Property Identifiers

Property Names and Designation: Ackley Wildlife Area/ Peters Marsh Wildlife Area/ Woods Flowage Fishery Area/ Statewide Habitat Areas, Shadick Springs (Eau Claire River Fishery Area) and Klemmen Springs (Statewide Spring Ponds) all associated with the East Branch of the Eau Claire River Stream Bank Protection Area

Combined Acreage: 4386

Forestry Property Code(s): 3414/3423/3411/3416

Master Plan Date: No current plans. New plans scheduled for 2020-2024.

Part 1: Property Assessment

General Property Description

Ackley Wildlife Area and Woods Flowage Fishery Area and the properties within the Eau Claire River Stream Bank Protection Area are located within the Forest Transition Ecological Landscape, while Peters Marsh Wildlife Area is further north within the North Central Forest Landscape. These properties are found within the following Landtype Associations: 212Qd01 Ackley Plains, 212Ta08 Rabe Knolls, and 212xe07 Kempster Moraines. The North Central Forest contains the best large-scale interior forest management opportunities in the state. This Landscape also offers excellent opportunities to manage areas for older forest within a context of outstanding aquatic features, intact and relatively undisturbed wetlands and vast public landholdings. Working forests could include areas with extended rotations, the development of old-growth forest characteristics and/or stands of "managed old-growth."

The original hardwood, hemlock and pine timber types that occurred on the Ackley Wildlife Area were logged beginning in the late 1800’s. Later, wildfires and aborted attempts at farming reduced the cover types to grasses, shrubs and aspen. These activities resulted in extensive habitat for grassland-dependent wildlife. In addition, the high water table and network of drainages provided opportunities for flowage development to enhance habitat for wetland wildlife. Woods Flowage Fishery Area was established in 1953 and is a unique coldwater complex. The name flowage is actually a misnomer, as the so-called flowage is just a wide, low gradient portion of Drew Creek, which is fed by ten spring ponds and abundant groundwater. The streams and spring ponds provide native brook trout fishing opportunities. A naturally reproducing rainbow trout population has become established in parts of Drew Creek and Nixon Springs via escape from a private hatchery on Drew Creek in the 1950’s. Peters Marsh Wildlife Area covers 1,687 acres and includes diverse habitat and wildlife. The property has seen many changes in the last 100 years. Following decades of extensive logging for white pine and hemlock in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, fires burned uncontrollably especially during the 1930’s. This promoted the growth of pioneer species and aspen became the dominant timber type.

The East Branch of the Eau Claire River is a high quality trout stream. It is classified trout water through the entire length. Properties acquired within the protection area are either within the Eau Claire River Fishery Area, Statewide Habitat Areas, Statewide Spring Ponds, or Peter’s Marsh project boundaries. In 1994, the Department proposed the establishment of the East Branch of
the Eau Claire River Project boundary, but that proposal was withdrawn based on the commitment of the Eau Claire River Land Owners Association to find alternative approaches to protect this valuable watershed. The Department will actively work with the Association to protect this resource within the protection area. The watershed of the East Branch is comprised of approximately 20% forested and 80% agriculture. A mix of Dairy farming, corn, oats and vegetable crops are found along the corridor with interspersion of woodlots and rural housing. History of land use and past management includes past timber harvests, trout habitat improvements, grasslands maintenance, field run-off protection, wildlife tree and shrub planting, public access maintenance and invasive species control.

Site Specifics

- Current forest types, age classes and successional stages
  - Aspen – A total of 1901 acres (43%) is typed as aspen. An estimated 667 acres are in the 0-25 age class, and 960 acres in the 26 to 50 class. Most of the remaining 274 acres is older than 75 years.
  - Northern Hardwoods - A total of 678 acres (15%) is typed as northern hardwoods.
  - Swamp conifers - A total of 290 acres of swamp conifers can be found on this property group. White cedar is most prevalent at 147 acres, followed by tamarack and balsam fir, at 45 and 43 acres, respectively.
  - Pine – About 48 acres of mixed pine can be found on the property group. Included in this total is a 25 acre jack pine plantation with an oak component, and an 8 acre red pine plantation.

- State Natural Area designation
  - There are no State Natural Areas within this property group.

- High Value Conservation Forests (HVCF) or other resources/natural community types limited in the landscape
  - Woods Flowage FA is part of the Menominee Forest Conservation Opportunity Area. Recommended actions for Species of Greatest Conservation Need include:
    - Maintain the largest blocks of northern mesic and oak forest, especially in the identified Conservation Opportunity Areas (limited opportunity on Woods Flowage because stand size is constrained by extensive network of spring ponds).
    - Increase connectivity of forest patches, especially in the identified conservation opportunity areas.
    - Encourage regeneration and reestablishment of eastern hemlock, Canada yew, white cedar, other conifers and yellow birch, where appropriate through adaptive management techniques

- Biotic Inventory – Not completed.
- Deferral/consultation area designations – No final or draft sites.
- Rare species – Rare species found within the property group include one small mammal listed as SC/N (special concern, no laws regarding use, possession, or harvesting) by the State of Wisconsin. In addition, a State threatened raptor has been found within the one-mile buffer.
- Invasive species – Buckthorn, spotted knapweed, and purple loosestrife, and rainbow trout have been documented within the property group.
Part 2: IFMP Components

Management Objectives:

On all properties, a 100’ Riparian Management Zone, consistent with BMP’s and Department policy, will be observed. This zone may be increased or decreased to address specific issues such as invasive species, erosion, water quality, and fish and wildlife concerns. All proposed timber sales are reviewed by an integrated team to insure protection and/or management of important resources.

Specific type objectives follow:

- **Aspen**
  - The primary objective is to regenerate this type to the extent possible for the benefit of game and nongame wildlife. Additional objectives include increasing age class diversity, expanding aspen acreage where opportunities exist, and leaving selected reserve trees as appropriate. Exceptions to aspen regeneration cuts near drainages or other waterbodies are generally the rule.

- **Northern Hardwoods**
  - The primary objective for this type is to maintain and/or regenerate stands to enhance wildlife values, with timber production as a secondary objective. Depending on quality and species composition, objectives may include uneven-age and even-age management. Another option is extended rotation in some hardwood stands, as older age classes are generally underrepresented especially in the Forest Transition Landscape.

- **Swamp conifers**
  - White cedar is the dominant species in this group comprising 57% of all swamp conifer acres. The majority of these stands are not scheduled for management.

- **Pine**
  - Red pine stands are being managed using even-aged techniques. Jack pine was inter-planted with oak to provide a mixed stand with enhanced values to wildlife over the long-term.
Aspen
- Aspen will be regenerated using the coppice method. To further enhance this type for wildlife large stands will be divided into smaller units and sales staggered over time to diversify age classes. As appropriate, snags, especially high value cavity and den trees, important mast trees, and selected conifers, especially supercanopy red and white pine suitable for eagle nests will be marked for retention. Non-merchantable trees 1" or greater in diameter may be felled to reduce crown closure to less than 20%.

Northern Hardwoods
- Where uneven-age management is appropriate, selection harvests will be designed to improve stand quality by removing poor quality trees and releasing crop trees. Canopy gaps will be included to enhance regeneration of species such as yellow birch, basswood and white ash, and to enhance shrub and ground layer communities to benefit wildlife. In the case of very poor quality stands with less than 40 potential crop trees per acre, shelterwood harvesting may be utilized for regeneration. Preservation of hardwood within hardwood stands is encouraged. Snags, conifers, and other trees that have special value to wildlife (such as white and red oak) will be retained. Extended rotation in some hardwood stands may also be considered, as older age classes are generally underrepresented especially in the Forest Transition Landscape.

Swamp conifers
- While no harvests are scheduled at this time, attempts to regenerate some swamp conifer stands, particularly tamarack and black spruce, have been highly successful in parts of Langlade County. Timber management within these areas should be completed only after consulting with an integrated team, including staff from Forestry, Facilities and Lands, Wildlife Management, Endangered Resources and Fisheries.

Pine
- Red and jack pine plantations will be managed using intermediate selection thinnings until rotation age or extended rotation age. A mixed stand of jack pine and oak will be encouraged using even-aged management.