



THE WISCONSIN YOUNG FOREST PARTNERSHIP



2018 Annual Report

5 YEARS AND GOING STRONG

The great inventor and businessman Henry Ford is credited with saying, “Coming together is a beginning; staying together is progress; working together is success.” His words resonate when I think back on the launch of the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership.

In December 2013, a large group of natural resource professionals gathered around a small table in a conference room in Rhinelander, WI. There were representatives from more than 15 government agencies, non-government organizations and businesses. The North Central Wisconsin Young Forest Initiative was a pilot project that had been operating successfully for two years, and it was time to come together united in purpose and create something more. The group unanimously agreed that the test period was over, that there was a need for early successional habitat, and that there were many landowners who were interested in receiving technical and financial assistance in managing their land for young forest and the species on which it depends.

In April 2014, the group came back together again, but this time as the steering committee of the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership. Each of the members brought with them a copy of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by their organization, authorizing them to contribute resources to, and benefit from the activities of the WYFP. Their first act was to vote on terms of reference, which gave the group a foundation and an operational structure. They then elected from their own ranks three individuals to operate as the Executive Committee, which would handle all the day-to-day tasks involved in starting and operating a healthy functional partnership with a broad geographical coverage area and equally broad variety of members.

Today, five years later, I have the pleasure of presenting you with this 2018 Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership annual report. While some of the names and faces have changed, our group has only continued to grow. All the while, our determination and focus have not changed. We are still bringing whatever resources we have available to improve early successional habitat, young forest, in suitable locations on a variety of

ownerships across the landscape. As you will see within the following pages, funds continue to come into the WYFP, going right back out to private forest landowners to generate management plans and complete habitat work. I look forward to a new year full of new challenges, new successes, and new partners.



JEREMY HOLTZ, WDNR
WISCONSIN YOUNG FOREST PARTNERSHIP FACILITATOR



Thank You **TO OUR PARTNERS**

U.S. Forest Service

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR)

Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA)

American Bird Conservancy (ABC)

Ruffed Grouse Society / American Woodcock Society (RGS)

Lumberjack RC&D Council

Wisconsin Wildlife Federation

Wildlife Management Institute

Pheasants Forever

The Forestland Group, LLC

Wisconsin Society of American Foresters

National Wild Turkey Federation

Louisiana-Pacific Corporation








Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative

"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

– Henry Ford

HABITAT IMPACT


The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership uses partner resources to provide technical and financial assistance to private landowners to encourage young forest habitat. Alongside partners in the public sector encouraging best management practices, WYFP can achieve a landscape scale conservation approach to deliver young forest habitat across Wisconsin.

2018	<i>Historical</i> (2014-2018)
 3,790 Landowners contacted	12,140
 97 Site visits	405
 115 Number of contracts	437
 1,124 Acres of directly improved young forest habitat	4,786
 171 Management plans written	783
 18,833 Acres of potentially improved habitat on private lands due to written management plans	71,107
 81,782 Acres of young forest habitat regenerated as part of our County, State, and Federal management actions	



PRIVATE LANDOWNER OUTREACH

Private landowners play a vital role in the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership's ability to achieve landscape scale conservation. Letters are mailed to individuals to encourage them to contact the WYFP to learn more about ways to improve wildlife habitat on their land.

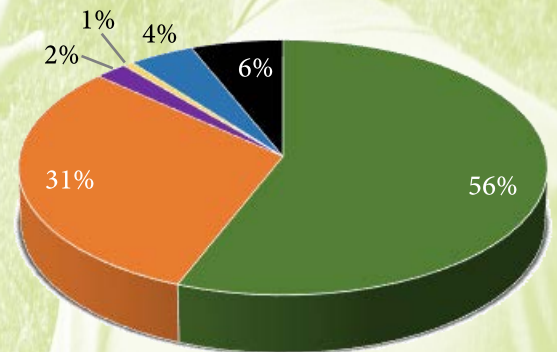
 **2,000** Landowners contacted from Price and Oneida counties
2 Different letters were sent in Spring and Fall
3,948 Total letters sent

 **69** Respondents
1.76% Response rate

WYFP has been successful in reaching unengaged landowners. Over half (9,400 acres) reported not having any sort of management plan in place. Second to that were landowners in the Managed Forest Law program with 5,163 acres.

- No Plan
- MFL/partial MFL
- FSP
- DMAP
- Own plan/with logger
- Unknown

ACRES BY PLAN TYPE IN 2018



REFERRALS

The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership connects interested landowners to programs and resources that can benefit them, regardless of habitat type.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 58 to NRCS EQIP | 26 to DMAP |
| 7 to ABC's RCPP | 18 to WFLGP |
| 7 to USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife | 12 to DNR Forestry |
| | 4 to a DNR Wildlife Biologist |
| | 3 to MFL |

135 TOTAL REFERRALS IN 2018

363 Historical total (2014-2018)

NRCS—Natural Resources Conservation Service; EQIP—Environmental Quality Initiatives Program; ABC—American Bird Conservancy, RCPP—Regional Conservation Partnership Program; USFWS— U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; DMAP—Deer Management Assistance Program; WFLGP—Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program; MFL—Managed Forest Law

LANDOWNER WORKSHOPS

CONDUCTING A SUCCESSFUL TIMBER HARVEST



To create good-quality wildlife habitat, it's sometimes necessary to conduct a timber harvest. Many landowners that the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership (WYFP) works to educate and assist haven't considered harvesting trees – or they've taken the first step by developing a forest management plan but are unsure what to do next.

To provide insight into how to conduct a successful timber harvest to benefit wildlife, WYFP hosted a forestry workshop and tour on December 8, 2018, at Kemp Natural Resources Station in Woodruff.

**29 PEOPLE ATTENDED REPRESENTING
25 PROPERTIES AND OVER 3,000 ACRES**

Participants had the chance to quiz a panel of resource professionals on a range of wildlife and forestry topics. Property owners reported being put at ease by learning what they should look for and what they should do as they consider taking the big step of harvesting trees on their land to enhance food and cover for wildlife such as deer, snowshoe hare, woodcock, and golden-winged warbler.



After an indoor discussion on the steps to conduct a timber harvest, participants visited a recently harvested red pine plantation and oak shelterwood cut to learn about the types of logging equipment and the minimal impact left on the sites.



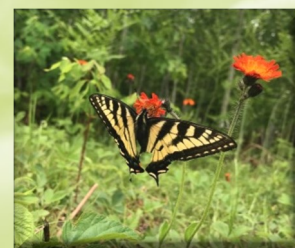
Funding provided by ABC's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. Thank you to presenters Jon Steigerwaldt (RGS Regional Biologist), Jacob Bonack (WDNR Forester), Jeremy Holtz (WDNR Wildlife Biologist), Peter Anderson (consulting forester with Sound Forest Management). Technical support from Randee Smith (WYFP Coordinator), Ryan Jacques (formerly of ABC), Ponsse staff, and WDNR Forestry staff.

LANDOWNER WORKSHOPS

MONITORING WILDLIFE USING iNATURALIST

iNaturalist may be unfamiliar to many, but this worldwide project gives anyone who wants to be a citizen scientist a place to record and organize environmental observations and share those valuable observations with a community of other nature enthusiasts and scientists.

The WYFP created a project within iNaturalist called “Wisconsin’s Young Forests” that lets landowners collect data specific to young forest habitat in Wisconsin. On June 16, 2018, the WYFP hosted a workshop at Kemp Natural Resources Station in Woodruff to kick off the iNaturalist project.



**20 PEOPLE ATTENDED REPRESENTING
13 PROPERTIES ACROSS NORTHERN WI**



Landowners who had completed management through the WYFP shared their experiences about applying for funding as well as the results of their management efforts. They unanimously expressed how easy the application process was, thanks to the WYFP staff. Landowners just starting to manage were relieved to hear how quickly the vegetation grew back on managed sites, and how a variety of wildlife sought out the regrowing young forest habitat.

Anna Buckardt, a graduate student studying bird response to young forest management in Wisconsin, shows workshop participants a male chestnut-sided warbler caught in a mist net and about to be freed back into the 8 year old aspen habitat on the Lake Tomahawk Demonstration Area.



Funding provided by ABC's National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant. Technical support from Randee Smith (WYFP Coordinator), Ryan Jacques (formerly of WDNR), Callie Bertsch (ABC), Anna Buckardt (University of Maine), Jamie Nack (UW-Extension Senior Wildlife Outreach Specialist), and WDNR staff.

ONE OF MANY SUCCESS STORIES

Michael and Linda Huber own 80 acres near the village of Exeland in Sawyer county. They bought the property in 2007 to enjoy hunting and viewing wildlife. Soon after buying the property, they put a Forest Stewardship plan in place. “We got logging done that first year,” says Huber. “We did a select cut and then clearcut some aspen. When we had it done, they mentioned alder

“THEY MENTIONED ALDER SHEARING, BUT WE DIDN’T HAVE ANYONE IN THE AREA THAT DID IT”

shearing, but we didn’t have anyone in the area that did it.”

In December 2017, Huber was searching the internet for ruffed grouse habitat

improvements and happened upon the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership website. He filled out a survey and was soon contacted by WYFP coordinator Randee Smith to discuss potential management opportunities on his property. “I could tell from the aerial photos that there was good alder potential on the property,” says Smith. “After I learned from Huber that the property used to be an old farm field, I knew the property needed a site visit.”

Since it was getting late in the year, the USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife program would be the best bet to get the work done that winter. After Smith confirmed with the Partners Biologist, Ted Koheler, that there was funding for the project, she passed Huber along to Ryan Jacques, WDNR LTE, for a site visit.



BY OCTOBER 2018, THE SHEARED ALDER IS COMING BACK NICELY. BEING ON THE EDGE OF THE 10 YEAR OLD ASPEN, THIS HABITAT WILL BRING BENEFITS TO ALL TYPES OF YOUNG FOREST WILDLIFE.

Usually a Partners program contract is signed before moving forward, but since Huber’s property was a few hours away and winter was in full swing, Jacques flagged a 12-acre and 1.5-acre block of alder right after his site visit. Within a few weeks, a contract was signed and Huber chose a contractor from the list that was provided by the WYFP.

By the end of March, the shearing of 13.2 acres was complete. “I’m really happy with how it turned out,” Huber says. “I like the contractor who did the shearing because he saved any trees bigger than 3” around that were in there.”

Smith says, “Even though a 12-acre block isn’t considered the best management practice for alder, we decided to go ahead with it hoping the aspen on the edge would grow into that cut area. There were pockets of alder that were avoided due to large rocks from the farming days, which will help provide cover for wildlife as the alder grows back.”

“WE’VE SEEN MORE WILDLIFE THAN WE EVER HAVE.”

“I’m impressed by the growth,” Huber says. “It is already 3’ to 4’ tall!

We’ve also seen more wildlife than we ever have. At one point there were 20 to 40 deer and we’ve never seen that around here. Every time we go out on the four-wheeler, we startle up some grouse. I even got an elk on the trail camera.” Huber noted that a neighbor of his has some alder and plans to share his experience and see if they too might want to have some alder shearing done.



DEER FOUND IN THE ALDER SHEARING AND FIRST ELK ON PROPERTY.

Jacques met with Huber in early January 2018 to evaluate the alder. “The property has good older alder with young aspen on the edges,” says Jacques. “There are some canopy trees within the alder stand like aspen and some oak. In 2008, 23 acres of alder were identified in the northern 40 near the agricultural field. Much of that is still alder with some encroaching aspen.”



RESEARCH

The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership and its collaborators conduct research to ensure implemented habitat management practices are providing anticipated benefits to woodcock, Golden-winged Warblers and other young forest species.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER MIGRATION

In June 2018, graduate student Anna Buckardt Thomas, with the University of Maine, returned to Oneida County to search for eleven male Golden-winged Warblers (GWWA) carrying archival light-level geolocators that were deployed in 2017. After three weeks of searching for and re-locating birds using color band re-sighting, only one geocator was recovered, but no data was recovered due to a technical failure.

The greatest success from the 2018 field season was having the GWWA migration research featured in a documentary film called “The Fight for Flight”. This film was produced by Jason Whalen and Chris Zuker of the Fauna Creative and debuted at the Fresh Coast Film Festival in Marquette, Michigan, in October 2018. The film can be found at www.vimeo.com/284653269.

This geocator migration study is a collaborative effort which combines data collected by the University of Maine in Wisconsin and Michigan; by

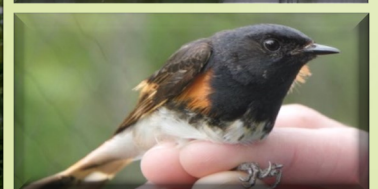
the Audubon in Vermont; and by the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation in New York. The combined data set includes light-level data from seventeen Golden-winged Warblers and three Blue-winged Warblers. Analysis of all geocator data is nearly complete and the outcome of this collaborative study will be included as a chapter in Anna Buckardt Thomas’s master’s thesis and submitted for publication in a scientific journal.

GOLDEN-WINGED WARBLER RESPONSE TO HABITAT RESTORATION

The 2018 breeding season concluded the fourth and final year of the multi-state dataset of avian point counts and associated habitat surveys to assess the impact of shearing aspen and alder habitat on male GWWA density. This collaborative project is between the University of Maine, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and Cornell University. Results will be included in the master’s thesis for the university graduates and submitted for scientific publication.



*Photos obtained from Vimeo video



2018 HIGHLIGHTS

Below are some of the exciting events that the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership and its partners have done to promote and advocate for young forest habitat.

LUMBERJACK RC&D PARTNERS WITH WYFP

In September, Lumberjack Resource Conservation and Development Council signed the WYFP Memorandum of Understanding to become an official partner and fiscal sponsor. Besides housing the coordinator position, Lumberjack will also bring a wealth of grant administration experience and organizational development expertise to WYFP.

WBCI PARTNERS WITH WYFP

In December, Wisconsin Bird Conservation Initiative (WBCI) signed the WYFP MOU. WBCI's mission is to maintain and enhance native bird populations through cooperative partnerships. WYFP is excited to gain a partner that is connected to more than 180 organizations around the state all working towards bird and habitat conservation.

EDUCATING NEW DNR FORESTERS

WYFP coordinator, Randee Smith presented during the WDNR training for new foresters in September educating them about WYFP and how they can get involved.

ANNUAL PUBLIC HEARINGS ADVERTISEMENT

On April 9 there were 72 public hearings, one in each county, where individuals interested in natural resources management could provide input and testimony to the WDNR and the Wisconsin Conservation Congress. The WYFP placed an advertisement in the spring hearing questionnaire to raise awareness about young forest habitat.

GEORGE MEYER INDUCTED INTO THE WISCONSIN CONSERVATION HALL OF FAME

George Meyer, who served as secretary of the WDNR and is currently executive director of the Wisconsin Wildlife Federation (WYFP partner),

was inducted in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame in an April 14, 2018 ceremony for his significant contributions to conservation programs, projects and public understanding.

EXPANDING RUFFED GROUSE MANAGEMENT AREAS

During 2018, the Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) worked with many of its 29 member county forests to add 6 areas to its Ruffed Grouse Management Area (GMA) program. This expansion brings the total GMA's to 18 on 17 different county forests and covering over 95,000 acres in northern and western Wisconsin.

WCFA used grant funding provided by the WI Department of Tourism and RGS in 2017 and 2018 to develop and promote an interactive mapping program for these GMA's on their website. This program helps hunters and non-hunters locate areas where they have a good chance of finding ruffed grouse and other young forest wildlife species.

WYFP ARTICLE IN GLTPA

Gary Zimmer, with WCFA, wrote an article highlighting WYFP's work with young forest and wildlife in a fall addition of the *Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association* magazine.

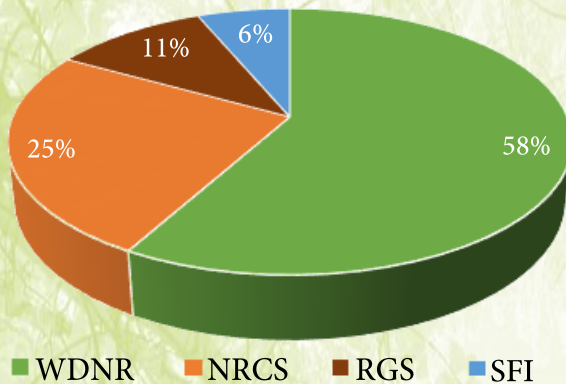
NEW RGS / NRCS / WDNR HIRES

New hires Dan Hoff and Jared Elm have embraced their role as forest wildlife specialists. Their well-rounded knowledge has made them important partners to the WYFP when helping landowners obtain technical and financial assistance from a variety of entities.

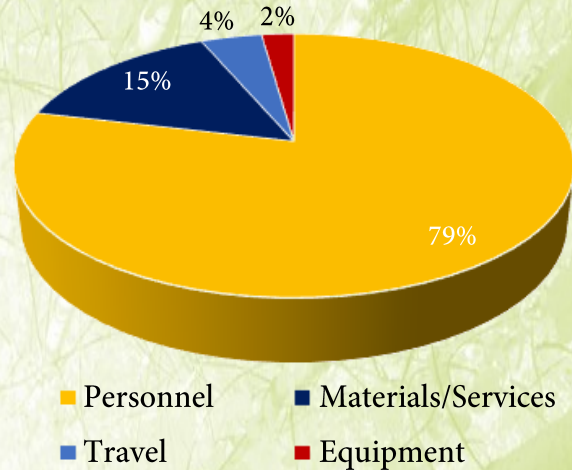
FINANCIAL

Due to the financial assistance from the WI DNR forestry and wildlife management departments and Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership has secured financial stability for a coordinator for the next 3 years.

WYFP REVENUE SOURCES 2018-2021



WYFP ANNUAL EXPENSE CATEGORIES



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2019

With the help of partners, the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership anticipates a productive and exciting 2019!

EXPANDING REACHES

In April 2019, the WYFP will venture into four new counties. An additional 2,500 or more new landowners will be reached out to through cold contact mailings. Positive responses from landowners will lead to more young forest habitat on the ground and referrals to various programs.

WORKSHOPS AND TRAININGS

Together with the American Bird Conservancy, WYFP will host a field trip about Golden-winged Warbler conservation efforts for the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin. This field trip will help raise awareness of young forest habitat and help raise funds for the Bird Protection Fund.

Workshops for landowners regarding young forest habitat and trainings for cooperating foresters/DNR Foresters can be anticipated.

RESEARCH

A new research project will begin in Spring 2019 conducted by a master's student with joint efforts through the University of Michigan-Flint and University of Maine. This project will investigate if body condition of woodcock can be used as an indicator of habitat quality.

Creating wildlife habitat together

TO LEARN MORE, CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE:

www.YoungForest.org/WI



US ON FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/WIYoungForest

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