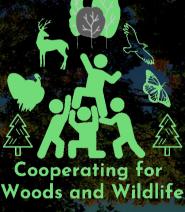
# Cooperative Forest & Wildlife Habitat Management in Central Wisconsin

#### Golden Sands Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.



FEMC Conference 2021 Joshua Beneš Previous Executive Director







#### My new role at the University of Vermont...

#### Joshua Beneš

Assistant Director for Operations for the Mt. Mansfield Science and Stewardship Center Please feel free to contact me: jbenes@uvm.edu



#### **Presentation Outline**

- Conservation concerns associated with fragmentation
- Need for cooperation among private landowners
- State of Wisconsin's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)
- Cooperating for Woods and Wildlife (CFWW) program
- Models for cooperative efforts among private landowners that may be adopted in the northeast



### **Landscape Fragmentation**

- What is fragmentation?
- In Wisconsin 1997 forest parcel average = 37 acres. In 2013 - 26 acres.
- 80% of Wisconsin landowners cite wildlife as a reason for owning land

Source: Wisconsin's 2020 Forest Action Plan

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#### **Fragmentation Concern:** Wildlife Habitat



Source: Dr. Scott Hygnstrom, University of Wisconsin Stevens Point



#### **Fragmentation Concern: Invasive Species**

Invasive plants pose a threat to forest regeneration and wildlife habitat.

 Smaller parcels = more challenging to coordinate invasive plant control efforts



### **Fragmentation Concern: Forestry Economics**

• Smaller parcels = less efficiency allowed for timber sales

• Proper forest management contributes to healthier forest ecosystems

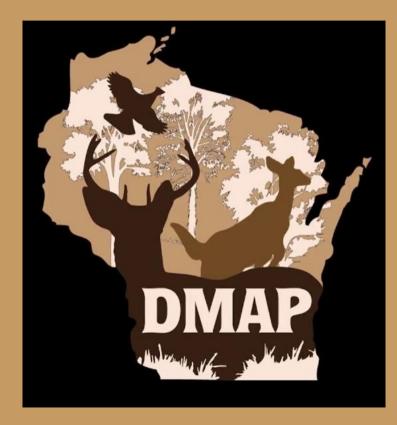


#### The need for cooperation





#### **Wisconsin's Deer Management Assistance Program**

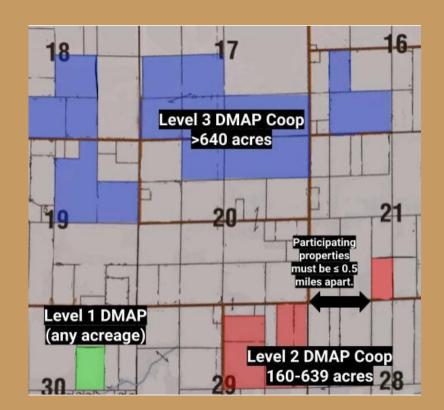


- A cooperative effort between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and private landowners.
- Landowners receive habitat management assistance.
  - Access to informational materials.
  - Increased access for landowners to state professionals.
  - Workshops
  - Habitat management plans.



## Deer Management Assistance Program

- Opportunity for private landowners to learn about managing their property for wildlife
- Individual vs. Cooperative
- Level 1, 2 and 3
  - Costs
  - Benefits
- Non-regulatory
- Private land remains private
- Platform which facilitates regional management



## Program Launch 2015-2020

- USFS funded with match from state and local partners.
- Regional management focus
- Connecting landowners with natural resource professionals
- Level 3 DMAP cooperatives
- 8 county area (Marathon, Wood, Portage, Waupaca, Juneau, Adams, Monroe, and Waushara)



### **Formation of Cooperatives**

- Step 1: Identify priority areas
- Step 2: Organize and hold landowner meeting
- Step 3: Identify landowners willing to become the group leader
- Step 4: Assist landowners with connecting and communicating with neighbors
- Step 5: Held follow-up meetings after landowners received their site visit



# **Cooperating for Woods and Wildlife: New program**

- Another USFS grant with match support from state and local partners
- Expanded our reach to 12 Counties
- Enroll 10,000 acres to DMAP
- Restore 100 acres of Karner blue butterfly habitat





### Cooperating for Woods and Wildlife: 2017-2021 Achievements

- >13,500 acres enrolled
- >125 landowners enrolled
- >100 acres of Karner blue butterfly habitat restored
- Countless landowner connections and landowner opportunites.



## **Cooperative Models that may work in New England and New York?**

- Nonprofit model:
  - Cold Hollow to Canada Vermont
- State program model:
  - None that I am aware of in the northeast?
- Land taxation model:
  - Integration within current use?



#### Learn more:

#### https://www.goldensandsrcd.org/cfww



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# **Questions?**

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