



## 2017 Newsletter

# Friends of Sylvania

Promoting the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness

<http://www.friendsofsylvania.org>

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Dear Friends:

The Friends of Sylvania would like to wish you a happy and peaceful 2017 and to thank you for your interest in Sylvania and your support of our work. In 2016 we had another successful year assisting the US Forest Service in protecting and preserving the Sylvania Wilderness.

### CHANGING TIMES

We probably are not providing new information but sometimes it is still good to write our thoughts to communicate and share them, and to work toward solutions. As our new national Nobel Literature Prize recipient, Robert Allen Zimmerman (Bob Dylan) said, "the times they are a-changing". We think his intent was also not to tell us anything new but to encourage us to move forward together. The following are some changes that may affect the wilderness qualities of Sylvania that we all value highly:

1) Last year Norm Nass retired after many years and was replaced by Tony Holland as the new District Ranger of the Watersmeet district of the Ottawa NF. Unfortunately for Tony this occurred in the middle of a controversy partially created by his predecessor. Over the summer the Friends of Sylvania (FoS) and Tony had several opportunities to work together and to better understand our shared commitment to Sylvania. We look forward to continuing communication and cooperation with the Forest Service.

2) After much thoughtful work and many hours of discussions and lobbying by the Friends of Sylvania Board of Directors it appears that unfortunately there will be a bike trail constructed immediately adjacent to the Sylvania Wilderness in 2017. For reasons clearly communicated on the FoS website, the FoS Board feels that this decision will seriously affect the wilderness qualities of Sylvania that the Forest Service (USFS) could be protecting. This trail location will increase the recreation density immediately adjacent to the wilderness, contribute additional vectors for the spread and propagation of invasive species, and disconnect the wilderness from adjacent wild lands. In dealing with the proposed FR 6380 trail location it was not our intent to cause controversy

*More about TIMES on page 4*



*Linnaea borealis ~ twinflower*

*The beauty of Sylvania Wilderness worth protecting.*

### INVASIVE WEED PROJECT

2016 was the sixth year FoS worked on the control of invasive weeds in Sylvania. We were again fortunate in having a great field team and several very enthusiastic volunteers.

Our field team consisted of four paid part-time members: one retiree (Carol) and 3 Natural Resources students (Victoria, Jena, and Sean) who worked nearly 900 hours total. The students came from Northland College and from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. One of our project goals is to inspire and empower future Natural Resources managers and leaders.

*More about WEEDS on page 2*

### VOLUNTEER GROUPS

#### Big Bateau Group

Paul Wagner and Cindy Schlosser, summer guests at a private property on Big Bateau, again formed their own "thistle attack" work party, joined this year by friend Jeff Henry. The three circumnavigated Big Bateau and Florence Lakes and checked the larger islands. FoS was provided with a long list of notes and an annotated map documenting the work. The group reported finding fewer plants, at least in part due to their and FoS work on those two lakes the past several years, but high lake levels in 2016 also helped by drowning plants.

*More about VOLUNTEERS on page 3*



*FoS Weed Crew learning field data methods*

We seem to be successful at that according to Sean who will be joining our field team again in 2017. He said that he wanted to return because “it is great hands on experience” for a Natural Resources student and that time spent in Sylvania “is very fulfilling”. The field team was augmented by local and out-of-state volunteers. Those volunteers and the FoS field leaders donated over 700 hours of field work.

At the beginning of the field season (which started in mid-June and ended in mid-August), we conducted a workshop on wilderness safety, safe paddling, effective processes for identifying, documenting and removing invasives, and Forest Service wilderness rules for the field team and volunteers. Throughout our training and operations, we emphasized respect for the wilderness and wilderness visitors. We also emphasized the need for a high level of quality control for this project to succeed.

In 2016 we visited about 85% of previously identified sites. Sites that were not revisited included sites that were part of the initial ONF inventory for species that are not within the scope of the FoS invasive removal program, sites with species difficult to control, and sites with species we decided to visit less frequently because of slow plant growth (Japanese barberry).

In addition, 115 new sites were identified. This is fewer new sites than in previous years which means that the quality of our past searches for new sites has been excellent. Two of the new sites were spotted knapweed which increased the number of such sites around the southern end of Clark Lake and the Clark/Loon portage to 5. Two of them are located at campsites and two at the portage. The source of these invasive seeds is most likely the Clark Lake boat landing which emphasizes the need for weed control in the Sylvania Perimeter area.

All 5 of the known garlic mustard sites in Sylvania are located at campsites, which indicates that this invasive was probably transported there by visitors. Two of the 5 sites had no residual plants in 2016. We will nevertheless continue monitoring them.

As always, our emphasis in 2016 was on the control of thistles which are the most prevalent invasives in Sylvania and which are most abundant along the flat, sandy shores of the western lakes. The location of perfect thistle growing sites is however not restricted to shorelines. Sylvania sits on top of the very hummocky Winegar Moraine. Moist depressions in the forest are abundant. These tend to be not very supportive of trees but are welcoming to moisture loving invasive species that can find their way to such spots. If undisturbed for some time, such spots can become the location of “mega sites” (with several hundred plants). These hidden sites can significantly contaminate other areas with wind-blown seeds. We managed to find some of these sources by tracing back to streams or creeks and by checking out any light in the distance that might indicate a forest opening. Prime examples of mega sites are: the Whitefish Outflow area which FoS discovered in 2013 and which now has 51 documented thistle sites; our recent thistle discoveries in a depression inside the forest at the southern end of Crooked Lake; and an opening in the forest near the Mink campsite with about 300 plants initially.

In 2016 we spent fewer hours in the field compared to 2015 for two reasons: 1) We found fewer invasive plants at many of the sites that we have been revisiting every year; and 2) our 2015 field team was larger than average which had permitted us to spend a considerable amount of time removing first-year thistle rosettes at a number of the major infestations. This resulted in a reduction in flowering plants in 2016 (we will continue this process as time and funding permit).

We were fortunate to receive financial support for our 2016 work from two sources: a Forest Service Stewardship grant and a grant from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to WePIC (Western Peninsula Invasive Coalition – of which FoS is a member). Without the support of these agencies and their staff (Tory Hahka and Jennifer Ricker) we would not have been able to accomplish this critical work. We are grateful to both agencies and their staff for this valuable support.

The task of protecting Sylvania’s 18 thousand acres from invasive species has been possible due to the above financial support, dedicated interns and the moral support and actions of our volunteers. We encourage you to join us in a project where we can make a difference for Sylvania and have some fun.

*W. Brinkmann*



*FoS  
Summer 2016  
Weed Crew*



*VOLUNTEERS from page 1 . . .*

The Big Bateau group is also starting to discover and work on some large infestations on land south of lake. Given the prevailing W/SW wind direction, work on those potential seed sources is very important – many thanks! *W. Brinkmann*



*Keep Sylvania Beautiful Team [J. Pytlarz]*

### **Keep Sylvania Beautiful Team**

Forest Road 6320 is the eastern boundary of the Sylvania Wilderness which is kept free of the targeted invasive species by an ambitious group of stewards. Folks from Ohio, Wisconsin and Michigan teamed up to walk the 7 mile road removing the weeds, swatting the mosquitoes and making conversation with newly found friends.

### **Conserve School**

A Conserve School environmental science class spent their April Stewardship day in Sylvania working on thistles. Armed with a map of invasive thistle sites provided by FOS, they went in search of thistle rosettes on Loon Lake and the portage between Loon and Florence. The students spent a good part of the day pulling MANY thistles. According to the instructor “it was a good experience for the students” but it also helped us because we found fewer mature plants in that area – many thanks! *W. Brinkmann/R. Eady*



*Conserve School students pulling thistle rosettes from around Loon Lake. [R. Eady]*

### **University of Dubuque**

Professors Popp and Hoffman of the University of Dubuque have for the past four years taught an environmental science class that has as one of its requirements participation in a field trip 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. For the past couple of years, they had to work on their own due to a scheduling conflict. Given that the students usually have no experience in invasive control, they and their instructors have been doing an amazing job – many thanks!

*W. Brinkmann*



*University of Dubuque students pulling European marsh thistles from around Clark Lake. [V. Popp]*

### **TRAIL CLEARING**

Several times during the past summer, extreme storms damaged power lines with the result that the Invasive Weed Project's ice cream melted. These storms also provided a challenging year for trail clearing. High winds, heavy rains and compromised trees provided unwanted trail clearing job security. The main north-south trail on the east side of the wilderness was mostly taken care of by the Land O' Lakes trail crew who we sincerely thank. The rest of the trail obstructions were taken care of by the USFS summer crew and a 4 day October marathon trail clearing with 2 complete FoS crews. Some of this skill and dedication can easily be seen in the remains of 2 very technical trees across the main north-south entrance trail. All this work provided very enjoyable mid-January skiing before the January meltdown. We thank our FoS trail crew leaders and volunteers. *D. Wallace*



*Great skiing, lunch and weather in the wilderness in January 2017*



*TIMES from page 1. . .*

or interfere with silent sports that we fully support. The lack of communication between affected parties before decisions were made and our mission to “protect and preserve” the Sylvania Wilderness made our opposition necessary.

3) The FoS has been working on the Invasive Weed Project for six years in and around the Sylvania Wilderness. This tedious work continues to provide positive changes in the natural landscape of Sylvania. In 2017 a Sylvania visitor will see significantly fewer invasive plants and have a lower probability of negative reactions to spiny thistles. Since we are fighting a natural force, continued diligence and funding will be required (see INVASIVE WEED PROJECT page 1).

4) The 2016/17 winter appears to be following the pattern of changes from previous years. This winter has seen more ice and less snow, has had more extreme temperature fluctuations, and has been warmer than previous years. This seriously affects local businesses and winter recreationists who depend on a consistent and solid snow base.

Higher average annual temperatures and extreme weather fluctuations have been seriously researched for decades. FoS is seriously concerned since weather changes (always have) will affect Sylvania’s hydrology, non-native insect populations, invasive plant species, and the survival of the heritage old growth forest that gives Sylvania its landscape character (Lee Frelich – University of Minnesota).

5) With changes in the Federal government and the “trickle down” effect we will see changes in how OUR federal lands are managed (or mined). We anticipate that there will be few if any additional monies and/or personal assistance for “pulling weeds” in the Sylvania Wilderness. Today (1.23.17) federal budgets were frozen and a hiring freeze was initiated. We expect that some federal (and state) lands will be sold off. Wisconsin has already sold off lands and some connected folks got great deals and locations.

6) There have been other changes but we are unsure how to accurately describe them.

Changes we hope to see next year:

1) With the help of the 2017 Invasive Plant Crew, local and distant volunteers, and the USFS we hope to see a continuing decrease in the numbers of Canada, Bull and European Marsh thistles in and around the Sylvania Wilderness.

2) After excessive motorboat use on Crooked Lake, in the Sylvania wilderness, we hope to see a completed legal process that keeps Crooked Lake protected from random and uncontrolled motor boat access by individuals playing legal games. The USFS, FoS and other plaintiffs are working on this in the courts. We hope the USFS gains the needed backing to enforce all the wilderness rules.

3) We hope to see the USFS, local volunteers and residents, and FoS continue to communicate and work together respectfully to protect the Sylvania Wilderness and surrounding lands.

(For additional Dylan musical entertainment please listen to “Ring them Bells”)

*W. Brinkmann/D. Wallace*



*FoS 2016 trail crew, part A, [D. Wallace]*



*FoS 2016 trail crew, part B, [J. Ketelle]*



*FoS interns contemplate the large task ahead.  
Where shall we start?*



Wishing you a happy and peaceful 2017. Friends of Sylvania Board of Directors,

Wally Brinkmann Craig Coleman Bob Evans Dan Wallace

The Friends of Sylvania sincerely thanks all of those who assisted, donated and/or volunteered to protect Sylvania during 2017:

Jane and Roger B., Madison WI  
Wally B., Monona WI  
Julie C., Madison WI  
Craig C., Minneapolis MN  
Bob C., Watersmeet, MI  
Yvonne and Greg C., Watersmeet MI  
Richard D., Stevens Point WI  
Lorena & Bob E., Iron River MI  
Carrie E., Sun Prairie WI  
Anne H., Madison WI  
Paula & Greg H., Pewaukee, WI  
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Diane M., Watersmeet, MI  
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Cheryl and Jeff P., Watersmeet MI  
John R., Madison WI  
Carol and David S., Watersmeet MI  
Jeri S.  
Michael and Jennifer T., New Berlin WI  
Dan W., Fitchburg WI  
Paul W. and Cindy S. and Jeff H., Eau Claire WI  
Bernard Z., West Dundee IL

For more info go to  
FriendsofSylvania.org

Classen's European Bakery, Middleton WI  
Conserve School, Land O'Lakes WI  
Environmental Law & Policy Center, Chicago IL  
Fiskars Tools, Middleton WI  
Iron Braga Conservation District  
Land O'Lakes Trail Crew  
Michigan DNR  
Paddle Planner, Ardoch ND  
Sylvania Outfitters, Bob Z., Watersmeet MI  
Sylvania Wilderness Cabins, Tim & Jill S., Watersmeet MI  
University of Dubuque, Environmental Science Class, Dubuque IA  
US Forest Service, Ottawa National Forest

#### Donations in memory/honor of:

Patricia A., Neenah WI (in memory of Howard, Eleanor, and Jean)  
Katherine K., Minneapolis MN (in honor of Andy K.)  
Warren County Bar Association (in honor of Greg C.)

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

**April 22, Saturday –CELEBRATE Earth Day - A Walk in the Wilderness–** For info call - 906-265-4081

**June 16, Friday – Invasive weed program WORKSHOP –** Join us for the needed background for safe and successful weed removal.

**June 16 to 21 –BEGINNING of Invasive Weed program and field work –** please join us for the fun and critical work to protect Sylvania.

**July 29, 2017, Saturday, 9-Noon, Keep Sylvania Beautiful WORKDAY,** rain date, Aug. 1. Looking for 20 Volunteers to sweep Forest Rd. 6320, eastern boundary. BBQ lunch to follow. Please contact Cheryl Pytlarz, 906/544-2524, cherylpoo@aol.com

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FoS weed crew with aggressively invasive purple foxglove