

# Wisconsin School Forest Program

## 2018 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—2018 Overall Statistics

Wisconsin has **423** school forest parcels

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

234 public school districts

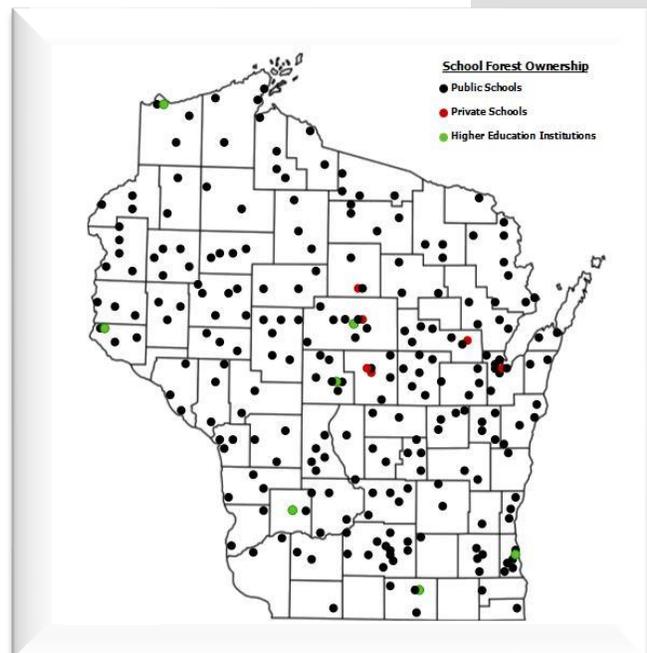
6 private schools

7 higher education institutions

Wisconsin has **96** community forests

Forest management plans are on file for **344** school forests

School forest education plans have been approved for **109** 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:

- Provide consultation on school forest education plan development.
- Update database to track education plan completion.
- Annually increase the number of school districts with an updated school forest education plan.
- Schools with School Forest Education plans over 7 years old will be contacted and encouraged to update existing plans.
- Annually increase by 10% the number of school districts that are developing a school forest through registration in the program, renewed interest, or education plan development.
- Annually increase by 10% the number of students learning at school forests.

#### Accomplishments

- Consultation service was provided to 13 schools regarding forest 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. There were no updated school forest education plans submitted this year.
- Schools with education plans over 7 years old were not contacted due to a lack of time.
- **Registration assistance was provided to eight (8) 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 12 districts that received support for education plan development, indicates 15 districts were developing a school forest program in 2018. The number of districts developing school forest programs did increase by 10%.
- The School Forest Survey indicated an average of 1,185 students visited their school forest an average of 4.9 times in the 2017-2018 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 1081 pre-Kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students who visited the school forest an average of 4.35 times in the 2016-2017 school year.



Antigo School Forest



Boston School Forest  
(Stevens Point)



Marion School Forest

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

### Objectives:

- Annually increase 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.
- At least forty school forests will have learning opportunities, events, lessons, or programs focused on sustainable natural resource management.
- At least twenty school forest programs will have community members or organizations involved in the forest's natural resource management.



Boston School Forest  
(Stevens Point)

### Accomplishments

- A **total of 344 school forest management plans** are on file at the end of 2018. This is a 1% increase. There **were four (4) management plans written** for school forests in 2018.
- Thirteen (13) school districts indicated on the 2017-2018 School Forest Survey that their students were involved in making value added products from the school forest. Those products included firewood, benches, maple syrup, plaques, lumber, and bird houses.
- Learning opportunities that focused on sustainable natural resource management occurred on at least 49 school forests** according to the 2017-2018 school forest survey. Sustainable management topics included timber cruising, forest restoration, 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-one (31) school forests** according to the 2017-2018 School Forest Survey.



Hartland-Lakeside  
School Forest

## 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 10 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 one (1) new school forest property which is registered to the Verona School District.** The annual goal of increasing by three the number of districts with school forests was not accomplished. However, 4 other school forests completed all the required registration paperwork to receive final approval status as a school forest.



Tri- County  
School Forest  
(Plainfield)

- It was determined that one of the Montello School Forest parcels was no longer a forest and was removed from the list. The City of Wisconsin Rapids Water Works and Lighting Commission sold 240 acres of its land holdings in the community forest program.
- Community education programs were held on at least 28 school forests.
- **Forty-seven (47) school districts indicated on the 2017-2018 School Forest Survey that community members utilized their school forest.** A 10% increase in the number of school districts that host/provide community events did not occur; however, there was an increase in the number of community members that used school forests. 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 and government organizations, parent volunteers, and school athletic teams also used the school forest. A combined total of 10,877 community members used these school forests. This data is compared to 9,334 community members who used the school forest in the 2016-2017 school year.



Auburdale School Forest

#### 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 2017-2018 School Forest Survey indicated that 77% of the respondents agreed that the lessons presented at the school forest increased students' knowledge of natural resource management issues, 87% agreed that students indicated the school forest is a place where they enjoy learning, 83% agreed the school forest increased student learning, and 83% agreed teachers recognized the school forest as a valuable learning environment.
- According to the survey, **45 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 2017-2018 School Forest Survey listed the following **examples of evidence that students are learning while at the school forest:**
  - "My students can identify various tree species and diseases that they learned about in the classroom. They also can do many forestry measurements as a direct result of having the school forest here."*
  - "Implementation of state-of-the-art maple sap production facility with student input and help. Student-led tours of forest. Student assistance in harvesting and maintenance of forest."*
  - "Students have learned a lot about camping and spending time outside. Students have also learned about the removal of invasive species that is taking place at the school forest"*.
  - "HS students learned tree identification, understanding of board ft, and use of Biltmore sticks. Students in environmental science describe leaf and plant structures more accurately. Appreciation of forest resources in general is increased."*



Antigo School Forest



Pittsville School Forest

## Priority #2:

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

#### Objectives:

- Participate in meetings with stakeholders.
- Present informational sessions at local, statewide, and regional meetings and conferences
- Write and publish articles on the value of school forests.
- Personally invite SF Coordinators to write stories specific to accomplishments at their school forests.
- 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

- Thirty (30) school forest outreach opportunities reached 2,250 individuals in Wisconsin in 2018. 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 of Agriculture Educators (WAAE), the Sustainable Resources Institute, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA), and UWSP College of Natural Resources Undergraduate Courses.
- Educators from both the Owen-Withee and Oconto Falls school districts submitted articles about how their school forests have been used to teach about maple sugaring and forest management. A series of articles in the Wisconsin Woodlands Magazine have highlighted publicly accessible school forests in different regions of the state.
- Media releases are sent to newspapers and the LEAF's social media outlets regarding school forest registration, and school forest award winners. School forest educators are invited to write and submit stories in their local communities as well.
- School forest awards were presented to educators Russ Noland, Travis Engel, Marlene McIlheran, DNR forester Steve Kaufman, and community member Courtney Marschalek.
- The School Forest website is updated as the need arises.
- School forest information is regularly provided for the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education's electronic newsletter called the News to Note, which is distributed monthly. 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 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 164 individuals from 109 different school districts** throughout Wisconsin. **One hundred three (103) registered school forests and six (6) potential school forests were served.** Work was done in conjunction with **25 WDNR foresters, 13 other WDNR individuals, and an additional 47 partnership/outreach contacts** that are not captured in the school district, school forest, and DNR forester totals.

#### School Forest Award Winners



Courtney Marschalek  
Hartland-Lakeside School District



Steve Kaufman  
WI DNR



Russ Noland  
Nels P Evjue School Forest  
Merrill



Carol Pluedman  
Northland Pines School Forest  
Eagle River



Marlene McIlheran  
Greendale School Forest

### 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

- Six (6) professional development opportunities were offered and reached at least 91 people.** These opportunities include workshops and a school district in-service.
- Neither the NRES 622 School Forest Programs and Administration or NRES 624 Enhancing School Forest Education courses were offered 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 WCEE's News To Note electronic newsletter once a month.
- Partner program trainings for Green and Healthy Schools, PLT, the Natural Resources Foundation, and UW Extension's First Detector Network were promoted and supported in 2018.

### School Forest Award Winners (Continued)



Travis Engel  
Owen-Withee  
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. **Sixty-nine (69) individual schools or districts provided responses to the survey out of 241 individual schools or districts** that received the survey. Responses were received from 67 public school districts, 2 private schools, and 0 higher education institution. This is a 28% response rate. As a result, this survey serves as a "snapshot" of school forest activity in Wisconsin, not as a comprehensive report. However, due to the fact that not all school forests submit data and that not all of the same school forests submit data every year, we can observe general trends throughout certain questions that were asked in the survey, but do not assume that these are precise and final numbers. This report is merely a representation of Wisconsin's School Forest Program over the past year. A complete overview of the survey results is available upon request.



Hartland-Lakeside  
School Forest



Hartland-Lakeside  
School Forest

## Priority #5: Visit school forests

### Objectives:

- Visit school forests – expand geographic areas visited

### Accomplishments

- Site visits occurred at twenty-one (21) different school forests in sixteen (16) different counties.** School forests that were visited include: Nels P Evjue (Merrill), Tri-County (Plainfield), Auburndale, Pittsville, Weyauwega-Fremont, Crandon, Wabeno, Laona, Rahr (Manitowoc), Southern Door (Brussels), Hartland-Lakeside, Greendale, Owen-Withee, Marion, Madison – Crestwood Elem., Janesville, Reedsburg, Antigo, Boston (Stevens Point), Northland Pines (Eagle River), and Suamico. 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.



Tri- County  
School Forest  
(Plainfield)

## Priority #6:

### Examine funding opportunities for individual school forests

### Objectives:

- Assist DNR-Forestry with development of a school forest transportation grant program
- Provide information about Wisconsin school forests to relevant state and national foundations
- Develop additional funding ideas

### Accomplishments

- Promotion was provided for the Natural Resource Foundation's GO (Get Outdoors) Fund. This grant supported field trip costs in forestry education, which includes money for school forest field trips.
- 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 2018 school forest information was provided at the Joint State Education Convention, Wisconsin Coalition for Forestry Outreach, Wisconsin Association for Environmental Education Fall Conference, the Wisconsin Council on Forestry, and at the Wisconsin Association of Agriculture Educators Professional Development Conference.



Owen-Withee  
School Forest

***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**



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