

# Wisconsin School Forest Program

## 2016 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. 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—2016 Overall Statistics

Wisconsin has **421** school forest parcels

There are **247** schools with school forests:

234 public school districts

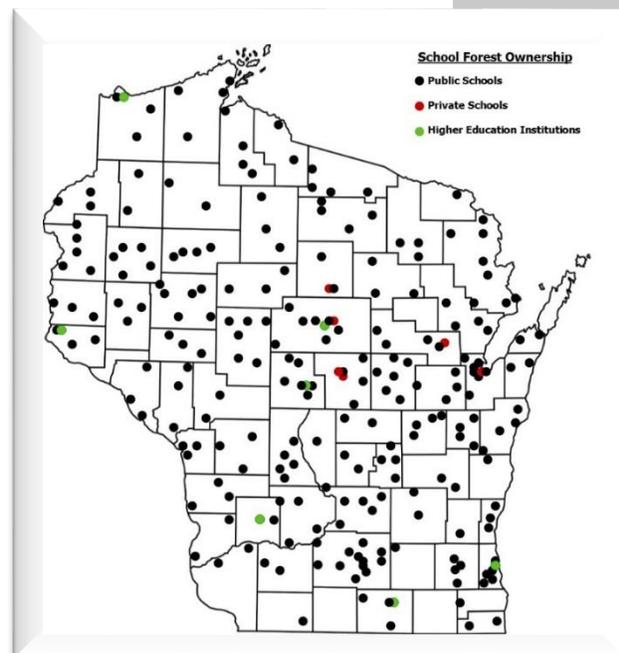
6 private schools

7 higher education institutions

Wisconsin has **96** community forests

Forest management plans are on file for **340** school forests

School forest education plans have been approved for **107** 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 10% the number of school districts with an updated school forest education plan
- d. 15% of School Forest Education plans over 7 years old will be updated
- e. Annually increase by 10% the number of school districts that are developing a school forest through registration in the program or education plan development.
- f. 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. Service was provided to 33 individuals regarding education plans.
- 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 2016, **Ten (10) districts received support for their education plans** and six (6) new school forest education plans were approved. This is a 6% increase in the number of districts with an updated education plan.
- Education plans over 7 years old were not tracked due to a lack of time.
- **Registration assistance was provided to eleven (11) different school districts** regarding school forests and two (2) municipalities regarding community forests. Three (3) of these districts followed through with the registration process. These 3 districts, who registered forests, combined with the 10 districts that received support for education plan development, indicates 13 districts were developing a school forest program in 2016. The number of districts developing school forest programs did not increase by 10%.
- The School Forest Survey indicated an average of 1,202 students visited their school forest an average of 4.1 times in the 2015-2016 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 an average of 970 pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who visited the school forest an average of 4.6 times in the 2015-2016 school year. A 10% increase in the number of students learning at school forests did occur.



Cumberland  
School Forest



Colfax  
School Forest



Boston School Forest  
(Stevens Point)

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

### Objectives:

- Annually increase by 10% the number of school forests that have an up to date forest management plan.
- Establish at least five school forest programs that add value to forest products for use in the community.
- Conduct at least five school forest learning opportunities, events, lessons, or programs focused on sustainable natural resource management.
- Establish at least five school forest programs that have community members or organizations involved in the forest's natural resource management.

### Accomplishments

- A **total of 340 school forest management plans** are on file at the end of 2016. This is a 1.5% increase. There **were eight (8) management plans written** for school forests in 2016.
- Twelve (12) school districts indicated on the 2015-2016 School Forest Survey that their students were involved in making value added products from the school forest. Those products included firewood, benches, signs, maple syrup, lumber, and bird houses.
- Learning opportunities that focused on sustainable natural resource management occurred on at least 50 school forests** according to the 2015-2016 school forest survey. Sustainable management topics included tree planting, timber harvest, invasive species control, wildlife projects, trail improvements, and prairie restoration.
- Community members** were involved in natural resource management on at least **thirty-seven (37) school forests** according to the 2015-2016 School Forest Survey.

## 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 11 schools and 2 municipalities. 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 three (3) new school forests properties that are owned by three (3) different districts:** Mishicot\*, Cedarburg, and West Bend. One (1) 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 accomplished.



Laona  
School Forest



Norbert Rich  
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(Winneconne)



Colfax  
School Forest

- Three school forests were removed this year and one decreased the number of acres registered. Northland Pines in Eagle River removed two parcels but still has two forests registered. Skeets Millard Valley school forest was owned by a private school and was sold. Wisconsin Dells sold 36.2 acres of a parcel, but 40 acres of that parcel still remain registered in the system.
- Community education programs were held on at least 29 school forests.
- **Fifty-one (51) school districts indicated on the 2015-2016 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 7,374 community members used these school forests. This data is compared to 8,799 community members who used the school forest in the 2014-2015 school year.



Arbor Vitae-Woodruff  
School Forest  
(Woodruff)

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

##### Objectives:

- Increase students' environmental literacy.
- Increase students' knowledge of sustainable natural resource practices.
- Identify five school forest programs that help students understand the role of the school forest in local community sustainability by demonstrating sustainable behaviors in social, economic, and environmental aspects.

##### Accomplishments

- Results of the 2015-2016 School Forest Survey indicated that 80% of the respondents agreed that the lessons presented at the school forest increased students' knowledge of natural resource management issues, 86% agreed that students indicated the school forest is a place where they enjoy learning, 89% agreed the school forest increased student learning, and 77% agreed teachers recognized the school forest as a valuable learning environment.
- According to the survey, **53 schools have used the school forest to help students understand the role of the school forest in local community sustainability** by demonstrating sustainable behaviors in social, economic, and environmental aspects.
- Educators responding to the 2015-2016 School Forest Survey listed the following **examples of evidence that students are learning while at the school forest:**
  - "(The) Forestry class learned how to measure height, dbh, and basal area, and how these measurements can be used to make management decisions. Ecology and forestry students learned to identify trees."*
  - "Freshmen biology students wrote papers which presented data collected at the school forest. The data clearly show deer browsing is a major factor in forest succession."*
  - "Forestry is a big career in our area. Students understand the importance from such activities as Log-A-Load."*
  - "Students are involved in the removal of invasive species, learning and observing the process of a forest harvest and learning about making (and eating) maple syrup."*
  - "Elementary students wrote letters to the high school students who taught them lessons. They described what they learned. High school students commented on pursuing careers in forestry and natural resources."*



Boston School Forest  
(Stevens Point)



Norbert Rich  
School Forest  
(Winneconne)

## Priority #2:

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

#### Objectives:

- Organize meetings with stakeholders. (Examples include: DPI, WEEB, WAEE board, Rep. Friske, CESA Pack, WASB).
- Present informational sessions at local, statewide, and regional meetings and conferences
- Write and publish article on the value of school forests.
- 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

- Sixty-four (64) school forest outreach opportunities reached 2,180 individuals in Wisconsin in 2016. School forest information has been shared at meetings, presentations, and conferences with the following partners and organizations: Council on Forestry meetings, school forest meetings, WI Society of Science Teachers (WSST), WI Association for Environ. Education (WAEE), WI Association of Agriculture Educators (WAAE), the Sustainable Resources Institute, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA), UWSP College of Natural Resources Undergraduate Courses, and the WI Env. Educ. Board (WEEB).
- Media releases are sent to newspapers and the LEAFlet regarding school forest events, news, local fieldtrips, school forest registration, and school forest award winners. School forest educators are invited to write and submit stories.
- A major story was featured on the PBS show Outdoor Wisconsin this year regarding school forests in Wisconsin and specifically highlighted the Boston School Forest in Stevens Point.
- School forest awards were presented to DNR forester Michael Sieger, and teachers Mark Mosey, Laura Cerletty, and Beth Shore.
- 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 157 individuals from 97 different school districts** throughout Wisconsin. **Eighty-nine (89) registered school forests and eight (8) potential school forests were served.** Work was done in conjunction with **23 WDNR foresters, 14 other WDNR individuals, and an additional 58 partnership/outreach contacts** that are not captured in the school district, school forest, and DNR forester totals.

#### School Forest Award Winners



DNR Forester  
Michael Sieger



Mark Mosey  
Colfax School Forest



Tomorrow River Sch. Forest  
(Amherst)



Laura Cerletty  
Whitnall School Forest  
(Greendale)

### Priority #3:

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

##### Objectives:

- Provide training and networking opportunities for school forest educators.
- Update and deliver School Forest Programs and Administration Course
- Assist with marketing of LEAF workshops
- Support partner program trainings

##### Accomplishments

- Fourteen (14) professional development opportunities were offered and reached at least 298 people.** These opportunities include school forest education plan workshops, NRES 622, NRES 624, school district in-services, a session at the WSST conference, and a field trip workshop at the WAEE conference.
- Both the NRES 622 School Forest Programs and Administration (5 students) and NRES 624 Enhancing School Forest Education courses (22 students) were delivered in the summer.
- All school forest educators (approximately 350+) 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 contacts receive the LEAFlet electronic newsletter once a month.
- Partner program trainings for Green and Healthy Schools, PLT, and UW Extension's First Detector Network were promoted and supported in 2016.



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School Forest



Laona  
School Forest

### 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 is delivered as a school-year survey. The survey was distributed in May and due in June. **Eighty-two (82) individual schools or districts provided responses to the survey out of 241 individual schools or districts** that received the survey. Responses were received from 78 public school districts, 3 private schools, and 1 higher education institution. This is a 34% response rate. A complete overview of the survey results is available upon request.



Norbert Rich  
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(Winneconne)

## Priority #5: Visit school forests

### Objectives:

- Visit school forests – expand geographic areas visited

### Accomplishments

- Site visits occurred at twenty (20) different school forests in seventeen (17) different counties.** School forests that were visited include: Arbor Vitae-Woodruff, Pulaski, Boston (Stevens Point), Rhinelander, Elcho, Highland, Goodman-Armstrong Creek, Cumberland, Crandon, Dodgeville, Mukwonago, Tri-County (Plainfield), Hayward, Winneconne, Osseo-Fairchild, Colfax, Janesville, Marathon, Northland Pines (Eagle River), and Green Lake. Visiting these school forests helps build relationships among the Wisconsin School Forest Program and educators in these districts. It also is 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.

## Priority #6:

### Examine funding opportunities for individual school forests

### Objectives:

- Assist DNR-Forestry with development of school forest transportation grant program
- Provide information about Wisconsin school forests to relevant state and national foundations
- Continue to work with WEEB to set priorities and provide support for the school forest grants program
- 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.
- Promotion was provided for WEEF's GO (Get Outdoors) Fund. This grant supported field trip costs in forestry education, which included school forests.
- The school forest coordinator is a member of the WEEB grant committee
- 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. In 2016 school forest information was provided at the Society of American Foresters National Convention, National Association of Environmental Education Conference, to the Michigan DNR for creation of a school forest handbook in their state, at the Wisconsin Society of Science Teacher Conference, and at the Wisconsin Association of Agriculture Educators Professional Development Conference.

***The Wisconsin School Forest Program is coordinated 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.***



Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education  
College of Natural Resources  
**University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point**



Hovind Family  
School Forest  
(Crandon)



Pulaski  
School Forest



Boston  
School Forest  
(Stevens Point)

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