



2018 Newsletter

Friends of Sylvania

Promoting the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness

Dear Friends,

The Friends of Sylvania wish you a happy and peaceful 2018, and we thank you for your continued interest in the invaluable Sylvania Wilderness and for your support of our work to protect it. We all cherish this special place for many reasons: fond memories with family and friends, adventures in nature, a successful fishing trip, and any number of other experiences, all against the background of the beauty and peace of a well-preserved wilderness.

OUR MISSION

The Mission of the Friends of Sylvania (FoS) is to promote the protection and careful management of the Sylvania Wilderness and surrounding areas that affect the wilderness. To that end the directors and active volunteers have seriously pursued the activities described in the stories below.

Although we carefully analyze all of our projects and legal activities within the context of our mission to advance the protection of Sylvania, some have been controversial. While we regret disagreements, our focus always has been and always will be to represent those who place great value on a quality wilderness. Please join us as we continue to pursue the mission of the Friends of Sylvania and move forward in a changing world.



SOSAC advocates for the protection of the Sylvania Tract in 1969, before it became a wilderness

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SYLVANIA INVASIVE WEED PROJECT

In each of the past six springs, FoS signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Forest Service (USFS) to allow FoS to remove invasives in the Sylvania Wilderness during the summer. In these MOUs, USFS agreed to provide certain things, such as free camping, and we agreed to document and remove invasive weeds. This cooperative effort was highly successful for six years, resulting in a 70 to 90% plant reduction in some areas.

However, in 2017, some USFS employees somehow developed the idea that people recreating in Sylvania would have their wilderness experience diminished by seeing FoS interns and volunteers working on invasives. In fact, the opposite is true: in prior years, people approached us, asked what we are doing, and then thanked us for our hard work.

Because of their new idea, the USFS put severe limits on the number of days FoS would be able to work, making it impossible to complete the work specified in the MOU. In addition, the operational and safety needs of the volunteers and interns on the FoS invasives crew were not respected by the new USFS administration. Those new circumstances forced FoS to terminate this critical, previously successful Sylvania project and return \$40,000 in competitive grants that would have supported it for 3 years.

While deeply regretting the termination of this program, we hoped that both the quantity and quality of our previous invasive weed work in Sylvania would be continued. The experienced FoS Invasives Project leaders offered to train anyone that would be continuing this critical work. Unfortunately, we have not received any response to our offer, and reports from visitors in 2017 and 2018 indicate many obvious invasives were untreated.

Over the years, several individuals living near Sylvania and visitors to the area have volunteered to help control these plants. Some joined the FoS weed crew working in Sylvania; some also pulled invasives on their own property and adjacent roads and lakes, thus reducing the source of seeds that would be blown or carried into Sylvania. Although FoS was forced to terminate the weed project in 2017, many of these volunteers continue their vigilance. They watch for invasive hotspots, and they work on their property and adjacent roads. Our heartfelt thanks to everyone who has helped and who continues to protect Sylvania from this significant threat to wilderness quality.

W. Brinkmann, D. Wallace



European Marsh thistles releasing seeds on Glimmerglass Lake in late summer 2017, Sylvania Wilderness

BIKE TRAIL ADDITION

As some visitors to Sylvania are aware, the proposed bike trail along the immediate northwestern wilderness boundary (the old Whitefish Road) has been completed. For pertinent background please see:

<http://friendsofsylvania.org/Update%20of%20FoS%20Bike%20commentsFeb16.pdf>

We encourage you to enjoy this new recreation resource since the damage is now done and significant resources have been spent. If you are very lucky you might see the wolf that has haunted this wild area. The FoS hopes that this trail will not become a corridor for invasive species, noise, motorized vehicles,

and damage to the Sylvania Wilderness, although local residents report that similar bike trails are minimally used and overrun by invasives.

We encourage you to do whatever you can to minimize the transfer of invasive species on bike tires, pets and footwear in this sensitive area adjacent to the wilderness. This bike trail segment will be safer than the surrounding roads, but please use extra caution when you are continuing onto dangerous roadways. This is particularly important on the narrow winding bike trail/road to the south of this new trail section.

D. Wallace

TRAIL CLEARING

The job of keeping the trails clear never ends, but visitors to the Sylvania wilderness trails may now enjoy the benefits of work done by three dedicated trail crews last fall:

Dan Ryskey (USFS) coordinated a forest service crew that covered the north half of the north-south trail from 6320, along the east side of Deer Island Lake, to Land-o-Lakes.

Bob Turnquist coordinated the Gezer Group who cleared the south half of this trail section, making several sawing trips.

Dan Wallace coordinated two saw teams that cleared most of the trails and portages in the Clark and Loon Lake area. This work was done at the cold end of October. We did not miss the wet snows of previous years but did have some adventures paddling into strong winds, removing many trail obstructions, and locating missing equipment. We are very grateful to David and Carol Sherrill, and Tim and Jill Schmidt from Sylvania Wilderness Cabins for their logistical assistance.

We also thank Dan Ryskey who coordinates the Sylvania Wilderness trail clearing and has trained many of the crew leaders in safe cross-cut sawing.

As the intensity and frequency of severe wind events increases, these crews have been critical for keeping this recreational resource functional. Personally, as a cross-country skier, I really appreciate being able to traverse wilderness trails without obstacles and safety hazards, especially when the weather is cold. Please let us know if you are interested in helping. We thank all those who assisted with trail clearing in the Sylvania Wilderness.

D. Wallace



Fisher to Florence Lake portage cleared late in October, 2017

LEGAL ACTIVITY

The legal process to protect the Crooked Lake area of the Sylvania Wilderness from uncontrolled gas motor boat use is still not complete after several levels of litigation. The USFS, FoS, and other plaintiffs are working on this in the courts with the help of the Environmental Law & Policy Center. We are pursuing the protection of the Sylvania Wilderness to the level of

the U.S. Supreme Court. The goal of this litigation is for the USFS to gain the necessary tools to enforce the wilderness rules prohibiting motors in the wilderness, for all visitors. FoS also will continue to work on protecting Crooked Lake through other processes.



The joys of a beautiful, clear wilderness trail

FUTURE EVENTS

We are planning to hold a gathering in the Sylvania area for those who are interested in the Future of the Sylvania Wilderness. We would like to coordinate our efforts with all stakeholders to preserve and protect the Sylvania Wilderness. This event will probably consist of a potluck, a FoS meeting and a trail hike (or whatever you think useful and fun). The three proposed weekends (Friday or Saturday afternoon or evening) are September 14/15, October 12/13, or Oc-

tober 19/20. If you are interested in this event and know your availability, please let us know what works for you. We will choose the best date for most stakeholders. (Please respond to Dan Wallace with preferred dates, questions, or other Sylvania ideas - email: dan.wallace@wisc.edu or phone: 608-835-5144 and leave message.)

Wishing you a happy and peaceful 2018. Friends of Sylvania Board of Directors,

Wally Brinkmann Craig Coleman Bob Evans Dan Wallace

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

Patricia A., Neenah WI

Roger & Jane B., Madison WI

Wally B., Monona WI

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Dean & Judy C., Richmond IL

Yvonne and Greg C., Watersmeet MI

Carrie E., Madison WI

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John R., Madison WI

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Michael & Jennifer T., New Berlin WI

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Dan W., Fitchburg WI

Bernard Z., West Dundee IL

Environmental Law & Policy Center, Chicago IL

Paddle Planner, Duluth MN

Bob T. and the Gezer Saw Group, Land O'Lakes WI

Sylvania Wilderness Cabins, Tim & Jill S., Watersmeet MI



Finishing trail clearing, Loon Lake, late October, 2017

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FriendsofSylvania.org

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At-risk monarch enjoying native vegetation