

Outagamie County Success from the Field

26 Years of Sustainable Forest Management

Background

Steve Ring, the owner/operator of Pinevilla Tree Farm near Shiocton, Wisconsin, has been actively managing his 175-acre woodlot since he purchased the land from its former owner in 1993. An active member of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) for many years, he was elected to the State Board of Directors in 2013. He served as Vice President and President, and is currently serving as Past-President, also chairing WWOA's 2020-2025 Strategic Planning committee. In 2018 Steve was awarded WWOA's Distinguished Service Award and is 2019's Wisconsin Wildlife Federation's Forest Conservationist of the Year. Steve's dedication to conservation stands out among others. Over the course of the last 26 years, Steve has hosted countless educational days on his woodlot, including 15 field days and 16 sleigh rides. Audiences for these field days have included WWOA members; Fox Valley Technical College students; grade school students; county, state, and federal agency staff; neighbors and friends. Steve loves managing the land and passing on his knowledge and experience to family including his grandkids, other woodland owners and anyone interested in learning about forest management. His hope is that people leave his property with a better understanding of how forests function and an appreciation of how vitally important forests are to the planet's ecosystem.

Program Successes

Steve first learned of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in 2016, and in that same year, enrolled his woodlot into the NRCS Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Under CSP, Steve has increased management on his woodlot by implementing forest stand improvement practices that include crop tree release within his conifer and hardwood stands, protection of vernal pools, removal of invasive and unwanted species and improvements to wildlife habitat. Steve has also utilized the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to help with the construction and installation of bat houses throughout his woodlot and is currently in the midst of utilizing practice 647, early successional habitat development, by cutting different 0.5 acre sections of a 17-acre Speckled/Tag Alder stand each year to achieve successive growth of the alder stand. This successional growth greatly improves Woodcock and warbler habitat, and Steve feels he's



Steve standing next to the sign near the entrance to his home and woodlot. His demonstration forest for Outagamie county through Golden Sands RC&D provides countless educational opportunities to northeast Wisconsin educators, landowners, students and resource management agency staff.

already seen positive results on his property. "I'm very impressed with Steve's knowledge and devotion to improving his woodlot and his willingness to educate and share his property with the community," said Lynn Szulczewski, NRCS District Conservationist.

Future Plans

Steve's intensive management of his woodlot will continue into the future. He plans to continue partnering with NRCS, opening up his land for educational opportunities to any eyes or ears who are interested. "Working with the NRCS staff has been a wonderful experience. They're very helpful and have been a true partner, providing professional advice and financial assistance through their many different programs. We have spent many an hour working together in the last three years, walking the land, reviewing successes of existing programs and discussing new programs that will benefit the woodland and all its wildlife, helping make it more sustainable not only today but for many future generations to come," explained Ring.

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