



Wild Rivers Legacy Forest © Jeff Richter

Forests are the lungs of our land, purifying the air and giving strength to our people.

– Franklin D. Roosevelt



American marten © U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Wisconsin Forest Legacy: Habitat, Jobs and Recreation for Future Generations

In Wisconsin, our forests are much more than trees. They are an important part of our economy and central to our way of life. We hike, camp, ski and hunt in them and depend upon them for wildlife habitat, clean air and water, timber and jobs.

If we want to conserve our forests, especially in Wisconsin's Northwoods, we must act now before we lose a big part of our forest heritage forever.

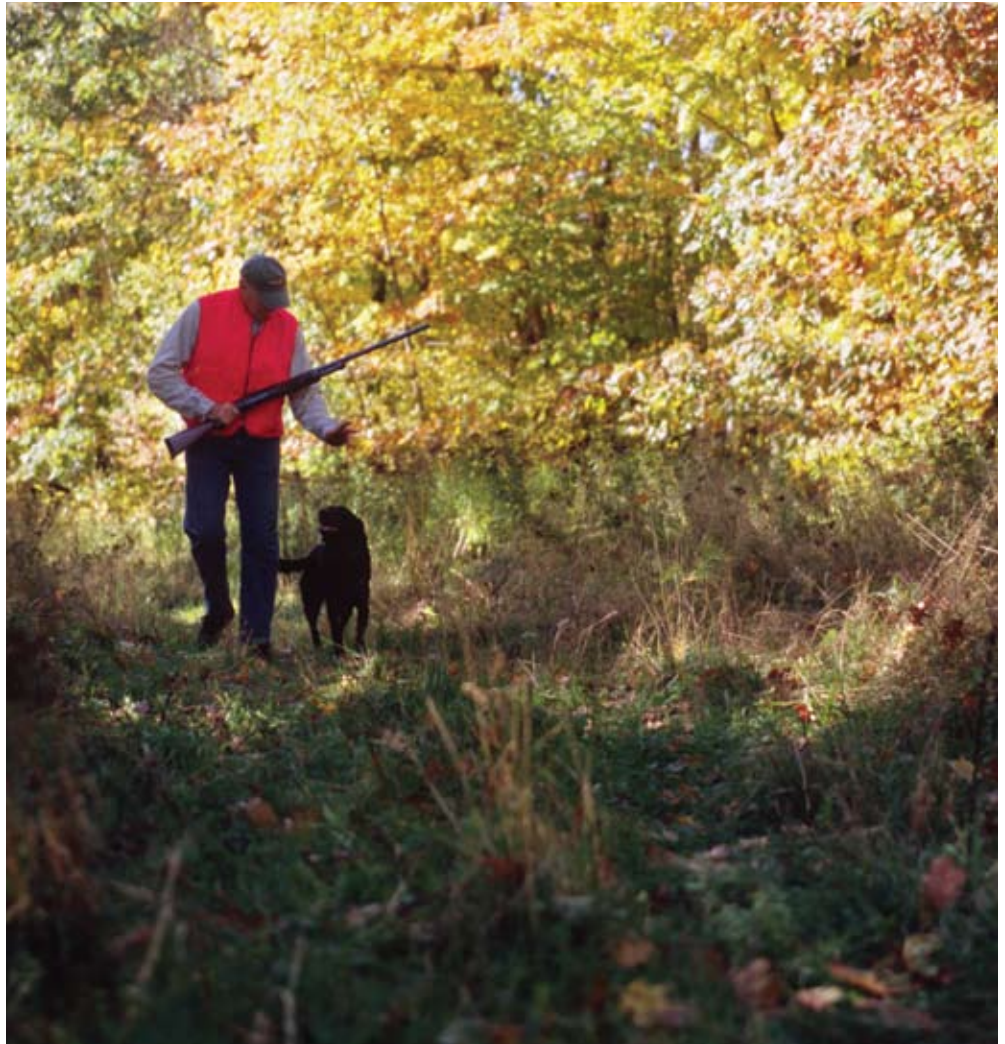
FEDERAL FOREST LEGACY PROGRAM

Established in 1990 as part of the Farm Bill, the federal Forest Legacy Program works in partnership with states and private landowners to identify and protect ecologically important forests that are threatened by development.

The easements:

- Are voluntary land protection agreements that restrict development while ensuring public access, sustainable timber management and wildlife habitat.
- Keep forestlands working to produce wood and fiber to benefit state and local economies.
- Keep the land in private hands and generating property taxes.

Since 2002, the federal Forest Legacy Program has helped protect more than 62,000 acres of forestland in the Baraboo Hills, Wild Rivers Legacy Forest, Wolf River basin and other parts of our Northwoods.



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Our Forests, Our Way of Life

- Wisconsin's 16 million acres of forests are the foundation for the pulp, paper, wood products and printing industries, which provide one in every eight manufacturing jobs and are among the leading employers in northern Wisconsin.
- In 2005, Wisconsin was first in the nation in the value of forest industry shipments. Wisconsin's forest products and processing produced 15.6 percent (\$19.5 billion) of the state's total industrial output.
- Forests help protect water quality in our rivers and lakes and provide habitat for songbirds, wide-ranging mammals like black bears and hundreds of other plant and animal species.
- More people than ever before are using Wisconsin's forests for hiking, camping, hunting and other recreational and tourism activities. Wisconsin households spend more than \$5.5 billion per year on goods and services associated with forest-based recreation.



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Lower Aimer Lake © Gerald H. Emmerich, Jr.

WILD RIVERS LEGACY FOREST

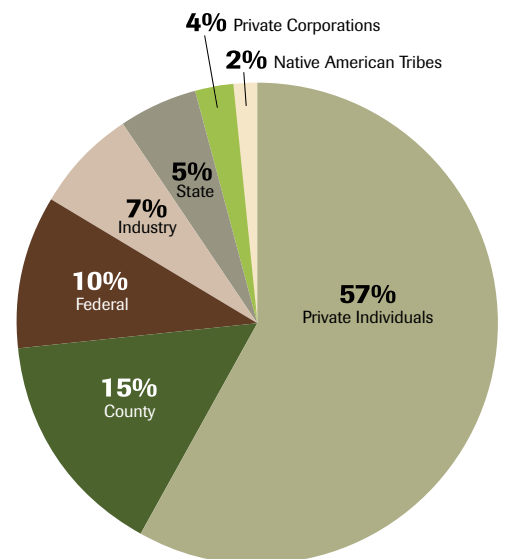
In July 2006, more than 64,600 acres of forest, wild lakes and wild rivers in Forest, Florence and Marinette counties were purchased from International Paper and conserved through an agreement between the State of Wisconsin, The Nature Conservancy, Conservation Forestry LLC and Forest Investment Associates. This project—the largest in state history—keeps almost 59,000 acres in working forest, protects 14 miles of wild river and several wild lakes, and maintains public access for recreation.

\$2.3 million in federal Forest Legacy funds were secured for this project in 2008; another \$2.3 million in funding has been requested.

The Risk: Permanent Loss of Wisconsin Forests

- Traditionally, timber companies owned and managed lands for a century or more and were committed to stewardship of their lands. Today, their forestlands are more valuable as real estate than for growing trees, causing the sale of millions of acres across the country, including in Wisconsin.
- From 1999 to 2007, enrollment of forestland held by large industrial owners in the Wisconsin Forest Tax Law Program declined by 17 percent.
- Oftentimes, new owners subdivide large parcels of industrial forestland and sell them in smaller pieces for development. This puts jobs, recreational opportunities and wildlife habitat—everything we value about our forests—at risk.
- Industrial forestland has traditionally been open to a variety of public recreation uses such as hiking, snowmobiling, hunting, bird-watching, fishing and skiing. As large forestlands are sold, new owners may not place the same priority on public recreation.

OWNERSHIP OF WISCONSIN'S 16 MILLION FOREST ACRES





Wild Rivers Legacy Forest © Gail Van Sluys/TNC

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The Solution: Support Federal and State Forest Legacy Programs

The federal Forest Legacy Program has been instrumental in conserving large areas of working forestland in Wisconsin (see sidebar for program details). It provides states with 75 percent of the funding needed to purchase conservation easements from private landowners; the remaining 25 percent comes from private, local or state sources.

While Forest Legacy is an excellent partner in the conservation of Wisconsin's forests, federal funding alone is not enough. From 1998 to 2006, average forestland sales prices statewide increased about 14 percent annually, from \$854 to \$2,415 per acre.

The Nature Conservancy is advocating the creation of a state companion to the federal Forest Legacy Program that would be used to acquire conservation easements on forestlands, thereby maintaining working forests and preventing fragmentation. The fund could also be used to provide the state match necessary to utilize federal Forest Legacy funding, reducing or eliminating the necessity of using Stewardship Fund dollars for the match, as is done currently. A state Forest Legacy Fund of \$3 million would leverage \$9 million in federal dollars.

Sources: USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service, Wisconsin Forest Land Sales by Year; Wisconsin Council on Forestry; Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry

