



Greetings from the Black River State Forest! When I worked at a state park November meant the end of the busy season. Campers no longer came, seasonal staff were all laid off, and many days I practically had the place to my own. Until snow came visitors did not come back to the park. Such is not the case at the Black River State Forest. November brings a flurry of activity to the property.

From the time the ATV trails close on October 16th into early November staff are busy grading trails, smoothing corners, and filling in holes and ruts. This work must be completed before the trail surface freezes for the year. After five months of steady use, with numbers approaching 800 riders a day on weekends, the trails require considerable rehabilitation. Trails must be in top notch condition before the December 15th reopening date. During the winter ATVs and snowmobiles use the same trail system. Snowmobiles require smoother riding conditions than ATVs and the trails must be free of ruts. In years where the ground has not frozen adequately by December 15th, and especially if it is wet, it can delay the reopening of the trails.

Hunting season also brings a lot of activity to the state forest. Chances are if you take a ride through the property you will see several pickup trucks sitting along roads while their owners are out small game or deer archery hunting. The gun deer season brings a once a year type of camping to the property. During the nine day season hunters can set up campsites away from the traditional campgrounds. During the weeks preceding the season we get many request for these off site permits. Many of these groups have been coming for generations. In a typical year we issue around 160 off site camping permits.

November is a busy time for the property's foresters. Each fall and spring we put out a timber sale prospectus. In a typical year a prospectus includes seven sales with an average of 427 total acres. On November 6th we had our most recent timber sale bid opening. This was a larger package than usual with 12 sales totaling 919 acres. Every tract sold with a total value of just over a half a million dollars. The amount of timber sold varies each year and is based on various ecological factors relating to sustainability of the resource.

Once November is over then our winter season begins with snowmobiling, cross country skiing, and snowshoeing. Logging operations on the forest significantly increase and we also begin our planning period for the following year. Each time of the year brings different activities to the property and it is this variety that makes working at the state forest a great pleasure.

Information on the state forest, its recreational program and forest management can be found on the internet at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/forestry/StateForests/SF-BlackRiver/>. You can also navigate to other state forests and the Division of Forestry's main webpage from here. If you have any questions about this article please call us at (715) 426-1406.