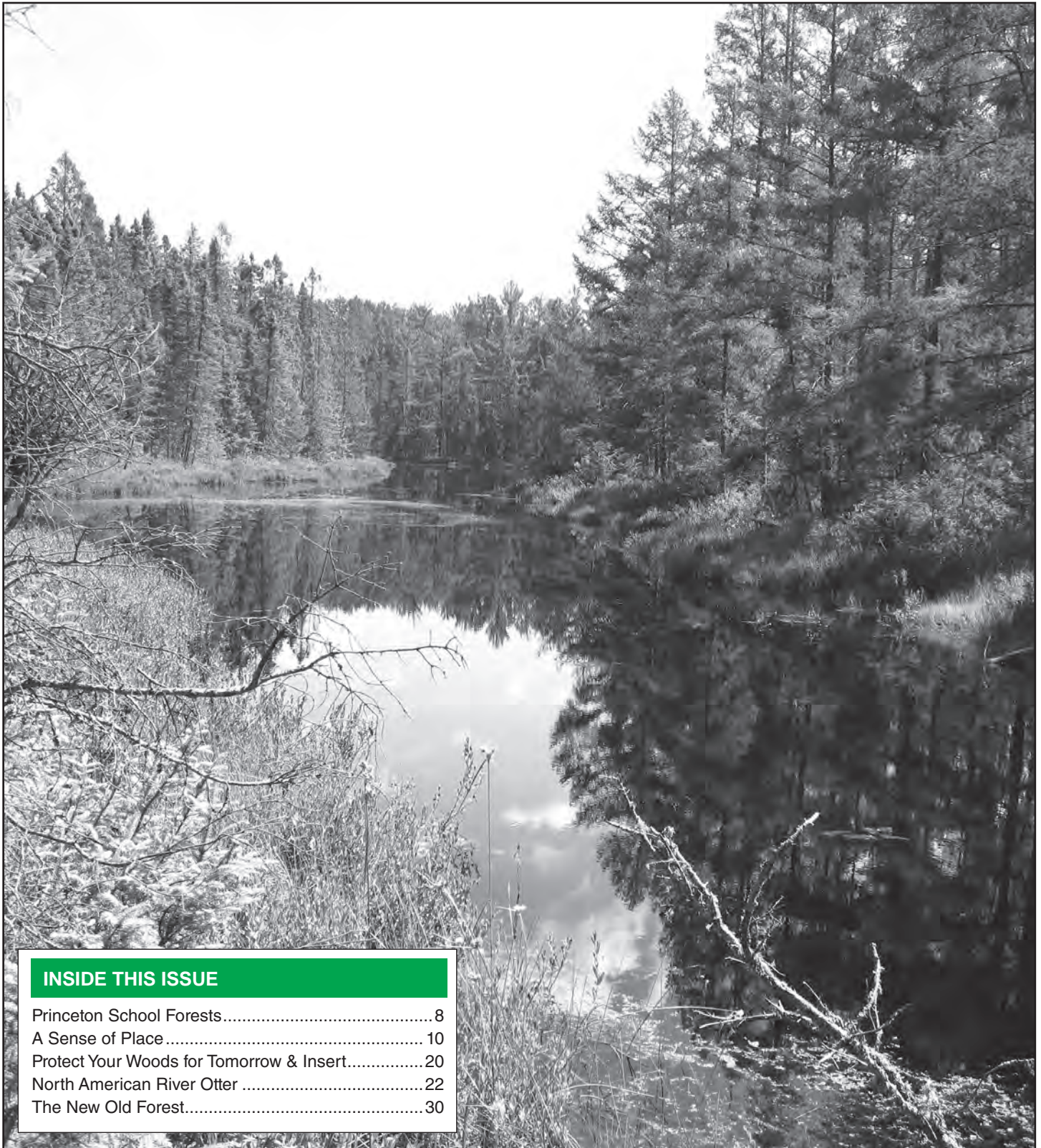


Wisconsin Woodlands



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Creating Tomorrow's Woodlands Today

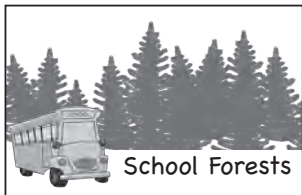
Princeton School Forests:

Green & Marquette county properties include forests, wetland

By Steve Schmidt

About one-third of Wisconsin school districts with a registered school forest have multiple school forests. That group includes Princeton with its two registered forests: Princeton School Forest in Marquette County and Prinsylvania II in Green Lake County.

The chain of names associated with these properties can be a bit confusing. The original property in Marquette County has been called Prinsylvania, Princeton Consolidated Community Forest, the school farm, forest farm, a game



preserve and the recreation area. Now it is almost exclusively called

Princeton School Forest. The Green Lake parcel is called Prinsylvania, officially Prinsylvania II.

Princeton Principal R. E. Calhoun was proud of the student council purchase of 200 acres of farm land in 1955 that became the Princeton School Forest. In fact, Calhoun made the original deal, and encouraged and helped students pay for the \$3,700 property in four years through magazine sales, yearbook sales and other fundraisers. In 1956, 24,000 trees and 3,000 shrubs were planted by students during a dedication event at the “school farm.” In a letter, Calhoun thanked extension forester F. B. Trenk for his advice to hold the dedication ceremony, writing “If you are in the area next fall at the right time, we’ll fill the trunk of your car with choice melons!”

T.A. Peterson, UW Extension forester, approved the 1961 registration of the second property that was 100 acres, including 40 acres of wetland. This was curious to Calhoun who thought that only land with timber potential could be registered. He even asked Peterson to register the 40 as “wetland management.” But Peterson made it clear in a letter of reply that education was every



Photos by Jenny Christopher

Students built this cabin on the Princeton School Forest property in 1998. It is still used today.



Left: Joe Waters, Princeton science teacher, shows deer hunting stand locations on the Princeton School Forest property. Right: A deer track is visible in the fine sandy soil of the Prinsylvania II property.



bit as important as the forest crop.

“Wetlands form an integral part of the forest landscape - what better opportunity is there to show interrelationships of natural resources? There is nothing wrong with managing the 40 acres of wetland for game within Prinsylvania II. It will, however, be registered as a school forest unit.”

Princeton was fortunate to have Trenk and Peterson as mentors to the process of developing their school forest

programs. Their lifetime accomplishments as foresters earned Trenk a place in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame and Peterson in the Wisconsin Forestry Hall of Fame. Both halls of fame list inductees with biographies at https://wchf.org/wchf_inductees/ and <https://www.wisaf.org/wisconsin-forestry-hall-of-fame/>.

The 2007 Forest Stewardship Management Plan includes both properties managed for environmental education,

Fast Facts

Princeton School Forest

- Marquette County
- Certified: 1955
- Total acres: 200

Prinsylvania II School

- Green Lake County
- Certified: 1961
- Total acres: 100
- School district enrollment: 336 (2018-19)
- Student visits: 161 (2017)
- Questions? Contact: Joe Waters, science teacher, joewate@princeton.k12.wi.us

Princeton School Forests (Green Lake & Marquette counties)



multi-use and timber production. Princeton School Forest is characterized by seven different stand types in about 45 stands over its 200 acres. The overlap between stands creates abundant edge habitat for wildlife. Red maple and tamarack dominate the mucky soils of the lowlands, but significant oak stands and a pine plantation are found on the primarily fine loamy sands of the more upland areas.

The pond, east of the cabin, and wetlands to the north provide excellent benefits to wildlife and opportunities for students to study the forest-wetland interface. The school forest is only accessible through an unpaved easement road and is unfragmented by the surrounding private forests and wetlands. Invasive species have not been identified as a problem, possibly due to its distance from the main road and active management on the outer properties.

On the other hand, the easy-to-access

Prinsylvania II property in Green Lake County does have invasive buckthorn and black locust. It is located adjacent to Highway 23, which may provide a corridor for invasive plants and the critters, including humans, that spread them. However, there are some interesting stands of hardwoods with black oak, walnut and hickory.

Prinsylvania has two parcels connected at a corner. The northwest 40-acre parcel consists mostly of lowland tag alder and tamarack and a wetland. The southeast 60-acre parcel has stands of hardwoods and jack-pine growing in nutrient poor, well-drained sandy soils.

Princeton School Forest, with its classroom cabin, pond, tree stand diversity and trail system sees much more use than Prinsylvania II. In fact, the 2007 Princeton School Forest Education Plan acknowledges Prinsylvania II, but makes clear that Princeton School Forest will be developed as the outdoor classroom.

Active development had been underway prior to the official plan. Some students from the class of 1998 were given the opportunity to build a 40-foot x 40-foot cabin and covered picnic area as a special project to help them earn sufficient credits to graduate. The cabin is the focal point of community gatherings and where classes meet before their hikes afield.

Although not officially stocked, someone put “keeper” bluegill, yellow perch and a few bass into the pond that was dug in 2006. Sixth grade classes held annual catch-and-release fishing tournaments until recently when fish were no longer caught. Science teacher and school forest contact, Joe Waters, thinks that otters may have finished off the fish. Current annual environmental education includes Waters’ biology, environmental science and forestry classes, sixth grade geocaching with GPS units, and elementary students observing forest ecology in action.

Princeton residents may enter a lottery for the opportunity to hunt deer from specific stands each fall. The stand locations help to provide a safe hunt for locals. There is a sense of community ownership from those who hunt here



Photo by Joe Waters

A Princeton student fishes in the pond in the Princeton School Forest.

and their ties with the land help foster care and management.

Consider a visit to either property outside of deer hunting season. Although both school forests are open to the public, please contact Supt. Chris Metras before your visit at 920-295-6571.

Princeton School Forest can be accessed by heading north of Princeton on Highway 73 for about 4 miles, then left onto Eagle Road. Travel 3 miles on Eagle Road and turn right on the easement road at fire number W1298. The gravel road is about a mile to the cabin. Search Google Maps for Princeton School Forest.

Prinsylvania II is easily accessed from Highway 23, about 2 miles west of downtown Princeton on the north side of the highway.

Editor's Note: Information taken from the 2007 Princeton School Forest Forest Stewardship Management Plan, LEAF school forest records and the 2007 Princeton School District Education Plan: School Activities at the School Forest.



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