

**Master Plan Variance**

**Property Name:** Flambeau River State Forest

**Date Master Plan was Approved:** September 2010

**Change to the Master Plan:**

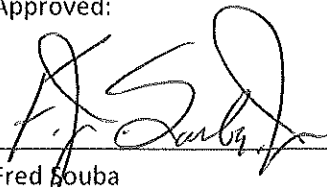
Authorize the use of the former Flambeau River State Forest headquarters building for housing of Limited Term Employees stationed at the property.

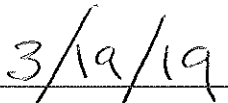
**Specific changes to the 2010 Master Plan:**

*Page 146 (variance language addition is in **bold**)*

Convert the former forest headquarters building for education and interpretative use. Remodel building interior to provide open space for exhibits. Provide interior/exterior interpretive exhibits as directed by the interpretive plan. **Until such a time that the former headquarters can be converted to an interpretative center, utilize the building as Limited Term Employee housing for employees working at the Flambeau River State Forest.**

Approved:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Fred Souba  
Administrator, Division of Forestry

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Purpose and need for the plan change:**

The 2010 master plan authorized the construction of a new forest headquarters building and the conversion of the then-existing headquarters building to an interpretive and education center. The new forest headquarters was opened in 2015. In 2010, the conversion of the building to an interpretive and education center was estimated to cost approximately \$180,000.

The Flambeau River State Forest (FRSF) is the second largest state-owned property managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and a full spectrum of forestry, wildlife, and recreation management activities occur at the property. Much of the management work is accomplished using Limited Term Employees (LTEs). Because of the property's remote location, the department has had difficulty attracting qualified LTE candidates to work at the FRSF due to limited housing options near the property, long travel distances between the FRSF and population centers, and higher costs of living in the communities near the FRSF.

The department believes that using the former headquarters office as interim LTE housing will help attract more well-qualified candidates to work at the Flambeau River State Forest. Given the size and layout of the former headquarters, the department concludes that housing could be provided for two people, which would comprise about half of the LTEs typically hired at the FRSF each summer.

### **How the plan change is supported by or is inconsistent with the property vision, goals and objectives or other plan provisions:**

The variance makes no changes to current recreation or resource management objectives or classifications and is consistent with the overall master plan vision, goals, and objectives.

The variance provides for interim use of the former forest headquarters building until funding is available for conversion of the building for education and interpretive uses. This interim use will not foreclose the opportunity to use the building for education and interpretive use in the future.

The department has accomplished a variety of education and interpretation actions on the property since the master plan was approved in 2010. The new headquarters building provides some displays and information about the property, recreation opportunities, and wildlife commonly seen. The interim use of the former headquarters building as LTE housing will not affect the department's current ability to carry out education and interpretation activities on the FRSF. The long-term plan to convert the building into an interpretive and educational facility is not changed by this interim use.

The former headquarters building is a log cabin built in 1951 and is listed on the State of Wisconsin Historical Society's Architecture and History Inventory as a Historic Property. It is 1,045 square feet in size. No alterations to the exterior of the building will occur as a result of converting the building to housing. The interior re-modeling associated with converting the building to housing will not affect the historic features of the building.

**Primary benefits of the plan change:**

The primary benefit of converting the former headquarters office to interim LTE housing is to address an obstacle that the department has had in recruiting an adequate pool of qualified LTE candidates to work at the property.

**Additional anticipated benefits:**

Occupancy of the building will help ensure it is maintained. In addition, the presence of staff located on the property will provide additional points of contact for the public in cases of emergencies and improve the department's ability to respond.

**Unavoidable adverse impacts:**

The building is well known locally as the former headquarters and is located in a noticeable spot on the north bank of the river just off CTH W; its use as LTE housing may elicit public questions.

**Compatibility with Statutes, Codes, and Department Policies:**

The department may provide housing to employees for the benefit and convenience of the department. The use, rental rates and agreements, operation, and maintenance of the former headquarters building for interim LTE housing will meet all administrative codes, building codes, and department policies.

This variance has been developed in compliance with ch. NR 44, Wis. Adm. Code. It does not change land management classifications or result in any use incompatible with the current classification for the area impacted by the variance.

The department's Division of Forestry and Bureau of Parks and Recreation support this variance. Both programs will benefit from being able to provide on-site housing to staff working at the property.

**Public review process:**

The variance was posted to the department's website for a 14-day public review period, which ran from February 19 to March 5, 2019. A press release in the *DNR Weekly News* was issued on February 19, 2019 and forwarded to local media outlets. In addition, a GovDelivery email notice about the proposed variance was sent on February 19, 2019 to the people on the Flambeau River State Forest GovDelivery distribution list (approximately 5,000 addresses). Residences and businesses in the vicinity of the former headquarters were notified of the proposed conversion of the building.

**Description of the public support and/or opposition to the proposed variance and any unresolved issues or concerns:**

Five members of the public commented on the proposed variance. No comments were in opposition, but rather all expressed support for the variance or the property in general. There are no unresolved issues.