

otic species may be impossible. The BCPL is preparing a more comprehensive assessment of the threat of invasives on its Trust Lands and developing strategies to prevent or mitigate their spread.

Global climate change is no longer debatable as a threat to ecosystems. Changes in temperature and rainfall affect in unpredictable ways the assets BCPL manages. The trend of milder winters with less snow cover in northern Wisconsin has exacerbated already high deer populations. Forest fragmentation (discussed above) limits public access, making deer herd management more difficult. The resulting increase in deer browse has seriously limited the reproduction and growth of hemlock, cedar, white pine, basswood, yellow birch, and red oak on Trust Lands. As a result of continued harvest and low regeneration rates, the number of mature higher value species such as yellow birch continues to decline.

Portions of the northern forests also continue to be stressed by severe drought, now in the third year. Severe drought stress has affected white birch, yellow birch, sugar maple, and mature aspen. Some have experienced crown dieback; others have died. Seepage lakes and rivers are near or at record low levels. Many wetlands and ephemeral ponds are completely dry. Drought also reduced the numbers of insects, important food sources for birds.

These trends and events contribute to the challenges of forest restoration and long-term management. The BCPL continues to monitor the diverse ecosystems on Trust Lands and to manage them responsibly and sustainably for the benefit of all of Wisconsin's citizens. ■



Snow shrouds the shoreline of Allen Creek, Forest County.