"This institution is an equal opportunity provider."

Partners News

JANUARY 2024

Protecting your wooded land for the future is essential to clean water, clean air, wildlife habitat, sustainable wood supply...all things that are necessary to society and health, and that are gone forever if the land is developed.

Contact Us

Partners in Forestry
Landowner Cooperative

6063 Baker Lake Road
Conover, WI 54519
partnersinforestry@gmail.com

715-479-8528

Have you paid your PIF dues?

Inside this issue:

Thank you to:

The UW Center for Cooperatives for their support of our important efforts in sustainable forestry and forest land conservation

All who have supported the Community Forest activities of Northwoods Alliance in establishing Headwaters Cedar and the ever-popular Wildcat Falls Community Forest. Certainly, acquiring Headwaters Cedar Community Forest was the highlight of last year.

The valuable programs which assure the lands will be open to future generations-Knowles Nelson Stewardship, USFS Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs. The photo on page 8 of family users on the Pilgrim Forest tells this story the best.

****

Containing Oak Wilt with Girdling and Herbicide

Download PDF (6.0 MB) https://www.fs.usda.gov/research/nrs/products/rooted-research/containing-oak-wilt-girdling-and-herbicide

Oak wilt is an aggressive vascular disease that typically kills infected trees within 3 to 8 months. It is particularly lethal for trees in the red oak group (section Lobatae). Oak wilt is caused by the fungus Bretziella fagacearum and transmitted over land by sap beetles (Coleoptera: Nitidulidea). Although the disease can be transmitted over land by sap beetles, the majority of oak wilt is spread by grafted roots from other nearby oaks with the infection. Oak wilt is currently in many eastern and midwestern states. Projected to expand northward as the climate warms, the disease has the potential to profoundly impact oak and oak management in the decades to come. Early detection and management are crucial for containing the spread of oak wilt.

Key Management Findings:

- Once infected, oak wilt can kill an otherwise healthy red oak tree in 3 to 8 months.
- This study of the girdle-herbicide method reported an overall success rate of 55 percent in containing oak wilt spread. In clusters of four or fewer infected trees, the success rate was up to 81 percent effective.
- Early detection and rapid response are critical for containing oak wilt spread.
- In certain landscapes, the girdle-herbicide can serve as a viable, cost-effective alternative to traditional methods like the vibratory plow.

****

Pilgrim River Forest and its Geo-Heritage

You have, by now, been familiarized with the Pilgrim River Watershed Project in the Upper Peninsula. We have covered the progress of the conservation effort since 2009 and celebrated public benefits of Forest Legacy and Community Forest since project completion in 2017. Here is a primer on the geological heritage of the watershed, thanks to Michigan Tech University. This is Copper Country and it is interesting to learn what is under the tree roots!

Pilgrim River Watershed--Brief Geologic Background

The Pilgrim River closely parallels the Keweenaw Fault (Fig 1), running about 0.5 to about 1 mile S of the fault line, on the sandstone side. It also shows that the river, like many rivers follows a path which takes advantage of a natural zone of weakness. The offset to the south is expected because the sandstone is weaker and more easily eroded than the basalt. The valley is steeper on the Northern side because of the harder basalt rock which underlies that side. On the basalt side are many old mines which are aligned along layers in the basalt where there were copper-rich amygdaloids (lava flow tops).

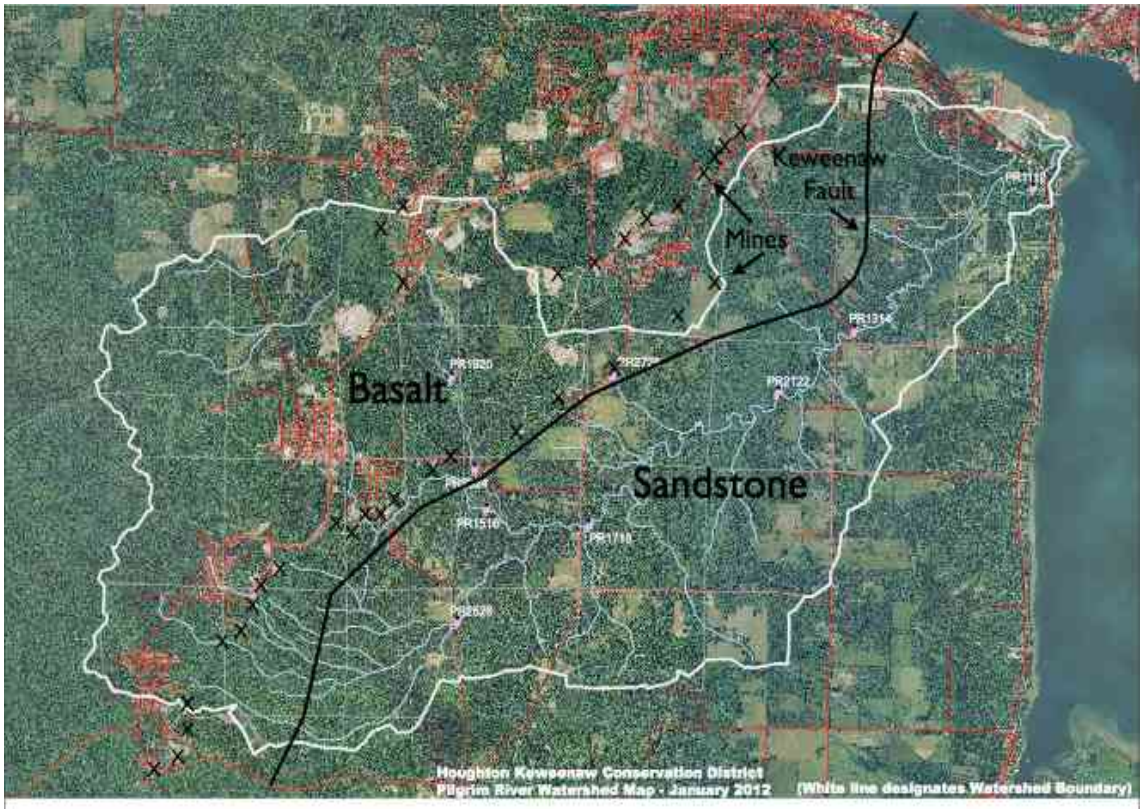


Fig 1: Simplified Geologic map of Pilgrim Watershed

The Keweenaw Fault is a geologic wonder which records a great geological thrusting event that ended the Keweenaw rifting of 1.1. It is thought to have been caused by a great continental collision (called the Grenville Orogeny by geologists) which broke apart the continent and thrust the basalt section radically upward, with an offset of thousands of feet. The sense and strength of this geological feature rivals any on Earth, but it has no seismicity associated with it now. It is a great fossil fault, with its former tectonic driver now impotent. The fault itself is a line that can be drawn on a map (Fig 1) and the dramatic sense of its movement visualized (Fig 2) but it is hard to see in person. There are a few places (The Natural Wall on the edge of the Traprock Valley, on Bete Gris beach, Douglas Houghton Falls, on Peepsock Creek near the SDC) where it can be fingered, but it general it is marked best by steep slopes where the edge of the sandstone is deeply eroded and basalt from the north side of the fault tumbles down to the river.

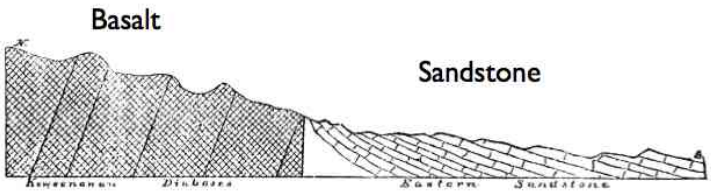
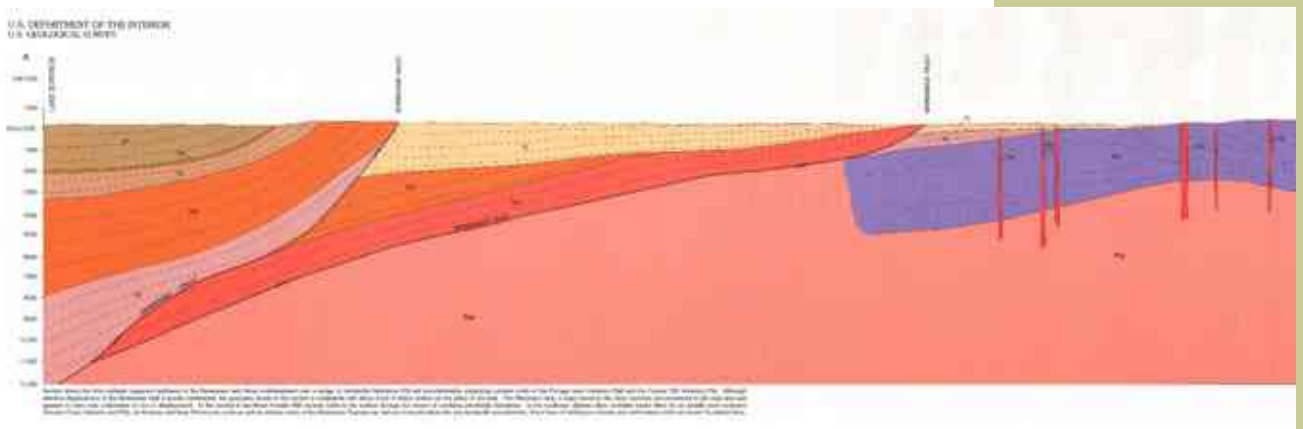


Fig 2 Section showing relation of Eastern Sandstone to Keweenawan diabase, T. 50, R. 39 W., Michigan. Length of section, one half mile.

Irving & Chamberlin, 1885, USGS Bull 23

All of the rock below the watershed is likely older than 1 billion years. The Basalt is a sequence of up to about 400 lava flows, one on top of the other, all dipping to the Northwest at steep angles of 45 degrees or more (Fig 2). There are a few layers of conglomerates in the otherwise monotonous dark grey lava rock sequence. The lavas have mineralized flow tops (amygdaloids) which contain copper and a variety of colored minerals. The most highly mineralized layers are the sites of shafts and mines, many of which are plotted in Figure 1. The shafts have mine dumps where mineralized waste rock has been piled. In many cases these waste piles have now been removed for construction use. The mine waste has only minor environmental impact because the minerals do not produce highly toxic or acid drainage. The south side of the watershed is made up of fewer and shorter tributaries which flow to the Pilgrim over very low slopes, while the north side is steeper and marked by more and longer streams. The south part of the watershed is underlain by sandstone and the north by basalt. The geochemistry of the two rock types and their porosity permeability contrasts are marked. The Jacobsville sandstone is a porous aquifer, marked by sulfide minerals and uranium occurrences. The Basalts of the Portage Lake Volcanics are relatively impermeable, and have geochemical signatures which mimic the copper deposits. The sandstone layers are nearly horizontal, probably dipping a few degrees to the south, while the basalts dip steeply N (Fig 2). The distinct differences of the two sides of the watershed and its relatively undisturbed environmental condition and location near the university make it advantageous for geo-environmental watershed research.



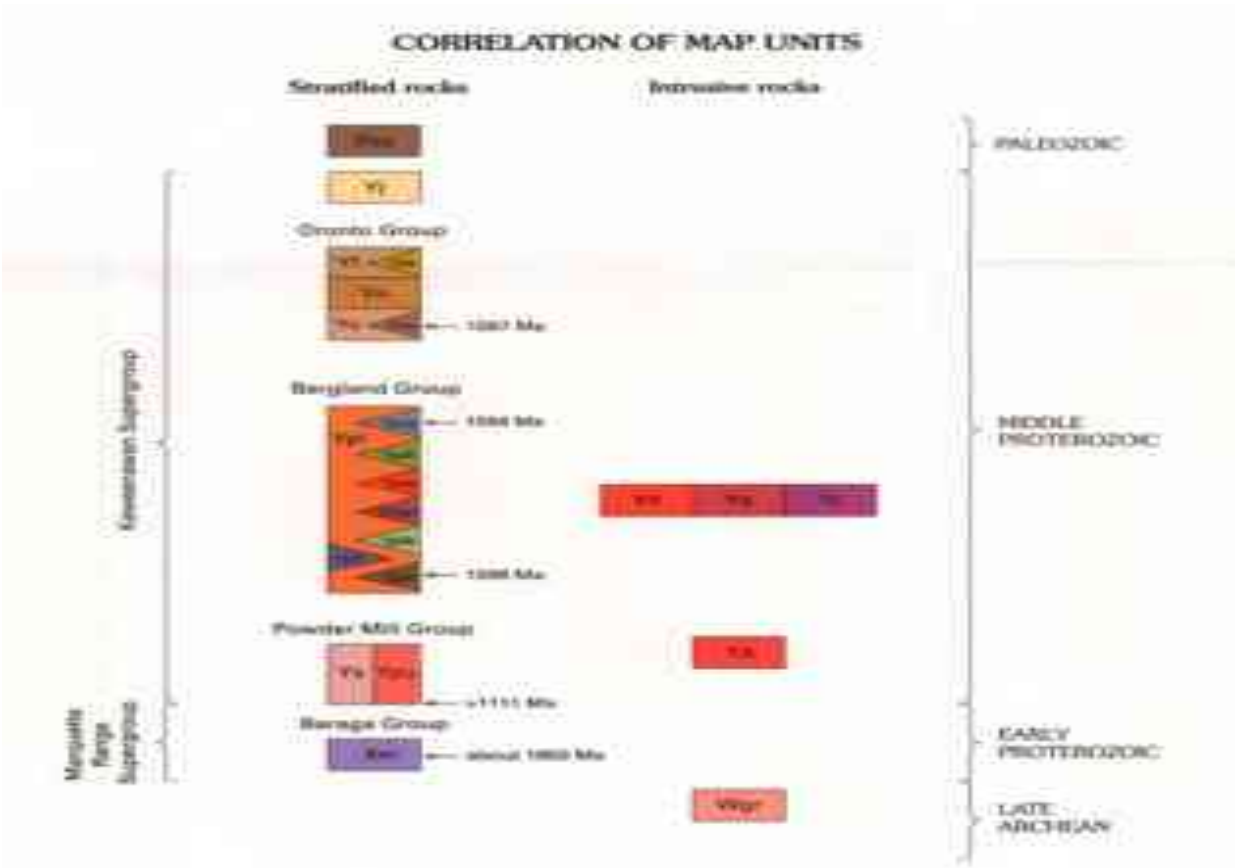
GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE KEWEENAW PENINSULA AND ADJACENT AREA, MICHIGAN

By

William F. Cannon and Suzanne W. Nicholson

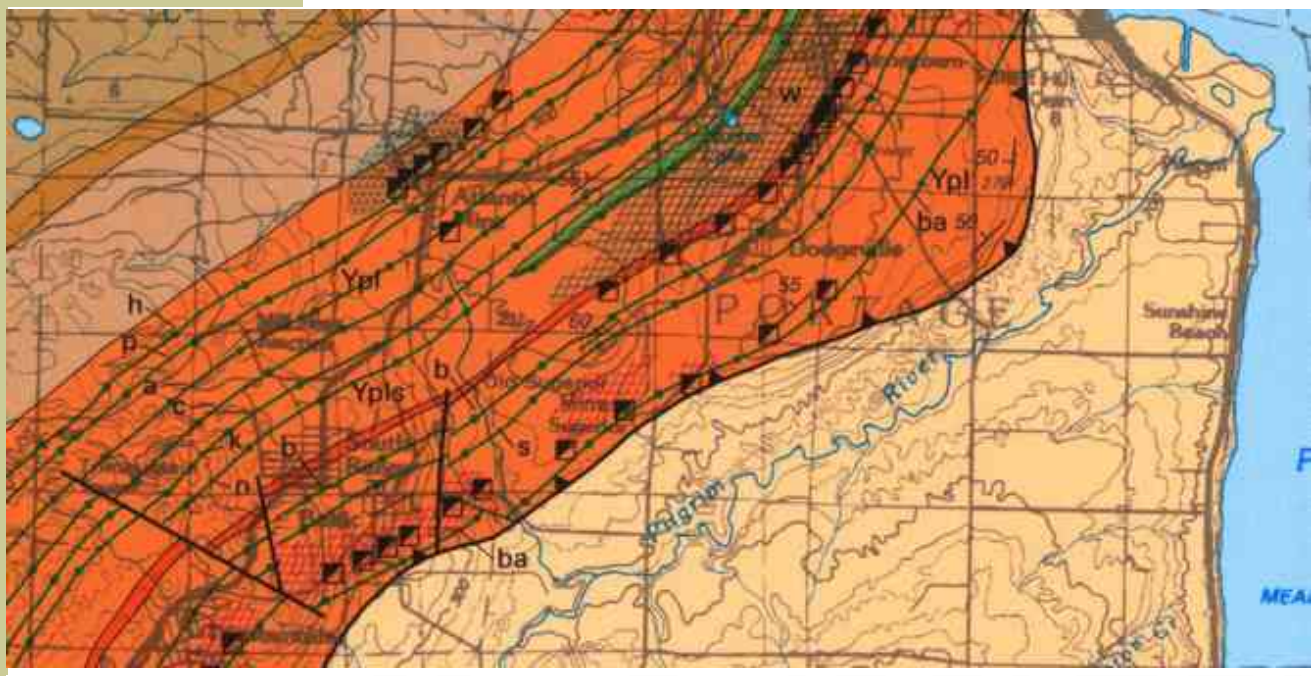
2001

In this more modern view of the Fault, there is splitting and more irregularity. Thrusting occurred on several different fault planes.



To see these maps more clearly, copy and paste the following link:

https://www.geo.mtu.edu/KeweenawGeoheritage/The_Fault/The_Fault/Pilgrim_River.html



GEOLOGIC MAP OF THE KEWEENAW PENINSULA AND ADJACENT AREA, MICHIGAN

By

William F. Cannon and Suzanne W. Nicholson

2001

Want to visit the Pilgrim Forest? See Northwoods Forest Conservation: A Handbook for map
The Pilgrim Forest is an asset to the area, serving not only the community recreation needs but an active educational site by MTU for forestry, fishery and aquatics as well as geology. We do not take lightly the very fact that, if we had not achieved protection through these valuable conservation programs, that access would not be possible for the future generations of students and recreationists.

Highlights that welcome you to the Pilgrim River conservation project:
*Public Access through the **Forest Legacy and Community Forest Programs** on over 1400 acres with miles of trails. boundaryroadtrails.org is a small group of trail volunteers promoting non-motorized access on the project.
*Coaster Brook trout habitat. Numerous feeder streams. Sandstone features. Canada Yew. Sugar maple, yellow birch, pine, cedar and hemlock dominate the forest overstory.

What is Float Copper? Float copper is native copper which has been moved from its original location by the action of glaciers. Glaciers are one of the more common sources of stones moving throughout history. As they moved and melted, they leave behind nodules and masses of material from other areas. Float copper can range from a few grams of material to many tons. The most famous piece of float copper is the Ontonagon Boulder, a 2-ton boulder discovered at Victoria Falls near Rockland MI, on display at the Smithsonian.

Feeder stream flows under sandstone formation on the Pilgrim River Legacy Forest.

Many high overlooks of the Pilgrim River on the conserved acreage.

Abundant Canada yew on the forest understory.

Float Copper retrieved following its theft from the project lands. See Partners News story September 2020.

Family time on Boundary Road trail January 2024-photo by Boundary Road Trails on Pilgrim River Legacy Forest

PIF note: *The Pilgrim River Watershed Conservation Project covers over 10% of this specific watershed of the Pilgrim River.*

****

As a service to PIF members, contact Joe for special pricing in your needs for:

*** Napoleon wood stoves**

*** wood finishes and preservatives**

*** garden and tree amendments**

*** grass seed for trails**

****

WILDCAT FALLS COMMUNITY FOREST HAS A TIMBER SALE

Under the high conservation value forestry guidelines, and with input from MDNR forester Gary Willis, John had set up a timber harvest on the Wildcat Falls Community Forest, which is now ongoing. Primarily in the hardwood stands near County Line Lake, but with several acres north of the waterfall the dense older stands of hardwood are undergoing a light thinning. There is also some aspen removal and a little hardwood thinning on the 2021 addition '40'.

The logging is being done by a hand cutter, with a chainsaw and single bunk forwarder. A feller machine has been used for directing fall of some dangerous trees.

The advantages of this select harvest fall well within the Community Benefits of the USFS Community Forest Program. Northwoods Alliance Inc. will use any income from this selection harvest to further land conservation with public access in this region.

John describes the conservation guidelines followed in setting up and monitoring this sale on the Community Forest: This prescription fits with older dense stands that have high conservation value. Our goals are as follows:

- All trees over 25" in diameter breast height (DBH) are retained for legacy trees
- All oak is retained for mast- acorn production as wildlife food
- Residual basal areas are kept higher than typical harvest with bottom basal close to 100
- Over half of trees between 23-25" DBH retained to replenish future legacy trees
- Staying extra safe distance from any riparian features
- No harvesting in the cedar-hemlock, near the rock outcrops or creek

****

Congrats to Paul Hetzler, I asked him 'what's new?' and his reply "The Saturday Evening Post just ranked my essay the second-most popular feature of 2023". There's no accounting for taste.

Connecting the Dots (This is not the Post essay) by Paul Hetzler

Back in primary school in the '70s, we learned about nature's "food chain." In this linear model, which I assume was devised by surveyors who normally lay out rail lines and utility corridors, a tiny plant-eating creature, let's say a minnow, gets eaten by a bigger fish, which is then eaten by a larger one, and so on. Eventually, the biggest fish of all dies and its rotting carcass becomes plant fertilizer, and is maybe nibbled on by a few vengeful small fish.

After a while, someone recognized that life on Earth was probably more complex than a straight line, and thus the "food web" template was born. The food web, which preceded the world-wide web, was meant to fully explain how nature worked, or at the very least, how spiders make a living.

Scottish-American naturalist John Muir, who founded The Sierra Club and helped create the U.S. National Park system, wrote about nature's interconnectedness more than a century ago. In 1911 he famously said ***"When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe."*** This suggests something more complicated than a web – a tapestry, for instance.

The corollary to everything being stitched together with unseen strands is that we humans never really know what consequences our actions will have when we start tugging on a loose thread. DDT seemed like a bright idea until we realized, almost too late, that it was wiping out eagles, hawks, osprey, and other raptors.

In the late 1990s, a well-known agrichemical company modified corn DNA to produce a toxin that killed corn earworms. As they patted themselves on the backs for their miracle, the western bean cutworm, an even worse pest that used to be kept in check by the very earworm they just killed, swept east across the continent, and is now wreaking havoc on corn crops. In spite of our alleged sophistication, for the most part we're groping around in the dark. But not in the fun sense of the phrase.

Although researchers are a long way from being able to expose the myriad filaments that bind nature as one, even the relatively simple parts of the web we have observed are fascinating. Take flowers and pollinators, for example.

There is rightly a lot of concern about dwindling populations of bees, both domestic and wild. We know most food crops need some kind of pollinator, but we less-often think about the fact pollinators rely on flowering plants for food. This interdependence is known as mutualism, which in some cases can be oddly specific.

The flowers of some orchids have the size, shape and colour patterns of the female of the particular bee species on which the orchids depend for pollination. Beyond visual mimicry, the plants make the exact sex pheromone produced by female bees. The males, which obviously have not evolved good eyesight, land on the lady-bee decoy flowers. In the process of trying to mate with these flowers, an unusually thorough pollination job ensues. Luckily, the males seem to accidentally bump into enough *real* female bees to perpetuate their species.

There is a type of desert moth that lays a single egg deep inside each yucca flower it visits. The caterpillar that hatches out of the egg is protected from predation by the flower, but as the yucca seeds develop, it eats some of them. The seed-chomping habit of the moth larvae sounds like bad fortune for the plant, but these

moths are the only insects capable of pollinating a yucca flower. If something wiped out the moths, yuccas would die out, and if yuccas disappeared, the moths would soon follow.

Plants that depend on birds for successful reproduction tend to make flowers of certain colours, mainly red, and specific shapes as well. In our region, the thin, trumpet-like corolla of a native *Monarda* blossom is well-suited to a hummingbird's long bill and tongue. Ironically, the common name for this plant is bee balm, even though it is nearly impossible for a lot of bee species to pollinate it. *Monarda* has evolved together with hummingbirds over time to the point where most other pollinators cannot do the job.

In forests across our neck of the woods, there are fungi that colonize tree roots and root hairs. Often, a given fungus will only associate with a single tree species or genus. This fungal-root relationship is not as entertaining as bees trying to mate with flowers, but it is more common. It's also critically important to the health of our forests, because the fungi, called mycorrhizae, increase the surface area of root systems exponentially.

Dr. Nina Bassuk of Cornell's Urban Horticulture Department has said that at least 90% of all water and nutrients used by trees are taken up by these beneficial fungi. In return for their essential service, the fungi get a substrate on which to grow, and they extract a small quantity of sugars from the trees. Landscape trees often suffer from a lack of mycorrhizae, because things like lawn chemicals, compaction, and warm soil temperatures suppress mycorrhizal fungi.

Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh has a different take on the dynamic of nature's interdependence, calling it "interbeing." He contends that a sheet of paper holds within it the sunshine that made the forest grow, a point science would agree with. But he goes further, suggesting the work of the loggers who cut the trees, as well as the paper-mill operators, the farmers who fed them all, and the parents who birthed and raised everyone involved, are also in some way represented by the paper.

In Thich Nhat Hanh's words: ***"You cannot point out one thing that is not here… earth, rain, minerals in the soil, sunshine…. Everything co-exists…. You cannot just be by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing."*** Whether one views the tapestry of life from a spiritual, scientific, or philosophic point of view, it is far more intricate than we were taught in school. We need to err on the side of caution when deciding to make changes to our environment.

So, the next time you need to lift a heavy object, remember that everything in the Universe is hitched up to it – please, get someone to help you.

PIF friend Paul Hetzler has a new book out now : Studies show reading prevents cognitive decline, and laughter relieves pain. Get both with *Birds of Happiness Aren't Blue*! Each word lovingly chosen to give you more smiles per page by an all-natural, fully biodegradable author. Books guaranteed to be:

- Portable
- High in Fibre
- Made without Aspartame, ChatGPT, or other Artificial Ingredients
- pH Balanced
- Cruelty-Free* *except for certain puns

https://www.amazon.com/Birds-Happiness-Arent-Blue-Nature-Essay/dp/B0CCZSY8N9

****

For The Birds

This study (link below and at www.partnersinforestry.com) reaffirms the large body of research which concludes that tree species diversity as well as stand structure diversity is key for bird conservation at the landscape level. From this study: "The youngest and oldest age classes of forest are underrepresented in eastern forests, and efforts to increase both of these age classes are necessary for biodiversity conservation" and "The homogeneity of our eastern forests is a well-documented artifact of human land use and suppression of natural disturbances. Increasing diversity through silviculture can help managers meet ecological objectives."
https://www.fs.usda.gov/nrs/pubs/Rooted-in-Research/nrs_rooted-res_23_jan2024.pdf

USFS Proposes National Forest Plan Amendment to Conserve and Steward Old Growth Forests

Excerpts from USDA Press Release

Consistent with executive order to conserve and restore old and mature forests, the U.S. Department of Agriculture announced a proposal to amend all 128 forest land management plans to conserve and steward old-growth forest conditions on national forests nationwide.

Healthy, climate-resilient old-growth forests store large amounts of carbon, increase biodiversity, reduce wildfire risks, enable subsistence and cultural uses, provide outdoor recreational opportunities and promote sustainable local economic development. Land management plans provide direction for how national forests are managed for their many uses, including conservation. The proposed amendment will use the best available science, including Indigenous Knowledge, to provide consistent direction related to old-growth forest conditions across national forests and grasslands.

"Old-growth forests are a vital part of our ecosystems and a special cultural resource. This proposed nationwide forest plan amendment – the first in the agency's history – is an important step in conserving these national treasures," said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. "Climate change is presenting new threats like historic droughts and catastrophic wildfire. This clear direction will help our old-growth forests thrive across our shared landscape."

These actions include defining and conducting the first-ever nationwide inventory of old-growth and mature forests across national forests and grasslands. Launched on Earth Day 2023, this initial inventory report shows that the Forest Service manages nearly 25 million acres of old growth and more than 68 million acres of mature forests on national forests. The proposal USDA is putting forward today relates only to lands managed by USDA Forest Service.

See full press release here: https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/newsroom/releases/usda-proposes-first-its-kind-national-forest-plan-amendment-conserve

****

And looking across the ocean- Forest conservation with old growth appreciation is not just an American idea

WARSAW, Jan 8 (Reuters) -

The Polish government ordered a state-run company that manages more than 7 million hectares of the country's forests to curtail logging in the 10 most cherished forest areas, delivering on a campaign promise following elections last October. "We have decided to stop logging in the most valuable forest areas. It's time to get saws out of the special Polish forests," Climate Minister Paulina Hennig-Kloska told a news briefing on Monday. Hennig-Kloska said the ministry's decision, to be in place for six months, is a first step before a systemic solution that will further limit logging in such woodlands.

According to public opinion polls, 75% of Poles believe that logging should be reduced. Prime Minister Donald Tusk has repeatedly said his government would boost protection of woodlands.

Last month, more than 100 environmental groups called for a moratorium on logging in the oldest and most precious forests. The measures concern 10 locations, including the Carpathian Forest in the southeastern corner of Poland as well as Augustow and Knyszyn Forest in the northeast. A total of 1.5% of the woodlands managed by state forests will be affected, the minister said.

Hennig-Kloska said the ministry supports increasing acreage of existing national parks and creating new ones, including in the Carpathian Forest.

While Poland halted large-scale logging in the ancient Bialowieza Forest after the European Court of Justice (ECJ) ruled in April 2018 that it had broken environmental laws, it started working on resuming it three years later. In a separate verdict last year the ECJ ruled that Polish forestry law breaches European Union law.

Increased logging in the forest, a UNESCO World Heritage site that straddles the border with Belarus, proved a major flashpoint between Poland and the European Union in 2016-2018. In 2022, UNESCO called on Poland to delay construction of a border barrier with Belarus that runs through Bialowieza Forest until it can prove that it will not harm local wildlife.
https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/poland-orders-halt-logging-10-oldest-forest-areas-2024-01-08/

****

Thinking globally from Earth Snap **But act locally!**

A study conducted by a collaborative team from Lancaster University, Bangor University, and the University of British Columbia sheds new light on the extensive benefits of secondary forests.

Naturally regrown forests, also known as secondary forests, play a critical role in the connectivity of old-growth forest habitats. They can also help to shield other plants and wildlife from the harsh effects of climate change.

Forest restoration

"Restoration of forests across the globe would make a crucial contribution to achieving global climate change mitigation, with the growth of secondary forests on deforested land in the moist tropics fundamental to success," wrote the study authors.

"Although tropical secondary forests (defined here as forest growing on previously disturbed land) store less carbon than old-growth forests, they rapidly remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere."

Forest fragmentation

The research emphasizes the significant impact of secondary forests in mitigating the effects of forest fragmentation in the Amazon, an area crucial for global biodiversity conservation.

"Secondary forests cover just 190,000 km2 of the Amazon but connect more than 2 million isolated fragments of old-growth forest, prominent amongst the world's most important habitats for biodiversity conservation," said study co-author Professor John Healey.

"The secondary forests are helping maintain connectivity for patches of old-growth forest that are too small to support long-term viable populations of rare species."

These connections are vital for the survival of rare species that rely on extensive, undisturbed habitats.

Climate buffering

"Secondary forests are buffering as much as 41% of old-growth forest edges, potentially shielding them from negative edge effects such as hotter temperatures and wind," said study lead author Charlotte Smith.

"Proximity to old-growth forests can also help the rate of biodiversity and biomass recovery in secondary forests. It is positive that 94% of secondary forests were connected to old-growth forest. However, may old-growth forest remnants are small and degraded patches, so only 57% of secondary forest was connected to an area of extensive, structurally-intact old-growth."

Study implications

Professor Healey says the research provides powerful new evidence of the importance of managing forests at the landscape scale.

"Promoting forest restoration through secondary forests located next to old-growth forest remnants can play a vital role in both conserving biodiversity in these remnants and the rate of biodiversity recovery in the secondary forests themselves."

The team notes that more research is needed to improve our understanding of the mechanisms driving variation in forest recovery and the potential benefits of secondary forest as buffers so that we can refine current estimates of forest carbon stocks and habitat provision.

UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration

The study underscores the importance of secondary forests in the broader context of the climate crisis and the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. This global initiative, spanning from 2021 to 2030, aims to halt the degradation of ecosystems and restore them to achieve global environmental goals.

Led by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration calls for a collective effort from governments, businesses, civil society, and individuals.

The primary objective is to revitalize millions of hectares of terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. The restoration efforts encompass a wide range of ecosystems, including forests, farmlands, cities,

wetlands, and oceans. These endeavors are crucial for combating climate change, enhancing food security, providing clean water, and halting biodiversity loss.

The study is published in the journal *Environmental Research Letters*

****

Oak Mortality Increased In 2023

By Michael Hillstrom, WI DNR Forest Health Specialist
Michael.Hillstrom@wisconsin.gov

White, red and bur oaks have been experiencing increased mortality in Wisconsin and neighboring states over the last few years.

The causes of mortality are varied, but two-lined chestnut borer (TLCB) is the most common culprit. Wisconsin has switched from a period of historically wet years (2017-2020) to drought conditions that have become more severe each year (2021-2023). Add in frost damage, storm damage, increased growing season length and aging forests and the environmental recipe exists for stressed oaks that are more susceptible to attack by insects and diseases.

Oak wilt certainly remains an issue, primarily for red oaks, but in many cases the recent increased oak mortality is the result of environmental stressors, insects and fungi.

Here are a few of the common situations which can lead to oak mortality:

- Drought-stressed oaks that were defoliated by spongy moth, oak leafroller and/or other caterpillars. Those conditions have been enough to kill stressed trees or make them susceptible to mortality from TLCB and Armillaria. Oak trees defoliated by spongy moth should have produced new leaves in three to four weeks if they were healthy. Oaks that were defoliated but did not produce new leaves usually will not recover the following year.
- Landscape oaks, oaks on forest edges and recently thinned oak stands that are hit hardest by drought and often have ground disturbance or soil compaction.
- Stressed white and bur oaks, 80 or more years old, being killed by TLCB, armillaria and potentially root pathogens such as phytophthora.
- Even generally healthy oaks stands are seeing mortality of poor condition and suppressed trees from drought, insects and fungi.

It's important to note that stress events such as droughts often lead to mortality events caused by TLCB and Armillaria, both native species. Trees that are attacked by TLCB and Armillaria during a stress event may be killed quickly or may die over the next one to three years. As always, proper forest management is the best solution. Well cared-for forests are better able to survive stressful environmental conditions.

However, given recent dry conditions, the best option may be to avoid forestry work in oaks stands for a few years until they have a chance to recover. This recommendation is consistent with the spongy moth forest management guidelines, but applies to many situations that put oaks under significant stress, such as drought. If salvage harvesting will be conducted, do so only during frozen ground conditions to avoid causing additional stress within a stand.

For yard or other high-value oaks, simply watering them low and slow (about 1 inch per week) during the growing season often is the best option to keep them healthy and help them recover from stress events. Mulching is another good option.

It is also important to avoid injury and ground disturbance. Certified arborists may be able to protect healthy oaks with insecticides and fungicides, but oaks with significant canopy dieback or epicormic branching (shoots rising from buds lying under the bark of a trunk, stem or branch of the tree) are unlikely to recover and should be removed if they pose a hazard.

****

PELICAN RIVER FOREST IN ONEIDA COUNTY (MOSTLY)—NEWS AND COMMENTARY

We have covered the Pelican River Forest Legacy project for over a year now. You recall, the local partisan-based opposition to the project and the Joint Committee on Finance denying the Knowles Nelson Stewardship funded state share last year. The **Conservation Fund** stepped up their fundraising and has matched the deficit from the denied state grant to achieve a match to the USFS Forest Legacy grant. So, let's get it done-right?

Last year the opposition had stated that the project could proceed without state funding. An early opposition point was taking future development off the Monico lands on the highways. So DNR and the Fund drafted a new map removing ~1200 acres near the main roads, and had the project reappraised. But, recently as the project seemed set to proceed, the partisan opposition from Oneida, Forest and Langlade counties sent letters to the USFS asserting the federal grant should be rescinded.

Weirdly, it appears the opposition is either being led by or assisted by an extremist group from Texas called the American Stewards of Liberty (ASL). Research shows this group was originally formed based on opposition to paying the federal government for cattle grazing on public lands. Thus, we scratch our heads wondering why and how a fringe Texas group should dictate forestry policy in northern Wisconsin. The group has a campaign underway to oppose the volunteer 30x30 conservation initiative, and essentially opposes conservation overall. ASL claims to be a property rights group, but apparently only when our property rights agree with their outlook. In other words, it's your right to fragment, develop, destroy or abuse your land, but not to conserve it!

But this gets stranger. A search found these excerpts from western news stories and commentary:

> *American Stewards of Liberty is very aware that its position is on the far fringe of American public opinion. In March 2022, ASL emailed its supporters to inform them that "Four out of five voters in the U.S. support the 30 x 30 Plan which is embraced by the Biden administration"—a remarkable moment of honesty from a group that generally relies on misrepresenting statistics. ASL correctly cited polling from Colorado College and Natural Resources Defense Council that found 77% of Westerners and 80% of voters nationwide support the 30x30 goal. The email went on to say that "we all know that this plan is not about conservation. It is about the destruction of our nation, and it is only the first step in their agenda." ASL's plea to ignore this widespread support was stunningly anti-democratic and racist: it argued that "only 1 in 4 Americans own land," therefore "the majority of people supporting 30x30 do not own land and should have no say."*
>
> *Financially, ASL exists primarily as a pass-through for its only employees, Margaret and Daniel Bayfield. In 2020, the most recent year for which data is available, the Byfields paid themselves $192,000, accounting for 65 percent of the group's total spending, according to the group's IRS filings. That year, ASL raised $203,000 in revenue, resulting in a $90,000 loss for the non-profit. Each year since 2017, the Byfields' salaries have amounted to more than half of ASL's total expenses.*

However, that is not to say ASL has steered all Texans. This story talks about Texas, mostly privately owned, has about a million acres in conservation easements- Texas family makes heartwarming decision about property that's been in their family for generations: 'It will always be our family place' (msn.com)

However, Texas ranks number 45 (at the bottom) of the list for the percentage of conserved public land available for recreation. Texas only has 4% of its land-space available for public use. The other 96% is privately owned. Recreation options in Texas are fee-based because there is so little public land available. See: https://www.summitpost.org/public-and-private-land-percentages-by-us-states/186111

Nor has ASL influenced all conservative states as this western excerpt and the example below state so well------- *In recent years, ASL has sought to push itself more squarely into mainstream conservative circles, but has suffered setbacks as governors and members of Congress have withdrawn from working with the group.*

Conservation should be Bi-partisan---- Idaho republican Governor Brad Little's example. He approved a Forest Legacy easement that protected 156 square miles of private land from development and said *"We're going to get more of these. The timber industry likes it, the conservation community likes it, the hunters like it. The community likes it because the land doesn't get fractured…."*

So, it appears to be a fair question—Why are these Texas folks with extremist views, steering the future of forestry in northern Wisconsin?

****

150 Years After the Fact, Keweenaw Bay Tribe May Be Compensated for Stolen Land

The U.S. Senate has unanimously approved a bipartisan bill to address longstanding land claims by the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, potentially providing the tribe with nearly $34 million in federal funds. The bill aims to settle the wrongful transfer of 2,720 acres of land by the U.S. government to Michigan as compensation for the Sault Ste. Marie Canal construction, violating treaties signed in 1842 and 1854. The Keweenaw Bay tribe has long held that the illegal land seizure caused economic harm, preventing the development of valuable lakeside properties. If the legislation passes the U.S. House and is signed by the President, the tribe will receive compensation for the land through future budgeting, allowing funds for government services, economic development, natural resource protection, and land acquisition.

****

Have you checked out PIF's website?

www.partnersinforestry.com

The website is for members to expose your business, service or tree farm, share thoughts, ideas, articles, photos, and links.

This is your COOP, we need your input as much or more than your dues.

PIF and Northwoods Alliance Inc. are proud to be advocating for further forest conservation in Vilas County at this critical time as parcelization and fragmentation are, frankly, out of control!

In the Town of Land O Lakes, with widespread support including the Town and two county departments, there are currently two projects under review by the USFS Forest Legacy ranking panel. Submitted under the new category funded by the Inflation Reduction Act, Small Tracts with Greater Strategic Importance, both these projects have exceptional public benefits.

The Border Lakes Project encompasses about 1200 acres on two watersheds. Highlights include Emil Lake which is the headwaters of the Tamarack Creek (WI River tributary), the popular Forest Lake segment of the Wilderness Lakes bike trail, closed canopy hardwood forests and a long scenic stretch of frontage on County Road B. It also shares ~2 miles of common boundary with State of Wisconsin lands. This great project is just a couple miles-- east of Headwaters Cedar Community Forest and south of Sylvania Wilderness.

The second project is a 191-acre addition to the Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest. This project, sometimes referred to as the Upper Wisconsin River Bird Habitat, links the legacy forest with state and county forest lands. Close to two state natural areas, and hosting several threatened & endangered species, this also is a special wildlife habitat project.

See www.northwoodalliance.org for photos and details on these two projects.

Vilas County Forest:

Last year a 450- acre parcel to the south west of Buckatabon Lake and straddling the Conover and Plum Lake town lines came on the market. The land has significant border with the Vilas County Forest (VCF), which immediately expressed interest and started the long process of gaining support and working toward acquisition. PIF was proud to help and expressed full support in March of 2023. The seller, lacking the patience required and well aware of the fragmentation frenzy in the area, started selling off 5 acre lots, and to date at least 17 are sold of about 21 surveyed lots, existing on approximately 100 acres.

The remaining ~350 acres still have a chance to become part of the VCF, and has been appraised as such. The funding could be partly from the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program, which should fund 50% of the value from the lower of two appraisals conducted. While the seller is adhering to the higher off the two appraisals, and allowing his actions of fragmentation speak for itself, we fully agree this is an important opportunity to expand the VCF in a sought-after area.

Vilas County has experienced a huge transformation of the landscape in recent years and we support the VCF efforts to conserve this parcel for all to access. We are happy to assist in any way we can and are grateful to the VCF for showing the foresight to expand as a benefit to all.

See February 2016 Partners News for a refresher on Wisconsin's County Forest Program.

To their credit, the Bayfield County Forest has shown visionary leadership with their expansion efforts. Adams County, which formerly had no county forest, but was once incredibly endowed with paper company lands, has the newest county forest in WI- being the 30th WI county in the County Forest Program.

****

If visiting the Upper Wisconsin River Legacy Forest, you will notice a recent thinning in the red pine just north of County Road E. These thinning are important in red pine to maintain its growth balance between height and diameter and occur at about 10 to 12-year intervals in a planted stand.

Parting words from Joe:

As you know by now, PIF and Northwoods Alliance follow a little different model than does a typical forest owner COOP, or land conservation group. No one receives a salary, which exposes our all-volunteer model. Being physically unable to do most of the high demand heavy lifting my long career required, I however still feel the need to be productive. I believe I speak for several of my associates as well, when I say productive means assisting in sustaining and providing nature's benefits to you and the general public including those who do not own land!

Northwoods Alliance now holds two community forests and you and the general public, including those who do not own land, have a stake in those diverse 400 acres, as we all do in the USFS, State and County forests. As users and supporters, we also have a stake in Forest Legacy program lands.

I encourage you to be involved in these critical issues which will lay the template for the opportunities our grandkids and future generations will have.

According to this news story, https://www.wpr.org/pelican-river-forest-secures-funding-local-leaders-want-federal-grant-revoked our very own 7th district congressman thinks we do not deserve more accessible acreage for the public. Maybe not surprising, as in 2015 as State Senator, he said about the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program: 'we can no longer afford nature lands.' I do not want politics to be part of this newsletter, but I must state some facts.

When I researched this American Stewards for Liberty group, I could not disagree with them more. They are essentially saying the strictly volunteer 30-30 movement and Forest Legacy are seizing private property rights--- but if a land owner wanted to destroy their land forever that is some-how noble?

All this gets plenty depressing and frustrating and makes one consider withdrawing. But I receive plenty of compensation just thinking about those two Community Forests and this little note which just came in, "Your efforts are so greatly appreciated. Thank you for fighting for the land". When I meet visitors at any of these projects, I never see partisan divisiveness, I simply see folks grateful they have the land to hunt, fish, hike, ski and recreate. And along with that photo of those young ones enjoying the Pilgrim River Forest Legacy property assures the purpose of defending forest conservation.

****

Submitted by Rod Sharka

****

FUTURE ARTICLES

If you have questions that you would like to see addressed in the newsletter, suggestions for, or have articles for, future newsletters, please contact us at partnersinforestry@gmail.com or by mail:

Partners In Forestry
6063 Baker Lake Rd
Conover, WI 54519

****