# COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN

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REV: 05/21/19

## CHAPTER 200

### GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

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200-2
GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Objectives
1. To comply with and implement the provisions of the Vernon County Forestry Ordinance.
2. To administer and manage the Vernon County Forest in accordance with s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.
3. To cooperate with the Department of Natural Resources and other agencies and organizations in the interest of furthering the optimum management of the forest on a sustainable basis.
4. To provide adequate financial support for the program by using Vernon county designated revenues and appropriations, along with funds available from federal and state sources.
5. To maintain an adequate system of accounts, records and reports for the orderly administration of the Vernon County forest and evaluation of program needs and implementation.
6. To facilitate the administration of the forest by authorizing personnel, equipment and facilities necessary to assist the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Committee and the administrator in carrying out their duties.

ROLES
Vernon County is unique from many counties enrolled in the Wisconsin County Forest Association. Vernon County Forest currently has one County Forest Administrator who resides under the Land and Water Conservation Committee.

The County and the WIS DNR have a mutual interest in administration of the Vernon County Forest. It shall be the policy of the Vernon County Board through the Land and Water Conservation Committee to cooperate with county and WIS DNR personnel in carrying out the program on the county forest. The County/Department roles are further defined in the Public Forest Lands Handbook, 2460.5.
205.1 COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

Powers of the Vernon County Board, relative to the management of Vernon County Forest lands are defined in s.28.11(3) and additional authority may include:

- Annual Budget and Work Plan
- Grants/Loans
- Land acquisitions
- Recreational Issues

205.1.1 Land and Water Conservation Committee

The Vernon County Board of Supervisors assigns the administration of the County Forest to the Land and Water Conservation Committee as detailed below.

1. Preparation of an annual work plan and budget for the ensuing calendar year to be presented for the Vernon County Board's approval.
2. Establishment and maintenance of the facilities necessary to conduct Vernon County forest operations.
3. Negotiations for and acquisition of lands necessary to further the objectives of the Vernon county forest.
4. Review and approval of all proposed recreation projects on the Vernon county forest lands.
5. Cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources on all matters pertaining to natural resource management on the Vernon county forest.
6. Participation in all other activities involved in the execution and administration of forestry operations in the Wisconsin county forest program.
7. Employ personnel to administer and implement the Wisconsin county forest program.
8. Hold committee meetings as necessary to carry out the above duties.

205.1.2 Vernon County Forest Administrator

1. The Vernon County Forest Administrator will act as the agent of the committee and will carry out its orders, as well as execute assignments
outlined in the comprehensive plan, and an annual plan, all within the framework outlined in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats.

2. The Vernon County Forest Administrator will prepare agenda items for and will be present at all pertinent Land and Water Conservation Committee meetings.

3. The Forest Administrator will serve as the Director of the Forestry Department in coordinating the programs of work of staff members and other matters as directed by the Committee.

4. The Forest Administrator will supervise the timber sale program, tree planting, site preparation, timber stand improvement, road and firebreak construction and maintenance, land acquisition, entry and withdrawal of Vernon county forest lands, trespass investigations, and long and short term planning, all within the restrictions of s. 28.11 Wis. Stats.

5. The Vernon County Forest Administrator will execute his duties as outlined in a MOU with the WIS DNR as it pertains to private lands.

205.2 DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

The role of the WIS DNR in the County Forest program is to:

1. Encourage technically sound management of the Vernon County Forest resources.

2. Protect the public rights, benefits and investments in Vernon County Forest lands.

3. Administer state compensation to county for the public rights, benefits and privileges the county forest lands provide as required by s. 28.11-(8) Wis. Stats.

4. Provide County Forest assistance consistent with those identified per the Public Forest Lands Handbook.

205.2.1 Division of Forestry

It is the function of this Division to:
1. Certify and make forest aid payments (variable acreage and project loans) to the county and audit county expenditures of the forestry fund account pursuant to s. 28.11(8)(b), Wis. Stats.

2. Certify and make acreage payments to towns pursuant to s. 28.11(8)(a), Wis. Stats.

3. Maintain and certify County Forest acreage by township, and audit distribution of severance share payments (s. 28.11(9) Wis. Stats.) made annually by the counties.

4. Collect severance share payments of not less than twenty percent of actual stumpage sales value on timber cut from the County Forest pursuant to s. 28.11(9)(a), Wis. Stats.

5. Administer various aids and grants pertaining, but not limited to, the County Forest program.

6. Assist with development and implementation of the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

7. Interpret and administer the laws and regulations set forth by the Legislature and the Natural Resources Board.

8. Review and approve or deny applications for withdrawal and entry of lands into the County Forest Law program.

9. 3-year Audit Programmatic and Financials

205.2.2 Local Office

Field representatives of the Department are available to provide technical advice and assistance to the county in natural resources management. This assistance includes, but is not limited to the following:

205.2.2.1 Forest Management

The forester designated by the Department to serve as liaison to the Committee will provide technical assistance in managing the resources of the county forest. The forester's duties include the following, but not limited to:
1. Attend all Committee meetings and any county board meetings as requested.
2. Assist in establishing, inspecting, and administering timber sales in cooperation with county forest personnel.
3. Process timber sale approvals, cutting notices and reports.
4. Maintain for the Department a record of forest management accomplishments, forms and maps.
5. Assist in preparation of projects, plans and estimates.
6. Provide assistance to the Committee in the preparation of the annual budget, annual work plan and the County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan.
7. Assist in County Forest timber theft and larceny investigations.
8. Organize and prepare minutes of annual partnership meeting as required in the Public Forest Lands Handbook.

205.2.2.2 Other DNR Program Functions
1. Fire Management - Maintain a system of communications, equipment, and trained personnel to prevent and suppress forest fires, assist with prescribed burns; and enforce forest fire related laws.
2. Forest Pest Control - Provide technical services for prevention, detection and suppression of forest pests in the district.
3. Wildlife Management - Conduct surveys of wildlife populations, habitat, and public use. Wildlife personnel use this information when providing technical assistance on long term ecosystem planning as well as wildlife habitat management, habitat improvement and wildlife health. Attend committee meetings as requested.
4. Fisheries Management - Maintain the quality of the fishery resource in the waters of the Forest to produce a balanced return to the angler, consistent with sound management principles.
5. Law Enforcement - Enforce state natural resource laws and regulations and assist in the enforcement of county and federal natural resource laws and ordinances.
6. Environmental Protection - Enforce and provide technical assistance in matters related to water and shore land management, pollution detection and waste disposal.

7. Endangered Resources - Provide technical expertise on rare, threatened or endangered species and natural community surveys, identification and management. Assist other DNR functions and the county in identifying local and landscape level issues.

210 COOPERATION
To meet the obligation of Vernon county to the public in accordance with s.28.11, it is in the best interest of Vernon County to cooperate with public agencies, non-profit organizations, tribal nations, and others.

215 FINANCIAL SUPPORT
An annual budget shall be prepared by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Committee. This budget shall contain county, state, private, non-profit and federal funds needed to carry out the forestry, park and recreation program on the Vernon County forest.

215.1 REVENUE FROM OPERATIONS
The following procedure will apply in crediting income from the Vernon County forest: Income derived from the Vernon county forest activities is split up into numerous accounts based on activity of origin. Money coming in will be respectively deposited to such accounts as seen by Accounts Manager of the Land and Water Conservation Department of Vernon County. More specific information about accounts can be seen below in subsections.

215.1.1 Timber Sale Revenue
All timber sale revenue is deposited into three separate accounts. The largest percentage - 70% of timber sale revenue is deposited into Vernon County’s general Timbersales account. The second largest percentage - 20% will be deposited into an account labeled “Timber
sales Due State”. This fund is utilized when a timbersale is closed or is no longer active to repay project loan debts. The final 10% of total timbersale revenue labeled “Timbersales Due Towns” this account is utilized to pay our local townships in lieu of property tax. All of these accounts comprise 100% of timbersale revenue.

215.1.2 Parks and Recreation Revenue

Parks and Recreation revenue is fairly complex and is separate from most Vernon County Forest activities. These funds are utilized by the Vernon County Parks Administrator as overseen by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Committee. These accounts are as delegated by the Accounts Manager of Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Department. Revenue received from camping activities are deposited in respective accounts based off of their origin. Such accounts are labeled “Sidie Camping”, “Esofea Camping”, “Donations” (iron ranger and otherwise), “shelters”, and “other” (soda, firewood etc.).

215.1.3 Other Vernon County Forest Revenue

Other Vernon County Forest revenue such as grant monies, firewood cutting permits, and donations are deposited into respective accounts as overseen by the Vernon County Land and Water Conservation Committee and the Accounts Manager. Grants received by the Vernon County Forest Administrator for activities directly related to only forestry activities will be deposited into a “forest sustainability” account once reimbursed. Grants received by the Vernon County Forest Administrator not directly related to Vernon county forest activities such as recreation-based grants or otherwise are deposited into respective accounts based on grant title. Firewood cutting permits are deposited into “forest sustainability” account. Donations received from outside sources are deposited into respective accounts as designated by the donor or the Accounts Manager and the Vernon County land and Water Conservation Committee.

215.2 OUTSIDE SOURCES OF REVENUE
215.2.1 State Funds

In addition to other state funds that may subsequently become available for county use, the following state funding sources will be used where appropriate in administration of the Forest:

1. **Variable Acreage Share Loan** (s. 28.11(8)(b)1., Wis. Stats.). The county may apply for variable acreage share loans in the amount of up to fifty cents per acre of regular entry County Forest land by December 31. Payment is made to the county on or before March 31st of each year and deposited in the State Forest Aid fund. Application is made by County Board Resolution.

2. **Project loans** (s. 28.11(8)(b)2., Wis. Stats.) are available to undertake acquisition and development projects of an "economically productive nature". Fish and game projects or recreation projects do not qualify. Application is made by County Board Resolution.

3. **County Forest Administration Grant Program** (s. 28.11-(5m) Wis. Stats). Annual grants are available to fund up to 50% of the salary and fringe benefits of a professional forester in the position of county forest administrator or assistant county forest administration. Benefits may not exceed 40% of salary. Application is made by County Board resolution with payment by April 15th of each year.

4. **Sustainable County Forest Grants.** Annual grants made for short-term unanticipated projects that promote sustainable forestry. Details are contained in s. NR 47.75, Wisconsin Administrative Code.

5. **County Fish And Game Projects** s. 23.09(12), Wis. Stats.).

6. **Wildlife Habitat Development Grant** (s. 23.09(17m), Wis.Stats).

7. **County Forest Road Aids** funds are available for each designated mile of County Forest road. The certification is done on a biannual basis.

8. **Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program:** Grants available to assist Counties in purchasing additional lands to add to the County Forest land base, usually funded at 50% of the purchase price.
215.2.2 Federal funds and programs

In addition to others that may be available, the following funds and programs will be used where practical:

1. Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LAWCON) This fund provides up to 50% matching grants for the acquisition, development and renovation of local parks.
3. Pittman-Robertson fund. This fund provides for wildlife management and habitat improvement.
4. Sport Fish Restoration (Dingell-Johnson) fund. This fund provides financing for fish management projects administered by DNR.
5. Federal Endangered Species fund. This fund provides cost sharing and grants for surveys, monitoring and management programs that conserve a threatened or endangered species. Contact the DNR Natural Heritage Conservation for information.

215.2.3 Other Funds

Other potential funding sources are groups such as Ducks Unlimited, Ruffed Grouse Society, Trout Unlimited, Whitetails Unlimited, National Wild Turkey Federation, local sportsman's clubs, service organizations, etc.

The Committee will consider donations, endowments and other gifts, whether real estate, equipment or cash. The county corporation counsel may be consulted to ascertain whether such gifts benefit the county.

215.3 COUNTY EXPENDITURES

All purchases and expenditures shall comply with County purchasing policy, and state statutes.
COUNTY RECORDS

The Vernon County Forest Administrator will keep concise and orderly records and accounts of all revenue received, expenditures incurred and accomplishments resulting from the operations of the forestry department. A job description, time and expense report, and training record will be kept on each employee.

220.1 ACCOUNTS

220.1.1 State Aid Forestry Account

Variable acreage share loans (s. 28.11(8)(b)1., Wis. Stats.), project loan funds (s. 28.11(8)(b)(2)Wis. Stats.), and sustainable forestry grants (s. 28.11(5r), Wis. Stats., and s. NR 47.75, Wis. Adm. Code) that are distributed by the WIS DNR are deposited in this account. Expenditures of variable acreage share funds from this account are restricted to the purchase, development, preservation and maintenance of the Vernon county forest. Expenditure of project loan funds are governed by the conditions of project approval. Sustainable Forestry grants from this account must be spent specific to the approved project. Revenue received from the sale of equipment purchased with State Aid Account money must be redeposited in the State Aid Account.

220.1.2 Other County Forest Accounts

All other expenditures and income are delegated into accounts as needed. Items pertaining to forestry but not pertaining directly to timber sale revenue or expenditures are delegated into the forestry stewardship fund. Within this account there are line items referring to activity of origin.

220.1.3 Account Numbers

Revenue Accounts

52.00000.1000 County Forest General Property Taxes
52.00000.1203 County Forest Transfer In
52.00000.3000 County Forest Application of Prior Year Revenue
52.00000.4002 County Forest State Funding
52.00000.4170 County Forest Project Loan
57.00000.1000 Forest Stewardship General Property Taxes
57.00000.4002 Forest Stewardship State Funding
57.00000.6134 Forest Stewardship Other Revenues
63.00000.1000 Parks and Forestry Development General Property Taxes
63.00000.4002 Parks and Forestry Development State Funding
63.00000.4104 Parks and Forestry Development Performance Bonds
63.00000.4133 Parks and Forestry Development Grants
63.00000.4149 Parks and Forestry Development Timber Sales
63.00000.4173 Parks and Forestry Development Forestry Grant
63.00000.4401 Parks and Forestry Development Donations
63.00000.6134 Parks and Forestry Development Other Revenues
63.60016.4133 Parks and Forestry Development Grants
63.60016.4170 Parks and Forestry Development Project Loan

**Expenditure Accounts**
52.00000.2001 County Forest Transfers Out
52.00000.5111 County Forest Salaries Regular
52.00000.5145 County Forest Flex Spending Fee
52.00000.5151 County Forest FICA-County Share
52.00000.5152 County Forest Retirement-County Share
52.00000.5153 County Forest Health Ins.-County Share
52.00000.5154 County Forest Life Ins.-County Share
52.00000.5329 County Forest Dues & Subscriptions
52.00000.5556 County Forest Project Loan Expenditures
52.00000.5998 County Forest Bills no line Detail
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57.00000.5335 Forest Stewardship Meals
57.00000.5336 Forest Stewardship Lodging
57.00000.5350 Forest Stewardship Materials and Supplies
57.00000.5352 Forest Stewardship Safety Supplies
57.00000.5365 Forest Stewardship Small Tools
57.00000.5472 Forest Stewardship Fuel-Gas
57.00000.5998 Forest Stewardship Bills no line Detail
63.00000.5001 Parks and Forestry Development Transfer Out
63.00000.5164 Parks and Forestry Development State Funds Expenditure
63.00000.5165 Parks and Forestry Development Grant Expenditures
63.00000.5166 Parks and Forestry Development Forestry Grant
63.00000.5167 Parks and Forestry Development Donation Expenditures
63.00000.5998 Parks and Forestry Development Bills no line Detail
63.60016.5552 Parks and Forestry Development Dime an Acre Project

220.2 TIMBER SALES

220.2.1 Active Files
Active timber sale files (hardcopy or e-copy), at a minimum, should contain or reference the following items:

1. Timber sale cutting notice and report (Form 2460-1)
2. Timber sale narrative (Form 2460-1A)
3. Contract and all addendums
4. Timber sale map
5. Ledger account of scale
6. Timber sale inspection journal / notes
7. Pertinent correspondence
8. Liability insurance
9. FISTA training
10. Financial assurance (performance bonds, ILC, etc…)
11. Field scale sheets
12. Lock box tickets (if applicable)

220.2.2 Closed Files
Once sales have been completed and audited by DNR only the following items need to be maintained in the file as a permanent record:

1. Timber sale notice and cutting report
2. Contract and addendums
3. Timber sale map
4. Pertinent correspondence
5. Financial ledger/summary

225 PERSONNEL
The Vernon County Conservationist shall have authorization to organize the workload of the Vernon County forestry department employees and contractors. Personnel of the Vernon County forestry department will be governed by the work policies as set forth by Vernon county, and their respective work policies.

225.1 COUNTY FOREST STAFF
The following positions are essential for the operation of the Forest: Vernon County Forest Administrator, Vernon County Parks Administrator, and seasonal employees.

225.2 HIRING PERSONNEL
Vernon County shall not discriminate because of race, creed, age, sex, color, national origin, religious or political opinions or affiliations, marital status, sexual orientation, disabled or handicapped persons, ancestry, use of lawful products, arrest or convictions, honesty testing, pregnancy or childbirth, genetic testing, or military service membership in its procedures of employment, upgrading, recruitment, promotions, layoff, terminations, rate of pay or any
other benefit. No position advertisement, job description or classification may be written in such manner as to discriminate against any potential employee.

New Positions
A New Position is one that does not currently exist and is not currently budgeted for. To create a new position, the procedure is as follows:

1. Department Head will contact the Personnel Department to develop a job description.
2. The Personnel Coordinator will do a salary survey to determine what pay grade the position should be assigned to.
3. The Personnel Coordinator will develop a fiscal impact sheet that includes, but is not necessarily limited to,
   a. Rates at which the new employee can be hired: new hires may be paid between Step 0 and Step 5
   b. Annual salary
   c. WRS and FICA costs
   d. % FTE and hours expected per pay period
   e. Average cost of benefits
4. The Department Head will complete:
   a. Request for Addition of Staff
   b. Resolution Template

All additions to staff must be approved by the home committee, the personnel committee and the county board.

Vacancy Replacement
A Vacancy is a position that currently exists and is currently budgeted for.

1. The Department Head will contact the Personnel Department for a copy of the job description. Any minor modifications may be made to the description at this time.
2. The Department Head will complete the Vacancy Request form. If the request fits within the current parameters of the department budget, the Department Head will get approval
from the Home Committee. If there is no Home Committee, then the Department Head will get approval from the Personnel Committee.

3. If the request to fill a vacancy results in an increase to the budget, then the Department Head will:
   a. Complete a Vacancy Request Form.
   b. Receive approval to fill the vacancy from the Home Committee

4. Upon approval by the appropriate Committee, the Department Head will forward the signed paperwork to the Personnel Department to start the recruiting process.

**Recruiting**

When the County determines that a vacancy or new position should be filled, it is the policy of Vernon County to normally advertise the availability of open positions. If advertised, vacancies will be advertised as appropriate (for example, County newspapers, professional publications and websites, and posted on Courthouse bulletin boards, Job Service, Western Wisconsin Technical College Placement Office, and/or University Wisconsin La Crosse Placement Office). Special qualifications for any particular position will be established by the Department Head and Personnel Department prior to initiating any recruitment efforts.

The Department Head and Personnel will review applications and select candidates to be interviewed, based on qualifications and experiences as advertised. All applications for employment are to remain in the Personnel Department prior to and following interviews to insure confidentiality and for record keeping purposes.

Eligible candidates for vacancies will be interviewed by the hiring manager. The hiring manager will determine what other staff, if any, will be part of an interview panel.

The hiring manager and/or Department Head may make an offer of employment to an eligible candidate within the approved parameters.

Some candidates may be required to have a physical examination and/or drug screen prior to start date, but after an offer of employment has been made.

All candidates will be asked to sign and complete a background investigation form as part
of the new hire package. Background checks will be done in accordance with state and federal laws.

Upon acceptance of position, and successful completion of any medical exam and background check, the Department Head will contact the Personnel Department who will contact the individual and schedule an orientation.

**Department Head Vacancy**

In the event of a Department Head vacancy, the supervising committee will meet with the Personnel Coordinator to perform the following tasks:

- Review and revise job description as necessary.
- Determine salary range for the position.
- Consider internal promotions.
- Identify key sources for advertising and recruiting opportunities.
- Determine who will make up the interview panel and decide on appropriate questions.

The supervising committee and Personnel Coordinator will review the applications and select candidates to be interviewed. This meeting shall be in closed session.

All interviews will be conducted in closed session. In the event there is no supervising committee, the Personnel Committee will be the hiring committee.

225.3 **OTHER SOURCES OF LABOR**

The Vernon County Forest Administrator will consider supplemental resources that can be utilized on the forest, following county procurement policy.

225.4 **TRAINING**

The Vernon County Forester Administrator will be responsible for scheduling and providing appropriate training to keep staff current with safety requirements, BMP’s, silviculture, pesticides, new technologies, and other training appropriate to manage the
Vernon County Forest. A training record will be retained for each employee identifying the course name, content and date of attendance.

230  EQUIPMENT
All equipment and supplies will be coordinated by the Vernon County Forest Administrator. The Vernon Forest Administrator will be responsible for locating equipment, considering the most economical alternatives of buying, borrowing, renting or constructing. The Vernon Forest Administrator will also be responsible for maintaining an inventory, to be updated annually, of equipment under his/her jurisdiction. Any Vernon County forestry department employee may purchase equipment and supplies when he / she has prior approval from the Vernon Forest Administrator or the Vernon County Conservationist. Equipment shall be purchased by competitive bidding as per county policy.

1. Tree planting machines (green and yellow)
2. Forestry Vehicle (currently 2013 dodge)
3. Painting equipment (Paint, paint guns, etc.)
4. Planting equipment (Bars, Bags, etc.)
5. Forestry Mower
6. 45 hp 4wd tractor
7. Skid-steer (occasional use)
8. WIS DNR issued iPad
9. Specialized forestry equipment (clinometer, borer, compass, prisms)
10. Fire Control equipment (pumps, backpacks, PPE, drip-torch)
11. Other equipment

230.1 FACILITIES
Maintenance of the facilities is assigned to the Vernon Forest Administrator and includes the following:

1. Office space – Provided at 220 Airport Road, Viroqua Wi USDA Service Center.
2. Forestry shop building – located on Park Road in our Esofea Compartment near County Hwy “B”. A cold storage garage is used to store vehicles and equipment used in operation of the Vernon County forest and parks program. The garage is also used for construction, maintenance and repair of Vernon County Forest equipment and facilities.


4. Sidie Hollow Park - Located in the Town of Jefferson and Town of Franklin, includes change rooms, toilets, tables, grills, and camping. Also included is the parks shop housing equipment utilized by Vernon County parks maintenance crew and Vernon County Parks Administrator.

5. Jersey Valley Park - Located in the Town of Christiana includes change rooms, toilets, tables, and grills.

6. Duck Egg County Forest – Located in Town of Jefferson, includes bathrooms, and tables.

7. Kooyumjian County Forest – Located in Town of Union, includes tables and parking areas.