

# Town of Hayward Recreational Forest

## Revised Management Plan

(Short and Long Term)





This report was produced by Deb Proctor, from information gathered over the past year from the Town of Hayward Planning Commission and its Parks and Recreation sub-committee, as well as input received from the public.

The maps were produced by Todd Goold, Point North, Inc.

The photos were taken by Kurt Proctor.

# Table of Contents

## Contents

Background .....	5
Purpose of this Plan Revision .....	6
Recreational Forest Development Goals and Objectives .....	6
Existing Condition (see also Existing Condition Map) .....	7
Desired Future Condition .....	7
Short-term Plan .....	8
Long-range Plan .....	9
Detailed Descriptions of Rec Forest Development Activities .....	9
Trail Maintenance .....	9
Trail Grooming in winter .....	9
Snowshoe Trail development .....	10
Gravel Deposit/Excavation .....	10
Construct Shelter on Edge of Meadow SW of Existing Gravel Pit .....	11
Construct a Road to Shelter and Small Parking Area .....	11
Power to Shelter .....	11
Provide Toilet .....	12
Provide Playground Equipment near Shelter .....	12
Provide grills and picnic tables .....	12
Develop Sliding Area behind Shelter .....	12
Develop Small Gathering Area Near Kozniesky Lake .....	12
Lighted Trails .....	12
Gravel Pit Reclamation-Skating Pond Near Shelter .....	11
Gravel Pit Reclamation- Ball and/or Skate Parks .....	11
Appendices .....	12
A-Existing Condition Map .....	13
B-Short-Term Plan Map .....	13
C-Long-Range Plan Map .....	13

## Background

The Town of Hayward purchased the 160-acre Kozniesky property with the intent to develop the gravel deposit, manage the forest sustainably, and provide the public with a place to recreate. The Recreational Forest (hereinafter called “Rec Forest”) was initially developed in May of 2007. At that time there were two main objectives for developing the Rec Forest:

1. “To provide Sawyer County with a “green space” in an area that is rapidly being developed, offering hiking trails, interpretive trail identifying plants, trees and forest management practices, skiing and snowshoeing trails and other non-motorized sports. We also will provide an area to sustain the 4<sup>th</sup> grade tree planting days as room allows, and an area for the high school science class and area residents to do a native plant and wildflower restoration in some of the open field areas within the (Rec) Forest.”

“We feel that the Forest will draw new visitors to the area and offer a peaceful place to go enjoy each season of the year.”

2. “To provide a place for the Town of Hayward to obtain gravel and other soils need(ed) for various Town projects for many years to come.

It is the wish of the Town of Hayward Planning Commission that: this property will always be owned by the Town and not sold.”

(Reference: Exhibit 2, Town of Hayward Recreational Forest Mission Statement, dated May 9, 2007 and Revised October 14, 2008 by Jeff Homuth -Town of Hayward Chairman, Andy Bonicatto- town of Hayward Forester, and Richard Dewhurst- Town Planning Commission Chairman).

The initial Management Plan for the Rec Forest was developed in June 2007 and revised on October 14, 2008 (see Resolution 10-14-2008 signed by Jeff Homuth- Town of Hayward Chairman, Harold Tiffany- Town Supervisor, and Gary Gedart, Town Supervisor).The initial revised plan was comprised of 9 items, in addition to the Designated Use Map (attachment 2) and Mission Statement (exhibit 2 referenced above). The 9 items were:

1. Sustainable forest management practices to include periodic selective cutting as designated by the Town Forester with Town Board approval.
2. Provide a non-metallic mineral extraction area for Town use.

3. Develop Kozniesky Lake area into urban fishing pond or ponds through DNR Grants.
4. Designate the following areas- See attached map
  - A. Grade School tree planting areas.
  - B. High School experimental plant areas.
  - C. Prairie Grass and Native Plant restoration areas.
5. Provide pavilion and benches
6. Develop and maintain a system of trails. Provide Interpretive trails where appropriate. Maintenance to include necessary cuttings and signs.
7. Under-planting of Red Pine Plantation area with natural ground cover.
8. Reclaim used-up gravel areas for recreational purposes.
9. Any changes or alterations to this Management Plan must be approved by the Planning Commission and the Town Board.

(Reference: Town of Hayward Recreational Forest Management Plan, June 11, 2007 and Revised October 14, 2008).

## Purpose of this Plan Revision

While the initial mission statement continues to apply today, more detail regarding the development of the Rec Forest is needed. Specifically, a short-term and longer-range plan will provide support and guidance for the prioritization of funds that become available for development of the Rec Forest. Additionally, now that the Rec Forest has been in existence for several years, more information is available regarding the existing and desired future conditions of the property that can be used to formulate more specific goals and objectives for the Rec Forest.

This Rec Forest Plan tiers to the Town of Hayward Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2009-2014).

## Recreational Forest Development Goals and Objectives

- ✚ Create an environment for people to enjoy and gain an increased appreciation for the natural environment.
- ✚ Provide a place for outdoor recreational experiences
- ✚ Create a sustainable system of trails and facilities that can accommodate the frequency and intensity of use that occurs.
- ✚ Manage the Forest vegetation to be sustainable. This includes healthy, vigorous, resistant and resilient to stressors such as wind, insects & disease, drought, and other factors.
- ✚ Leaves an impression about how the Town is fulfilling a mission of stewardship
- ✚ Facilities are designed to be in harmony with the natural setting
- ✚ The gravel pit is managed for long-term non-metallic mineral extraction and reclamation for future recreational use by the public

## **Existing Condition (see also Existing Condition Map)**

The Rec Forest is typically accessed via the public parking lot off of County Hill Road along the northern boundary of the Forest just west of the Town of Hayward gravel pit. This parking lot is about ½- acre in size and can accommodate approximately 25 standard vehicles. A split rail fence separates the parking lot from the Forest and trails. A gated service road provides access to the trails for mowing and trail grooming.

The Rec forest is bordered by private property on all sides, in addition to Gorney road to the East, County Hill road to the North, and Aspen Ridge Road to the West. Some visitors access the Rec Forest directly from their property or the adjacent roads.

As described on a large sign adjacent to the parking lot, the Rec Forest is open to the public for most non-motorized activities from dawn till dusk, with the exception of the gun deer season. The 3.5 miles of trails are used by local residents for hiking, running, mountain biking, snowshoeing, skiing, and accessing the Forest for hunting and wildlife viewing. Some residents bring their dogs, as most other developed trail systems in the area do not allow pets. Six benches provide rest stops at key locations along the trails. The trails have received limited use during summer, due to the high number of wood ticks that are picked up from the grass. When trails are mowed they receive a higher level of use. They receive limited use during winter due to the challenge associated with trekking through deep snow. Winter trail grooming has attracted more visitors for classic and skate skiing, hiking, and snowshoeing.

The 10-acre gravel pit on northeast side of the park is off-limits to the public for safety reasons. A barbed wire fence and signs traverse the pit perimeter. The gravel deposit, which extends across much of the eastern 80 acres of the Rec Forest property, is currently forested with a mix of hardwood and pine species.

The other portions of the Rec Forest are comprised primarily of oak, aspen, and pine forest. There is also a small red pine plantation, two meadows, a wetland, and small lake. The forest has been managed through shelterwood (oak), thinning (pine) and clear cut (aspen) Silvicultural treatments. These forest types are responding well to past management activities (growing and regenerating).

## **Desired Future Condition**

The following objectives describe the desired condition of the Recreational Forest in the future: It is well known by folks in the community and easily accessed via County Hill Road or the pedestrian trail. It is open to non-motorized user groups for picnicking, walking, running, bicycling, skiing, snowshoeing, and hunting. It is not open to non-hunters during the gun-deer season(s) for safety reasons. All pets, except hooved animals, are welcome throughout the year, as long as under the control of their owners at all times. School groups use the Rec Forest for a variety of educational programs, athletic training, and sporting events. Ample parking is available to accommodate large groups for sporting events, special events, or educational programs. The Rec Forest facilities (excluding trails) are fully accessible per ADA standards. The trails are consistently well maintained throughout the year (mowing, brushing, grooming). Signs are maintained and replaced as needed. Trails are groomed for skate and classic skiing

and are open to snowshoers in winter. Additional single track snowshoe trails are clearly signed. Interpretive signs provide information regarding the purposes of forest management activities that are implemented. To protect the investment of newly developed facilities (e.g. shelter, toilet, playground, etc.), they are located outside of the extent of the gravel deposit. As the gravel deposit is exhausted from the current pit location the area off-limits to the public will expand toward the south and east. Eventually, the excavated areas will be reclaimed and re-opened to the public. Reclamation may include but is not limited to re-vegetation, wetland and/or pond creation, additional recreational developments (e.g. ball fields) and additional parking areas.

## Short-term Plan

### Phase 1 (complete):

- ✓ Establishment of a gravel pit
- ✓ Parking Lot and service road construction
- ✓ Development of trail network, benches, and signs
- ✓ Development of a Forest Management Plan
- ✓ Conduct Silvicultural treatments through commercial timber sales (shelterwood, thinning, clearcut)
- ✓ Provide educational programs (i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> grade tree planting areas)
- ✓ Provide picnic tables

### Phase 2 (in progress):

- Advocate the existence and benefits of the Rec Forest to the local community & schools
- Establish consistent trail maintenance (removal of tree falls, brushing, and mowing)
- Groom the trails for skate and classic skiing in winter (they are also open for snowshoeing)
- Establish and sign snowshoe trails (separate from ski trails)
- Create a detailed Rec Forest map (make copies available at the trailhead as well as on the Town of Hayward website)
- Provide more detailed trail signage (maps at trail intersections with “you are here”)
- Develop a bike trail to connect the City of Hayward to the Recreational Forest
- Develop designs and obtain cost estimates for a shelter, power to shelter, toilet, parking area, playground, parking lot, driveway, and sledding hill.

### Phase 3 (\*as funds become available)

- ✚ Continue development of the bike trail from the City of Hayward to the Rec Forest\*
- ✚ Develop single track snowshoe trails\*
- ✚ Add interpretive/educational signs in key locations\*
- ✚ Construct a building on the edge of the meadow (1/4 mile south of current parking lot) to serve as site and shelter for picnics, educational programs, and other events\*
- ✚ Excavate the gravel from the hill north of the meadow as soon as possible so that area can be reclaimed and turned into a driveway, parking lot, and sledding hill
- ✚ Provide a toilet, playground, grills, picnic tables, and power for the shelter\*



- ✦ Encourage and promote the use of the Rec Forest for a variety of educational programs
- ✦ Encourage and promote the use of the Rec Forest trails by Hayward School cross-country and ski teams
- ✦ Develop a small picnic area with shelter on Kozniesky Lake\*
- ✦ Continue development of the gravel pit, screening it from the public portion of the Rec Forest, and reclaim portions of it as soon as possible after excavation is completed
- ✦ Establish prairie grass and native plant restoration projects- in the meadow northwest of Kozniesky lake\*
- ✦ Provide lights along the trails for night time use in winter\*

## Long-range Plan

Phase 4 (begin this phase when portions of the gravel pit are ready for reclamation)

Rehabilitate the fully excavated portions of the gravel pit. Rehabilitation may include:

- ❖ Reshaping the pit area so slopes are no steeper than 30 percent
- ❖ Development of additional parking lots
- ❖ Development of one or more ball fields with dugouts, bleachers, toilets, concession stand, and shelter
- ❖ Excavation of a small pond that could be used for ice skating in winter
- ❖ Planting of trees, shrubs, and grass

## Detailed Descriptions of Rec Forest Development Activities

### Trail Maintenance

Consistent trail maintenance includes removal of tree falls, encroaching brush, and rocks; regular mowing; erosion control; and signage. Development of a regular maintenance schedule based on the amount of use (and resulting impacts) will ensure the trails remain sustainable.

Suggestions for implementation: Contracting out trail maintenance may be an effective option if Town of Hayward staff is not available. The mowing contract should include the incidental removal of fallen trees and the prevention of trail encroachment by brush.

### Trail Grooming in winter

The trails are well-suited for skate and classic skiing when groomed. They are also attractive to snowshoers, hikers, and pet owners. The amount of use that occurs on the trails in winter increased dramatically, once trail grooming occurred. Reasons for the increase include: both skate and classic skiing options provided, trails where pets are welcome, a packed surface suitable for walking or snowshoeing away from traffic, convenient location close to town, and non-technical aspect of the trail system.

These trails provide something most other trails in the area don't: they provide both skate and classic skiing opportunities while being open to snowshoeing, hiking, and pets. The location of the trails (2 miles from Hayward) is ideal for folks in the area who wish to get out for a leisurely outing with minimal travel time. The trails are also ideal for folks at all experience and fitness levels. They are flat to rolling, non-technical, and easy to navigate.

While use by local ski teams and clubs has not occurred yet, they are ideal for such use due to their vicinity to the schools, trail layout, and the variation in difficulty level (easy to moderate). The open area ¼ mile south of the parking lot provides a great central gathering and meeting area, and connecting area for most of the trail loops. The future heated shelter will also be located on the edge of this opening.

Suggestions for implementation: Grooming could be accomplished by the Town or through contracting. There are pros and cons to each option. Advantages to contracting include: Contract specs ensure the level of trail quality desired is achieved/that contractor is qualified and capable; equipment upgrades and maintenance are not the responsibility of the Town; Town would not have to hire or provide an employee with training in trail grooming; contracting provides more flexibility when future funding is unknown; the Town would not have to schedule grooming into its daily schedule or pay overtime for having it done on weekends or in the evenings; the cost each season will be known up front through a bid process.

## **Snowshoe Trail development**

The development of single track snowshoe trails throughout the Forest and separate from the wide ski trails would provide a different type of snowshoeing experience for those who prefer a narrow trail and powder snow surface (after new snowfalls). Providing the option of separate snowshoe and hiking trails would also help to maintain the quality of the groomed ski trails for a longer period of time (snowshoes and feet leave divots in the ski trail surface). These trails would be signed, but not groomed with equipment. Snowshoers, who enjoy breaking trail after new snowfalls, would be the "groomers" for the folks who prefer a packed trail. While the ski trails would continue to be open to snowshoers and hikers, the addition of single track trails would alleviate some of the impact on the groomed trails. The new snowshoe trails would be created by a minimal amount of brush removal and the posting of signs. No ground disturbance or tree cutting would be necessary.

## **Gravel Deposit/Excavation**

The gravel deposit extends to the east, southwest, and south of the existing gravel pit (see maps). The extent and timing of gravel excavation and expansion efforts are dependent upon the demand for gravel in the future. Investments (such as a shelter, toilet, playground, etc.) will be protected by placing them in areas outside of the gravel deposit or in areas where gravel excavation has been completed. Test holes will be excavated to confirm the presence, quality, and quantity of gravel prior to land clearing. It is desirable that gravel southwest of the existing pit be excavated soon, so that area can be reclaimed to a new parking area, sledding hill, and access road to the new shelter, toilet, and playground with as little disruption to the public as possible. The area east of the pit is currently wooded with no plans for future recreational development, making it an ideal place for future pit expansion when the need for additional gravel arises. Three trails traverse the gravel deposit south of the existing pit (Red Pine, White Pine, and

Hilly loops). While there are no plans for structures in this area, it is desirable to retain those trail systems as long as possible, putting off gravel excavation until absolutely necessary. When gravel excavation does occur in that area the recommendation is for it to begin from the eastern portion of the deposit closest to Gorney Road. That way the white pine trail can continue to be open for recreational use, providing a connector between the hilly and red pine loops. If the entire gravel deposit as shown on the long-range plan map is removed, a pond is an option that could be constructed as part of the rehabilitation process. Another long range rehabilitation option is the development of a ball park (refer to the long range plan map).

### **Gravel Pit Reclamation-Skating Pond near Shelter**

A small pond could be created just east of the meadow after gravel has been excavated from that area. A wetland pond would provide aquatic habitat, a scenic view, and an area to ice skate in winter... all conveniently located near the shelter. It would be an ideal setting for environmental education activities centered on aquatic habitat. The large open area between the shelter and pond could be groomed for skiing. The combination of shelter, ski trails, sledding hill, ski play area, and skating pond would make a great winter park.

### **Gravel Pit Reclamation- Ball and/or Skate Parks**

The existing gravel pit on the northeast end of the Rec Forest would make an ideal location for a ball park. Once gravel excavation is complete, one or more baseball fields could be created complete with dugouts, bleachers, concession stands, toilets, and parking lots.

### **Construct Shelter on Edge of Meadow SW of Existing Gravel Pit**

A plan for a shelter that was drawn up by Kurt Proctor in 2009 is under revision, and will be subject to a design review. The proposed 24' by 40' shelter would be located, planned, and designed with respect for the natural system in which it resides. The shelter design includes both enclosed and open areas. A 24' x 20' area would be enclosed with walls that include several windows with shutters that can be closed. The other 24' x 20' area would be covered by the roof but would have open walls. The open area should accommodate 4-6 picnic tables. The Shelter would be a rustic, aesthetically pleasing structure constructed of wood. It would have a concrete slab (possibly stamped) foundation. The shelter may include a wood stove or similar type of heat source.

### **Construct a Road to Shelter and Small Parking Area**

Access to the shelter can easily be provided by constructing a short spur off of the existing gated service road that provides access to the trails for maintenance. The spur would be approximately 250 feet long. The gate would be moved further down the access road to block vehicular access to the trails. The shelter access road would end at a small parking area nearby the shelter. A split rail fence, rocks, or some other type of barrier may be needed to prevent unauthorized vehicle access past the shelter if the existing trees don't provide an adequate or effective separation.

### **Power to Shelter**

The shelter would be equipped with lights and outlets both inside and outside. A power line could be run from the nearest transformer along County Hill Road to a pedestal near the new shelter. The most

idea route would be along the driveway to the shelter once all gravel is removed and no further disturbance is expected. The alternative would be to follow the trail that runs north south and parallel to the private land west of the Rec Forest.

### **Provide Toilet**

An accessible toilet located in the vicinity of the shelter area will be necessary. A unisex toilet with a 1,000 gallon tank is recommended as a starting point. Additional toilets could be added in the future depending on demand. The toilet needs to be located near the shelter driveway or parking lot, so it is easily accessible for periodic pumping. It should also be a short walk from the shelter.

### **Provide Playground Equipment near Shelter**

Development of a small playground near the shelter would provide children with a place to play within view of their caregivers during picnics, reunions, special events, and/or sporting events. Estimated costs vary, depending on the type and size of playground equipment, as well as the type of surfacing that it sits on.

### **Provide grills and picnic tables**

Grills installed near the shelter would provide picnickers with a safe place to cook, and would help regulate how much and where cooking occurs. Picnic tables would be located within and outside of the shelter.

### **Develop Sliding Area behind Shelter**

The hill behind the proposed shelter provides an ideal sledding area. The few trees and stumps that are in that area could be removed at the time the shelter site is prepared, or the portion of the hill that remains after gravel is excavated could be reclaimed to include a sledding hill.

### **Develop Small Gathering Area Near Kozniesky Lake**

Kozniesky Lake provides a scenic view and ideal small group gathering area on the west end of the Rec Forest. Providing a few picnic tables, a grill, small open-sided shelter, and wilderness style composting toilet would be ideal for small groups, whether it be family, school group, or other special event group.

### **Lighted Trails**

The Rec Forest is an ideal location for lighted ski and snowshoe trails in winter, being two miles from town and the schools, and surrounded by town roads and private lands. Lighted trails would provide the public and schools with a very convenient place to enjoy winter sports after school and daytime shifts. The lights could be timed to turn on at dusk and off at 10 pm (or other specified time).

## **Appendices**

## A-Existing Condition Map

## B-Short-Term Plan Map

## C-Long-Range Plan Map

## D- Cost Estimates

### Appendix D- Cost Estimates

Item	Cost Estimate	Description
Shelter site prep, access road, small parking area construction	\$12,000-\$15,000	includes site prep for shelter, new construction of spur road and small parking area, and gravel surfacing
Shelter	\$25,000-\$35,000	Depends on design, materials
Power to shelter	\$5,000	Depends on actual distance from nearest transformer to pedestal
Toilet	\$12,000	Unisex, accessible, 1000 gallon tank
Playground	\$35,000-\$50,000	Includes the playground equipment, site preparation, and surfacing. Equipment costs vary depending on size.
Grills	\$400.00	\$200 per grill, includes site prep and labor to install
Trail and shelter area mowing	\$1,300	4 times/year
Ski trail grooming	\$4,000	Dec-Mar, once per week on average, contractor provides equipment
Kozniesky Lake Gathering area	\$5,000	Includes 2 picnic tables, small open-sided shelter, wilderness toilet, grill
Lighted Trails	TBD	Recommend it be done in phases beginning with the center loop.

