

Langlade County along with the other 28 counties that own county forest have provided recreational opportunities for resident and non-resident taxpayers since 1929. In 1929, Langlade County was the first county to enroll acreage in the county forest program.

Back in the early stages of development of the county forest, forest users were primarily loggers, hunters, fishermen and trappers. The increased logging activity on the county forests over the next seven decades resulted in hundreds of miles of logging roads being constructed. These roads are used by logging crews to access tracts of timber to harvest and haul to the countless timber-based industries that are so vital to Wisconsin's economy. The newly constructed roads have been shared with many recreational groups so they can enjoy their sports. The upkeep of these roads/trails are funded by loggers, recreational groups and county tax dollars. The road density on so many of the county forests is sufficient for logging activities and recreational needs. Additional roads could result in more pressure being put on forest ecosystems, and this is of great concern to us, the resource managers.

As time went on, the list of user groups now included snowmobilers, campers, hikers, cross-country skiers, bikers, bird watchers, horseback riders, dog sledders and ATVs. Historically, these groups have respected each others sport and have shared many of the same trails without much conflict. However, as more people from larger cities are moving north and purchasing recreational property, more pressure is put on public land from the many user groups.

Our task, as resource managers of the county forest, is to try and satisfy these recreational needs of increasing numbers of visitors that frequent the county forest on a daily basis. As you can imagine, this is a balancing act. We still need to ensure that the forest resource including all plants and animals that inhabit the forest are not negatively impacted by the increase of human activity. We also must follow guidelines set forth in our 15 year comprehensive land use plan, which are developed to ensure that the forest is managed in a sustainable fashion giving full recognition to the concept of multiple uses to assure maximum public benefit.

We also need to ensure that recreational activities do not conflict with the county's very active timber sale program. Our county has surpassed the 1 million dollar mark in revenue for the past nine years. This year we should surpass \$2 million in scaled timber. This revenue is essential for our county's budget especially in a time of state imposed tax freezes and increased operational costs that the counties face.

It is quite evident that the counties play a major role in recreational opportunities available for people to enjoy throughout the State. We have enjoyed our working relationship with the State in trying to meet the recreational challenges that face us on a daily basis. We hope that when developing your State trails policy that the counties continue to be directly involved.

Steven M. Jackson  
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