

# IOLA-SCANDINAVIA SCHOOL FOREST PROGRAM GOALS



The Iola-Scandinavia School District currently has one school forest area that was established many years ago. This area is located on Highway 49 between Iola and Scandinavia. This area is completely wooded, primarily with pines. In the spring of 2011, the district began the process of adding an additional area to the school forest program. This area includes the wooded areas to the east and west of T-Bird Hill (a local sledding area) as well as the school prairie. Adding this area to the school forest program will bring in some hardwood trees as well as a variety of vegetation types not found in our established school forest. In addition to this, a third area has been added to our school forest program. The Jorgens Park area, which is currently owned by the Scandinavia Booster Club, has been set aside to serve as a park and recreational area where people can enjoy the natural setting surrounding Silver Lake. Both the Scandinavia Booster Club and the Iola-Scandinavia School District have similar goals in mind when it comes to this property: establishing areas in the park which can be used by members of the community to enjoy the environment surrounding Silver Lake. The Iola-Scandinavia School District has entered a lease agreement with the Scandinavia Booster Club so that our district can use this property as a school forest area. This property has a tremendous amount of potential for educational opportunities to be experienced by our students. We are very excited to add this property to our school forest program.

During the winter of 2010, two teachers at the Iola-Scandinavia School District applied for a grant through WEEB (Wisconsin Environmental Education Board). The grant would provide funding for a committee to research school forest programs and our district's school forest areas in order to develop a comprehensive plan for its use. This grant was awarded to the district early this summer. Currently, a group of teachers are working on the grant which will promote environmental education and the use of our school forests and outdoor educational areas within the district. The grant will take about 18 months to complete but parts of it will be integrated into the district's environmental education curriculum much earlier. Once this school forest plan has been developed, the plan can be used to apply for other WEEB grants that can be used to improve the school forest areas. The amounts that can be applied for with these grants range all the way up to \$30,000.

School forest areas have an exceptional education value for school districts which have established them. They are used to do the following: meet state education standards and integrate environmental education into the curriculum, connect teachers and students to local natural resource areas, demonstrate sustainable natural

resource management, and strengthen school and community relationships. In addition to this, schools which have lands in the school forest program receive other benefits from state resources. It allows the district to have free forest management assistance from the DNR, obtain free seedlings for planting in the school forest areas, allows the lands to be eligible for grant awards by WEEB and other organizations, and provides assistance to the school district from the Wisconsin School Forest Program.

The committees that have been established in our district to improve the use and facilities of our school forest areas are very excited about reestablishing our school forest program. If you have any comments, questions, or concerns related to our school forest program, feel free to contact one of us listed on the contacts list.