



Madeline Island

Wilderness Preserve News

Summer 2003

Managing the Reuel Harmon Forest

By Daniel Engstrom

At the north end of Madeline Island, stretching between School House Road and the North Road, is the largest contiguous tract of land in the Wilderness Preserve. Well in excess of 1000 acres, its well-drained soils are beautifully cloaked with a mixture of northern hardwoods – sugar maple, yellow birch, red oak, paper birch, and aspen – plus scattered hemlock and the occasional white pine. Some of these trees, especially those growing in the little valleys cut by intermittent streams, are ancient gnarled giants, but most are lanky and young (as trees go), owing their origins to the slash fire that roared across the Island in the fall of 1910.

This is the Reuel Harmon Forest, named to honor the man whose generosity and foresight allowed MIWP to buy the land when such large tracts of the Island were still in single ownership and reasonably affordable. Before its acquisition by the Wilderness Preserve, most of the Harmon Forest was owned by Werco Wisconsin, a New York based land-investment company. Werco, like many other owners of forest land in Wisconsin, had enrolled its holdings in the Forest Crop Land (FCL) program, which provided substantially lower property taxes in exchange for dedication of the lands to timber production. When MIWP bought Werco's land, the FCL designation came with it. The FCL tax rate (85¢ per acre) was initially a boon to the young MIWP, but with it came the obligation to manage the lands for forest production. A change in Wisconsin law eventually exempted lands held by conservation organizations from taxation, so that today the Harmon Forest is the only tract on which MIWP pays property taxes.

In the early 1990s Wisconsin created a new tax-incentive program for private forestry, the Managed Forest Land (MFL) program and encouraged land-owners to convert their FCL holdings to MFL. The



new program had several attractive features, the most important being (1) more flexible guidelines allowing "ecological" management and (2) elimination of the so-called "termination tax" – a hefty fee on any unsold timber at end of a FCL contract. Like the FCL program before it, MFL contracts were for 25 years and had severe penalties for early withdrawal – repayment of all back taxes! In order to convert to the new MFL program, the Wilderness Preserve needed to develop a forest management plan with scheduled harvests based on modern silvicultural practices.

To help design the management plan, MIWP turned to Fred Clark of Clark Forestry Consulting out of Baraboo Wisconsin. Fred's company is highly regarded among conservation organizations as a leader in ecological forestry management. The plan, which was reviewed and accepted by the Wisconsin DNR (who administers the MFL program), calls principally for selective thinning of pole-size birch and sugar maple – by far the dominant tree species – with an aim toward "... improving the quality, composition, and age structure..." of the forest. That means taking out a lot of small stunted trees and leaving the biggest behind to develop the diverse, multi-aged, old-growth, forest that once grew there. The plan calls for only limited harvesting of saw timber, and that largely in the form of some over-mature aspen stands along the southern edge of the forest. [\(continued on page 2\)](#)

Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve

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The Wilderness Preserve is a local land trust dedicated to the protection of natural areas on Madeline Island for the enjoyment of all.

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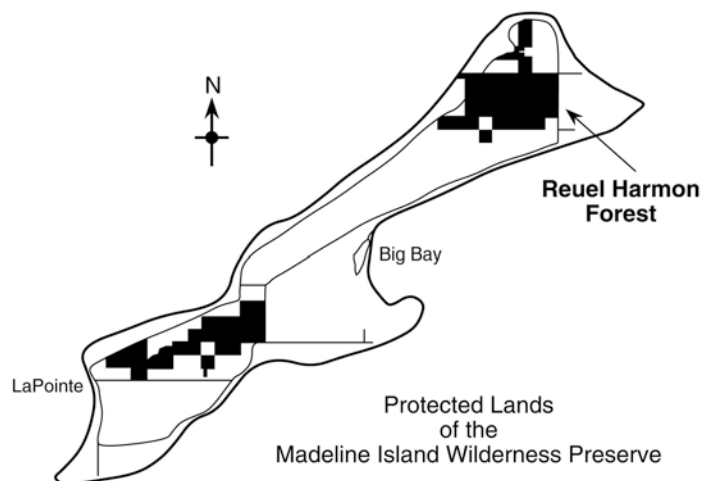


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Reuel Harmon Forest

The first timber offering under the plan was advertised in 1996, and the volume of wood was substantial – about 4500 cords of aspen, birch, and maple pulpwood intermixed with 250 mbf (thousand board feet) of birch and maple saw-timber on 760 acres. A five-year contract was specified with harvesting restricted to winter (frozen ground). Despite the size of the sale and the high demand for pulpwood at the time, no offers were received. The cost of removing the timber from the Island was simply too high – higher in fact than the price paid for wood delivered to the mill. A follow-up offering made only last year met the same fate; the costs of handling and transportation off the Island were too great to justify any interest.

The Harmon Forest will remain in the MFL program until December 31, 2021, the end of the 25-year enrollment period. Timber offers will be renewed from time to time as required, but unless the value of pulp rises substantially, it's unlikely that there will be any takers. But if harvesting should ever take place, it will be done in close accordance with our management goals to enhance the ecological qualities of the forest over the long term.



Summer 2003 Program

*Cosponsored by the Madeline Island
Historical Museum*

Saturday, May 24, 9–11:00 a.m.

"Spring Bird Hike at Big Bay"

Join seasoned birders, Peter Hudleston and Victoria Erhart, for an ornithological exploration of the varied habitats of Big Bay Park -- right at the peak of spring bird migration. Peter is Professor of Geology at the Univ. of MN and Victoria is a MIWP board member and Island summer resident. Meet at the Town Park (parking area); bring binoculars & bird guides.



Big Bay

Sunday, May 25, 11:30 a.m. "Mapping

Madeline: Assessing the Present, Planning the Future"

MIWP's 15th Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting; The premiere presentation of Madeline Island's new Geographic Information System (GIS) by its creator, Dr. Paul Bolstad of the College of Natural Resources, University of Minnesota. At the Clubhouse (*see detailed announcement, page 4*).

Saturday, June 28, 9:00 a.m.–Noon "Beaver Ecology with Kids"

Kids (ages 7 and up) will learn all about beavers, where they live, what they eat, and why they were so important to Madeline Island. Lead by Ruth Oppedahl, executive director of the Bayfield Regional Conservancy, and Steve Cotherman, director of the Madeline Island Historical Museum. Meet at the Museum for a presentation; then drive to a beaver site. Adults must accompany their kids.

Saturday, July 5, 9–11:00 a.m. "The Beaches and Bogs of Big Bay"

Hike the beach ridges and floating bogs of Big Bay lagoon with Dan Engstrom, Director of the St. Croix Watershed Research Station of the Science Museum of Minnesota. Learn how lake-level changes shaped the history of Big Bay and see rare and exquisite orchids, insectivorous plants, and more. Meet at the Town Park (parking area); wear boots or old sneakers.

Thursday, July 17, 7:00 p.m. "Timeless Timber: The Discovery and Recovery of Old-Growth Underwater Timber"

Scott Mitchen, founder of Timeless Timber in Ashland Wisconsin will tell about the discovery of this sunken local treasure, the retrieval process, and drying of the ancient wood. At the Museum.

Thursday, July 31, 7:00 p.m. "Invasive Species in the Great Lakes"

Many exotic fish and other non-native animals have invaded the Great Lakes via ocean-going ships, man-made canals, and fish stocking efforts. Dr. Philip Moy, non-indigenous fisheries specialist for the University of Wisconsin Sea Grant Institute will explain where these invaders came from, how they got here, and their consequences for Lake Superior's ecology. At the Museum.

Thursday, August 21, 7:00 p.m. "Shallow Drafts and Deep Water – Sea Kayaking the Apostle Islands"

Grant Herman, co-owner of Adventures in Perspective – a local sea kayak outfitting company in Red Cliff – will present a paddler's highlights slide tour of the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore and Madeline Island. Maps, stories, and a possible French fur trade song or two included. At the Museum.

All events are free (except the Spring Luncheon) and open to the public

15th Spring Luncheon and Annual Meeting

Memorial-Day weekend, Sunday May 25th at the Clubhouse on Madeline Island.

As with past luncheon events, we invite our members and friends to rekindle their ties to the Island, share in a gourmet meal, and hear a fascinating presentation on the natural history of the Lake Superior region by a guest speaker. This year's luncheon buffet will be catered by Ron Madich. A social gathering begins at 11:30 AM with seating at noon.

Our program will feature a premiere of the island's new Geographic Information System (GIS) by its creator, Dr. Paul Bolstad of the University of Minnesota. Paul's talk is titled:

" Mapping Madeline: Assessing the Present, Planning the Future "

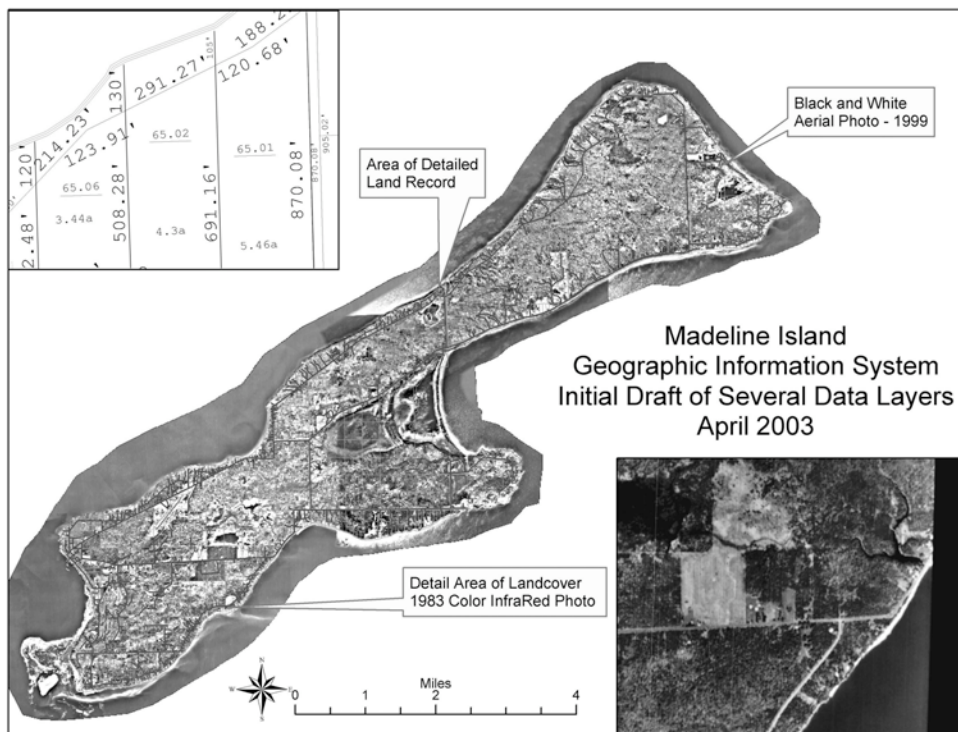
This flagship project of the MIWP has been a work in progress for several years and has been generously funded by MIWP members, several local foundations, and the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program. Here's your opportunity for a first-ever computer-illustrated tour of Madeline. Get a new perspective on the geography of our Island and learn just how GIS works and how it can help inform land-use decisions. A brief business meeting and annual review of MIWP activities will precede Paul's presentation.

Paul Bolstad is Associate Professor in the College of Natural Resources at the University of Minnesota. He teaches courses on GIS and spatial analysis to over 200 students each year. He also conducts research on the impacts of land use and climate change on forest ecosystems, at the behest of NASA, DOE, and the National Science Foundation.

The price of the luncheon is \$27 per person; RSVP (through May 20th) MIWP vice president Tom Kromroy, 802 Fairmount Ave., St. Paul 55105 (651-292-9222) or by E-mail at miwp@miwp.org

A Sampler from the Madeline GIS Project

The above image shows pieces of the Madeline Island GIS database being constructed by Dr. Paul Bolstad for the Wilderness Preserve. The center image is composed of 1999 black/white aerial photos of the island with updated roads and driveways added. The upper left image is a small portion of the land records data from Ashland County. Each record will be linked to its correct location on the map. The lower right is a portion of a 1983 color infrared aerial photo, which is being used along with other current sources to map the different types of land cover (vegetation) of the island.

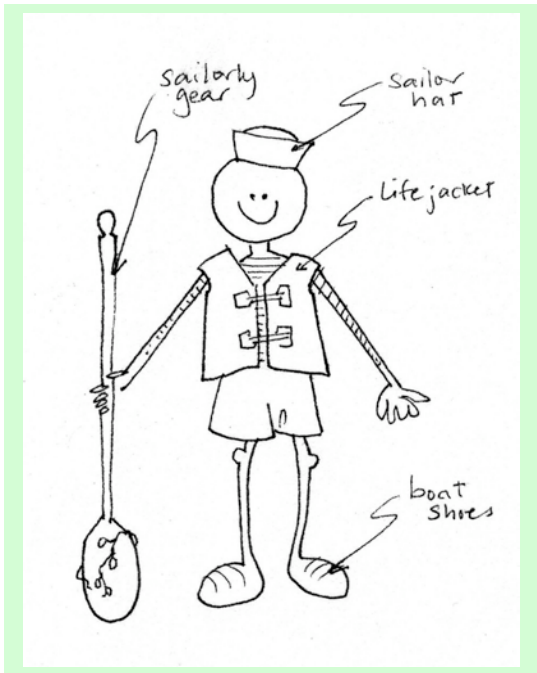




Fourth of July Parade Join in the Fun!



The fearless award-winning Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve marching non-band invites any and all members and supporters to join us for the 2003 Fourth of July parade.



Expanding on last year's prize-winning theme, this year we plan to march as the "*Madeline Island Wilderness Preservers*". If you have ever held back from joining the Fourth of July parade because of the sheer tediousness of making those difficult costumes, this is the year for you! The entire dress code is A LIFE JACKET.

Of course, and as always, we encourage creative and gutsy elaborations on the themes of seamanship and recent marine mayhem: sailor hats, boat shoes, dragging half of your splintered kayak, etc.

Children and pets with a flair for the dramatic are welcome.

❏ Plan to meet under the MIWP banner at the marina at least one half hour prior to the parade start.

❏ For questions or encouragement, call Victoria Erhart at 715-747-2277 between June 30th and July 3rd.

❏ And for anyone who remembers last year's heart-breaking failure of the little red wagon, this year, time and carpentry skills permitting, we plan to have a full-fledged car-dependent float!



Last year's award winners – the *Wilderness Preserves*

See you there!

New Signs Improve Trails

By Leslie Livingston

Reprinted from the Island Gazette, March 5, 2003

Cross-country skiers on the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve's North Trail loops are enjoying well-groomed trails and new location signs, thanks to Keith and Carol Sowl.



Keith has maintained MIWP trails for hiking and skiing for the past several years. He began defining the trails by running his mower tractor over old logging roads. He then removed underbrush and downed trees and further cleared the trails until they were walkable. Keith uses a cross-country trail-

setting machine to get a classic ski trail. He recently constructed small 'houses' for the North Trail loop maps and installed them at key intersections. Carol printed up the maps (which show one's current location on the trail system), laminated them for durability, and mounted them in the 'houses.'

The 6.9-mile East loop and the 3.7-mile West loop of the North Trail system comprise two of the activity trails MIWP maintains for public use. Other MIWP trails are the Capser Trail, close to town (the only trail open to snowmobiling), and the Nucy Meech and Burroughs Trails, which are not maintained for winter use (skiers will need to break their own trails). Access and parking for the North Trail system is at the Burroughs parking area, about 2.7 miles east of Benjamin Boulevard on the North Shore Road.

MIWP trails and lands are closed to all types of motorized traffic. According to Tom Kromroy, MIWP board member, the only exceptions are winter snowmobile usage on the Capser Trail and one week of ATV use on the North Trail loops during deer rifle season.

Kromroy also noted that MIWP has contracted with the Sigurd Olson Environmental Institute at Northland College to inventory these lands; formulate sound land management practices; develop signage plans (for directions, cautions, and nature interpretations); and to clearly mark boundaries and non-motorized usage areas. This will complement the mammoth GIS (Geographic Information System) Project, which will be presented during the MIWP Spring Luncheon at the Clubhouse.

The GIS Project—initiated by MIWP and further supported by a number of community grants—is a computerized mapping system of Madeline Island. It will show current land use, vegetation, topography, soils, ownership, roads, trails, etc., and can be used by the Town, Ashland County, or any others who need this type of detailed information for planning purposes.

Comments from Keith Sowl: Island Gazette, April 15

It was Tibbs (William Tibble) that constructed the trail map shelters and then spent the better part of a day helping me install them and clearing this year's windfalls. The maps were the product of some Northland college students and I believe part of the GIS project that Leslie refers to in her article and sent to me by Dan Engstrom. I have also received many hours of trail clearing help from Ron Nelson and Ron Harrold.

In the past few years I have received many donations of money to defray the cost of the trail grooming equipment and fuel and a group of North Shore Road hunters even gave me a new Jonserud chain saw.

Hopefully there will be more news about trails in the months to come, and we will have trails so everyone on the island can enjoy the woods. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions about where to go for a walk or a ski at slurpy@cheqnet.net.

