



Friends of Sylvania

Promoting the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness

<http://www.friendsofsylvania.org>

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WHO ARE THE “FRIENDS OF SYLVANIA”?

A very important question with a simple answer: the friends of Sylvania are folks from all walks of life who care about one of their favorite places – the Sylvania Wilderness. Some of these folks donate their time by actively working to preserve and protect the place they love, others donate money. Still others, due to other commitments, are able to only visit this wilderness for a short time, perhaps removing litter while on their wilderness journey. Some visited Sylvania long ago and can only dream of returning. Several environmental organizations are also members of this family of friends. The friends of Sylvania include many fortunate local folks and also concerned individuals in distant states.



Sylvania Friends John, Carol and David recheck Clark Lake for invasives. [D. Wallace]

Some of those who have been “friends” of Sylvania for many years realized that to properly care about this wilderness it would be necessary to have a formal Friends group. They officially incorporated the Friends of Sylvania (FoS) in 2009 and nonprofit status was obtained in 2010. At their first meeting the board adopted a Mission Statement to:

- Promote the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness so that its unique wilderness character and quality natural resources are preserved for future generations
- Foster a sense of public pride and a stewardship ethic toward our public lands and in particular the wilderness areas of the Ottawa National Forest
- Provide active stewardship of the Sylvania Wilderness to minimize the degradation of water quality, the impact of invasive species, and the overuse and misuse of the natural resources
- Function as an educational resource regarding all potential threats to the Sylvania Wilderness
- Cooperate with the Ottawa National Forest as appropriate to help achieve and promote the above activities

While this mission statement formalized the goals of the Friends of Sylvania, to protect and to preserve Sylvania has been the focus of many individuals and organizations for over 100 years. After many years of private stewardship, the Fisher family and The Sylvania Club cooperated with the Forest Service to transfer these lands to the public for long-term protection. Environmental organizations such as the Sierra Club fought hard in the 1960s to assure that the land was not sold to a developer and turned

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SIERRA CLUB SERVICE TRIP

In mid June of 2015 we resumed our Friends of Sylvania Invasive Weed project with crew training and a Sierra Club Service Project. Wally provided the summer interns and a few volunteers with GPS and weed documentation training. After successfully finding the practice weed data points, the interns and volunteers practiced newly learned canoe skills. This was needed since most of our work is done along the edges of lakes and we usually “commute” to work by canoe. Two students also

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INVASIVE WEED PROJECT

Because of a somewhat cool and dry 2015 winter/spring, the invasive plants started producing buds and flowers later than usual but, as always, they quickly caught up by July and seeds start flying by early August. Our ‘field season’ therefore extended from late June through early August. During this 7-week period we covered about 1,000 acres, visiting as many as possible of the over 1,000 known invasive plant sites in Sylvania and searching for new ones.

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into a northwoods 'Coney Island'. They also continued to push for the further protections offered by federal "wilderness" designation due to Sylvania's unique and natural landscapes. The Conservation Fund and Sylvania friends Tom Church and Tim and Jill Schmidt invested time and funds in 2004 to protect Crooked Lake from future motor boat abuse. Cameron and Marie Carol Coleman volunteered as Wilderness Rangers and educated several generations of friends in proper wilderness etiquette. And since 1999 Dan Wallace has led a volunteer group (with recent assistance from Bob Turnquist and his local crew) that clears fallen trees from portages and trails in Sylvania so visitors can experience and appreciate this unique wilderness.

The Friends of Sylvania have followed in these footsteps by becoming involved in several critical projects designed to protect and preserve Sylvania.



Six interns and two volunteer leaders relax after a long day of invasive removal. [W. Brinkmann]

Compared to most 'natural' areas further south, Sylvania has relatively few invasive weeds because the previous owners were very protective of it. Some board members, Forest Service personnel and friends with expertise in weed control from southern Wisconsin did a limited amount of invasive species removal work in Sylvania. However, Tom Church turned this into a serious and effective project by pointing us to a funding source. In 2011 FoS obtained funding through a "Secure Rural Schools Act Title II" competitive grant to develop a paid student intern program to enhance and expand invasive species management in Sylvania. This funding was reviewed and renewed through 2015 based on the documented benefits from this tedious and difficult work. Over the past 5 years, more than 1000 invasive plant sites have been identified, documented with a GPS, and visited annually. As a

result, most of the known major infestations now have significantly fewer plants. Over the past 5 years, we helped educate 14 next-generation environmentalists and many volunteers on safe and efficient methods to reduce the number of damaging invasive plants and to protect the Sylvania Wilderness.

As early as 1994 a direct link between aquatic invasive species (Eurasian watermilfoil) and motorboat activity on Crooked Lake was recognized. In September 2011, the Ottawa National Forest (ONF) offered 3 major options designed to reduce the introduction and spread of aquatic invasive species on Crooked Lake: pull up the invasive plants from the lake bottom, introduce beetles to fight these invasives biologically, or modify the public boat landing to make it a "carry-down" only facility. FoS joined several environmental organizations, including the Upper Peninsula Environmental Coalition (UPEC) and The Sierra Club, in support of the latter option. Over some objections, in 2012 the ONF wisely chose to preserve Sylvania's lakes for future generations by installing a gate that limits motor boat access while allowing emergency access. This action combined with other treatment options will significantly help to minimize aquatic invasives on Crooked Lake and in the Sylvania Wilderness.

In 2014 the new owners of a cabin on the first bay of Crooked Lake (which is located outside of the wilderness) filed suit against the Forest Service for not being permitted to use gas motor boats on the wilderness portion of Crooked Lake. (They purchased the cabin with full knowledge of the long-standing motor restrictions in the wilderness.) FoS, UPEC and others obtained intervenor status in support of the Forest Service position because we feel that motorboat usage in the wilderness seriously and negatively



One of the many invertebrates that benefit from natural wilderness areas. [D. Wallace]

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impacts the wilderness experience. That same year, FoS was given legal right to place restrictions, such as 'no gas motorboat use in the wilderness', on a different private property adjacent to the wilderness boundary. For various reasons these two legal cases have each become involved and time-consuming. (Our advice: Try to stay out of legal situations.) These two cases are still ongoing and part of the continuing FoS effort to protect Sylvania from all threats.

In September 2015 FoS became aware of a plan to have FR 6380 reopened to become part of the Wilderness Lakes Trail System. This reforestation road, which ran immediately adjacent to the Sylvania Wilderness boundary, was closed 22 years ago purposely to protect the Sylvania Wilderness. After consulting several local individuals, collecting needed information and serious discussions, the FoS board unanimously decided that **reopening of this road for any purpose would be a serious threat to the Sylvania Wilderness and to forest continuity**. In addition there have been serious Forest Service procedural errors. Several nearby local residents were not informed of this proposed change to "their backyard", and FoS was only informed very late in the process. As an official Friends organization with several Forest Service MOUs in place over the past 6 years, this project should have been communicated to and discussed with FoS several years ago. It also appears that the Forest Service gave its support to this project before notifying neighbors and the volunteers (both FoS and local) who have assisted the Forest Service the most in protecting the Sylvania Wilderness and Perimeter Area. In further support of the FoS position, when informed in January 2016 of the possible reopening of this old road for bicycles, the highly respected UPEC unanimously opposed this project. Please see: "News/Bike Trail around Sylvania/Update of FoS Comments – Feb. 2016" on our website and contact the individuals listed at the end of that document. In this way you too will be a "Friend of Sylvania."

A new threat has recently arisen to the Sylvania Wilderness and all U.S. wildernesses. Mountain bikers and mountain bike organizations have written and will introduce legislation in Congress to weaken the Wilderness Act and allow mountain bikes in designated wildernesses. This change coupled with a FR 6380 bike trail would spread addition invasive species, seriously damage trails and natural landscapes, and be devastating to the Sylvania Wilderness. In addition, adding this new sport in most wilderness areas will exceed the "carrying capacity" of these natural landscapes and create unsafe trails for families and hikers. Please contact us for more information on this critical national issue.

The above examples illustrate who the Friends of Sylvania are and the work they do to protect and preserve the Sylvania Wilderness. More information on the above topics can be found at our website: www.FriendsOfSylvania.org W. Brinkmann, D. Wallace

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learned that for proper canoe safety they should not paddle on the same side of the canoe.

Over the next 4 days we put these skills to the test paddling on Whitefish Lake and Crooked Lake to search for and remove invasive thistle plants, mainly European marsh thistles. With the exception of 3 major infestations the work went faster than in previous years, as we reduced the backlog of thistle seeds accumulated before the project started. We had one serious setback due to an unknown, large and dense thistle patch that Angela, TJ and Dan attacked on Whitefish Lake. (This location should be better next year due to some dedicated hand work on first-year plants in the fall.)

During this project we traditionally attack the thistles in the Whitefish outflow – a major area of thistle infestation that was unknown until FoS completed a careful search for the seed sources on Whitefish Lake. This is a very rugged and wet area where a very careful search is needed – our interns and volunteers rose to the occasion except for one afternoon when we made a good decision to make a quick exit due to a major approaching storm. Even though we are simply removing invasives we must do this work very thoroughly so there are no seeds released for future years. We also have some fine nature adventures in areas seldom seen by Sylvania visitors.

A special thanks to the volunteers who helped on this service project and the interns who assisted. We got off to a great start on the 2015 invasives project. D. Wallace



Invasive team volunteers protecting the perimeter of Sylvania with a trophy Japanese barberry plant. [D. Wallace]

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Our 2015 Invasive Weed Crew consisted of 4 part-time students: three new students (April, Brenna, and Lexi) and Evelyn who was a member of last year's crew. However, an enormous amount of work needed to be done over a short period of time. Furthermore, because the field work is hard, we usually do not work for more than 5-6 days before taking 5-6 day breaks. We therefore hired two additional students, Angela and TJ, on an as-needed daily basis. At the end of June, Brenna decided to pursue other opportunities but was fortunately replaced by Leah, who caught up quickly. These students worked nearly 1320 hours during this 7-week field season which was a necessary increase of more than 400 hours over last year.



Invasive crew comfortably cooks inside a donated "Tundra Tarp." [D. Wallace]

Additional assistance was provided by several local and out-of-state volunteers and participants in service trips to Sylvania organized by local and out-of-state groups. These volunteers and the FoS field leaders donated about 1150 hours of field work, a very helpful increase of more than 200 hours over last year.

2015 was the fifth year FoS worked on the control of invasive weeds in Sylvania. In 2015 over 800 known sites of invasive species (mostly European marsh, Canada, and bull thistles) were revisited. This is about 80% of all the known sites; sites not revisited were mostly Japanese barberry, which do not grow fast and therefore do not need to be revisited every year, and other species of lower concern such as water forget-me-not and hawkweed. In addition, about 210 new sites were identified; this increased the number of known sites in Sylvania from the original 134 sites provided by the Forest Service at the beginning of the project in 2011 to approximately 1200 sites. This increase in the number of sites is mostly due to the fact that we are covering more area and with a finer grid than was done prior to 2011.

Due to the effectiveness of our work in past years, we found fewer thistle plants at many sites. This, together with an expanded crew and additional volunteers, permitted us to spend a considerable amount of time removing first-year rosettes at a number of the major marsh thistle infestation sites. This should result in a considerable reduction in flowering plants in 2016. The members of the Land O'Lakes Fish and Game Club were among the volunteers that helped with the control of invasive species along Forest Road 6320. This was the third year that members of that club, under the leadership of Cheryl Pytlarz and with support from FoS, assisted with this critical task. Any invasive species inhabiting this active perimeter road need to be removed before they migrate into the Sylvania Wilderness. We appreciate this significant contribution and look forward to a continued collaboration in 2016.



Local volunteers remove invasive from the perimeter campground to minimize seed spread by campers. [D. Wallace]

Much of the road construction in the Sylvania Perimeter area was completed in 2014, with the exception of the road from the Entrance Station to the Crooked Lake boat landing. Access to Crooked Lake in 2015 was via a sliver of land belonging to the Forest Service, with a parking area generously provided to FoS by Sylvania Outfitters. With the renovation of the Clark Lake Day-Use Building completed, FoS crew and volunteers again camped in the drive-in campsite and made use of the wonderful new bathroom and shower facilities. The Day-Use Building was again our meeting and eating location, for which we thank the Forest Service.

Since its inception, our Invasive Weed Project has been financially and logistically supported by the US Forest Service because of Sylvania's wilderness designation, rare habitats, and relatively low invasive species infestation. We thank the ONF for the Title II RAC grant which we used to pay our students and to buy supplies during the 2011-2015 field seasons. At this time there is no funding for this project beyond 2015. We therefore invested a significant amount of time in 2014 and 2015 writing and submitting several grant proposals to continue this critical work. To properly sustain this project we have a great need for volunteers and for continued funding to protect Sylvania from invasive species. *W. Brinkmann*

University of Dubuque

For the past three years Professors Popp and Hoffman of the University of Dubuque have taught an environmental science class that has as one of its requirements participation in a fieldtrip in the Sylvania Wilderness. The service learning component of this class consists of volunteer work to remove invasives in Sylvania under the guidance of FoS.

This year, due to a scheduling conflict, the group worked without a FoS representative being present. FoS was, however, able to provide them with guidance. On their way from Dubuque to Sylvania, they stopped in Madison to pick up gloves. Armed with written instructions, a map, and pictures of the plant to be attacked, provided by FoS, they searched the 4 grassy patches at the southern end of Clark Lake that are infested with Canada thistle and pulled numerous plants. Professor Popp reported that the service project was a success and that he pulled the biggest thistle and caught the biggest bass as well. *W. Brinkmann*



University of Dubuque students removing Canada thistle from the shores of Clark Lake. [V. Popp]

Conserve School Contributions

In 2010, FoS started collaborating in a variety of ways with Conserve School, a college preparatory boarding school emphasizing environmental stewardship. The school is located in Wisconsin, immediately adjacent to Sylvania's southern boundary. In previous years Conserve School has assisted FoS in our efforts to protect Sylvania from invasives by providing access to Big Bateau Lake and by organizing teams of students to remove European marsh thistle rosettes on the Big Bateau Lake shoreline. This has been a very successful collaboration and has significantly reduced the thistle population on Big Bateau Lake. In 2014 Conserve School also provided FoS with dormitory accommodations for our invasives team which was greatly appreciated.

This year, Conserve School again gave us permission to travel across their property for thistle removal on Big Bateau Lake. In mid-May a group of students devoted part of an afternoon to pulling invasives on Conserve School property, rather than on the shoreline of Big Bateau Lake, due to the high lake levels that inundated the thistle sites. We understand that the Conserve School has organized an invasive removal plan for their property. This is also greatly appreciated since the school property is immediately upwind of the Sylvania Wilderness and has been a serious source of windblown invasive thistle seeds. FoS wishes them well on this critical task and has offered assistance and guidance. *W. Brinkmann*

Trail Clearing

This past year was a light year for trail clearing but we still had job security. All the trails had to be scouted and so we did a lot of nice wilderness walking carrying hand tools and 2-person cross-cut saws and then did some obstruction removal. By mid November all the trails and portages had been scouted and cleared for safe winter travel. Two experienced saw teams did most of the work: Bob Turnquist led the Land O'Lakes team clearing the SE corner of Sylvania and Dan Wallace led the Madison team covering the rest of Sylvania. The Madison team used a combination of walking and paddling so portage trails could be scouted and the team subgroups could move efficiently. Each team worked 2 to 3 days. *D. Wallace*

Forest Legacy Project completed near Sylvania

Only about 1 mile to the SE of the Sylvania Wilderness lies a relatively natural and productive forest. The greater landscape surrounding Sylvania provides critical habitat for wildlife and affects water and air quality and this area together with the Wilderness function in a mutually beneficial partnership. Thus it is a pleasure to see Wisconsin's most recent Forest Legacy project completed in the headwaters of the Wisconsin River near Land O' Lakes. This partnership between two private landowners and the State of Wisconsin protects 1,042 acres of forestland



Sunset over Loon Lake after a long paddle and portage to a wilderness campsite. [A. Arrowwood]

and 2 miles of Wisconsin River riparian habitat, and contributes to existing public lands. This project also adjoins the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest and is close to the Spruce Grouse State Natural Area and the Vilas County Forest.

The Forest Legacy program is designed to protect working forests with high ecological and recreational value, and achieves a permanent conservation easement between the landowners and the Department of Natural Resources. This perpetual agreement ensures non-motorized public access to the entire parcel for traditional forest uses like hiking, hunting, fishing and skiing. In addition to requiring public access, the Forest Legacy agreement

forbids future development and parcel division, and mandates sustainable forest management under a Forest Stewardship plan. Situated at the origin of the Wisconsin River, this project protects water quality, riparian habitat, and northwoods forests. The forest resources are diverse and include large stands of jack pine, red pine, aspen, white pine, spruce and hardwoods on the upland sites. The wetland areas feature significant stands of 120 year old white cedar, as well as black spruce and tamarack. In accordance with the Stewardship plan, the timber resource will continue to be managed by the landowners, with emphasis on watershed protection, wildlife habitat and protection of rare plants. Rare or endangered taxa have been documented on the project, including the Calypso Orchid, the Spruce Grouse and the Kirtland Warbler, and management for these species is included in the Forest Stewardship plan.

Partners in Forestry Co-op (PIF) brought this project forward, as yet another significant step in the Co-op's efforts in protecting forest lands and associated benefits. PIF board representative and FoS volunteer Rod Sharka stated: "we are very pleased to achieve such a significant project in the headwaters area, protecting our namesake river, as well as all the valuable habitat on this property. This project will be a solid legacy benefiting future generations. We are very grateful to DNR and the landowners for the vision they display with this project." This conservation project was generated through collaboration of Land O' Lakes real estate businessman Gary Goska and well-known conservationist Joe Hovel of Conover.

The Forest Legacy easement was purchased using the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund and the landowners donated part of the value. See www.partnersinforestry.com for more information on this project. [J. Hovel]

SAVE THE DATES: (see Upcoming Events on our website, more information will be posted as it becomes available)

June 17 – 21, 2016 **Sierra Club** invasive weeds removal project – volunteers needed/please contact Dan Wallace 608/698-5144

June 28, August 2 and 13, 2016 **Fish and Game Club** work days. Details will be posted in the F&G April newsletter and by email. Volunteers needed/please contact Cheryl Pytkarz 906/544-2524

Wishing you a happy and peaceful 2016. Friends of Sylvania Board of Directors,
Wally Brinkmann Craig Coleman Bob Evans Dan Wallace

The Friends of Sylvania sincerely thank all those who assisted, donated,
and/or volunteered to protect Sylvania during 2015:

Jane and Roger B., Madison WI
Wally B., Monona WI
Bob C., Watersmeet
Susan C., Watersmeet
Craig C., Minneapolis MN
Yvonne and Greg C., Watersmeet MI
Lorena & Bob E., Iron River MI
Carrie E., Sun Prairie WI
Jim F., Land O'Lakes WI
Anne H., Madison WI
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Susan K., Middleton WI
Diana M., Watersmeet
Mark M., Watersmeet MI
Michael M., Riyadh/Saudi Arabia

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Cheryl P., Watersmeet MI
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Jim P., Middleton WI
John R., Madison WI
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Melanie S., Germany
Alan P., Land O'Lakes WI
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Bob T., Land O'Lakes WI
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Paul W. and Cindy S., Eau Claire WI
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Sherry Z., Watersmeet MI
Anonymous, Chicago IL

Iron Braga Conservation District
Michigan DNR
Classen's European Bakery, Middleton WI
Conserve School, Land O'Lakes WI
Environmental Law & Policy Center,
Chicago Illinois (Howard Learner, Executive
Director/Jennifer Tarr, Staff Attorney)
Fiskars Tools
Land O'Lakes Fish & Game Club
Paddle Planner, Ardoch ND
Sylvania Outfitters, Bob Z., Watersmeet MI
Sylvania Wilderness Cabins, Tim & Jill S.,
Watersmeet MI
University of Dubuque IA,
Environmental Science Class
The Sierra Club

Donations in memory/honor of:
Patricia A., Neenah WI
(in memory of Howard, Eleanor, and Jean)



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*Vulnerable Purple Fringed
Orchid in the Sylvania
perimeter. [D. Wallace]*

Friends of Sylvania is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit charitable and educational organization.