed lakes have all or portions of their shoreline under county ownership. In addition, the county owns frontage on 6 named trout streams totaling over 6.75 miles. A complete inventory of the surface water resources in Barron County can be found in Chapter 800 – 840.7.9.

Barron County also has 5 streams totaling 53.75 miles which are classified as Outstanding and/or Exceptional Resource Waters. One of these streams, Rock Creek is within the boundaries of the County Forest.

## 130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

### 130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Barron County. Recreational opportunities with developed facilities include waysides, boat landings, and snowmobile, cross country ski, and hunter walking trails. The county forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, wild life viewing, and sight-seeing.

### 130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and spin-off industries derived from the recreational opportunities on the forest and the forest products produced are vitally important to Barron County's economic well being. These forest product industries are an important part of Barron County's manufacturing base.

### 130.2.3 Roads and Access

All Barron County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. In addition to the town and county roads that access the forest, the county also maintains a number of gated or bermed special use trails and roads that are also available. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation is provided for within the forest. See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access.

### 130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Barron County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

### 130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Barron County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs now and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the Forest in coming years.

a. Greater demands are being placed on the forest by people wishing to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has led to some user conflicts. In particular, the dramatic increase in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATV's) is creating access and user conflicts on the County Forest.

b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forest land is being lost to residential development, and many private forest landowners are uninterested in managing land primarily for timber values.

c. Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid 1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock. A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on Wisconsin's National and State forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the county forests. The county forest system currently has 15 percent of the State's public land base and 24 percent of the aspen resource.

d. Conflict over timber management practices has been rare; however, it is likely that as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions that it will become more frequent. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of sound forest management techniques will be continued.

e. Barron County may experience funding problems as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from state shared revenues and resistance locally to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county government.

f. The ever increasing knowledge base on a wide variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigating measures may have the potential to impede some recreational and forest management activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

The Forest is to be considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

### 130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest is composed of 14 management compartments ranging in size from 120 acres to nearly 2,400 acres. Within the county forest acquisition boundaries approximately 54 percent of the land is county owned. Most of the remaining lands are in small private holdings. A map of these compartments with acquisition boundaries and ownership detail can be found in Chapter 900, 900.3 pages 5 - 19.