



# My Land Handbook



**Foreword:** The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) hopes the My Land Handbook will assist and inspire you to care for the records of your land as much as you care for your land. We believe this Handbook, once completed, will provide you, your family, your next generation or future owner with an invaluable resource. This resource will assist you in sustainably caring for the resources found on your special piece of land.

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) is indebted to member Helen Moberg for envisioning this project and sharing her story. A very special thank you goes to Elise Worthel Schuler, Volunteer Wisconsin AmeriCorps member (2015-16) who created and organized the project, making it a reality for you to use. WWOA also thanks the Women of WWOA for their advice throughout the creation process. Thank you to the WWOA Board of Directors for their support and feedback. We also appreciate WEEB's support for this project by funding the first printing so that it could be distributed to hundreds of Wisconsin woodland owners.

My Land Handbook can also be found on WWOA's website at [wisconsinwoodlands.org/resources/](http://wisconsinwoodlands.org/resources/)

My Land Handbook will be updated or modified as laws and situations change through time. To make suggestions, recommendations, or for questions, please contact us at

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*It is always best to direct questions to your attorney. Information provided in this document is for reference only, and is not intended to be, nor is it legal advice.*



Created by the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association ~ August 2016 under a 2016 grant from the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board. Updated July 2018.



# MY LAND HANDBOOK

**Owner:**

**Contact Information:**

**Date:**



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# Introduction

What would you do if you were suddenly charged with caring for your family's land? Would you know how to maintain it, keep it healthy, and know its boundaries? Would you know what government programs it might be enrolled in, the easements on the property, and how to pay the taxes? The My Land Handbook was imagined by the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association's (WWOA), Women of WWOA, who were interested in creating a resource for current and future landowners to help answer these questions and more, so the land can eventually be smoothly and effectively passed on to the next caretakers. Below, you'll find the story of one of the main creators of this handbook and her reasons for wanting a resource like the land handbook.

*My name is Helen, and this is my story.*

*My husband, Ed, and I own 103 acres in Wood County. Ed first started buying land from his sister, who decided country life wasn't for her. This land included a swamp, sandy soils, and four oil pipelines. We continued buying small tracts of land from our neighbor a little at a time. Each time we would purchase 40 acres or so, we would immediately plant red pines on it. We also have hardwoods which provide us with more than enough lumber and firewood for heating our home and sugar shack. There was a red pine stand on the property before we bought it and that was the first major cutting we did – and when I say we, I really mean it.*

*Ed and I do all of the cutting and skidding. The first trees that we mass planted in 1989 got old enough to cut, so we started in that stand a few years ago. Now, we are up to cutting six truckloads of red pine and one truckload of jack pine per season. Since it is just Ed and I, this takes time, usually one load per month, or ten to twelve pulpwood cords. We haul the loads to our landing on the pipeline, where our hauler picks them up.*

*We work on our tree farm year round – we cut in the fall and winter, make maple syrup in the spring, mow fire lanes and prune lower limbs of the red pine in the summer. It is hard work, but very satisfying. I tell people that I don't have to spend \$100 a month to work out at a gym, I work out at home and I get paid for it!*

*Now here is the problem – we have no children and Ed's only sibling's children have no interest. We do not want to see our blood, sweat, and tears turn into a subdivision. Another problem is statistics show that women usually outlive their husbands. I have to confess that I have relied on Ed through the years to take care of the taxes and Managed Forest Law information. He has all of this information in his office, and I know where some of it is, but not all of it.*

*We needed to compile and organize this information so I can find it.*

*These concerns lead me to think about the best way to go about this. With help from the Women of WWOA and Elise Worthel Schuler, WWOA's Volunteer Wisconsin AmeriCorps member, and many others, WWOA was able to create this Handbook.*



# My Land Handbook

Everyone's land and situation is unique. This is where you can keep all of your land's information so that its story can continue into future generations, helping those that come after you to care for the land. Or if at some point the land is sold, this could be used as a record of its care and management.

My Land Handbook includes space for information regarding your land's location and details about your land, your management plan and what to do to stay on track, as well as where to find keys, equipment, tax materials, and other important documents. Also included are additional resources and definitions for some key words relating to land ownership and care.

Please feel free to add pages as needed.

## Tips on how to use your My Land Handbook:

- Fill in information early.
- Complete the following document or use the Word documents to create and save your Handbook. Additional pages can also be printed if needed from the website. The files can be found at [wisconsinwoodlands.org/resources/](http://wisconsinwoodlands.org/resources/)
- If handwriting information into the document, you may want to consider using pencil, allowing you to update items more easily.
- Engage the whole family in filling out the details. Someone might remember something you don't or may know more about different parts of the land or its management.
- Update and add new information frequently, keeping the date at the beginning of each section updated as you make changes.
- Don't leave anything out, and make sure anyone can understand what you write. Pretend you won't be around to answer any questions – be thorough.
- Keep this document in a safe place. You may include information regarding the locations of important documents, as well as other personal information. Also consider keeping it in a location safe from natural disasters.
- Make sure anyone who might need to find it knows where it is. If you're not around, this document is what others will need to refer to regarding details about the land and managing the land.
- Keep multiple copies, electronic and print if you can. Remember to update all copies at the same time.

# Land Location and Boundaries

Section Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

**A simple, but important, first question is where is your land?** Knowing the location of your land is essential for being able to enjoy it and care for it properly. This is especially important if you have multiple properties or if your land has an odd shape to it. *There is space provided for two properties, add or remove pages as needed.*

## Property 1:

Property name:

Address and city/township:

Acres:

Legal description:

Where are the access roads?

Are the property lines marked? How?

Are there any fences? Who is responsible for their upkeep?

Are there any signs? Where? When should they be replaced and how often?

Who surveyed your land most recently?

Attach a map of your property with its boundaries, access roads/trails, and important features marked, or state where you can find them.

Attach important land documentation including ownership documents, surveys, plats, air photos, etc. or state where to find them.

**Below, list your neighbors and their contact information if you have it.**

Attach or state where to find a map of your land, marking your boundaries and where your neighbors' land borders yours.

Names:

Names:

Contact information:

Contact information:



**Property 2 (if applicable):**

Property name:

Address and city/township:

Acres:

Legal description:

Where are the access roads?

Are the property lines marked? How?

Are there any fences? Who is responsible for their upkeep?

Are there any signs? Where? When should they be replaced and how often?

Who surveyed your land most recently?

Attach a map of your property with its boundaries, access roads/trails, and important features marked, or state where you can find them.

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**Below, list your neighbors and their contact information if you have it.**

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Names:

Names:

Contact information:

Contact information:



# Legal Information

Section Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

Now, include the information below regarding the legal aspects of your property(ies), including ownership, purchase price, liens, and timber basis and rights.

## Property 1:

Legal description:

Acres:

Date acquired:

Method of acquisition (purchased, inherited, other):

Purchase price:

Owner(s) as listed on deed:

Land value:

Date of land value:

Timber basis:

Date of timber basis:

Who owns the timber rights?

## Property 2 (if applicable):

Legal description:

Acres:

Date acquired:

Method of acquisition (purchased, inherited, other):

Purchase price:

Owner(s) as listed on deed:

Land value:

Date of land value:

Timber basis:

Date of timber basis:

Who owns the timber rights?



# Your Land's Plants and Wildlife

Section Last Updated: \_\_\_\_\_

**Record any unique or special plants and trees on your land, as well as any additional information about them you think is important.** Include why they're unique or special and share any stories if appropriate.

**Are any of the plants that are on your land invasive?** If there are invasive plants, you might consider implementing management strategies for those species, or those strategies might already be included in your management plan. Include a description below of the invasive plants and what you're doing to control them. Include the type and mixture ratio for chemicals if you're using herbicides.

**What wildlife have you seen on your property?** This might be important because you're a hunter, birder, or like to check your trail cameras. Knowing what you might see, when, and where is an exciting part of enjoying your land. Describe the wildlife you've seen on your land. (*Checklist of Wisconsin Vertebrates* could be a useful resource - <http://dnr.wi.gov/files/PDF/pubs/ss/SS0954.pdf>)

**Do you have trail or game cameras on your property?** How many do you have and where might be a good place to look for them?

**If you plant trees or other plants, where do you get your seedlings?** Do you know what species or varieties have been recommended for your property?