

**BURNETT COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN**

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**CHAPTER 100**

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## **100 MISSION STATEMENT**

Natural resources, such as those provided by the Burnett County Forest, provide part of the base for satisfying the ecological and socioeconomic needs of society. The mission of the County Forest is to manage, conserve and protect these resources on a sustainable basis for present and future generations.

County Forest resources should be protected from natural catastrophes such as fire, insect, disease, Invasive species outbreaks, and from unregulated human uses such as encroachment, environmental degradation and excessive development. While managing for environmental needs including watershed, protection of rare plant and animal communities, and maintenance of plant and animal diversity, these same resources must also be managed and provide for sociological needs, including provisions for recreational opportunities and the production of raw materials for wood-using industries.

Management must balance local needs with broader state, national and global concerns through integration of sound forestry, wildlife, fisheries, endangered resources, water quality, soil, and recreational practices. Management will provide this variety of products and amenities for the future through the use of sustainable resource management practices.

## **105 GOAL OF THE COUNTY FOREST COMPREHENSIVE LAND USE PLAN (Hereafter referred to as the “Plan”)**

To administer the County Forest program consistent with the mission statement and the purpose and direction of the County Forest Law as stated in s. 28.11, Wis. Stats., giving consideration to input from citizens and groups. The purpose of the County Forest Law being:

“ ... to provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the County Forests for optimum production of forest products together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie.”

Each state agency, whenever it administers a law under which a local governmental unit prepares a plan, is encouraged to design its planning requirements in a manner that makes it practical for local governmental units to incorporate these plans into local comprehensive plans prepared under s. 66.1001 Wis. Stats (i.e. “Smart Growth” planning) s. 1.13(3) Wis. Stats. This County Forest plan will complement, and should be a part of local comprehensive planning efforts (e.g. Smart growth). There are similarities in the considerations of both plans although the County Forest plan is of smaller scale and focused by s. 28.11, Wis. Stats. In an effort to ensure that the values of the Burnett County Forest are fully recognized, protected and infused into local planning, the County Forest administrator / Asst. administrator, staff will coordinate with local townships having County Forest within their boundaries in adopting the Burnett County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan within their planning efforts. Efforts will be made in explaining the 15 Year Plan to these townships, with emphasis on following this plan for the future County Forest management in all aspects of management. (e.g. timber harvests, recreational uses, county forest roads, ect.)

#### **110 CHAPTER 100 OBJECTIVE**

1. To recognize the authority of the County and State in the administration and development of operating policies on the Burnett County Forest
2. To provide the reader of the plan with background information regarding the Burnett County Forest.

#### **115 STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Law (s. 28.10 and 28.11 Wis. Stats.) provides the authority to establish, develop, and manage a permanent County Forest Program. (For the full text of the County Forest Law refer to Chapter 900 Exhibit 1.

#### **120 COUNTY AUTHORITY**

The County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan is the official County Forest authority. The Forestry Committee of the County Board (hereafter referred to as the “committee”) enforces the regulations governing the use of the County Forest.

## 120.1 ORDINANCES

The county ordinances that apply to the administration and management of the Burnett County Forest can be found in Chapter 900 Exhibit 2.

## 125 HISTORY

### 125.1 STATEWIDE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1927, the State Legislature passed the Forest Crop Law, authorizing counties to create county forests. An opinion of the Attorney General with reference to the Forest Crop Law stated that the counties would be exempt from the owner's share of annual tax. The Legislature of 1929 specifically provided that counties were exempt from paying the "acreage share" required of private owners. The legislature of 1931 amended the County Forest Reserve Law of 1929. It provided for the payment of acreage aids to Towns for County Forest land and an additional annual State payment of \$.10 /acre to the Counties for all land within county forests entered under the Forest Crop Law. Counties were required to spend this aid money solely for the development of the county forest. In return for this aid, the state originally collected a seventy-five percent severance tax on the products cut on county forests. This was reduced to fifty percent in 1937 and then to twenty percent of gross sales in 1963.

In 1963, several major revisions were made to the County Forest Law. The most notable change was the creation of a permanent program of forests that would be managed in accordance with a 10 Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan developed by the county, with the assistance of the Department of Natural Resources. The severance tax on harvested forest products still remains at 20% of the stumpage value, although no severance tax is collected if counties do not have a loan balance. A number of grants, loans and shared revenue payments are currently available to counties to help offset any losses in taxes due to public ownership. The acreage share payment to towns is currently \$.30/acre. In addition, towns with county forest land receive a minimum of 10% of the stumpage revenue from their respective County Forest each year. Stumpage revenues exceed \$18,000,000 annually.

Twenty-nine counties in Wisconsin now own approximately two and one third million acres entered under the County Forest Law.

## 125.2 COUNTY FOREST PROGRAM HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

At one time, much of Wisconsin was covered with magnificent stands of pine, hemlock, and hardwoods on the highlands, and cedar, spruce, and balsam on its lowlands. From 1860 to about 1910, these forests provided raw material for a thriving lumber industry. The need to supply lumber for a growing nation, and the lack of sound forest management, resulted in over harvest of the forests and degradation of the landscape. Immigrants rushed to these newly cleared lands, hungry for a place to farm and build their lives. But in just a few years, the soils gave out, catastrophic fires occurred, and many people were forced to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The land was left exhausted and tax delinquent. The Wisconsin County Forest program originated with the taking of these tax delinquent lands.

## 125.3 BURNETT COUNTY FOREST HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT

On December 1, 1931 Burnett County petitioned the Wisconsin Conservation Commission to enter 745 land descriptions in the Townships of Rusk, Sand Lake, Scott, Jackson, Union, Webb Lake, Swiss and Blaine totaling 29,800 acres as Forest Crop Lands. These land descriptions were formally entered into the Forest Crop Program on March 19, 1932 forming the Burnett County Forest. The first Burnett County Forestry Ordinance was passed in 1934. As of June 30, 2003 there were 106,429.39 acres in Burnett County enrolled in the County Forest Program.

Early phases of development of the County Forest consisted largely of road construction, fire protection, and investment in the planting of open areas. Much of the early planting was done by hand using labor from the nearby Riverside CCC Camp. The first timber sale on the Burnett County Forest was sold on May 16, 1938 to the WPA; 71.32 cords of jack pine was sold for \$1.00 per cord with the wood being used for building houses at the Danbury Indian Village.

## 125.4 WISCONSIN COUNTY FOREST ASSOCIATION

Burnett County is a member of the Wisconsin County Forest Association, Inc. This Association was incorporated on May 15, 1968 under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, without stock and not for profit. The WCFA Board of Directors is composed of ten delegates elected from the County Forestry Committees who are members of the Association.

This corporation provides a forum for consideration of issues and policy that are common to all of the county committees responsible for their respective County Forest programs, including those programs encompassed under s.28.11 and Chapter 77, Wis. Stats. WCFA also provides leadership and counsel to County Forest administrators and forestry committees through regular meetings and active committees on legislative and recreational issues.

The Association also provides leadership and counsel to county forestry committees in regards to forestry policies and programs of the County Forest. The Association also facilitates communications between counties, cooperating agencies, and state legislative representatives. Public education and working with private groups as well as public agencies to strengthen forestry related programs are other major roles of the Association.

## **130 DESCRIPTION OF FOREST**

### 130.1 NATURAL FEATURES

#### 130.1.1 Topography

The Burnett County Forest, located in the Northwest part of the state. The topography of the forest and surrounding area has glacial origin. The glaciers eroded hilltops and filled valleys, thus reducing relief. Elevations range from 760 feet above sea level in the southwest part of the county forest to 1500 feet above sea level in the Southeast corner of the county. The terrain ranges from generally level to gently rolling. The St. Croix River flows from the northeast corner of the County to the southwest corner and receives flow from the Namekagon, Yellow, Clam and Wood Rivers as well as many other smaller creeks. The St. Croix River is the western boundary for most of Burnett County and the State of Wisconsin.

### 130.1.2 Geology and Soils

The soils of Burnett County have been derived largely from the weathering of the glacial drift deposits and show a great variation within relatively short distances. Since the glacial period, the soils have been modified by water action, wind, and the accumulation and incorporation of organic material. Most of the northern and western landscape of the County is characterized by pitted outwash plains marked by irregular depressions and potholes. Soils here are composed of stratified acidic sand and gravel soils from 50 to 150 feet deep over bedrock. A large portion of central Burnett County has been influenced by Glacial Lake Grantsburg. Landforms here are relatively level and soils are poorly to moderately drained and composed of well sorted, fine textured sands, silts, clays, and lacustrine deposits. This region extends from Grantsburg east through Siren and Webster to north of Hertel. The southern and eastern portions of the County have rolling topography resulting from glacial moraine deposits. Soils here consist of unsorted, unstratified deposits of clay, silt, sand, gravel, and boulders. Upland soils originating from these deposits generally are good quality, productive soils.

Several small, scattered locations have sand dune terrain. Soils here are predominately wind blown, excessively drained sands covering acid fine sand soils. Vegetation often is sparse on these soils. Most of these areas occur in western Burnett County.

Exposed bedrock occurs at scattered locations along the St. Croix River and in the northern portions of the County. At these locations, bedrock has been exposed by glacial and weathering forces. A generalized soil map can be found in Chapter 900 Exhibit 3. Detailed soils information is available in the soil survey for Burnett County.

### 130.1.3 Geography

Burnett County is the 28th largest county in Wisconsin with a land area of approximately 521,900 acres as well as another 41,600 acres of lakes and streams. Approximately sixty-four percent of the land in the County is classified as forestland. The County Forest, which contains 106,429.39 acres, is the ninth largest county forest in the state. The following is a listing of Burnett County Forest lands by Township as of June 30, 2003:

<u>TOWNSHIP</u>	<u># ACRES</u>	<u>%</u>
Anderson	14,234.08	13.37
Blaine	28,276.79	26.57
Jackson	2,754.94	2.59
Lincoln	3,584.82	3.37
Roosevelt	3,861.31	3.63
Rusk	5,818.48	5.47
Sand Lake	5,719.87	5.37
Swiss	18,852.26	17.71
Union	9,912.12	9.31
Webb Lake	9,429.48	8.86
West Marshland	3,985.24	3.75
TOTAL	106,429.39	100%

### 130.1.4 Biological Communities

Wisconsin's County Forests are part of a larger landscape and are managed not as sole entities but part of a larger eco-region. The National Hierarchical Framework of Ecological Units (NHFEU) categorizes Wisconsin into two provinces, the Laurentian Mixed Forest (212) forming the northern half of the State and the Eastern Broadleaf Forest (222). Within each province are sections, subsections and land type associations that further group land into areas with similar geology, soil types, surface water features, wetlands and historic and potential plant communities. The Burnett County Forest is encompassed within the Laurentian Mixed Forest province including subsections West Superior Mixed Forest and South Superior Mixed Forest. Landtype Associations (LTA's) within the subsections include:

212K and 212J. LTA's, having common ecological characteristics, allow land managers to better plan for future vegetative communities, wildlife species to feature, and compatible recreation uses.

A biological community is an assemblage of different plant and animal species, living together in a particular area, at a particular time in specific habitats. Communities are named for their dominant plant species. The following biological communities are found on the Burnett County Forest:

Northern Forest: contains mixed deciduous and coniferous forests found in a distinct climatic zone that occurs north of the tension zone. Commonly found in the 212Ka LTA in the most portions of the County Forest.

Southern Forest: contain a predominance of oaks and a general absence of conifers and lie south of the tension zone. Commonly found in the 212Jd LTA in the Southeast portion (of the County Forest.

Oak Savannas: characterized by open grassland areas interspersed with trees, especially oaks. They are defined as having less than fifty percent of the ground covered with trees. The Southwest portions of the forest, encompassing LTA 212Ka, are typical for this community.

Oak and Pine Barrens: typically occur on sandy soils and are dominated by grasses, low shrubs, small trees, and scattered large trees. Most commonly these are pine barrens in northern and southern Wisconsin and oak barrens in the southern and west central parts of the state. LTA 212Ka in most parts of the forest contains the barrens communities on the Burnett County Forest.

Grassland: characterized by the absence of trees and large shrubs and the dominance of grass and forbs species. Commonly found in the 212Ka LTA in the Southwest to the North part of the forest.

Wetlands: characterized by soils or substrate that is periodically saturated or covered by water. This community is common across the 212Ka and 212Jd LTA(s) throughout the forest.

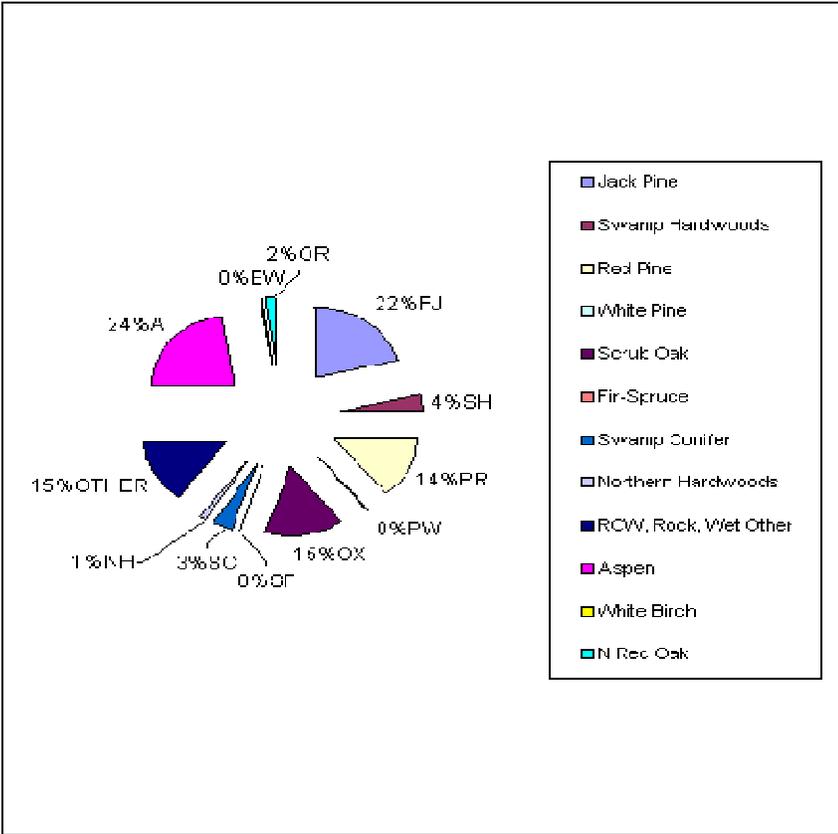
Aquatic Communities: including springs, ponds, lakes, streams and rivers. Common to LTA 212Ka and 212Jd and consisting of mainly (list river/stream systems or lake complexes).

130.1.5 Vegetative Cover Types

Approximately eighty-three percent of the County Forest acreage is considered forested. The remainder is primarily a wild but open non-forest landscape comprised of wetlands, lowland shrubs, upland shrubs, bogs, lakes, streams, grassy openings, roads, rock outcroppings, and utility right-of-ways. Four major forest types account for 73% of the total forest acreage: jack pine 21%; aspen 23%; scrub oak 15%; and red pine 14%. Figure 110-3 shows the most current distribution of forest types on the Forest. Chapter 900 Exhibit 4 contains details of these forest cover type acreages. **Figure 110-3.**

**BURNETT COUNTY FOREST**  
FOREST TYPE DISTRIBUTION (ACREAGE)

Jack Pine	21.43%
Swamp Hardwoods	3.93%
Red Pine	13.74%
White Pine	0.42%
Scrub Oak	14.87%
Fir-Spruce	0.46%
Swamp Conifer	3.50%
Northern Hardwoods	1.16%
ROW, Rock, Wet, Other	15.00%
Aspen	23.50%
White Birch	0.38%
N Red Oak	1.76%



### 130.1.6 Wildlife

The Burnett County Forest is habitat for most wildlife common to the plant communities of northern Wisconsin. From observations, field surveys and research (local, regional and statewide) that have been conducted, a species occurrence list can be established. From an audit of these information sources, the following table of taxonomic orders, families, and species of animals is generated. These species are either known to occur or are considered very likely to occur on the Forest (a complete list of species is included in Chapter 900 Exhibit 5).

	Orders	Families	Species
Mammals	7	19	59
Birds	17	44	164
Herptiles	4	10	34
Fish	14	17	76

Many plant and insect species also occur on the Forest, but unlike vertebrate wildlife species, no complete list is available as an inventory of insect species or native flora found on the Forest. At this time, it is safe to comment that there are hundreds of individual species of insect as well as lichens, mosses, grasses, ferns, shrubs, and tree species that occur on the Forest. Collectively these mammals, birds, herptiles, fish, insects, plant and animal communities use the forest.

Each type of plant community is important because of the habitat it provides to wildlife. Some types are more important to the wildlife resource because they are both abundant and used by many species; such as aspen, jack pine or northern pin oak. Types of lesser abundance such as white pine, northern red oak, upland brush, spruce-fir, swamp conifer, grass openings are also just as important because they may provide the only breeding habitat available for some species or offer a critical habitat type that is needed seasonally.

### 130.1.7 Rare and Endangered Resources

A review of the Natural Heritage Inventory (NHI) indicates the presence of a number of rare species, natural communities, species of special concern and unique natural features on the Burnett County Forest. See Chapter 900 Exhibit 6 for a listing of threatened and endangered species in the Forest.

#### 130.1.8.1.1 Water

Burnett County has 563,500 acres including 208 named lakes, many flowages, 10 major rivers and 145 miles of streams. Of this total, 66 miles are classified as trout streams. Within the Forest boundaries there is a variety of fishery resources as well. Approximately 27 named and 9 unnamed lakes have all or portions of their shoreline under County ownership. In addition, the County owns frontage on 10 named trout streams totaling over 23 miles, 6 warm water streams totaling 11 miles, and 5 major rivers totaling 32 miles. A complete inventory of the surface water resources in Burnett County can be found in Chapter 900 Exhibit 7.

Waters classified in NR 102 as Outstanding or Exceptional for Burnett County.

Outstanding:

North Fork Clam River, South Fork Clam River, Namekagon River, St. Croix River, Tributaries to the North and South Forks of the Clam River, Big McKenzie Lake, Big Sand Lake, Sand Lake (T40N R15W S25).

Exceptional (Class I Trout Stream portions):

Bear Branch, Benson Branch, Brant Branch, Clemens Creek, Dody Branch, Dogtown Creek, East Branch, Ekdahl Branch, Hay Creek, Jones Creek, Kettle Branch, Krantz Creek, Montgomery Creek, Moore Farm Creek, Nelson Creek, Perkins Creek, Pine Branch, Rand Creek, Sand Creek, Sioux Portage Creek, Spencer Creek, Spring Branch, Spring Creek, Unnamed Tributary to Hay Creek.

There are many lakes on the Forest with high water quality but none have been designated as Outstanding or Exceptional Resource waters. Chapter 900 Exhibit 8 provides a map of the Outstanding and Exceptional Waters in Burnett County.

## 130.2 CULTURAL FACTORS

### 130.2.1 Recreation

Forest-based recreation has expanded rapidly in recent years in Burnett County. Recreational opportunities with developed facilities include parks, campgrounds, boat landings, snowmobile, all-terrain vehicle, hunter/hiker and cross-country ski trails. The county forest also provides tremendous opportunities for informal recreational pursuits not requiring developments. These include hunting, fishing, berry and mushroom picking, bird watching, hiking, mountain biking, and sightseeing.

### 130.2.2 Economy

Production of forest products and industries derived from the recreational and ecotourism opportunities on the Forest and the forest products it produces are vitally important to Burnett County's economic well being. The quality of life in many counties is heavily dependent on the traditional resources the County Forest provides.

### 130.2.3 Road and Access

All Burnett County Forest lands are open for public use and for foot travel. In addition to the town and county roads that access the forest, the county also maintains 33 miles of County Forest roads. A number of gated or bermed special use trails and roads are also available. Access management remains a controversial issue on the Forest. Both motorized and non-motorized recreation are provided for within the Forest. See Chapter 700 for detailed discussion on Forest access.

#### 130.2.4 Education and Research

Education and research continue to be critical components in making decisions that affect our natural resources. As public needs and demands of our forest and its products increase, we must be prepared to assure that sound decisions result. To this end, Burnett County encourages and supports research efforts that relate to the forest, and educational opportunities that will promote a better understanding of forest communities and management.

#### 130.2.5 Trends

The values and uses of the Burnett County Forest contribute significantly to fulfilling many of society's ecological and socioeconomic needs now and in the future. Changing trends will impact the values and uses of the Forest in coming years.

- a. Greater demands are being placed on the Forest by people using it to fulfill their recreational pursuits. The popularity of trails for various uses has lead to user conflicts. In particular, dramatic increases in the number of all terrain vehicles (ATV's) has pressured County forests into providing trails for their use and resolving access conflicts on the County Forest. Conflicts between motorized and non-motorized users are commonplace.
- b. Demands for timber products are predicted to increase. At the same time, more private forestland is being lost to residential development, and forest landowners are decreasingly interested in managing land primarily for timber values.

c. Wisconsin's forests are naturally changing due to forest succession. Most of the County Forest acreage statewide is a result of regeneration or planting from the early to mid 1900's. Mid to late successional northern hardwood forests are replacing the early successional aspen-birch, oak and jack pine forests of the 1940's through the 1970's. The aspen cover type is key habitat for many of the state's premier game species including deer, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and woodcock. A declining harvest and a movement away from even-aged species on Wisconsin's National and State forests may place the responsibility of maintaining aspen, birch and jack pine types on the county forests. The county forest system currently has 15% of the State's public land base and 24% of the aspen resource.

d. Conflict over timber management practices will likely continue to increase as more individuals and groups demand greater involvement in forestry decisions. Practices such as clear cutting and even-aged management will continue to be controversial. Efforts to educate the public on the merits of these sound forest management techniques will continue.

e. Burnett County may experience funding problems, as municipalities are being required to provide more services with less money. Potential losses of revenue from decreased shared revenues and resistance to tax increases may make county timber revenues increasingly important to the finances of county governments. This is complicated by increasing public pressure to reduce timber harvests on county forests.

f. Increasing knowledge about a wider variety of species and their habitat needs is leading to a growing list of threatened and endangered species. This could lead to improvements in managing the forest and mitigating impacts to these species. Mitigating measures have the potential to impede recreational and forest management activities. Refer to Chapter 800 (840) for specifics on this subject.

g. Invasive exotic species pose an ever-increasing threat to the County Forest. Gypsy moth, Asian long-horned beetle, buckthorn, honeysuckle and others have all gained a foothold in Wisconsin's forests. Refer to Chapter 600 (610.3) for specifics on this subject.

h. The Forest is considered to be an outdoor classroom serving all age groups. It consists of diverse communities with a large variety of plant and animal life giving ample opportunity for study and observation.

### 130.3 COUNTY FOREST OWNERSHIP

The County Forest has been divided into several layers of management units to aid in the planning and focus for activities on the Forest. The largest unit is the landscape management unit, dividing the Forest into 27 separate geographic units. Landscape units are further divided into compartments. There are a total of 133 forest compartments, ranging in size from 285 acres to nearly 1600 acres. Each compartment is further subdivided into forest stands with similar vegetative characteristics.

Within the County Forest boundaries approximately eighty-four percent of the land is County owned with most of the remaining sixteen percent in small private holdings. A map of these landscape units is found in Chapter 800.

## 135 OVERALL GOAL

To administer the County Forest Program in a manner consistent with the Mission Statement, with consideration to recommendations from interested citizens groups and consistent with the purpose of the County Forest Law stated in s. 28.11 Wisconsin Statutes as follows:

"--To provide the basis for a permanent program of county forests and to enable and encourage the planned development and management of the county forests for optimum production of forest products, together with recreational opportunities, wildlife, watershed protection and stabilization of stream flow, giving full recognition to the concept of multiple use to assure maximum public benefits; to protect the public rights, interests and investments in such lands; and to compensate the counties for the public uses, benefits and privileges these lands provide; all in a manner which will provide a reasonable revenue to the towns in which such lands lie".