Fire—Fire has occurred periodically in Wisconsin forests for more than 100,000 years. It can occur as slow moving surface fire to an intense crown fire. The effects can range from the death of a few trees to complete stand replacement.

Pasturing—Animals such as cows, pigs and sheep are often grazed in woodlands. They remove many of the plants and shrubs in the understory (as shown below). Over-grazing can result in tree damage and soil compaction.

Logging—A common historical and current land use, logging can influence the type, age and form of forest trees. The practice often leaves skid trails as well as large, woody debris on the forest floor (as shown below).

Blight—Insects, fungi, and microorganisms can damage and kill trees. Blights are often specific to a single tree species. Dutch elm disease is a common, lethal blight. Black walnut canker (as shown below) is a non-lethal blight that weakens trees and reduces tree value.

Beaver Activity—Nature's foresters, beavers girdle, fell, and haul trees to build shelter and alter waterways. They can change forest composition by killing specific tree species and by flooding or draining shoreline areas.

Blowdowns—Extreme lateral and vertical winds can blow down individual trees or large areas of forestland. This can create piles of woody debris (as shown below) as well as a "lumpy" topography known as pillow and cradle.