

Kickapoo Sustainable Post

Newsletter of the Kickapoo Woods Cooperative

Begin Your Management Plan

There are many reasons to create a land management plan. It will require you to look carefully at the different parts of your property, get to know them better, and envision what they could become in 20 or 30 years. It will enable you to plan the work and the harvests for when you will most need the income (for example, for college or retirement) and when you will most easily be able to accom-

plish your objectives—like putting off certain work until the children are old enough to help. If you're a KWC member, you must have a management plan before you can avail yourself of our forestry and marketing services. KWC wants decisions about the woodlands to be carefully considered because their impact can be great and affects the land for a long, long time. Some management plans make you eligible for lower taxes, or for cost-sharing grants to accomplish the work specified in your plan. And it's tremendously satisfying to know that each year you are taking the steps to make your future vision of your property become real.

A completed plan includes:

- Statement of the landowner's objectives and over what timeframe, usually 20 to 50 years.
- Description of the stands being managed, including age, volume and species of trees, understory species, soil type, slope, acreage, regeneration, and other details and measurements.
- What the stand should be like if the plan is implemented in the given timeframe.

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Member Paul Richardson purchased a Farmi winch through a new co-op program. See page 4.

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- Specific practices that must or should be done, and when, in order to achieve the stated objectives.
- Forestry methods or “silvicultural parameters” to be used.
- Map of the stands under management.
- Additional information specific to the type of plan and it’s goals.

To begin your plan, start with a map or aerial photo of your land. If you don’t have one, you can probably download one from terraserver.com. Divide your map into stands of similar age and species composition. Think back to your free woods walk when you became a member of Kickapoo Woods. What kind of trees were naturally regenerating there? Where were the unusual or unique species? Which areas could be accessible for a harvest? Where could you put the access roads? What future uses were suggested for each stand? Should some areas be managed differently in anticipation of possible future building projects? Where will you hike, hunt, get firewood, ski, snowmobile, watch birds? Consider the view from the house, the barn, the fields, your hunting blind. What species do you wish to enhance? Are you safeguarding water quality, diversity, endangered species, vitality of the forest community? What unique goals or uses need to be considered?

Bear in mind that there are different types of management plans. In Wisconsin, a Managed Forest Law (MFL) program gives excellent tax benefits, but also has some requirements. A Forest Stewardship plan has fewer requirements, but no tax

benefits. But both of these can provide eligibility for cost-sharing grants. Ask your county DNR Forester for more information on these programs. You may be able to take advantage of government programs like CRP (Conservation Reserve Program), designed to remove marginal agricultural land from production, and reforestation is a popular option; or CREP (Conservation Reserve

Enhancement Program); which provides assistance for taking care of riparian zones such as streambanks and wetlands; or WHIP (Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program), all of which are administered by the NRCS, or Natural Resource Conservation Service. The Forest Stewardship Council provides certification of sustainable management practices for your forest products, but their standards extend into additional areas such as a required monitoring system, environmental assessments and safeguards, social considerations, and justification for planned harvests and the techniques that will be used.

Foresters comment that many landowners don’t know their goals, so they end up with the forester’s goals, or perhaps the forester’s guess of what the landowner’s goals are. You may have to learn a bit about the life cycle of various trees, what conditions they require at different stages, how to encourage specific types of wildlife, and so on. Visit your woods again and make some notes on the different stands, and discuss general goals with your land partners. Make sure you have clear agreement on each stand on your map.

Next issue: Woodland assessment, getting the plan into writing, and more on government programs.

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From the Coordinator

Summer time makes it easy to stay busy with outdoor tasks, but I'm taking some time at my desk to communicate several items of interest to our members and potential members and to give you a short update on KWC's growth. The results of the member survey from last December has led the co-op to offer a new service. And there's a touchy political issue around the definitions and practices of conservation vs. preservation that could impede the growth of the Cooperative.

Conservation versus Preservation

Conservation is an economic term and implies a management system that protects a resource from exploitation, destruction and neglect. Preservation involves keeping something free from decay, and assumes a static biosphere. Preservation can be used as an excuse for neglect. What is usually needed is restoration to have what most people envision when they think of their woodland's potential. Except for some really isolated or inaccessible places, there is not much of the landscape that could really be called pristine; as ideal as it sounds, pristine forests may not meet the landowner's objectives if they had it. We know that this land has been managed by man for thousands of years so we must talk about preservation in terms of ecosystems and try to observe where nature is taking US and then act to support nature's inclination toward healthy systems.

We all need to provide for ourselves and our families and most of us understand that we cannot exploit our landscape and preserve the sustaining resources within our midst at the same time. The realities of taxes and the way we own and sell land dictate conservation of the resource. Most of us need to justify our woodland ownership in terms of benefit versus its ownership cost. Ideally these costs would include the responsibility of stewardship and the legacy we leave our children. The value and appreciation of our land is directly related to the management objectives and the actions we do or do not take. What is good for nature is good for us no

matter what our politics are. As long as we preserve the ability of the land to produce the resources we need, we are stewards.

Most of our woodlands have been exploited for their best timber —“high graded” and pastured— which created a condition where the regeneration of valuable trees is retarded by the growth of over-represented native and exotic shrubs and trees. If there is to be any forest industry in the Kickapoo watershed that benefits a landowner any where close to the land's carrying cost, we need to grow high-quality, high-value hardwood trees. The cost of harvesting in these hills is too high to support the high-volume fiber growth mentality that has pervaded the general industrial-type forestry practiced in many places with economic success, but with little regard for diversity. In order to raise valuable trees, we need to observe carefully and try to duplicate where and under what conditions great quality trees grew in the past. Fortunately for us, beautiful logs come from beautiful trees that seem to grow best in a natural setting. With patience and careful management, we can raise fine quality valuable hardwood timber and maintain our woodland ecosystems and the esthetic quality of all-aged, diverse and healthy forests.

The Kickapoo Woods Cooperative is organized to give its members the tools it needs to accomplish their sustainable forestry goals and objectives. There are hundreds of thousands of acres of woodlands in KWC's area in SW Wisconsin and many more acres of former pasture reverting to a more “natural” state. With active management (Admittedly an “unnatural” act), landowners can hasten the conversion of these lands to a more “pristine,” and by the way, more productive state. Because landowners are all individuals, their idea of “sustainability” varies and it becomes necessary for the co-op to provide support to its members' various objectives, commercial as well as ecological. There must be recognition that economic realities dictate land use and if commercial management is necessary to accomplish forest restoration, then it is important for the co-op to support active management practices that improve and preserve

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ecosystems, and to help members market their forest products as well as provide the educational events that support various management objectives.

Some may try to pigeonhole KWC members as extremists of one sort or another. Comments I've overheard range from "Woods Co-op members just a bunch off tree huggers from LaLa Land" to "Those Co-op People are way too focused on commercial forestry." We are a diverse group including neither or all of the above depending on your point of view. I do know one thing about our members as a group: they do not like to see our environment exploited for some short term gain, and each of them has their own vision of a healthy environment. A much used quote from Aldo Leopold sums it up for me: "I have read many definitions of what is a conservationist...the best one is written not with a pen, but with an axe."

New co-op program

Tools that can help with forest restoration are the focus of a new co-op program suggested from the survey of members conducted last December. A large majority of respondents to the survey supported the idea of the co-op investing in forestry tools that an individual member may struggle to justify owning, but would be glad to rent short-term. Last month The Co-op purchased a "FARMI" 3 point tractor winch for rental to members. We have also obtained the dealership for these winches and as a membership benefit, the Co-op is splitting its dealer discount with members on any Farmi winch or Valby chipper. We plan to expand this service to include many more useful forestry tools to rent and sell. Rental rate on the Farmi will be \$60/day. The



The Farmi is tipped up, ready to mount on a tractor. It is transported laying horizontal on this custom trailer built by Paul Bader.

winch requires a minimum 40 horse power tractor for safe operation. It has a pulling capacity of 11,000 pounds and a cable length of 150 feet. I have built a trailer for the transport of the winch that is designed to load and unload with a tractor's 3-point hitch. Please call me to reserve a date(s) to rent and arrange for safety training.

KWC Learning and Growing

The last year's woods activities by members clearly show that it is possible to harvest the dregs of a high-graded woods and make good wages if you do the harvesting yourself. Or you can hire someone to cut and skid your low-grade trees and break even. Either way, you can improve your woods' potential by doing a selective harvest. It is also possible to harvest mature aspen (popple) in a mixed stand to release younger, more desirable trees and see a positive return from the thinning. We have also learned that cull trees are put to best economic advantage as firewood used on site, and that non-commercial "Timber Stand Improvements" can be supported by state cost-sharing programs with a landowner's labor and expenses considered part of the landowners share.

The Co-op has had a hand in several management projects, including management plan consulting and creation, marking for thinning and TSI, timber sale administration, pulp stumpage sales, scaling and grading logs, marking boundaries, road restoration and trail layout, and marketing cut logs. The board of directors feels that we must continue to develop our revenue-producing services to maintain growth and viability. At this point it is not possible with our current volume of business to directly employ administrative and management people. The above forestry services and more can be provided through the Co-op by member contractors @ \$30/hour or by professional forestry consultants at varying hourly or per acre rates.

Our upcoming co-op events include several popular educational workshops and member recruiting venues. One of these I believe will be of particular interest to many of our members is the "Light on the Land Logging" exposition and demonstrations in late September. This event is being cosponsored by several organizations and is to be widely promoted in SW Wisconsin. The Expo will be held at Duck Egg County Park in Vernon County. Many small scale logging and forestry tools will be demonstrated and there will be several workshops on practical forestry practice. (Please see upcoming events) Educational events produced by the KWC will be partially supported by a grant from The Kickapoo Valley Reforestation Fund (KVRF) but it will be necessary to continue to charge a small fee to support these educational services without additional funding. Meanwhile we continue to work with KVRF on developing other projects for the benefit of the Kickapoo Valley and KWC.

The fall and winter are a great time to be in your woods just soaking in nature. It is also a good time to start your planning for a more "pristine" environment and I am wishing you all a dry fall and an open winter for a productive forestry season. Please call or e-mail me with your questions about how Kickapoo Woods Co-op can be of service to you.

Paul Bader, KWC Coordinator

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Light on the Land Logging

SMALL-SCALE LOGGING EQUIPMENT &
FORESTRY BEST MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES

Duck Egg County Forest, Viroqua, WI
September 26 & 27, 2003 9am-3pm

Directions: Two miles north of Viroqua on Hwy. 14/16, turn left (west) onto County "Y" about 6 miles to Irish Ridge Road, left 1.5 miles to park entrance.

Admission is FREE.

Equipment demonstrations:

- Farm tractor cable winches
- Forwarders
- Farm tractor attachments
- ATV 4- wheeler conversions
- Grapplers and loaders
- Firewood processors
- Other small-scale equipment

Workshops will include:

- Forestry Best Management Practices
 - Bucking for Grade
 - Directional Felling
 - Stream Crossings
- Invasive Species ID & Control
- Timber Stand Improvement

For more information email steve.bertjens@wi.usda.gov or call 608-348-3235.

Sponsored by :
SW Badger RC&D • WI Dept. of Natural Resources
Vernon Cty. Land & Water Conservation Dept. • Kickapoo Woods Cooperative
Brooks & Christie Forestry Consultants

Become a member and enjoy:

- Free woods walk to evaluate your forest (\$50 value)
- Information, support and education.

Thank You!

I want to join the Kickapoo Woods Co-op.

Enclosed is my gift of:

____ \$100. Founding Associate

____ \$_____ Other donation

Name _____

Address _____

City State Zip _____

Phone/email _____

I am interested in KWC because:

Calendar

Sep16 - Kickapoo Gold Maple Supplies Open House, Phillip and Sarah Gudgeon farm, 10 am - 8 pm. KWC will have a booth and exhibit the Farmi winch. E 8533 Cherry Grove Rd, Viroqua; 634-4896.

September 26-27 Light on the Land Logging Conference, 9am-3pm At Duck Egg Reserve near Viroqua. Equipment demonstrations and workshops focused on small scale logging, best management practices, and timber stand improvement. KWC will offer safety training on the Farmi winch, required to rent the winch. (More details on page 5)

October 11 - Open Woods Walk at Kettle Trust property near Rockton. Principles and practices of regenerative forestry will be discussed with living examples.

October 18 - Open Woods Walk at Aspen Farm near Readstown.

October 25 - Chainsaw Safety with FISTA trainers at Turkey Ridge Orchard near Gays Mills. Fee is subsidized so participants pay only \$20. Limited enrollment; reserve a place by calling 608-625-2515.

November 1 - Reforestation and Care of Young Plantations at Roger Krause farm west of Viroqua, Wisconsin.

December 6 - Timber Stand Improvement seminar at Turkey Ridge Orchard near Gays Mills. Workshop and woods walk with local DNR forester Gary Harden.

January, 2004 - Writing a Land Management Plan. If you use the article in this newsletter plus the followup in the next issue to begin the process, this workshop will help you get the details together in time to apply for a Wisconsin MFL (Managed Forest Law) Plan by the January 30 deadline.

The mission of the Kickapoo Wood Cooperative is to provide sustainable forestry education, management and marketing services to residents of the Kickapoo Valley and neighboring watersheds.

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