

Tri-County School Forest



A User's Guide

Compiled in 1995 by Whitney Dunnett,
Environmental Education Counselor

Revised in 2000 by Abbigail Wills,
Environmental Education Counselor

Notes:

For answers to your questions or for additional information regarding the Tri-County School Forest, please contact:

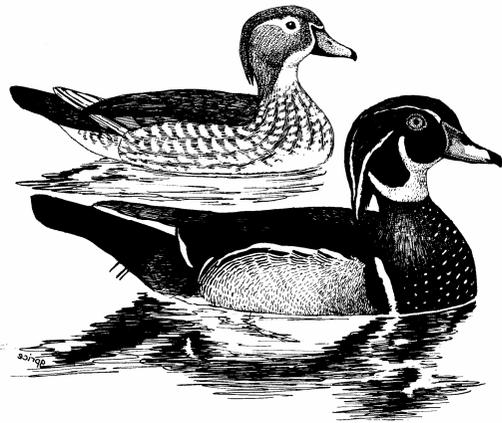
Tri-County High School
409 S West St. P.O. Box 67
Plainfield, WI 54966

Phone: 715-335-6366 Fax: 715-335-6322

-Various other projects have been implemented as well. An animal tracks booklet and plaques have been created, wildflower identification albums including pictures and descriptions were compiled. Leopold benches constructed for resting hikers, trail signs set, and fifteen birdhouses for common local birds were constructed and placed in the school forest. A booklet to accompany them was also written.

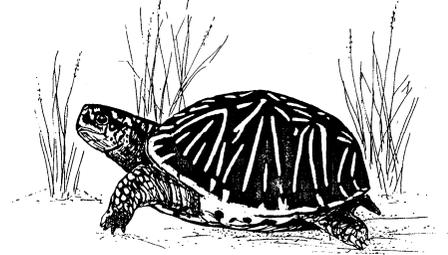
-Gathering areas with benches have been installed, walking trails cut, a wingspan comparison chart constructed, a mobile puppet stand built with several written skits, picnic tables built, and a tree identification album compiled.

-An active School Forest Committee, consisting of students, staff and community members has actively sought to maximize the benefits of the school forest for all users. Many of them have donated their time, their equipment, and their expertise. Many thanks are owed them.



THE SCHOOL FOREST SCOOP

The Tri-County Area School District was



one of the first in the state of Wisconsin to establish a school forest. Soon after World War II, Wisconsin recognized the importance of school forests and found them to be excellent educational facilities. To promote the idea, the state of Wisconsin hired Fred Trenk (the Father of school forests in Wisconsin schools) to administer the forestland into an outdoor classroom.

Three Tri-County teachers—Alex Aschenbrener, Art Mullen, and Morley VanSant—were quite vocal and very supportive of a school forest. They felt the values and importance of conservation were a great priority that the school forest could help teach. In the early 1950's, the Board of Education was approached about the school forest and the idea was approved.

The next step was to find a suitable location. A conservation group called the "Land and Lakes Club" was formed by local citizens to encourage conservation in the local area. The club had purchased a piece of land adequate for their hunting. The land had been previously owned by the town of Rome in Adams County. When club members discovered that the school district was interested in purchasing land for a school forest, the members of the Land and Lakes Club decided to donate the land to the Tri-County Area School District under the following conditions:

- 1) The land should never be closed to hunting.
- 2) The forest should be a memorial to World War II Veterans.

The school district readily accepted the generous offer.

The dedication of the Tri-County School Forest took place on October 16, 1953. The Tri-County band performed, tours were given, and speeches were given. The main speaker was State Forester, Fred Trenk; he spoke of the goals of the State of Wisconsin concerning school forests.

-In 1996 a storage shed was built near the shelterhouse. The money for the project came from memorial funds donated in Art Mullen's memory. In 1996 a challenge course was implemented. The challenge course consists of activities that stress teamwork and problem solving. The course continues to grow as more stations and activities are added

-In 1997, many of the fire lanes were widened and sanitation cuts were made in two areas of the forest.

-In 1998 the prairie restoration project was started. The family of Liza Golla, a Tri-County graduate, established a memorial fund to help in this project. Today, "Liza's Prairie" is undergoing a major transformation into a native prairie site.

-Currently, the district maintains sole ownership of 27 acres of the 95 acre Carrie Frost School Forest in Portage County. It is managed in cooperation with the Portage County Forester. The old Hancock School Forest, approximately 10 acres in size, is in the process of being transferred back to the district.



-A concrete slab was poured for the future site of a shelterhouse. The Grange donated \$1,000 to assist in this project.

-The shelterhouse was built in 1986-1987, by Dudei Construction.

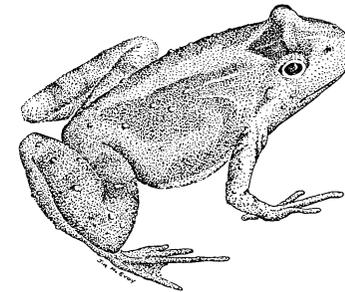
-In 1991, the district appointed science teacher, Larry Mancl, as Environmental Education Coordinator. This position was created to integrate the environmental education curriculum and to address environmental issues in all academic program areas. Arthur Mullen, a former agriculture teacher, wrote a complete history of the Tri-County School Forest, so all may appreciate its rich history. Al Schinner converted 160 acres of adjacent school forest property to the district under a Conservation Easement agreement. This enlarges access and project areas for users of the school forest.

-In 1992, Joe Farago of Farago Plumbing offered to drill a well adjacent to the shelterhouse as a donation. An Early Childhood through grade twelve infused environmental education curriculum was developed for the district. To assist with the implementation, an Environmental Education Counseling program was initiated in 1993. This program trains high school students to serve as mentors, counselors, and teachers for all district students.

-Since 1993, a large map was erected at the north entrance, the wood duck and bluebird nesting project expanded, tree identification stations developed, permanent vegetative study plots marked, cross country ski trails permanently marked, "tree cookies" produced for forestry studies, and a "Users Guide" written for the school forest.

-In 1994, an amphitheater was constructed overlooking Bullhead Lake. The amphitheater greatly enhances the district's environmental education program.

In 1968, Isacson Development Corporation of Reedsburg purchased a large tract of land adjacent to the school forest. Lakes were to be created by damming the creek- thus the birth of Lake Camelot. The corporation needed the school forest property for development and began negotiations with the district for the purchase of the property. The district was concerned about selling the forest to the Isacson Corporation; they felt it would defeat the original purpose of the school forest.



During negotiations, it was discovered that a tract of land, known as the Powers Property, near Goose Lake east of Hancock, was for sale. There were numerous advantages to this parcel of land. There were pine plantations, hardwood stands, open fields, lakes, pothole areas and low-land habitat. It was also only six miles from the school, rather than the thirteen miles to the school forest in the Town of Rome.

The final agreement from the negotiations stated that Isacson was to purchase the 239 acres of the Powers Property and transfer it to the school district. Isacson would then receive 200 acres of the “old” school forest. This left 160 acres in the Town of Rome that was still owned by the school district. Negotiations were finalized on September 29, 1969.

The remaining 160 acres were later sold to pay for a new athletic field when the school was being rebuilt after being destroyed by fire in 1976.

The school forest was enlarged by 160 acres in 1991, due to a Conservation Easement agreement between Al Schinner and the school district. This provides a total of 400 acres that the Tri-County Area School District is responsible for managing and able to use for environmental education.



Tri-County School Forest History: A Timeline

-The original 360 acre school forest was established on 10-16-53, and was located in Adams County in the town of Rome. It was donated to the Tri-County School District by the Land and Lakes Club, a local conservation organization, under the conditions that it should not be closed to hunting and should serve as a memorial to the veterans of World War II.

-In 1969, 200 acres of the original school forest property was transferred to the Isacson Development Corporation of Reedsburg, in exchange for 230 acres of land known as the Powers Property- now known as the current school forest. Isacson Development Corporation of Reedsburg was damming the nearby creek to develop what is known today as Lake Camelot. The purchase was arranged by Alex Katovich, Area Forester.

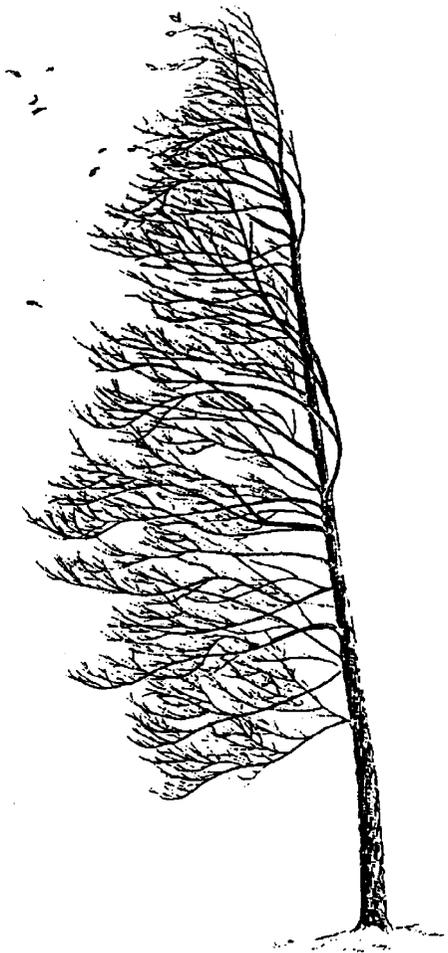
-Approximately 155 acres of the remaining 160 acres of the original school forest was sold for \$25,000, and used to build the athletic field in 1977-1978. The remaining 5 acres was sold in 1997, as it was longer utilized by the district for environmental education purposes.

-Since 1969, fire lanes were established, test plots laid out, demonstration areas developed, brush was cleared, animal shelters created, bird housing areas developed, clear cuts made, pulp and timber cuts conducted, and the areas gated to “walk-in only.”

-In order to establish a long-term management plan for the school forest property, a School Forest Committee was formed. Its members consisted of staff, natural resource professionals, and local community members.

-Toilets were built by Don Lamb in the early 1970's.

CROSS-COUNTRY SKI TRAILS- are groomed annually. Depending upon your desire for challenge, there are various distances you can travel. Each trail is marked for your benefit. Snowshoeing is allowed, but please stay off the ski trails.

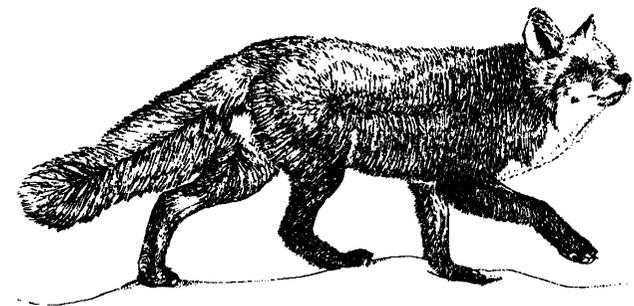


THE GUIDELINES

The Tri-County School Forest is open to the public for many educational and recreational opportunities. However, there are several guidelines that must be followed when utilizing the school forest.

These guidelines are in place to...

- Enhance the experiences for all that visit the school forest.
- Maximize the educational benefits which can be achieved for people of all ages.
- Minimize any conflicts-of-use which may occur.
- Protect the safety and well-being of all users.
- Maintain a diverse, productive habitat for all forms of plant and animal life.



For the benefit of all users, *please* abide by *all* guidelines.

- 1) **No Motorized Vehicles-** the school forest is designated as a “Walk in Area Only.” This is to protect the safety of all users and to minimize any fire hazard. The forest is managed as a low-impact area. Motorized vehicles disturb plant and animal habitat, and destabilize the soil. There are numerous permanent plots and other study areas that must remain undisturbed. Violators will be cited for unlawful trespassing.
- 2) **No Public Camping-** the school forest is open to hikers, bikers, walkers, bird watchers, picnickers, joggers, skiers, photographers, and other non-consumptive users. The school forest is only a place for humans to visit. Let the wild plants and animals reside peacefully in their home.
- 3) **Trapping-** is allowed only with a written permit so the resource is maintained and many can share this valuable resource.

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION- the environmental education program was started in the summer of 1993. Counselors spend six weeks studying natural resources- including water, forestry, soil and wildlife. They also spend time developing skills in teaching, counseling, and interpretative techniques. The environmental education counselors lead trips throughout the year for other students.

AMPHITHEATER- built in 1994, the amphitheater is located on the northwest side of Bullhead Lake. The structure was built overlooking the lake to promote ample nature observation. Don't hesitate to stop and rest for awhile and take in the view.

CHALLENGE COURSE- the challenge course was first implemented in the 1996-1997 school year. It consists of activities that stress teamwork and problem solving. The course continues to grow as more activities and stations are added.

PRAIRIE RESTORATION PROJECT- the project was made possible by a memorial fund in the name of Liza Golla, a Tri-County graduate. With this funding, “Liza’s Prairie” is slowly being transformed into a native prairie site.

SPECIAL FEATURES

SHELTERHOUSE- the shelterhouse was built in 1986 by Dudei Construction. Half of the structure was enclosed for protection against the elements. In the fall of 1994, windows were installed in the west wall to allow for more natural lighting. It's a great place to stop and catch your breath or have a picnic lunch.

NESTING PROJECTS- there is an ongoing nestbox project concerning the rehabilitation of bluebirds and wood ducks. Students and community volunteers monitor these boxes throughout the spring and summer months. You will find bluebird houses in the meadows and wood duck houses on each of the lakes.

SAMPLE PLOTS- there are numerous plot studies being conducted by environmental education counselors. A map of the sample plots is updated periodically. The plots are useful to determine growth of a particular plot, manage for cuts and thinnings, and examine diversity and tree population.

- 4) **All Tobacco and Alcohol Products are Prohibited-** the school forest is the property of the Tri-County School District. State Statute 118.258 prohibits the use of all tobacco and alcohol products on school properties.
- 5) **Hunting is Allowed-** except when the School Forest is occupied by a school group or a group which has reserved the right to utilize the forest. A sign will be posted at the north entrance gate indicating if such a group is using the forest. All federal, state and local hunting regulations must be followed. Be sure to check current hunting regulations.

