



Greetings from the Black River State Forest! It is that time of the year when we look back at last year's accomplishments, record them and develop this year's work plan. All in all it was a good year and this month's article is a recap of the Black River State Forest's significant events of 2007.

This past year was very typical for visitation. While tracking total visitation is impossible with multiple entry points to the property, other numbers can be easily tracked. In 2007 we had 16,680 traditional campers. Our group camp with its indoor facility was rented 166 nights including most weekends. Total recreational revenue for 2007 was \$87,930. Most of these dollars come from campsite registrations and vehicle permits.

This was the first year that numbers were kept on ATV traffic on our trails. Three traffic counters were installed by Jackson County on our joint trail system. One of the things we discovered is that the amount of traffic varies substantially amongst different portions of the trail system. At our busiest spot weekend traffic averaged between 400-600 riders per day with a high of over 900 on Labor Day weekend. Other areas averaged 200-300 riders a weekend day.

The state forest celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this past year. To celebrate this milestone the property significantly increased the number of naturalist events offered to the public. This included a range of activities such as a frog night hike, an early morning bird hike, tours of state natural areas, and a spring ephemeral walk.

Two dedication ceremonies were held in 2007. In February the new log warming house at ski trails was dedicated at the candlelight ski. This building was a generous donation from the Black River Forest Trail Foundation. The money to construct it was bequeathed to the organization from a former active member, Martin "Marty" Denmark. In October a dedication ceremony was held for a newly acquired 50 acre parcel along the Black River. This purchase was made possible through assistance of the Friends of the Black River and the Western Wisconsin Land Trust.

Weather as always had an important impact upon our operations. A warm start to last year's winter resulted in motorized trails not opening until early January. A late spring storm resulted in flooding and downed trees on the motorized trails which caused them to be closed for a week. An August storm created havoc in our Pigeon Creek campground and the 24 mile hike, bike, and ski trail system. Numerous trees were blown over resulting in the campground being closed for five days. Although it happened on a busy Saturday night thankfully no injuries occurred.

This past year was a good one for our forest management program. Fourteen tracts of timber were sold comprising 919 acres. These sales were a combination of intermediate cuts and final harvests. The total value of these was \$502,591 including

11,570 cords and 290,000 board feet. All of our timber sales are performed in a sustainable manner and all of the lumber is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forest Initiative. Only 10% of all lumber in the United States has this desirable status.

In 2007 we began a several year project to significantly reduce the number of invasives species in the forest. A contractor cleared 22 acres that were severely infested with European buckthorn, an exotic species that shades out native plant species. This work was performed by our Castle Mound campground resulting in a much improved appearance. An even larger project is in the works this year.

Other important events of 2007 included hosting a field day for the Governor's Council on Forestry, a successful field audit of our forestry practices by the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forest Initiative, the first public meeting for the master plan, and the restoration of the historic stone entrance wall at Castle Mound campground. This wall was constructed by the Works Progress Administration during the Great Depression.

The current year promises to be equally interesting. A return to winter has created a boom in winter usage, many projects are underway, and we hope to have the final two master plan public meetings. If you have any questions about this article or the Black River State Forest please call us at (715) 284-4103 or visit our website at: <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver/> .