

A Forest Stewardship Story About School Forests



NDCS students planting 6,800 pine seedlings donated by VanOss Forestry and Plum Creek in 2015.

The North Dickinson County School has owned and managed a school forest for 85 years. The school bought its first 40 acres of forest land from the Kimberly Iron Company in 1930 for \$1.00. The school's first forest management plan was written in 1932 and has a birch bark cover. The school added several other parcels over the years and now has just over 1,000 acres of forest land. The North Dickinson County School has a long history of managing their forest resources and using their school forest for outdoor education.

Students at the North Dickinson County School have been planting trees on their land since the early 1940's. Back in the 1950's, there were two cabins in the school forest that were used by students and staff for overnight 4-H or FFA field trips that included hunting for small game. The school has a long history of actively managing their forest with commercial timber harvests to accomplish multiple objectives. The school has heated their entire building with a wood-fueled boiler since 1991 with trees harvested on their school forest. The North Dickinson County School has been recognized many times over the past 85 years for their excellent forest management. The school has a Forestry Commission to oversee the use and management of the school forest.

The North Dickinson County School's most recent forest management plan was written in 1970 by two foresters working for the Department of Natural Resources. Although forest management plans typically cover a 10 to 20 year planning period, this old plan was written for 50 years, and therefore about to expire in a few years. The Forestry Commission recognized their need for a new forest management plan so they contacted several local consulting foresters to request bids for developing a new Forest Stewardship Plan for their 1,000 acre school forest. The school selected Brandon Bal of American Forest Management in Atlantic Mine to develop their new Forest Stewardship Plan. The DNR's Forest Stewardship Program provided a grant of \$1,525 to pay for part of the planning costs. The Dickinson County Chapter of the UP Whitetails and the Louisiana Pacific Foundation provided matching funds to pay for the remainder of the school's cost (LP operates a sawmill in nearby Sagola).

The new Forest Stewardship Plan has excellent maps, detailed inventory data, and useful recommendations for the school. Darrell Oman, the Director of Support Services for the school says, "Our school forest is living proof of what is possible over a very long time when people and groups work together for the common good. Our Forest Stewardship Plan will help us manage our school forest for our students to enjoy for another 85 years."

In 2014, the Michigan Forest Stewardship Program helped 265 landowners like the North Dickinson County School develop Forest Stewardship Plans covering almost 57,000 acres around the state. Call the DNR Forest Stewardship Coordinator at 517-284-5884 or explore www.michigan.gov/foreststewardship to find a professional forester or wildlife biologist near you who can help you manage, protect and enjoy your forest.