



It is an exciting time to work at the Black River State Forest. We are in the middle of a process that will determine the direction of the property's management for the next 15 years. This process, referred to as master planning, ensures a property will be wisely managed, and includes considerable public involvement.

The current master plan for the property was accepted in 1983. Since then many changes have occurred in how the property is used, in the public's expectations, and in the Department's knowledge of natural resource management. The new plan will address these changes and provide clear guidance to current and future managers of the state forest.

Master planning is a lengthy five step process that typically takes two to three years to complete. The first step involves a regional assessment which describes the resources found on the property and what uses the property is ecologically capable of providing. This was completed in 2007.

The second step involves writing a public participation plan, drafting a property goals and vision statement, and identifying important property issues. This was completed last year with the culmination being a March 8th public meeting. The public was able to provide comment on the issues identified by the Department plus identify additional issues important to them. We were very pleased with the attendance, the number of comments received and diversity of issues the public was interested in. People who could not attend the public meeting were able to access materials on the internet and provide comments during the 45 day comment period.

Since that meeting the Department has been busy working on the third and most time consuming stage: developing management alternatives. Alternatives are broken into three different sections. One team works on developing all of the recreational alternatives, a second team works on land management, and a third team develops boundary expansion alternatives.

The various teams discuss possible alternatives for each property use and then identify a preferred alternative. An example of this is the campground system. The regional analysis and public comments indicates more amenities are needed. A proposal for new modern bathroom buildings and additional electric sites is being considered as part of this process. This is just one of many different uses that must be considered.

Currently the Department is working on packaging all of the alternatives that have been identified. We expect to set a date for a public meeting in either March or April of this year. Once a date has been set public notice will be given. All of the alternatives will be presented at this meeting and then the public will have a 30 day period to provide comment. Those who are unable to attend will be able to access a copy of the alternatives document at our website or request a copy be mailed to them.

Once the comment period is over the Department will consider the public comments and then begin drafting a plan and writing an environmental assessment of the plan. Once this is complete one more public meeting will be held and then the final step is to present the plan to Wisconsin's Natural Resources Board for what we hope will be approval.

To read more information about the process, the regional assessment, a general summary of comments received from last March's meeting, and updates please view our website at: http://dnr.wi.gov/master_planning/BlackRiver/index.htm . If you have any questions please call us at (715) 284-1406.