

**DOUGLAS COUNTY FOREST  
COMPREHENSIVE LAND-USE PLAN 2021-2035**

**CHAPTER 300  
MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

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# **CHAPTER 300**

## **MANAGEMENT PLANNING**

### **300 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST**

#### **300.1 County Forest Ownership**

The Douglas County Forest is the largest County Forest in the State. Of the total 280,090 acres, 264,452 acres (94 percent) are enrolled under the County Forest regular land class and 15,638 acres (6 percent) are enrolled under the County Forest special-use land class.

71 percent of the County Forest is in the western half of the County. The remaining 29 percent is scattered in the eastern half with the two largest eastern blocks located in the northeastern and southeastern corners of the County. Appendixes A-I and B-I include regional and local maps of Douglas County and the County Forest.

All but about 0.3 percent of County Forest land falls within the blocking unit boundaries (see Section 410). 50 percent of all land within the County Forest blocking boundary is County Forest land. The remaining 50 percent consists of private or timberland investment holdings.

##### **300.1.1 Integrated Resource Management Units**

The County Forest is arranged into 27 blocking units or Integrated Resource Management Units (IRMU's) ranging in size from 2,839 to 22,897 acres (average 10,019 acres). Clearly identifiable boundary features such as roads, waterways, and land ownerships were used to delineate the units. Each IRMU is defined as a geographically recognizable unit of forest land that forms the basis for planning, prescribing, implementing, monitoring, and recording operations undertaken by the DCFD at a broader landscape scale. IRMU's are used to effectively and effectively communicate Forest resource management needs and accomplishments. The planning objectives, decision guides, and management considerations outlined within this Plan apply to all IRMU's. Appendix D-I includes a IRMU map.

##### **300.1.2 Compartments**

The 27 IRMU's are further divided into 269 management compartments ranging in size from 229 to 4,486 acres (average 1,037 acres). Similar to IRMU's but at a much smaller scale, these compartments are geographically recognizable units of forest land that form the basis for planning, prescribing, implementing, monitoring, and recording forest management operations at a smaller scale. Where possible, clearly identifiable boundary features such as roads, waterways, and land ownerships were used to delineate the compartments. Appendix E-I includes a forest compartment map.

### **300.1.3 Stands**

The 269 forest compartments are further divided into stands based on common cover types. Stands (forested and non-forested) are contiguous areas that contain a relatively uniform cover type throughout that are distinguishable from adjacent areas or stands. Forested stands contain trees that exhibit a common set of characteristics (e.g. species composition, age, size-class, structure, etc.). Stands form the foundation for planning, prescribing, implementing, monitoring, and recording forest management operations at the ground-level scale. Forested stands average approximately 30 acres in size and non-forested stands average 48 acres. Appendix K-I includes a stand cover type map.

### **300.2 Natural Features**

#### **300.2.1 Topography**

Douglas County is located in the far northwestern corner of Wisconsin and borders the southwestern shores of Lake Superior, Bayfield, Washburn, and Burnett Counties in Wisconsin, and Pine, Carlton, and St. Louis Counties in Minnesota.

Topographically, Douglas County ranges from level, swampy lowlands to gently sloping and rolling uplands. The lowest point in the County is approximately 605 feet above sea level in the City of Superior on the Lake Superior lowland. From this low point, the land rises to nearly 1,200 feet above sea level at the top of the Superior escarpment toward the center of the County and then falls to 1,063 feet in the southern region. Appendix F-I includes a relief map of the County's topography.

Douglas County is divided between two of the five geographical provinces of Wisconsin. The Lake Superior Lowland Province covers the northern part of the County, an area formerly occupied by Lake Superior. The boundary coincides with the topographic boundary provided by the escarpments at the juncture of the Lake Superior sandstone with the older igneous rocks. It consists of a clay plain interrupted with moraine hills. The Northern Highland Province occupies an area south of the highest abandoned beach line of Lake Superior. About 70 percent of the County falls within the Northern Highland Province; the remaining 30 percent is part of the basin of the Lake Superior Lowland.

The Continental Divide that separates the St. Lawrence (Lake Superior) and Mississippi River drainage systems intersects at the middle of Douglas County. The major drainage streams, which lie north of the divide and empty into Lake Superior, are, from east to west, the Bois Brule, Poplar, Middle, Amnicon, Nemadji, and St. Louis Rivers. The St. Croix, Totagatic, and Upper Tamarack Rivers drain the southern part of the County.

Streams and their 147 connecting lakes have a total direct drainage area of 1,010.3 square miles, 75.2 percent, of the County's land surface area. Of this amount, 705.73 square miles drains directly into Lake Superior. The drainage areas of 284 landlocked lakes account for 84.7 square miles of surface drainage, 6.3 percent. Land areas with no permanent surface waters account for 246.9 square miles or 18.4 percent of the total land area of 1,342 square miles.

### **300.2.2 Geography**

Douglas County is the 4th largest county in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 858,880 acres (1,342 square miles), including 22,165 acres of State recognized lakes and streams. About 681,600 acres (1,065 square miles) or 79.8 percent of the land in the County is classified as forest land.

### **300.2.3 Geology and Soils**

The Superior escarpment, or Douglas Copper Range, probably is the most noticeable geological feature in Douglas County. It extends northeast/southwest across the County from the Bayfield County Peninsula to Minnesota and again in Wascott Township south and east along the Ounce River and west of the St. Croix River from the Gordon Flowage west into Dairyland Township. In some places, this range rises 350 to 400 feet above the lowlands. It is not a continuous bedrock range but is divided into three main ridges by the streams that cross it. These streams have cut deep gorges and have many rapids and falls where they drop from the hard rock of the escarpment to the soft clays and sandstones of the lowland. Pattison State Park, 11 miles south of Superior, includes two such falls. Big Manitou Falls on the Black River, the highest waterfall in Wisconsin with a 165 foot drop, is located on the cataract of the Superior escarpment. Little Manitou Falls, a waterfall with a 30 foot drop, is about one mile upstream from Big Manitou Falls. Other waterfalls created by the Superior escarpment are located on Balsam, Miller, and Copper Creeks and on the Amnicon River at Amnicon Falls State Park.

Sloping gently north of the Superior escarpment toward Lake Superior is a plain of heavy red clay with poor permeability. It is 10 to 20 miles wide and often is as much as 100 feet thick. These clays were deposited as bottom sediments in glacial Lake Superior when the last glacier retreated 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. South of the escarpment is a broad area of glacial outwash with the soil types being mixed clays, stony silts, and sandy loams.

The eastern to south-central portion of the County is dominated by a light and very permeable glacial outwash sand. The soils of the southeastern corner are a heavy loam and stony. Numerous lakes and wetlands abound throughout most of the County. Appendix G-I includes a map of the County's generalized soil types. Detailed soils information is available from the USDA Web Soil Survey website.

### **300.2.4 Ecological Units**

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a diverse landscape and are managed not as sole entities but as part of a larger ecoregion. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) was developed to systematically classify areas at different geographical scales that have unique combinations of physical and biological characteristics as well as similar potentials for management. The province, one of the broadest of the Ecological Units, contains sections, subsections, Ecological Landscapes (EL), and Landtype Associations (LTA) that further classify land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands, and historic and potential plant communities.

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There are two provinces in Wisconsin. The Laurentian Mixed Forest forms the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest forms the southern half. The Douglas County Forest is within the Laurentian Mixed Forest province and includes the following Ecological Landscapes with associated Landtype Associations:

- (1) **Superior Coastal Plains** – Far northern Wisconsin landscape adjacent to Lake Superior. Soils generally poorly drained clays with forest types dominated by aspen and boreal forest. LTA includes Douglas Lake-Modified Till Plain.
- (2) **Northwest Lowlands** – Found in northwest Wisconsin. Soils are predominantly loams, with significant acreages of peat deposits in the poorly drained lowlands. Forest types include lowland hardwoods and conifers. LTA's include Pattison Moraines, Dairyland Moraines, and St. Croix Plains.
- (3) **Northwest Sands** – Found in northwest Wisconsin. Soils generally well-drained sands or loamy sands with forest types dominated by pine, aspen/birch, and oak. LTA's include Oula Washed Moraine, Bayfield Rolling Outwash and Washed Till, Upper Brule-St. Croix Valley, Bayfield Level Barrens, Gordon Rolling Barrens, Beauregard Knolls, and Webb Lake Collapsed Barrens.
- (4) **North Central Forest** – Found across northern Wisconsin. Soils generally sandy loams, sands and silts with forest types dominated by northern mesic forest types such as northern hardwood, aspen/birch, and spruce/fir. LTA's include Smokey Hill Basalt Ridge, Cable Rolling Outwash, and Hayward Moraines.

With their common characteristics, Ecological Landscapes allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses. See Section 810.1.4 for additional information on the NHFEU's. Detailed information on EL's and LTA's is available from the WDNR website. Appendixes H-I and I-I include a map of the EL's and LTA's in Douglas County.

### **300.3 Vegetative Cover Types**

Approximately 80 percent of the Douglas County Forest land base is occupied by a variety of forested cover types. The upland forest, which accounts for 79 percent of the total forested land, is occupied by aspen, northern hardwoods, white birch, northern red oak, scrub oak, red maple, hemlock, white pine, red pine, and jack pine. The lowland forest, which accounts for the remaining 21 percent, is occupied by swamp hardwoods, black spruce, tamarack, balsam fir, and northern white cedar. 20 percent of the total land base is classified as non-forest and includes open water, wetlands, rights-of-way, developed use areas, grass openings, and shrubs and bogs. Appendix K-I includes a map of County Forest cover types, Appendix L-I includes a map of forested and non-forested cover types, and Appendix M-I shows the location of commercial timber cover types.

### 300.3.1 Forested Communities

Forested cover types include a variety of size-classes (regeneration, sapling-pole, and sawtimber) and structure (canopy, layers, ground vegetation, dead and downed material, and inclusions). Forested communities make up approximately 80 percent of the total County Forest land base (see Appendix L-I for a map). The following upland and lowland forested cover types are associated with the County Forest:

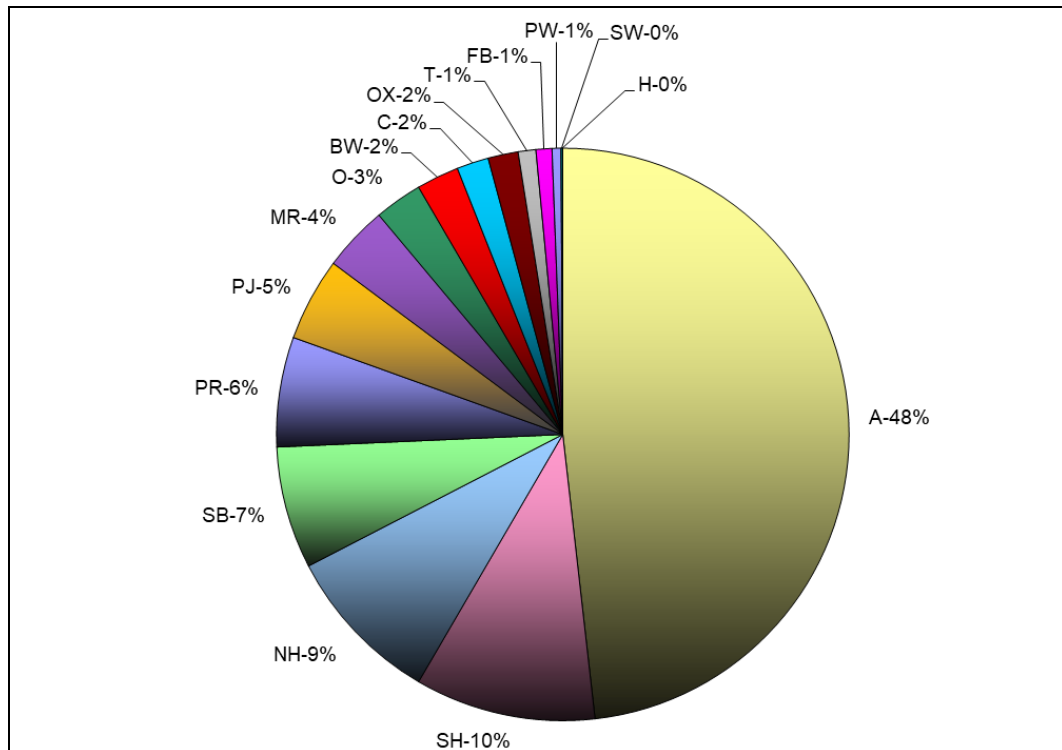
- (1) **Aspen (A)** – 48.2 percent. Aspen comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.
- (2) **Swamp Hardwoods (SH)** – 10.2 percent. Any combination of black ash, green ash, red maple, silver maple, swamp white oak, and American elm comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. This type occurs on wetlands characterized by periodic inundation (fluctuating water table near or above the soil surface) and nearly permanent subsurface water flow.
- (3) **Northern Hardwood (NH)** – 9.0 percent. Any combination of sugar maple, beech, basswood, white ash, and yellow birch comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.
- (4) **Black Spruce (SB)** – 6.9 percent. Black spruce comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed swamp conifer stands, black spruce is predominant.
- (5) **Red Pine (PR)** – 6.2 percent. Red pine comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed pine stands, red pine is predominant.
- (6) **Jack Pine (PJ)** – 4.7 percent. Jack pine comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed pine stands, jack pine is predominant.
- (7) **Red Maple (MR)** – 3.7 percent. Red Maple comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. If soil is poorly drained, then swamp hardwood type.
- (8) **Oak (O)** – 2.7 percent. Northern red oak, white oak, or black oak comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.
- (9) **White Birch (BW)** – 2.4 percent. White Birch comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.
- (10) **White Cedar (C)** – 1.8 percent. Northern white cedar comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed swamp conifer stands, white cedar is predominant.
- (11) **Scrub Oak (OX)** – 1.7 percent. More than 50 percent of the basal area in sawtimber and

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poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands is comprised of oak with site indices <50. Typical forest products include only fuelwood and fiber.

- (12) **Tamarack (T)** – 1.0 percent. Tamarack comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed swamp conifer stands, tamarack is predominant.
- (13) **Balsam Fir (FB)** – 0.9 percent. Balsam fir comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed swamp conifer stands, balsam fir is predominant.
- (14) **White Pine (PW)** – 0.5 percent. White pine comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands. In mixed pine stands, white pine is predominant.
- (15) **White Spruce (SW)** – 0.1 percent. White spruce comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.
- (16) **Hemlock (H)** – <0.1 percent. Hemlock comprises 50 percent or more of the basal area in sawtimber and poletimber stands, or 50 percent or more of the stems in sapling and seedling stands.

**Figure 300.1  
Forested Cover Types within the Douglas County Forest (percent)**



### 300.3.2 Non-Forested Communities

Non-forested communities account for approximately 20 percent of the Douglas County Forest (see Appendix L-I for a map). In broad categories, they are wetland (85.4 percent), open water (7.6 percent), upland (5.6 percent), and developed use areas (1.4 percent). Many of these communities provide important habitat for a variety of plant and animal species.

#### 300.3.2(a) Wetlands

Wisconsin State Statutes define a wetland as *an area where water is at, near, or above the land surface long enough to be capable of supporting aquatic or hydrophytic vegetation, and which has soils indicative of wet conditions.*

Wetlands are the transitional habitats between upland and aquatic systems where the water table usually is at or near the surface or where the land is covered by shallow water. The following wetland cover types are found on the Douglas County Forest:

- (1) **Lowland Brush (LB)** – 46.2 percent. Lowland brush on lands less than 10 percent stocked with tree species including more than 50 percent alder, bog birch, dogwood, or shrub willow.
- (2) **Marsh (K)** – 39.2 percent. Bogs, coarse emergent marsh vegetation, or other high water table areas associated with cattails, river bulrush, tall sedges, sphagnum moss, cotton grass, leatherleaf, cranberry, labrador tea, other lowland grasses, etc.

Wetland communities are recognized as a complex association of plants and animals, soils, and water levels with special natural values. These fragile systems are degraded rapidly by incompatible uses and unskilled management. Wetlands provide shoreline, flood, and, water-quality protection, groundwater recharge, and habitat for plants and animals. It is the policy of DCFD to preserve, protect, and manage wetlands under its jurisdiction in ways that recognize the natural values and their ecological importance. Different wetland types are characterized by their vegetation, soil type, and degree of saturation or water cover. Some of the more prominent types found on the Forest include:

- (1) **Aquatic Bed** – Aquatic plants growing entirely on or in a water body no deeper than 6 feet. Plants may include pondweed, duckweed, lotus, and water-lilies.
- (2) **Marshes** – Characterized by standing water and dominated by cattails, bulrushes, pickerelweed, lake sedges, and/or giant bur-reed.
- (3) **Sedge (wet) Meadows** – Often have saturated soils rather than standing water. Sedges, grasses, and reeds dominant, but blue flag iris, marsh milkweed, sneezeweed, mint, and several species of goldenrod and aster may be present.
- (4) **Scrub** – Characterized by woody shrubs and small trees such as tag alder, bog birch, willow, and dogwood. Includes bogs and alder tickets.



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- (5) **Forested** – Characterized by trees 20 feet or greater in height such as tamarack, white cedar, black spruce, elm, black ash, green ash, or silver maple. Includes bogs and forested floodplain complexes. Forest management is conducted on many of these areas in the County Forest with activities occurring primarily during frozen soil conditions.

**300.3.2(b) Non-Forested Upland**

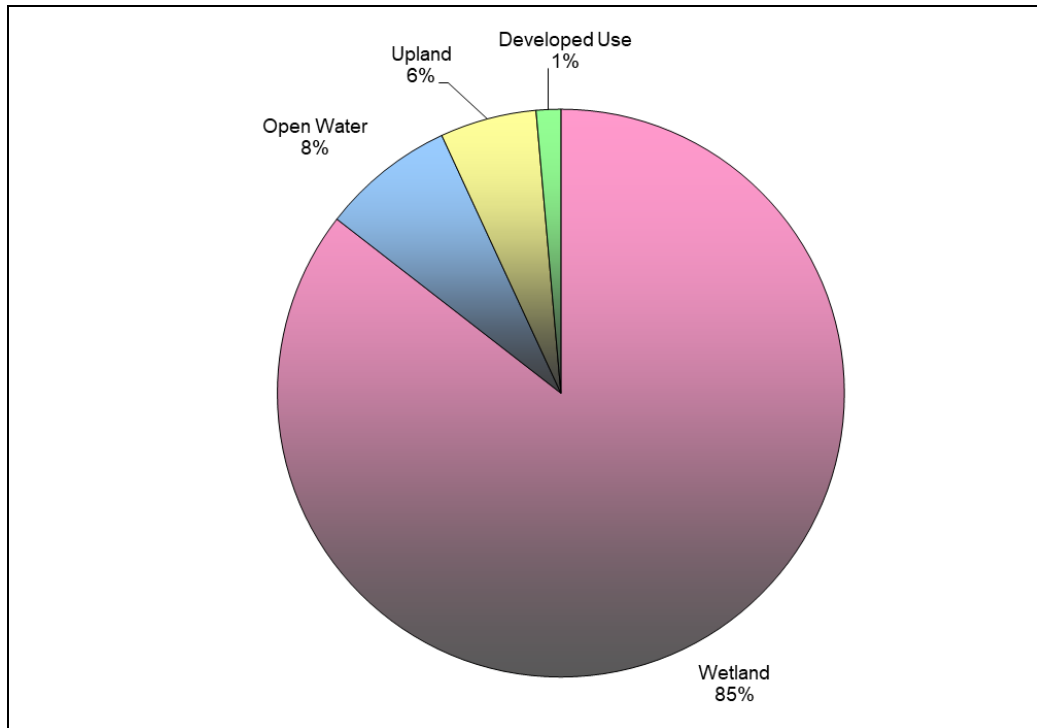
The following non-forested upland cover types are found on the County Forest:

- (1) **Grass (G)** – 2.8 percent. Upland grasses, forbs, and ferns, including abandoned fields less than 10 percent stocked with tree species. Ground cover is predominantly herbaceous vegetation, native/non-native grasses, or low growing woody plants.
- (2) **Upland Brush (UB)** – 2.8 percent. Upland sites less than 10 percent stocked with tree species but having 50 percent or more of the area stocked with taller growing, persistent shrubs. Includes shrubs such as hazel, gray dogwood, juneberry, sumac, ninebark, prickly ash, and others.

**300.3.2(c) Developed Use Areas**

Developed use areas (1.4 percent) are important components of the County Forest and include maintained campgrounds, parks, picnic areas, trails, waysides, and other recreational uses. Industrial uses such as utility corridor rights of way, non-metallic mines, and others are also included in this cover type.

**Figure 300.2**  
**Non-Forested Cover Types within the Douglas County Forest (percent)**



### 300.4 Fish and Wildlife

The County Forest provides habitat for numerous species of songbirds, waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, reptiles, amphibians, fish, mammals, and many invertebrates. Management of the Forest and the biotic communities it supports provides a diverse range of habitat types and ages for many wildlife species. Each species or interacting group of species thrives under different conditions, e.g., from open barrens to mature forests, from bogs to forested wetlands, or from spring ponds to lake shorelines. A diversity of plant communities is essential to providing a niche for wildlife. For example, the aspen forest type is recognized as key habitat for ruffed grouse and white-tailed deer and is important in maintaining biological diversity across North America. Similarly, longer rotation forest communities, e.g., uneven-aged northern hardwoods, provide important habitat for less well-known species such as the pileated woodpecker and northern goshawk. DCFD staff works closely with WDNR fish and wildlife managers to identify and manage critical habitat for many species of fish and wildlife.

### 300.5 Rare and Endangered Resources

Data on rare species, natural communities, and unique natural features occurring on the County Forest is recorded in the Wisconsin National History Inventory (NHI). All land disturbing projects will include an evaluation phase to determine whether an NHI screening is necessary.

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The NHI Database is the most comprehensive source of rare species data in the state. This data is used for a variety of purposes including research, land management, state land master planning, community planning, conservation planning, and review of public and private activities across the state. Due to the sensitive nature of rare species occurrence information, NHI Portal data is currently protected and only available to WDNR and DCFD staff who hold a data sharing license. Additional information on the NHI program is available from the WDNR website.

The Wisconsin Historical Preservation Database (WHPD) is the most comprehensive source of cultural resources for Wisconsin and is used in a similar fashion to the NHI data to identify and protect historically and/or culturally unique sites on the Forest. Additional information on the WHPD program is available from the Wisconsin Historical Society website.

### **300.6 Water**

Douglas County contains 4 major subbasins, or hydrologic unit codes (HUC 8):

- (1) Beartrap-Nemadji River
- (2) Namekagon River
- (3) St. Louis River
- (4) Upper St. Croix River

These four HUC 8 level subbasins are further divided into 17 HUC 10 level watersheds:

- (1) Amnicon and Middle Rivers
- (2) Black and Upper Nemadji Rivers
- (3) Bois Brule River
- (4) St. Croix and Eau Claire Rivers
- (5) St Louis and Lower Nemadji Rivers
- (6) Totagatic River
- (7) Upper St. Croix and Eau Claire Rivers
- (8) Upper Tamarack River

Appendixes W-I and X-I include maps of the HUC 8 level subbasins and 10 level watersheds located in Douglas County. Additional information on Douglas County watersheds is available from the USGS website.

Douglas County has 15,170 acres of total surface water recognized by the State as lakes. Included are 149 named lakes, 277 unnamed lakes, 6 named flowages, and 513 miles of shoreline. In addition, the County also has 1,749 miles of streams (725 intermittent and 1,024 perennial), including 312 miles classified as trout streams. The County Forest contains a variety of fishery resources. 33 named lakes, 4 names flowages, and 15 unnamed lakes have all or portions of their shoreline under County Forest ownership. The County Forest also includes frontage on 64 named streams (44 Creeks, 19 Rivers, 1 Brook) totaling more than 230 miles. An additional 192 miles of unnamed streams also exist in the Forest. The WDNR maintains a list of “outstanding and

exceptional resource waters” for Douglas County that can be found in NR 102.10 and 102.11 Wis. Adm. Code and on the WDNR website.

### **300.7 Cultural Factors**

#### **300.7.1 Economy**

The importance of County Forests to Wisconsin’s economic health continues to rise. County Forests sustain over 60,000 full-time jobs derived from logging, trucking, paper production, manufactured building materials, and lumber. Many additional jobs are created in such businesses as the expanding printing and manufacturing industries. Cumulatively, County Forests contribute a significant percentage of the State’s 24 billion dollar forest industry.

In addition, County Forests also provide a vital recreation resource to complement Wisconsin’s valuable tourism industry. By providing 2.4 million acres of public recreation land, County Forests offer outstanding recreational opportunities that attract many tourists. As Wisconsin’s and neighboring States’ populations continue to increase and public access to privately owned land continues to decrease, the need for accessible lands will unquestionably assume an ever more essential role in society’s future.

At a local level, the County Forest is vitally important to the economy of both Douglas County and the surrounding region. The production of timber for use in a variety of forest products benefits many regional industries and generates important revenue for the County, and the outstanding recreational opportunities on the Forest significantly contribute to the tourism-based sectors of the County’s economy. Additional information on the economic impact of the County Forest program is available from the WCFA website and economic data specific to Douglas County is available from the WDNR website.

#### **300.7.2 Education and Research**

Education and research continue to be critical components in decision making that affects our natural resources. As public needs and demands of forests and their products increase, we must assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Douglas County encourages and supports forest research as well as educational efforts that provide a better understanding of forest communities and long-term integrated and sustained management (See Section 210.2 for additional information on research).

### **300.8 Other Public Lands Ownership**

The County Forest shares a common boundary with numerous other public land ownerships including; National Park Service (St. Croix National Scenic Riverway lands), Brule River State Forest, City of Superior Municipal Forest, Bayfield County Forest, Sawyer County Forest, Washburn County Forest, Burnett County Forest, Nemadji State Forest in Minnesota, and Carlton County Minnesota lands. The DCFD will continue to consult with the agencies managing these other adjacent public lands as necessary for improving policy consistency and to continue building

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relationships in the best interest of the public.