SiskiwitPreserveOrchard\_2021-08-02

Hello Roger,

Below are some recommendations from Jason Fischbach (UW Ag Extension Agent) regarding revitalizing the apple orchard on the Siskiwit property. Is this something you think the Town or some form of sub-Committee would be interested in?  If so, we’d be open to exploring the development of a community orchard or something similar.  Would involve entering into some form of agreement.  Will take some doing to get it back in shape, as well as a long-term commitment to maintain, but could end up being a valuable addition to the local community.

Thanks,

Jason Bodine

Forestry and Parks Administrator

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*Please note my email has changed to* *jason.bodine@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov*

**From:** JASON A FISCHBACH
**Sent:** Friday, July 30, 2021 9:08 AM
**To:** Jason Bodine <Jason.Bodine@bayfieldcounty.wi.gov>
**Subject:** Siskiwit Falls Road apples

Hi Jason,

I visited the property on July 29.  If you wanted to restore the old apple trees into a safe and productive orchard here are some recommendations:

1. Though there are lots of apples on the trees this year, I’d be careful letting anyone in there to harvest this year.  The branches are tall, weak, and fully loaded meaning they are very prone to breaking.  If someone were to climb into those trees the risk of falling is pretty high.
2. Almost all the trees I looked at had weak trunks with much decay and rotting wood.  Also, the branches are tall and most of the apples are at the top.  In the section where the competing vegetation was removed the trees are more exposed to wind and it was clear the recent storms had brought down new branches.  This will continue until the trees are pruned, particularly this fall as the apples increase in weight.
3. If the intent was for a commercial orchard my recommendation would be to remove the trees and start over.  That said, if the intent is just to provide some apples for the community, then the trees can be restored, though with such malformed trunks there will be continued breakage.  Apples are surprisingly resilient and despite the poor quality trunks, they should continue to produce, though it would be a good idea to start planting new trees.
4. Starting next spring, 1/3 of the wood should be removed basically by topping the tallest branches and removing any dead or dying wood.  This will result in water sprouts and suckering so the same process will need to be repeated in 2023 and 2024.  I can provide guidance, but it’ll take a crew and some chain saws.  The goal is to prune the trees back to the strongest branches and to stimulate new branching from the strongest parts of the trunk.
5. Annual maintenance pruning should then be done in successive years to control size.
6. If desired, new apple trees can be planted in gaps.  These should be protected with wire cages until the trees grow out of the deer browse line.  Use standard rootstocks or M111 to ensure the trees get big enough.
7. It’ll take repeated mowing to get the competing woody vegetation (dogwood, alder, etc) out of the orchard.  It would be good to seed in a grass mix (red rescue, ryegrass), though I’m not sure whether non native species are tolerated for that property.
8. I didn’t try to figure out what varieties are in the orchard, the apples are still too young to make any guesses.

Jason