

2010 FINAL REPORT FOR THE WISCONSIN COVERTS PROJECT



Promoting Woodland Wildlife Stewardship

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August 12-15, 2010 WI Coverts Project attendees: Standing (left to right): Dick Merten, Daniel Einstein, Brad Matson, Scott Craven (workshop coordinator), Doug Hagie, Mark Erickson, Chad Reynen, Tom Owens, Bill O'Donnell, Jim Stuempges, Jo Bailey, David Drake (workshop coordinator), Craig Stomberg, Steve Schwartz, and Doug Appelgren. Sitting (left to right): Roxanne Erickson, James Marquardt, Robert Asproth, Charles Erickson, David Johnson, Jason Spaeth, Barb Thompson, Kathy Lewis, and Gretchen Larson. Not pictured: Jim Lohff and Jamie Nack (workshop coordinator).



August 26-29, 2010 WI Coverts Project attendees: Back row standing (left to right): David Drake (workshop coordinator), Andy Chikowski, Ted Zabel, Dennis Waterman, Chad Lampi, Harold Ehrenreich, Roger Williams, Dennis Lampi, and Bob Kleinhans. Middle row (left to right): Scott Craven (workshop coordinator), Dick Grossenbach, Sue Coffman, Jim Coffman, Karen Wedde, Jeff Schuler, Gerry Mich, Alanna Koshollek, Mark Nammacher, and Jamie Nack (workshop coordinator). Front row (left to right): Nancy Mead, Bonnie Grossenbach, Dean Scherwinski, Wayne Blickhahn, Dan Andrae, Howard Mead, Margo Mich, Peter Dohr, David Davis, and Mike Ryan.

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HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN COVERTS PROJECT

The Wisconsin Coverts Project began in March 1994 with the funding of a 3-year proposal by The Ruffed Grouse Society (RGS). A second 3-year grant continued the project through 1999, and a third, 3-year grant provided funding through 2002. Conservative use of funds and use of the University's field station (Kemp Natural Resources Station) allowed us to save enough money to fund the 2003 workshop. In 2004, RGS suspended funding for the Coverts Project. We felt it was very important that we not skip a year of the program, so we used our remaining RGS funding, plus an additional \$1,500 from the Department of Wildlife Ecology to cover the 2004 workshop expenses. In the spring of 2005, we received a grant from RGS for the 2005 workshop. In 2006, Gary Zimmer (RGS, Senior Regional Biologist) and Jamie Nack received a Wisconsin Environmental Education Board (WEEB) Grant for the 2006 and 2007 Coverts workshops. The match for this grant was provided by the RGS through a donation from Louisiana-Pacific Corporation. The Department of Wildlife Ecology at UW – Madison also provided match in the form of salary and time. In 2008, the WI Coverts Project received the majority of its funding from the RGS through a donation from Louisiana-Pacific Corporation (LP). The Project also received donations from Michigan Technological (Tech) University (through a National Science Foundation grant) and Braun Woodlands Foundation, Inc. for the 2008 workshop. The two workshops in 2009, were funded by the RGS, LP, Michigan Tech (through a National Science Foundation grant), and the T. Stanton Armour RGS Chapter. In 2010, we received a 3-year grant from Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc, with matching funds from RGS and LP. The 2010 workshops were also supported by The Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology at UW – Madison, the University of Wisconsin Extension, and Braun Woodlands Foundation Inc.

Coverts workshops have taken place in August, September, or October of each year since 1994. Previous annual reports covered the first 17 workshops. This report covers the 2010 workshops and the accomplishments of our 2009 Coverts Cooperators.

Darrel Covell supervised the Wisconsin Coverts Project from 1994 - 1999. In June 1999, Darrel departed Wisconsin to take on new job responsibilities, ultimately becoming the State Wildlife Extension Specialist at the University of New Hampshire. Rebecca Christoffel was hired to replace Darrel, and served as the Wisconsin Coverts Project Coordinator from June 1999 - August 2002. Jamie Nack, hired to replace Rebecca in October 2002, serves as the current Wisconsin Coverts Project Coordinator, and Scott Craven serves as Project Co-leader. In 2005, David Drake, Extension Wildlife Specialist, joined our staff and has been helping with the workshops.

Since 1994, 476 Coverts Cooperators (representing 419 properties) have attended Wisconsin's 19 workshops. They own or are responsible for managing 341,418 acres (including 165,000 acres of industrial forest) in Wisconsin. The Coverts Cooperators from the first 17 workshops have reached out to more than 8,400 other landowners in the state accounting for an additional estimated 410,000 acres in Wisconsin. The total land base impacted through 17 years of the program is estimated to be over 750,000 acres.

In 2010, we developed a Wisconsin Coverts Project logo and began to offer the embroidered logo on shirts for Coverts Cooperators who would like to purchase them. The cooperators really liked the shirts; more than half of the 2010 attendees purchased one. This should improve the profile of the WI Coverts Project and may help with cooperator recruitment.

SUMMARY OF 2010 WORKSHOPS

In 2010, 2 Wisconsin Coverts Project workshops were held at Kemp Natural Resources Station in Woodruff. The August 12-15th workshop had 23 participants (including 1 couple) representing 22 properties and the August 26-29th workshop had 26 participants (including 4 couples) representing 22 properties. In total, 49 landowners received training on woodland wildlife management through the 2010 Wisconsin Coverts Program.

Workshop sponsors included: The Ruffed Grouse Society, Louisiana-Pacific Corporation, University of Wisconsin – Extension, UW-Madison – Department of Forest and Wildlife Ecology, Sustainable Forestry Initiative Inc., and Braun Woodlands Foundation Inc.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUGUST 12-15, 2010 COVERTS COOPERATORS

The following is a summary of information gleaned from the 23 Coverts Cooperators, representing 22 properties, who attended the August 12-15, 2010 Coverts Workshop.

- **Acres owned or responsible for:** Total=3,982; average=181; median=80; range=8-830.
- **Landowner’s state of residence:** 15 Wisconsin, 6 Minnesota, 2 Illinois
- **Years lived in Wisconsin/Minnesota:** Average = 45 years (out of 19 attendees)
- **Years lived in your present community:** Average = 23 years (out of 23 attendees)
- Primary interests and/or management objectives for the property:

<u>Primary Interests</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 22)</u>
Wildlife	22 (100%)
Recreational Enjoyment	18 (82%)
Forest Mgmt./Timber Stand Improvement	9 (41%)
Income from Timber Production	4 (18%)
Prairie Restoration	4 (18%)
Wetland Improvement/Restoration	3 (14%)
Invasive Species Management	3 (14%)
Legacy/Future Generations	3 (14%)
Firewood	3 (14%)
Maple Syrup	3 (14%)
Water Quality	1 (5%)
Quality Deer Management	1 (5%)
Honey Bees	1 (5%)
Creating a Legacy Trust	1 (5%)

- **Properties with a written wildlife or forest management plan:** 12 of 22 properties (55%).
- **People consulted in the past three years for woodland management advice:**

<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 22)</u>
DNR Bureau of Forestry	16 (73%)
Private Consulting Forester	14 (64%)
DNR Wildlife Biologist	8 (36%)
Natural Resources Conservation Service	7 (32%)
UW Cooperative Extension System	6 (27%)
Farm Service Agency	2 (9%)
Other Landowners	2 (9%)
Others*	7 (32%)

*Others listed: Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Minnesota Forestry Association, Woodland Advocate Program, Aldo Leopold Foundation, Boulder Lake Environmental Center, West Central Landscaping Committee, and Pheasants Forever.

- **Knowledge of forest and wildlife management:**

<u>Knowledge Level</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 23)</u>
▪ I have no knowledge of forest or natural resource management	0 (0%)
▪ Aware of some options for managing my woodlands	3 (13%)
▪ Understand some management concepts & can explain them to others	10 (43%)
▪ Have enough skills to implement some management activities on my land	10 (43%)
▪ I know as much about forest and wildlife management as most foresters or wildlife biologists	0 (0%)

- **Attitudes about hunting:**

<u>Position</u>	<u>Number of Attendees (out of 23)</u>
Am a hunter	13 (57%)
Not opposed, but don't hunt	10 (43%)

- **Cooperators allowing hunting on their property:** 21 of 22 properties (95%)

EVALUATION OF THE AUGUST 12-15, 2010 WORKSHOP

Twenty-two of 23 workshop evaluations were returned (96%). The August 12-15th workshop and site exceeded Cooperators' expectations. On a scale of 1 to 5, landowners rated the workshop a 4.6 and the site a 4.9. From the returned evaluations, Cooperators pledged that a year from now they will have encouraged an estimated 336 to 405 woodland owners to adopt the concepts of good wildlife and forest management presented at the Wisconsin Coverts Project workshop.

Following are excerpts from the August 12-15, 2010 evaluations:

Any advice for speakers?

- No, they are all articulate and very knowledgeable on their subjects.
- All were excellent speakers (knowledgeable and experienced, sense of humor, spoke clearly).
- I had trouble hearing the wolf presentation outside.
- Invasive species - show color slide of each species as it is discussed because we might not know it.
- No advice - you have some fantastic speakers who not only know their topics but pass the information to us in a way that makes everything interesting. No boring subjects.
- I appreciate your being candid when discussing various subjects. All outstanding and experienced speakers.

Any comments on facilities? (Kemp Natural Resources Station, Woodruff)

- It is just what I expected...camp for adults! Perfect!
- Do not change a thing! Improvements would ruin this place.
- I loved it, loved being here. It's a super facility, just the way it is. Don't put in A/C.
- Great facility, everything is neat and well kept, great job.
- Not one concern, perfect setting for subject.
- Tell the staff, great job. This is the perfect place for the workshop. It's clean, handy, and the best get-a-way.
- I thought the accommodations were fine and helped everyone get into a receptive mood for talking about wildlife and forest management.

What is the very first thing you plan to do as a Coverts Cooperator?

- Write down my goals and management plan and try to spread the word.
- Read the manual, augment plan with herptile habitat improvements, involve kids with animal inventory/building track areas/in-ground traps.
- Work on my management plan and put it to use. Inform everyone I know and talk about this wonderful program and workshop.
- Walk the property; envision how to use the information from the presentations.
- Pass the word to other landowners about the program and the educational opportunities that are available to private landowners.
- Study the material. Add a wildlife plan to my MFL plan.

- Call my living forest cooperative owner, walk our property to learn/observe specifics, plan a fire circle with agency reps and interested friends, help our group keep in touch.
- Make myself available to calls and visitors.
- Spread the word about Coverts. Already talking to our neighboring landowners regarding wildlife management and the invasive species.
- Talk to others about how great this experience was. I plan to demo my sawmill again for 5th graders at Hartley Nature Center, also arrange for pine thinning demo on small scale on my property in October.

Additional comments?

- Truly appreciate all aspects of the program. All players excellent. Good food. Nice facility. You've given us a great gift to share. Thanks.
- Thanks to Jamie, David, and Scott for putting together a great program. The topics and speakers were top shelf. Every landowner should be aware of the program, even though it wouldn't be possible for all to attend. Thanks to the sponsors, the staff, and the speakers, great job and greatly appreciated.
- Thank you, Thank You! You guys are great. Great hosts, felt welcome, great food and cooking, great accommodations, great speakers. I am very appreciative of being invited as a Minnesotan. You guys are great! The program was great and well coordinated. Thank you Jamie, Scott, and David.
- Jamie, Scott, and David are awesome! I don't think I've ever met a group of more intelligent, organized, caring people. I thoroughly enjoyed my experience.
- One assumption I had was because program had been sponsored by RGS that more discussion would have been centered around it. Content of program was very good and learned a great deal, but topics were broader than I had expected.
- What a wonderful 3 days this has been. I will start meeting other landowners and join WWOA.
- I totally appreciated the careful planning, telling us what to expect in advance, and camaraderie of staff. Thanks so much.
- I feel very fortunate to have been invited to coverts. The concept is perfect for what I wish to do/be. I am grateful to the Kemps, UW, and to our guest speakers and sponsors. Most thankful for the expertise and personal treatment from Jamie, David, and Scott. The food was outstanding; it was a great crowd of fellow guests, very nice and interesting people.
- We will be attending the WWOA annual conference in September and attendance is usually 250-300. Perfect opportunity to spread the word. I'm so excited to share the Coverts project information with everyone. I can't believe you don't charge for this experience. Thanks for also including hands-on subjects and field trips. Already have 4 people interested in attending your next or future Coverts Program. Coverts = great food, great people, great speakers, and great time!
- I thought this was great and that I had the chance to participate. I plan on being a good cooperator so your efforts in teaching are rewarded by accomplishing your goal of spreading the word. Thank you! The resources are appreciated for future use.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUGUST 26-29, 2010 COVERTS COOPERATORS

The following is a summary of information gleaned from the 26 Coverts Cooperators, representing 22 properties, who attended the August 26-29, 2010 Coverts Workshop.

- **Acres owned or responsible for:** Total=6,701; average=305; median=141; range=29-1,500
- **Landowner's state of residence:** 21 Wisconsin, 4 Minnesota, 1 Illinois
- **Years lived in Wisconsin/Minnesota:** Average = 51 years (out of 22 attendees)
- **Years lived in your present community:** Average = 31 years (out of 23 attendees).
- **Primary interests and/or management objectives for property:**

<u>Primary Interests</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 22)</u>
Wildlife	22 (100%)
Recreational Enjoyment	16 (73%)
Forest Mgmt./Timber Stand Improvement	14 (64%)
Income from Timber Production	4 (18%)
Prairie Restoration	3 (14%)
Income	2 (9%)
Firewood	2 (9%)
Aesthetics	1 (5%)
Trails	1 (5%)
Erosion Control	1 (5%)
Aquaculture	1 (5%)
Invasive Species Management	1 (5%)
Legacy/Future Generations	1 (5%)
Protection Against Development	1 (5%)
Stewardship	1 (5%)
Educational Programming	1 (5%)
Research	1 (5%)

- **Properties with a written wildlife or forest management plan:** 18 of 22 properties (82%).
- **People consulted in the past three years for woodland management advice:**

<u>Consultant</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 22)</u>
DNR Bureau of Forestry	14 (64%)
Private Consulting Forester	10 (45%)
UW Cooperative Extension System	8 (36%)
Farm Service Agency	6 (27%)
Natural Resources Conservation Service	5 (23%)
DNR Wildlife Biologist	3 (14%)
Industrial Forester	2 (9%)
Others*	7 (32%)

*Others listed: loggers, DNR Disease and Insect Specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (2), books/magazines, University faculty, and Aldo Leopold Foundation.

• **Knowledge of forest and wildlife management:**

<u>Knowledge Level</u>	<u>Number of Properties (out of 23)</u>
▪ I have no knowledge of forest or natural resource management	0 (0%)
▪ Aware of some options for managing my woodlands	2 (9%)
▪ Understand some management concepts & can explain them to others	5 (22%)
▪ Have enough skills to implement some management activities on my land	15 (65%)
▪ I know as much about forest and wildlife management as most foresters or wildlife biologists	1 (4%)

• **Attitudes about hunting:**

<u>Position</u>	<u>Number of Attendees (out of 23)</u>
Am a hunter	18 (78%)
Not opposed, but don't hunt	5 (22%)

• **Cooperators allowing hunting on their property: 22 of 22 properties (100%)**

EVALUATION OF THE AUGUST 26-29, 2010 WORKSHOP

Twenty-five of 26 workshop evaluations were returned (96%). The August 26-29 workshop and site exceeded Cooperators' expectations. On a scale of 1 to 5, landowners rated the workshop a 4.2 and the site a 4.7. From the returned evaluations, Cooperators pledged that a year from now they will have encouraged an estimated 466 to 572 woodland owners to adopt the concepts of good wildlife and forest management presented at the Wisconsin Coverts Project workshop.

Following are excerpts from the August 26-29, 2010 evaluations:

✦ **Any advice for speakers?**

- You all showed enthusiasm on subjects and did a very nice job.
- All were excellent, especially extension group.
- Continue to stay fresh in your approach (no problems yet), have a friendly post-conference within-group debriefing and critique.
- Expert and excellent, great knowledge and fine delivery. Give Jamie more time for wrap-up.
- It's the difference between them that works for all.
- The first day was a review. The second day covered topics of interest.
- Keep doing what you are doing. It was easy to understand and absorb.

- After 39 years of post secondary experience, I found none need any help or advice. Make reference to any helpful material in binder; provide useful websites wherever possible, keep presentations practical.
- Print off all presentations for the participants.

Any comments on facilities? (Kemp Natural Resources Station, Woodruff)

- Very nice place, liked the new bathrooms.
- A special northwoods feel.
- Perfect for this workshop.
- Very nice facilities with excellent setting.
- The facilities were excellent - very clean and comfortable.

What is the very first thing you plan to do as a Coverts Cooperator?

- Join the Ruffed Grouse Society, gather info and implement more practices for herps and birds on property, help others.
- Inventory critters on my land, set goal/objectives and 3 actions, engage siblings and children.
- Organize all my handouts, review notes, and implement some of the forestry recommendations.
- Take what I learned to a good friend and his family. They are landowners and will be very interested in this I am sure.
- ~~Develop a plan for introducing kids to the woods and wildlife.~~
- Find out name and addresses of other Minnesotans who have had the great opportunity to participate.
- Family meeting.
- ~~Review various items of the project on a monthly basis with my Sportsmen's Club. Review my property for suspected invasives.~~
- ~~Develop a comprehensive plan for my property; spread the word about sound wildlife management.~~
- Talk to our neighbors and friends about our experiences at Kemp and let them know anyone can implement these practices.
- ~~Walk and look over our property in a very different light. Talk, talk, talk, and share what we have learned.~~
- ~~Sit down with family and partner's family to discuss future plans for out 80 acres of woodland. Set-up a critter catch demo for grand kids.~~
- ~~I will be incorporating some of this info. Into a workshop that I am putting on for the public on Oct. 9, 2010. Sponsored by Barron Co. Woodland owners and CVWVOA.~~
- Contact local newspaper and place an article in it for making the public aware of the program and to reach other individuals who might need help with woodland wildlife management.
- ~~Notify local paper of attendance at Coverts Project and indicate to landowners looking for help that we can supply information to help achieve goals.~~
- Work to establish oak/hickory savanna, work to get aspen established for grouse habitat, work to get clover established on trails and create new trails, consider adding a pond on the property.
- Incorporate this into existing outreach efforts ant my place of employment, begin inventorying my property.

Additional comments?

- Thank you for all your efforts and bringing in the talented speakers. Questions from all the other participants were also great.
- The staff was great. They made it very easy to learn and very comfortable and the food was great.
- Your success in enlisting support of private donors speaks volumes, including your long term contact with them and their respect for you and the program.
- Well designed program with difficult task to put so much material in short time. I really learned a lot and got motivated to do something.
- Beside all your knowledge and skill you are all exceptional people! A very appealing combination.
- Enjoyed the entire program and appreciate the efforts the three of you did in its presentation and hospitality. Being able to interact with fellow landowners is an added bonus to the program. See you at the anniversary in 2011.
- Excellent workshop! I would have paid to attend. Thanks for map of where landowners are located.
- Staff worked very very hard and we appreciate it. Thank you for all of the extra kindness. Wish there had been more women; sometimes a different point of view and we need them in this effort.
- I know you are pressed for time, but if you could give each speaker an extra 10 minutes (maybe by cutting down on field trip time) it would not feel rushed and they could cover all that they wanted to.
- I was amazed at how these classes opened my eyes to logging management practices and how we all can greatly improve our land one project at a time and still have fun doing it and not be overwhelmed. All the wildlife that will benefit from our practices. Scott and the crew did great jobs. You are all a credit to your professions. Thank you so much.
- Very informative, the sessions were very good. The hospitality was over the top. The workshop exceeded expectations in all ways. Thank you and keep up the good work. I am and I think many others would be willing to pay a fee, if necessary to maintain this beneficial workshop.
- I didn't know much to begin with so this was very helpful.
- I felt that the entire program was well run, great meeting other woodland owners and sharing information. The three of you did a marvelous job organizing and executing the program, thanks.
- Found that the people that attend had a lot to add with questions and their own experiences. Would like to attend more workshops dealing in small woodlot management and wetland management. This workshop was very well done, thanks.

2009 COVERTS COOPERATOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE AUGUST 13-16, 2009 COOPERATORS

Twenty-eight participants (including 7 couples) representing 21 properties attended the 16th Wisconsin Coverts Project workshop held at Kemp Natural Resources Station, August 13 - 16th, in Woodruff. A 1-year survey was sent out in September 2010. Eighteen of 21 surveys mailed were returned (86% response rate). Two major goals of the program were 1) to get Cooperators to develop management plans for their lands, and 2) to reach other members of the community through Cooperators. The results below show how both of these goals were met.

Goal 1:

Prior to the Coverts program 79% of the attendees had a written forest or wildlife management plan for their property (15 out of 19 properties). One year after the workshop 78% of Coverts Cooperators (14 out of 18 properties/responses) indicated they have a written plan; with a total of 4,035 acres under management. (Note: this particular workshop had a relatively high percentage of attendees who entered the program with a written plan in place.). One hundred percent (18 out of 18) of the survey respondents indicated that their involvement in the Coverts Program had changed (17) or confirmed (1) the way they managed their land. For example, Cooperators responded,

- It confirmed what I have been doing for 39 years with a consulting forester. The value of the Covert experience has been a better understanding of the principles.
- Reduced timber planting by 15% to increase wildlife management areas. Went to smaller "cuts" in aspen to allow for grouse/deer areas. Manage for diversity based on consulting forester: bear, deer, turkey, grouse, duck, wolf pack.
- The biggest change we have made is putting more of an emphasis on clear cutting for aspen instead of select cutting to promote hardwoods. We are also trying to regenerate old alder stands by shearing them off for improved woodcock habitat.
- Cut back on early grass cutting and have noticed more frogs and birds using property.
- Although we were on basically on the right track, the Coverts Project helped us to realize the importance of natural regeneration. Manipulating the canopy increases the effect.
- Added deer exclosure, researching ways to manage specifically for forest interior obligate birds, set up game cameras to monitor wildlife activity, leaving more logs for salamanders & frogs.
- More focus on clear cutting.
- We have done work on succession planning and a new LIP program for endangered birds.
- Intensified all my efforts, more focus on habitat, more focus on invasives.
- Feel much more empowered to make decisions about managing my forest. I now see that there are many options I was not previously aware of, and I will research more with the information Coverts provided.
- More intense consideration given to wildlife management in the implementation of our plan.

Goal 2:

At the end of the August 13-16, 2009 workshop, the Coverts Cooperators estimated that they would be able to reach out to between 320 to 422 additional landowners sharing what they have learned and encouraging them to adopt sound wildlife and forest management practices on their land. In one year, they influenced an estimated 266 people in their communities owning an estimated 11,160 acres (based on 18 of 21 returned surveys). This is an average of 15 landowner contacts per property represented at the 2009 workshop in one year of outreach. While the 2009 Cooperators did not meet the outreach goal they set for themselves after one year, they will likely meet the goal within the next year. It often takes a year for attendees to process all of the information and some will focus on their own property before reaching out to others.

Cooperators used a variety of methods to communicate the message of forest/wildlife management:

<u>Method of Communication</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 18 surveys)</u>
One on one conversations	17 (94%)
Shared written resource materials (binder)	9 (50%)
Hosted a tour/field day at your property	3 (17%)
Gave a presentation	2 (11%)
Wrote article(s) for a newspaper or magazine	1 (6%)

In addition, Cooperators have developed useful contacts with many professionals.

<u>Professionals Contacts</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 18 surveys)</u>
WDNR forester	11 (61%)
Consulting forester	10 (56 %)
WDNR wildlife manager	7 (39%)
Other state or federal agency	7 (39%)
Conservation organization	6 (33%)
Other*	7 (39%)

*Others included: timber company, Sustainable Forestry Initiative, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Great Lakes TPA, American Family Forests, Prairie Enthusiasts, and fellow Coverts Cooperators.

Some of the 2009 Cooperators have also used their experiences with Coverts to influence decision-makers in their communities.

<u>Decision-Makers</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 18 surveys)</u>
Planning Commission	3 (17%)
Conservation Commission	1 (6%)
Others influenced*	1 (6%)
Other contribution to community*	2 (11%)

*Others influenced included: town attorney, county and town board members, and county wildlife committee.

*Others contribution to community included: town weed commissioner, and town land planning committee member.

The 2009 Cooperators have implemented the following habitat management activities for wildlife on their property since attending Coverts.

<u>Habitat Management</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 18 surveys)</u>
Created brush piles	15 (83%)
Conducted a timber harvest/stand improvement	11 (61%)
Planted trees and/or shrubs	10 (56%)
Inventoried and/or monitored wildlife	8 (44%)
Developed a food plot	8 (44%)
Managed or restored a grassland	7 (39%)
Developed and/or updated a written wildlife/ forest management plan	6 (33%)
Added artificial nesting boxes or structures	5 (28%)
Managed or restored a wetland	4 (22%)
Other*	3 (17%)

* Others included: invasive species removal (2), and trail establishment

How successful do you think you have been with your efforts to-date, comparing what you thought you could accomplish and what your actual experiences have been since the Coverts workshop?

	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 18 surveys)</u>
1 – Not very successful	1 (6%)
2	3 (17%)
3 – Somewhat successful	9 (50%)
4	4 (22%)
5 – Extremely successful	1 (6%)

The following are a few personal success stories/accomplishments from our 2009 Coverts Cooperators:

- In addition to our personal land, we own over 1000 acres with various extended family members. Many of those members (including us) tended to look down on clear-cut areas of Aspen and promoted transitioning those areas to hardwood trees so we could have the aesthetically pleasing large trees. After attending the Coverts workshop we conveyed information on the value of young aspen forests for grouse and other songbirds. We are now working to implement a management plan that will give us a real variety of habitats including clear cuts - especially in some of the property (240 acres) which was former paper company land managed for aspen.
- I took the information learned at Coverts and made a concerted effort to meet one-on-one with neighboring landowners. Additionally communicated with other landowners that I have come in contact with or who I knew had property; using the Coverts experience and program as a talking point. Know many of these folks have expressed an interest in more

information or have sought out additional resources and in at least one case altered planting acreage to accommodate more buffer strips for wildlife.

- Clear-cut approximately 35 acres, thinned approximately 20 acres, re-seeded 12 acres, hope to work with MDNRE to eradicate reed canary grass infestation. Working with upper great lakes woodcock & young forest initiative -Amber Roth.
- On the wooded portion of my land, the popple species were even-aged and quite mature. In December of 2009, we did a selective-cut and clear-cut logging to regenerate and stagger the age groupings of that species. Regeneration has been very successful which should benefit the grouse population (and unfortunately the deer population).
- I had a selected plots harvest of aspen on our property, regeneration is great and we had the first covey of grouse chicks, I've seen in quite some time. We will be having a fall field day on one of four properties in October of this year on the regeneration happening on a harvest done 2 years ago mixed forest.
- Updated our plan; took steps to get certified in WI as a tree farm (80 acres); planted 10,000 trees for sustainable forestry and to protect the watershed (we have considerable frontage on both sides of the east fork of the Chippewa River). Put in wildlife sustaining roads while circumventing the wetlands.
- Talked with DNR-fisheries to restore Maiden Creek for trout habitat update and was approved. Let neighbors know about project. Increased brush piles more and do not cut any grass areas until late June for nesting birds.
- I had a selected plots harvest of aspen on our property, regeneration is great and we had the first covey of grouse chicks, I've seen in quite some time. We will be having a fall field day on one of four properties in October of this year on the regeneration happening on a harvest done 2 years ago mixed forest.
- We did walk the property with a county forester. Our biggest hurdle with the forests is trusting in the cutting of trees for regeneration. We are working on a plan to continue new growth of the aspen. We are also considering a scrape since we have acres of wetland.
- Hosted a field day with a DNR wildlife specialist as guest speaker, built small deer exclosure and planted white cedar seedlings inside, have written a few articles for WFF and some stuff for WWOA.
- We have started a LIP project on 20+ acres to restore habitat for red-headed woodpeckers.
- I did a 10 acre timber stand improvement last summer. Openings in the upper canopy allowed light to the forest floor for ground cover. Thinning intermediate trees helped the light penetration also. Three days ago I saw 2 ruffed grouse, I haven't been seeing them for about 20 years-since regrowth from a logging operation became too dense.

Additional comments we received from the 2009 Coverts Cooperators:

- One of the best informational and learning workshops I have ever attended. Excellent workshop in a super environment setting. Thanks for a wonderful workshop.
- As a result of attendance met Larry Heathman and initiated 35 acre clear cut this summer/fall. Use other materials as reference from time to time - plan and hope to do more in the future.
- Our consulting forester just attended a session in part (I hope) because we spoke so highly of it, what a great program - I hope you can keep it going forever.

- The variety of topics covered was fantastic. One of the things we have enjoyed doing is wildlife inventory. We knew what large animals and birds we had on the property but we have been surprised at the number of small mammals, songbirds and reptiles we have found. Great experience.
- I continue to sing the praises of the program and encourage others to take advantage of it. The wolf howling trip where we scared the some campers has been a great lead in story to having reasonable discussions about wolf management with folks who normally wouldn't.
- Wish we could attend every year. We not only had an enjoyable time, but we gathered new information and also went over old information and the more you hear it you can start putting it into practice.
- It was a wonderful experience. We attended additional local classes on management. We still talk about the Coverts project.
- It was a stimulating experience packed with information and hands on examples in the field. It was good people, good food, and fun.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE AUGUST 27-30, 2009 COOPERATORS

Twenty-five 25 participants (including 8 couples) representing 17 properties attended the 17th Wisconsin Coverts Project workshop held at Kemp Natural Resources Station, August 27-30th, in Woodruff. A 1-year survey was sent out in September 2010. Fifteen of 17 surveys mailed were returned (88% response rate). Two major goals of the program were 1) to get Cooperators to develop management plans for their lands, and 2) to reach other members of the community through Cooperators. The results below show how both of these goals were met.

Goal 1:

Prior to the Coverts program 47% of the attendees had a written forest or wildlife management plan for their property (8 out of 17 properties). One year after the workshop 82% of Coverts Cooperators (14 out of 17 properties/responses) indicated they have a written plan; with a total of 1,266 acres under management. Eighty-two percent (14 out of 17) of the survey respondents indicated that their involvement in the Coverts Program had changed the way they managed their land. For example, Cooperators responded,

- Coverts helped the long term plan, before I was thinking of 1-2 years out. Became aware of the value of aspen on my land.
- Made us aware of the value of diversity for various wildlife species (i.e. that scrubby oak savannah on a sandy knoll may better be left as is rather than converting to pine).
- I will do selective thinning on an accelerated basis to encourage growth of underbrush and return of hardwoods. Had young white pine pruned last winter to discourage blister rust.
- Doing a better job with the food plots; planting more trees. Looking into CRP for wildlife, planting crops for wildlife, collecting more prairie seeds and sharing them, leaving more trees grow into fields, poplar.
- Additional planting of trees, constructed wildlife pond, numerous bluebird houses, and additional acreage devoted to grouse habitat.

- ~~•~~ Much more aware of maintaining animal habitat: leaving areas undisturbed minimizing light at night, leaving "woodpecker trees", leaving fish havens in the creek.
- We think before acting.
- Coverts gave me many ideas. I have used trail cameras to see what deer and bear are on our property.
- We increased the number of bluebird houses (from 5 to 22) and learned the best sites to deploy them. We learned to identify several indigenous rodents and the signs of their existence. Active cooperation with DNR in our CWD zone to reduce the herd in our area.

Goal 2:

At the end of the August 27-30, 2009 workshop, the Coverts Cooperators estimated that they would be able to reach out to between 99 to 133 additional landowners sharing what they have learned and encouraging them to adopt sound wildlife and forest management practices on their land. The 2009 Cooperators met their outreach goal. In one year, they influenced an estimated 149 people in their communities owning an estimated 6,880 acres (based on 15 of 17 returned surveys). This is an average of 10 landowner contacts per property represented at the 2009 workshop in one year of outreach.

Cooperators used a variety of methods to communicate the message of forest/wildlife management:

<u>Method of Communication</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 15 surveys)</u>
One on one conversations	15 (100%)
Shared written resource materials (binder)	6 (40%)
Hosted a tour/field day at your property	1 (7%)
Wrote article(s) for a newspaper or magazine	1 (7%)
Other*	3 (20%)

*Others included: toured the properties of other landowners and provided advice, informal discussions with hunting group, assembled groups to attend other workshops.

In addition, Cooperators have developed useful contacts with many professionals.

<u>Professionals Contacts</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 15 surveys)</u>
Consulting forester	10 (67%)
WDNR forester	9 (60%)
Conservation organization	7 (47%)
WDNR wildlife manager	6 (40%)
Other state or federal agency	2 (13%)
Other*	2 (13%)

*Others included: Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association and town board.

Some of the 2009 Cooperators have also used their experiences with Coverts to influence decision-makers in their communities.

<u>Decision-Makers</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 15 surveys)</u>
Planning Commission	0 (0%)
Conservation Commission	0 (0%)
Others influenced*	6 (40%)

*Others influenced included: town board (re: invasive species), area farmers (re: forestry issues), high school teachers and school forest personnel, assembly/senate representatives, Beaver Creek Reserve board, and Strum public library.

The 2009 Cooperators have implemented the following habitat management activities for wildlife on their property since attending Coverts.

<u>Habitat Management</u>	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 15 surveys)</u>
Created brush piles	12 (80%)
Inventoried and/or monitored wildlife	10 (67%)
Planted trees and/or shrubs	7 (47%)
Added artificial nesting boxes or structures	7 (47%)
Conducted a timber harvest/stand improvement	6 (40%)
Managed or restored a grassland	5 (33%)
Developed and/or updated a written wildlife/ forest management plan	5 (33%)
Developed a food plot	4 (27%)
Managed or restored a wetland	3 (20%)
Other*	3 (20%)

* Others included: removing garbage out of creeks and invasive species removal (2).

How successful do you think you have been with your efforts to-date, comparing what you thought you could accomplish and what your actual experiences have been since the Coverts workshop?

	<u>Number of Cooperators (out of 15 surveys)</u>
1 – Not very successful	2 (13%)
2	2 (13%)
3 – Somewhat successful	9 (60%)
4	1 (7%)
5 – Extremely successful	1 (7%)

The following are a few personal success stories/accomplishments from our 2009 Coverts Cooperators:

- The sharing of your resource binder with landowners has helped to stimulate the interests in their acreage. Also follow-up discussions, regarding specific ideas and/or questions, were explored or accomplished with my professional advice or referrals to respective agencies.
- The Coverts workshop probably influenced me to get more involved in the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association. I recently accepted vice president of our local chapter and we attended the WWOA 4-day annual meeting in Mishicot. Wildlife awareness and enhancement is becoming more and more a part of the WWOA agenda. We also agreed to monitor 18 bluebird houses next season.
- Have been working w/my Amish neighbors on invasive species control. Will incorporate some of the materials in a forestry training series for technical service provider to farmers.
- Working with an elderly neighbor along the creek who wants to sell at a reduced price or donate acreage along the creek to the DNR or to another preservation organization. He made this decision based on our discussion re: preserving not developing these lands. Riparian plants (marsh marigolds, turtleheads iris) that we reintroduced are appearing trilliums we've transplanted have returned for a second year to the woods. Thousands of white pines are located and marked in acres cleared of nettle and wild false buckwheat.
- My wildlife pond has attracted more deer, turkeys, etc. than previously existed.
- Still working on neighbors for wildlife plan. Keeping records of animals on property and sharing info with family and friends. Planting crops for the wildlife - 65 acres. More interested in habitat than profit. Working towards having a nature preserve on our land- 190 acres. Have a long ways to go but little by little we are getting there. The 15 acres of prairie is spreading to different areas. Our kids know what we want to do with the land. ✖
- Our neighbors (after our advice) have made food plots in some old fields. We have finished a pond which had very little water until the past 6 months. We have lots of wildlife attracted to it. We have made and fenced gardens (I am a member of a farmers market)
- Advocated, encouraged, supported town board initiative to restore river bank and restrict ATV access at popular local canoe/tube put-in on Grant River. So far it seems to be a success
- I am trying to control invasive species on my three properties. Two properties I own and the third is an in-law property in the process of being handed down. On my 15 acres where my home sits, there is buckthorn and purple loosestrife. In the spring of 2010, my family set out to cut as much buckthorn as possible. This will be a multi-year goal for my family. We have also planted trees on all three properties.
- We have shared some of the information regarding bluebirds with neighbors and visitors to our farm in an informal way.
- Had my private forester install 6' wire mesh cylinders around a row of small red oak that we planted 7-8 years ago that were "topped off" by deer each year along a border fence of mine. Some of these small oaks grew 12-15" this year. Also did the same to some tamarack that we planted along my wildlife trail along the south fork of the Flambeau.

Additional comments we received from the 2009 Coverts Cooperators:

- I am grateful for having had the opportunity to attend the Wisconsin Coverts project workshop in 2009 and will someday, hopefully in the not too distant future, begin to implement some new practices to improve the quality of our forest and provide a better area for wildlife. My experience with the Wisconsin Coverts Project was wonderful and I will continue to spread the word to anyone who might benefit from attending a future workshop.
- It was the most rewarding training I have been to and would love to attend another. I will continue to spread the word and share the binder. Thank you for all the valuable resources.
- Much of the material that was presented at the Coverts project was new to my wife and she thought the experience was the best experience she ever had in learning about the outdoors.
- It was an awesome experience which sensitized me to so many things going on around me which I had previously not noticed. Each of you was such an inspiration as instructors and role models.
- Your program provides a terrific introduction and challenges to ethical land management that many landowners have little knowledge or appreciation of on this topic. Continue to keep up the great program.
- The program was excellent and it was great to assemble with other landowners who had concerns about conservation. Will finalize my plans for succession of my property to ensure that it remains as a forest reforestation/red pine nature preserve.
- Excellent program. Highly recommend. I do encourage others to participate.
- We have been working with the land for 20 years plus. The project gave us many more ideas to do with the land. We have 4.5 miles of trails and still working on more. We have our fire breaks, our prairie, food plots, clover area, and pond for water - but have much more work to do with the project we know we will get there. The Coverts project should be a must for every landowner. I have used my knowledge in many small ways with the Master Gardeners, Wild Ones, and Herb Society.
- Enjoyable and useful. As an older landowner (65+) I would like to see the program bring in younger landowners or potential landowners at an earlier age. I know it is the old folks who have the time and the land, but younger people have or should have a longer term perspective. In any case thank you and the Coverts sponsors.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

The Wisconsin Coverts Project continues to be a success with all 19 workshops exceeding Cooperators' expectations. The positive feedback that we received from participants and presenters suggests that this program will keep building in Wisconsin. The Coverts Project has a sound philosophy behind it, as indicated by the responses of the Cooperators. Landowners who were strongly interested in woodland wildlife management were brought together at a workshop, asked to be partners in promoting their and our wildlife values in an ecologically sound manner, and have followed through with their promise. They have done much to enhance and protect wildlife habitat while benefiting from the resources on their land. They have also been excellent ambassadors of forest and wildlife habitat management, spreading the word in their communities.

There are a number of essential links in the chain that make this such a strong workshop: funding support, organization, communication, Cooperator quality, presenter quality, workshop site, subject choice, support materials quality, and attitudes of all involved. We maintain high standards among all these factors in the preparation for and conducting of the annual workshop.

FUTURE PLANS

- **Planning is underway for the 2011 Coverts workshops.**
 - The 20th Wisconsin Coverts Project Workshop will take place August 11th-14th 2011 in Woodruff, WI - at Kemp Natural Resources Station.
 - The 2nd Wisconsin Coverts Project Reunion and Advance Training will take place August 26-28th at the Heartwood Conference Center in Trego, WI. All past workshop participants will be invited to attend.
- In January 2011, all past Wisconsin Coverts Project Cooperators will receive a letter updating them on the program. They will have the opportunity to purchase a shirt embroidered with the new Coverts logo. Additionally, they will be invited to attend the 2011 Wisconsin Coverts Project Reunion and Advanced Training August 26-28, 2011 in Trego, WI. Finally, a 2011 Coverts workshop brochure will be included and they will be asked to help recruit landowners for future workshops.
- We will mail a 1-year survey to Cooperators from the (2) 2010 workshops to assess progress in their management and outreach activities in the Fall of 2011.
- We will continue to maintain the WI Coverts Project website (http://forestandwildlifeecology.wisc.edu/wl_extension/wicovertsproject.html) we created in 2003. We have made the Directory of Coverts Cooperators available on the website to reduce printing costs for the annual mailing, and we have added PowerPoint presentations to the website for our Cooperators to use in advertising the program.
- The landowner's guide "How to Inventory and Monitor Wildlife on your Land," will continue to be incorporated into our Coverts workshops. This guide and its associated curriculum have proven to be very popular with the Cooperators, especially the field exercises.

Items included with this report:

- 2010 WI Coverts Project brochure
- 2010 Agendas
- 2010 Participant directories
- 2010 Presenter directories
- 2010 Table of contents page from the resource binder the Cooperators receive