Weyauawega - Fremont School Forest Tour – April 27, 2010 – Summary

On April 27, 2010 Environmental Youth Connections (EYC) conducted a school forest and outdoor education tour in Weyauwega. Seven sites were visited to evaluate use for outdoor education and for potential school forest designation. Participants included Rich Tomaszewski – K-12 physical education, Lynn Ponto – 9-12 science and assists with the 6th grade water testing, Nick Winn – 6-12 science, Sandra Dykes – 7-12 ag science, Sheryl Scheuermann – Weyauwega City Administrator, Connie Abert - UW-Extension Waupaca Co., Gretchen Marshall – UWSP Forestry and Outdoor Specialist and Carrie Esch - EYC.

In the morning, participants walked each of the sites and talked about possible outdoor education activities. The areas that were visited included the school forest known as Our Backyard, located behind the elementary, middle and high school, city and county parks. Sheryl Scheuermann led the tours of the city parks giving a history of each park and an overview of recreational uses in each park. Rich Tomaszewki guided the tours through the school forest - Our Backyard and Gill’s Landing County Park. In the afternoon, discussions included what types of habitat are found at each site and advantages and needs of each area. A timeframe was established by the teachers to apply for school forest designation and a WEEB planning grant. The locations for future school forest designation are school property adjacent to the 20 acres currently in school forest, and Maasch City Park. Additional, land near the Fremont school will be evaluated for future school forest. Gretchen agreed to investigate if a county park can be designated a school forest.

Timeframe and Site Summary are found on the following pages.

**Timeframe for school forest designation:**

**Beginning of May** – contact teachers and city personnel in Fremont to see if there are areas they would like to designate school forest (Kris Sorka -5th grade and Bill Van Nulaand)

**May 18th (or 14th) tours the school forest of Berlin and Tri-County (Plainfield)**

Tour other school forest property to find out what is out there, who uses the school forest, what works and what doesn’t in other school forests, the role of school administration in other school forests, funding of the forest and curriculum ideas for a variety of age groups

Also, work on grant planning on this day.

 **School In-service day in May** – Survey the entire teaching staff – to find out how many teachers use the forest, what activities the forest is used for, what limitations there are, etc… Summarize the data to present to the school and city boards

**May** - Connie Abert will ask Ian at the Waupaca County Courthouse to aid in identifying the exact area of the designated 20 acres of school forest and also locate maps of the school forest, Maasch City Park and Fremont area

**Middle of May** – Fill out School Forest application

**End of May** – notify Waupaca County forester to walk the school forest and potential school forest areas, to give approval of the site for school forest, forester will need to complete the application and send in to Gretchen - Once approved the forester must come up with a forest management plan – this is a requirement of school forest designation and needs be done within one year of acceptance of the school forest

**May or June** – meet with the school board to present school forest application and plans for designating areas to get their approval – must have school board approval to proceed – keep copy of meeting minutes to send in with the application

**June 8th** – meet with the Weyauwega City Board to present school forest application and plans for designating areas to get their approval – must have city board approval for city park/school forest designation proceed – keep copy of meeting minutes to send in with the application

**Over the summer** - All interested parties take Gretchen Marshall’s online School Forest Course (1 credit course) work together to come up with the education plan for the school forest that will be used for WEEB grants in 2011

**Beginning of 2010-2011 school year** –Full In-Service day for all teachers (Wey/Fremont) to tour school forest and potential school forest areas with education plan/curriculum ideas

**Jan/Feb. 2011** – Application for WEEB education planning grant due to UWSP/Gretchen

Once the grant is approved - do a little dance – and get to work in your beautiful school forest!

Site Summary:

1. Maasch (pool) Park
2. Habitat

Open park area with mature shade trees and undeveloped forested areas

1. Activities

Trail for hiking, running (cross county practice), picnic shelter, bathroom, swimming pool, sledding hill, within biking distance of school, forest for bird watching and tree and plant id,
Ag classes plant trees for Arbor Day, Fourth grade history field trip, and end of the school year celebration parties

1. Needs

Signs for trail - plant and tree id –nature stations – idea to involve the Ag and Tech Ed depts., summer school ideas – swimming lessons, env. ed, nature crafts, pool chemistry in the fall for high school chem. students, bike lanes for safe routes to park, native plant area

\*\*Would like to designate as school/community forest

1. Gill’s Landing County Park
2. Habitat

Wolf River, forest and wetland with a boardwalk

1. Activities

Bike trip from school, wet land exploration, forest activities, river activities, bathrooms

1. Needs

Bike lanes for safe routes, fishing and water safety classes – idea for Ag students to help out on field trip with the elementary, find out how much acreage the forest are and if they are accessible any time during the year or if they are too wet, idea for canoe or tube trip from the school forest

\*\*Maybe interested in school forest designation

1. Our Backyard
2. Habitat

Forest, prairie, open field, Waupaca River, riparian zone

1. Activities

Many varied school activities from elementary to high school – trail, water sampling, wildlife, plant and tree id, geo-caching, fishing, prairie, bluebird houses, active osprey nesting platform, GPS, aquatic life id, unofficial bike jumps

1. Needs

Find out which 20 acres are school forest and include the rest of the property under school forest status, Shelter building and picnic area, bathrooms access from Jackson/East St near lift station, improved forest mgnt - tree thinning, tree id signs, repair of amphitheater, secret/outdoor classroom sitting area, Frisbee golf, revitalize challenge coarse, ropes coarse, winter sport activities – animal tracks, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, summer school activities – water safety, fishing, canoeing, tubing

\*\*Would like to add to school forest designation

Other City Parks that were visited on the tour included the Main Dock, Peterson Park, and City property off Cty Rd AA – Mill Pond Circle. These parks should be included in class field trips within Weyauwega but not be designated school forest. These areas will likely be used in the photo-documentation study of visual habitat changes in Lake Weyauwega before, during and after the proposed draw down of the lake. The study will be conducted by Lynn Ponto and Sandy Dykes students.