

# Wisconsin School Forest Program

## 2013 Annual Report



### Wisconsin School Forest Vision:

*Every student will visit their school forest to enhance their learning in all subject areas and to increase their understanding of sustainable natural resource management and of their role in developing sustainable communities. All school forests will serve as outdoor classrooms that will reconnect students with their natural and human communities through place-based, experiential environmental education.*

## Wisconsin's School Forests—2013 Overall Statistics

Wisconsin has **409** school forest parcels

There are **238** schools with school forests:

222 public school districts

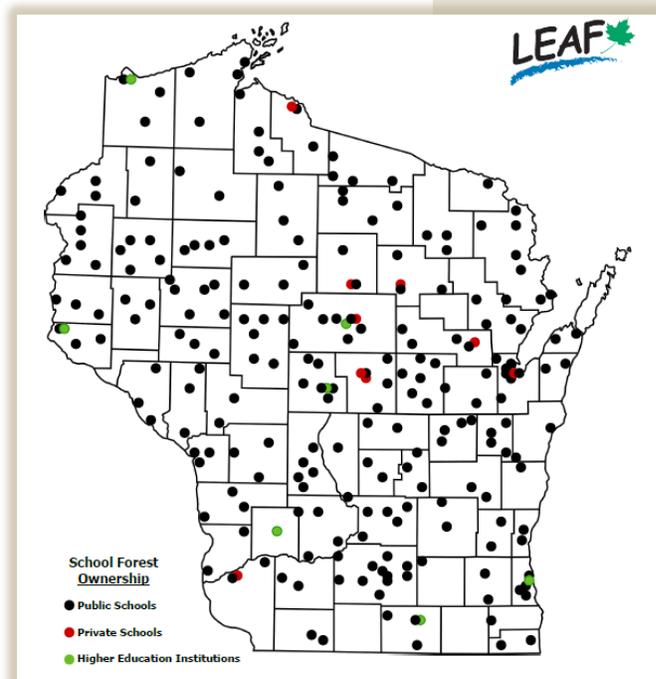
9 private schools

7 higher education institutions

Wisconsin has **95** community forests

Forest management plans are on file for **137** school forests

School forest education plans have been approved for **85** schools



## Priority #1: Assist districts in developing & maintaining school forest education plans

### Goal 1: School forests will be utilized as curriculum-driven outdoor education sites

#### Objectives:

- a. Provide consultation on school forest education plan development
- b. Update database to track education plan completion
- c. Annually increase by 25% the number of school districts with an updated school forest education plan
- d. Annually increase by 10% the number of school districts that are developing a school forest program.
- e. Annually increase by 10% the number of students learning at school forests.

#### Accomplishments

- Consultation on school forest education plan development is continuous and ranges from fielding questions regarding the School Forest Education Plan WEEB grant, to writing the education plan, reviewing the plans as schools are in the writing process, and eventually approving a district's education plan. Schools that receive a WEEB School Forest Education Plan grant or are beginning the process of writing their plans attend a one-day workshop that guides them through the process of writing an education plan.
- The database is continually updated to reflect completed education plans and track the progress of districts that have begun to write their plans and have them reviewed. In 2013, **eighteen (18) districts received support for their education plans** and development of their education programs and nine (9) new school forest education plans were approved. This is a 12% increase in the number of districts with an updated education plan. To meet the 25% annual increase in education plans, 19 schools would need to update their plans. This is not a realistic annual objective.
- **Registration assistance was provided to twenty-three (23) different school districts** regarding school forests and one community regarding a community forest. Nine (9) of these districts followed through with the registration process. These nine districts, who registered forests, combined with the 18 districts that received support for the education plan development, indicates a total of 27 districts that are developing a school forest program. The number of districts developing school forest programs did increase by 10%.
- The 2012-2013 School Forest Survey indicated an average of 1,080 students per school district visited their school forest an average of 6 times in the 2012-2013 school year. This number is reflective of the pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade trips to the school forest. This data is compared to 1,170 pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who visited the school forest an average of 3.5 times in the 2011-2012 school year. A 10% increase in the number of students learning at school forests was not validated.



Waupun  
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Rahr School Forest  
- Manitowoc



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## Goal 2: School forests will demonstrate sustainable natural resource management

### Objectives:

- Annually increase by 10% the number of school forests that have an updated forest management plan.
- Establish at least five school forest programs that add value to forest products for use in the community.
- Establish at least five school forest programs that hold regular community education programs focused on sustainable natural resource management.

### Accomplishments

- There **were eighteen (18) management plans submitted** for school forests in 2013. This is a 14% increase. A **total of 137 school forest management plans** are on file at the end of 2013.
- Five (5) school districts indicated on the 2012-2013 School Forest Survey that their students were involved in making value added products from the school forest. Those products included firewood, maple syrup, lumber, and bird houses.
- Nineteen (19) school districts indicated on the 2012-2013 School Forest Survey that they hold community education programs focused on sustainable natural resource management at their school forests.



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## Goal 3: School forests will be valued by school districts and communities

### Objectives:

- Assist with school forest registration and administration
- Annually increase by three the number of school districts with a registered school forest
- No school districts will discontinue their school forest program.
- Annually increase by 10% the number of school districts that host/provide community events.

### Accomplishments

- Assistance for school forest educators in the registration process and administration aspects is continuous and ongoing. Registration assistance was provided to 26 schools and 1 municipality. Educators can gain information about the registration process through consultation and the LEAF website. WDNR foresters are contacted about potential new school forests in their region when a new school inquires about the registration process.
- Wisconsin gained twelve (12) new school forests properties which are owned by nine (9) different districts:** Hartland/Lakeside\*, Mukwonago\*, Oregon\*, Iola-Scandinavia, Riverdale\*, Winneconne\*, Greendale\*, Whitnall\*, and Crandon. Seven (7) of those districts registered a school forest for the first time, as indicated by the (\*) following the district name. The annual goal of increasing by three the number of districts with school forests was reached.
- No schools discontinued the use of their school forest program.
- Nineteen (19) school districts indicated on the 2012-2013 School Forest Survey that they hold community education programs at their school forests. Programs in these districts focused on a variety of topics including bird identification, invasive plants, forest festivals, maple syrup production, and outdoor recreation.

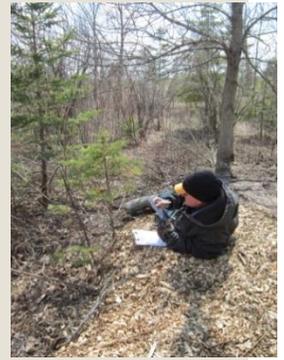


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- **Fifty-six (56) school districts indicated on the 2012-2013 School Forest Survey that community members utilized their school forest.** The greatest number of people who used school forests are members of the general public. The districts indicated boy scouts, girl scouts, church youth groups, hunters, school clubs, local organizations, and school athletic teams also used the school forest. A combined total of 9,133 community members used these school forests. This data is compared to 11,826 community members who used the school forest in the 2011-2012 school year. A 10% increase in the number of school districts that host/provide community events was not reached. These numbers serve as a good reference point, but it needs to be taken into consideration that we are relying on educators to respond to the Annual School Forest Survey in order to get this data.



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#### Goal 4: Students will understand their role in developing sustainable communities

##### Objectives:

- Increase students' environmental literacy.
- Increase students' knowledge of sustainable natural resource practices.
- Establish at least five model school forest programs that use an education for sustainability framework.

##### Accomplishments

- Results of the 2012-2013 School Forest Survey indicated that 81% of the respondents agreed that the lessons presented at the school forest increased students' knowledge of natural resource management issues, 85% agreed that students indicated the school forest is a place where they enjoy learning, 87% agreed the school forest increased student learning, 77% agreed teachers recognized the school forest as a valuable learning environment, and 40% of the respondents agreed the school forest increased attendance in school.
- Educators responding to the 2013-2013 School Forest Survey listed the following examples of evidence that students are learning while at the school forest:
  - "Career awareness in the forestry field. (Students) feel safe when using a chainsaw. Tree selection (is) based on the soil type." Ag students ID knowledge expanded. Management principles were applied."*
  - "Students used the connections they made in the school forest when talking about different wildlife habitats later in the year. (Students) can describe plant life out at the forest; especially trees and invasives."*
  - "We have student journals that clearly show an increase in student understanding of environmental concepts and we have several student projects/displays put up in our building each year that demonstrate student learning related to our school forest areas."*
  - "Students could not fish and could. Students could not canoe and could. Students could act appropriately in the forest, on trails, off trails and could not before. Students could be outside in the dark and not be scared."*
  - "Students can identify both natural resources and wildlife that exists in the school forest."*



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## Priority #2:

### Maintain & improve a public relations and networking plan

#### Objectives:

- Organize meetings with stakeholders: DPI, WEEB, WAEE board, Rep. Friske, CESA Pack, WASB. Present informational sessions at local, statewide, and regional meetings and conferences (state conferences to include school board, administrator)
- Write and publish article on the value of school forests. (Teaching Today, WSST, WWOA, TPA, WPLA, CESA)
- Personally invite SF Coordinators to write stories specific to accomplishments at their school forests and include in publication list above.
- Develop a plan to promote school forests around the state that includes ideas for school forest coordinators to promote school forests in their school districts.
- Continue school forest awards program
- Expand and update the School Forest website
- Provide information for quarterly newsletter
- Respond to requests for information and resources

#### Accomplishments

- Twenty-five (25) school forest outreach opportunities reached 944 individuals in Wisconsin in 2013.** School forest information has been shared at meetings, presentations, and conferences with the following partners and organizations: The National Green Schools Conference, the Governor's Forestry Economic Summit, WI Citizen Based Monitoring Conference, Green and Healthy Schools Workshop, school forest meetings, WI Society of Science Teachers (WSST), the Youth Summit, Lakeview Elementary staff in Madison, WI Association for Environ. Education (WAEE), WI Association of Agriculture Educators (WAAE), the Sustainable Forest Resource Management Network, and the WI Environ. Education Board (WEEB).
- Media releases are sent to newspapers and the LEAFlet regarding school forests events, news, local fieldtrips, school forest registration, and school forest award winners. School forest educators are invited to write and submit stories. They receive a reminder in the School Forest News that is sent at the beginning of the school year. Other requests are made sporadically throughout the year.
- Three school forest awards were presented at the Celebration of Environmental Education Awards Banquet. The award winners include: Teachers: Stephen Hadfield (Pittsville School Forest) and Mary Wagner (Rudolph Environmental Center, Newman Catholic Schools, Wausau); Community Members: The Shumaker Family: Dan, Nicke, Sara, Kelsi, & Gage (Tigerton School Forest)
- The School Forest website is continually updated as the need arises.
- School forest information is regularly provided for the LEAFlet, which is distributed every two weeks. Highlights from site visits are included and useful information is shared. Other general school forest information includes introducing new school forests, how to order seedlings, information about WEEB grants, and lesson ideas.
- Educators and resource professionals throughout the state regularly contact the program for information and resources. Consultation is critical to the success of the program and constitutes a vast majority of time. **Consultation services were provided to 220 individuals from 83 different school districts** throughout Wisconsin. **Seventy-six (76) registered school forests and seven (7) potential school forests were served.** Work was done in conjunction with **20 WDNR foresters, 19 other WDNR individuals, and an additional 42 partnership/outreach opportunities** that are not captured in the school district, school forest, and DNR forester totals.

School Forest  
Award Winners



Stephen Hadfield



Mary Wagner



Shumaker Family:  
Sara, Gage, Kelsi,  
Dan, & Nicke

### Priority #3:

#### Maintain & Improve professional development/in-service programs

##### Objectives:

- Provide training in current forest related issues.
- Update and deliver School Forest Programs and Administration Course
- The School Forest Summit will be held bi-annually.
- Conduct a survey of school forest coordinators and educators to determine topics of greatest interest for the School Forest Summit
- Assist with marketing of LEAF workshops
- Support partner program trainings (e.g., Wis Nature Mapping, Forest Invaders curriculum)

##### Accomplishments

- Twelve (14) professional development opportunities were offered and reached at least 186 people.** These opportunities include a school forest education plan workshop, NRES 742, NRES 744, school district in-services, and field trips at the WSST and WAEE conferences.
- Both the NRES 742 School Forest Programs and Administration and NRES 744 Enhancing School Forest Education courses were delivered in the summer.
- Eleven (11) students enrolled in NRES 742 during the summer of 2013 and seven (7) students enrolled in NRES 744.
- All school forest educators (approximately 300+) individuals listed in the school forest database receive information via e-mail about LEAF's professional development opportunities, workshops, and resources. School districts with school forests have at least one identified primary contact that all information is sent to. Many districts have two, even three or more contact which receive school forest, LEAF, and WCEE information. Also, all school forest educators listed in the database also receive the bi-weekly LEAFlet electronic newsletter.
- No partner program trainings occurred in 2013 however, all contacts in the school forest database receive information about relevant professional development opportunities hosted by other organizations.

### Priority #4: Continue development of a strategy for school forest program evaluation & assessment

##### Objectives:

- Modify and conduct the Annual School Forest Survey

##### Accomplishments

- The annual school forest survey was modified based on feedback from last year and was once again delivered as a school-year survey. The survey was distributed in May and due in June. **Seventy (70) individual schools or districts provided responses to the survey out of 219 individual schools or districts** that received the survey. Responses were received from 67 public school districts and 2 private schools and 1 higher education institution. This is a 32% response rate. The survey was sent to 212 public schools, 6 private schools, and 1 higher education institution with registered school forests. Overall, it was distributed to 334 contacts within the school forest database. The respondents included 47 teachers, 28 environmental education/school forest coordinators, 13 administrators, 2 community volunteers, and 3 pupil services/guidance department members.



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## Priority #5: Visit school forests

### Objectives:

- a. Visit school forests – expand geographic areas visited

### Accomplishments

- **Site visits were conducted at seven (7) different school forests in seven (7) different counties.** School forests that were visited include: Manitowoc, Waupun, Chilton, Granton, Boston, Gillett, and Laona. Visiting these school forests helps build relationships among the Wisconsin School Forest Program and educators in these districts. It is also extremely informative in allowing the WI School Forest Program to network educators across the state and stay up to date on the type of programming that takes place at various school forests.



Waupun  
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## Priority #6:

### Examine funding opportunities for individual school forests

### Objectives:

- a. Assist DNR-Forestry with development of school forest transportation grant program
- b. Provide information about Wisconsin school forests to relevant state and national foundations
- c. Continue to work with WEEB to set priorities and provide support for the school forest grants program
- d. Develop additional funding ideas

### Accomplishments

- WEEB grant promotion and consultation is provided to school forests that are in the process of writing and implementing a grant.
- Fund-raising ideas for school forests are collected and distributed to the school forest distribution list as they become available. Sites such as [einwisconsin.org](http://einwisconsin.org) are also promoted and distributed.
- Information is provided to state and national organizations and individuals regarding school forests upon request.



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*The Wisconsin School Forest Program is coordinated by Gretchen Marshall within the LEAF Program. LEAF is a partnership between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources-Division of Forestry and the Wisconsin center for Environmental Education at the College of Natural Resources, University of Wisconsin–Stevens Point.*

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