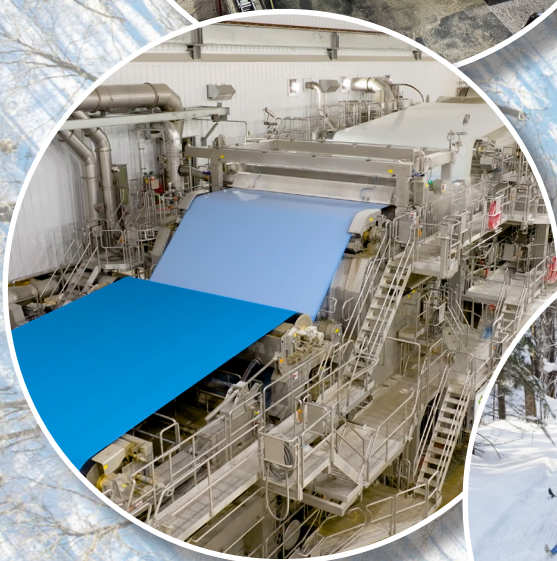




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COUNCIL ON  
FORESTRY  
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# Biennial Report 2023-2024



**Healthy Forests • Healthy Industry • Healthy Communities**





This biennial report is required by state statute 26.02(2). The purpose is for the Council on Forestry to report on the status of the state § 26.02(2) (a) 1-10. Additionally, the Council chose to report on its accomplishments during the time period covered by this report. The Council was assisted by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources – Division of Forestry with the drafting of this report. This report was approved by the Council on May 20, 2025.

The Council thanks the following for their assistance in preparing this report:

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St. Croix River and forest © Kevin Sink

Sawyer in action wearing protective equipment © Tom Hittle

Skiers enjoying winter in the Northwoods © Karen Wendt

Georgia-Pacific's new through air dried (TAD) paper machine © Georgia Pacific

Kretz Lumber sort building © Eric Rantala Kretz Lumber

Winter shadows in a Northern Wisconsin hardwood stand © Kevin Sink

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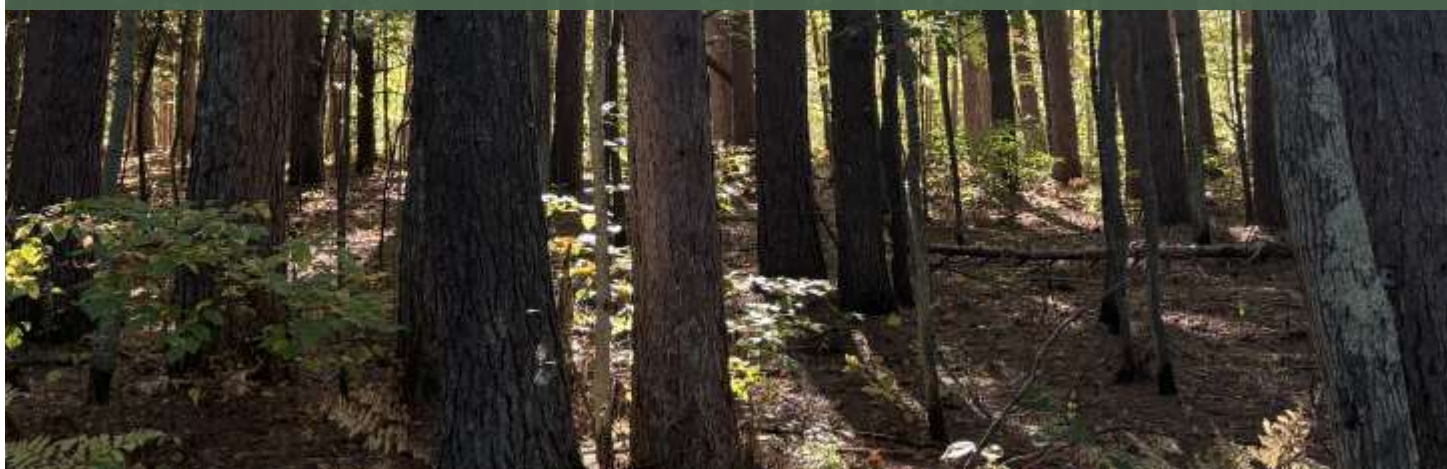
## Council Charge



The Wisconsin Council on Forestry was created by Wis. Stat. § 26.02 in July 2002 to advise the governor, legislature, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Commerce, and other state agencies on a host of forestry issues in the state, including:

1. Protection of forests, from fire, insects, and disease
2. The practice of sustainable forestry, as defined in Wis. Stat. § 28.04 (1) (e)
3. Reforestation and forestry genetics
4. Management and protection of urban forests
5. Public knowledge and awareness of forestry issues
6. Forestry research
7. Economic development and employment in the forestry industry
8. Marketing and use of forest products
9. Legislation affecting management of Wisconsin's forest lands
10. Staffing and funding needs for forestry programs conducted by the state

**Biennial Report:** The Council is required to prepare a biennial report on the status of the state's forest resources and forestry industry. This report is prepared in odd-numbered years for distribution to the Governor and the appropriate standing committees of the state legislature. It covers the 24-month period ending on December 31st, 2024. The contents of this document meet the biennial reporting requirements as outlined in the statute.





# Council Membership

*The Wisconsin Council on Forestry is comprised of individuals appointed by the Governor to represent the state's diverse forest stakeholders, including:*

**Tom Hittle (Chair)**

Representing: Forest products company that manages forest land  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Matt Dallman (vice chair)**

Representing: Nonprofit conservation organizations  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Heather Berklund**

Representing: Chief State Forester  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Brad Dorff**

Representing: Labor unions  
Terms served 23 & 24

**James Hoppe**

Representing: Pulp and paper industry  
Terms served 23 & 24

**Buddy Huffaker**

Representing: Non-industrial, private forest land  
Terms served 23 & 24

**James Kerkman**

Representing: Society of American Foresters  
Terms served 23 & 24

**Rebekah Luedtke**

Representing: County forests  
Terms served 23 & 24

**Representative Jeff Mursau**

Representing: Wisconsin Assembly  
Terms served 23 & 24

**Senator Romaine Quinn**

Representing: Wisconsin Senate  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Erik Rantala**

Representing: Interests of the lumber industry  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Juris Repsa**

Representing: Forestry consultants  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Adena Rissman**

Representing: Schools of forestry accredited by the Society of American Foresters  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Henry Schienebeck**

Representing: Timber Producers Organization  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Representative Katrina Shankland**

Representing: Wisconsin Assembly  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Senator Jeff Smith**

Representing: Wisconsin Senate  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Jordan Skiff**

Representing: Urban and community forestry  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**Jennifer Youngblood**

Representing: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Terms served: 23 & 24

**William Van Lopik**

Representing: Conservation education  
Terms served: 23 & 24

# Introduction

The first sawmill in Wisconsin was built near present-day De Pere in 1809. By the late 1800s, Wisconsin led the nation in lumber production. During this era, the state's paper industry also emerged, with the Neenah Paper Mill opening in 1865. To this day, Wisconsin remains the nation's leader in paper production. In 1867, the state legislature authorized the first forestry commission to study forest destruction, and in 1904, the appointment of E.M. Griffith as the first state forester brought organization and leadership to sustainable forest management in Wisconsin. Thus began Wisconsin's national leadership in forest conservation, laying the foundation for the state's culture, economy, and quality of life.



Charles W. Fish Lumber Co. Elcho WI, circa 1915./ Photo Credit: T. Hittle Personal Collection

Since then, strong partnerships among state, federal, and county forest landowners; land and natural resource managers; private-sector foresters; timber producers and forest industry representatives; and a dedicated cohort of private forest landowners have tended for our forestlands and urban trees with an uncompromised stewardship philosophy.

Today our forests support:

- 126,000 jobs tied to the forest products industry, comprising nearly 11 percent of the state's total manufacturing jobs
- \$15.9 billion in state gross domestic products
- \$3.3 billion in total tax contributions
- \$1.6 billion of forestry commodities exported to foreign countries



Left to Right: Heather Berklund (Chief State Forester), Sarah Godlewski (WI Sec. of State), Jennifer Youngblood (USDA Forest Service, Forest Supervisor - Chequamegon-Nicolet), Tony Dixon (USDA Forest Service Eastern Region), Matt Dallman (COF Vice-Chair), Tom Hittle (COF Chair), Jim Copeland (USDA Forest Service Deputy Regional Forester - Eastern Region)./ Photo Credit: Nicole Pregam



Forests contribute significantly to Wisconsin's economy while exhibiting growth at a rate that exceeds the volume harvested to support our industry. Discussions on this topic often focus on economic metrics—such as jobs and output—but the relationship between the forest industry and forest conservation is deeply interdependent, with the health of one directly influencing the vitality of the other. Sustainable forestry practices ensure that the forest products industry can continue to thrive without depleting the natural resources it depends on. By promoting conservation efforts, the industry helps maintain the ecological balance and biodiversity, which in turn supports the long-term availability of raw materials.

Forest conservation initiatives can often lead to the development of better forest management techniques, which can improve the efficiency and productivity of the forest products industry. Through careful planning and sustainable harvesting methods, forest industries can minimize their environmental impact while maximizing economic benefits. This balance is crucial for ensuring that forests remain a viable resource for future generations.



Council member Brad Dorff reads a paragraph from Aldo Leopold's essay, "The Good Oak" at the very spot the "good oak" stood until it was killed by a lightning strike and cut into firewood by Aldo Leopold./ Photo Credit: Jim Kerkman

The Wisconsin Council on Forestry plays a pivotal role in bridging the gap between forest conservation and industrial needs. By bringing together a diverse group of experts and stakeholders, the Council fosters collaboration and innovation in addressing the challenges facing Wisconsin's forests. The Council's efforts not only support the forest products industry but also contribute to the overall health and resilience of the state's forests, benefiting both the economy and the environment.

For over 40 years, the Wisconsin Council on Forestry has assembled a group of forestry and natural resource experts dedicated to supporting Wisconsin's con-

tinued efforts to achieve this balance of sustainable forestry, while ensuring healthy, diverse, and resilient forests that support our industries, rural communities and the state's economy.

The Council's early history dates back to 1982 when Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus created the Governor's Council on Forest Productivity. In 1987 Governor Tommy Thompson re-created the Council and changed the name to the Governor's Council on Forestry. Governor Thompson continued to re-establish the Council with executive orders in 1991, 1995 and 1999. In 2002, the Council was formally created in state statute and the name changed to the Wisconsin Council on Forestry.

Serving on the Council, by appointment of the Governor, is an honor that requires a commitment of time, energy, and the willingness to address numerous challenges confronting Wisconsin's forests and forest owners. Council members are a dedicated and diverse group of individuals engaged in bringing forth a variety of perspectives. These diverse perspectives, combined with existing or newly discovered information, are the basis for solutions which benefit all forest users. The Council strives to strike a balance of addressing issues that span from being current and time sensitive to issues that may challenge the health and well-being of forests and forest industry well into the future in an effort to meet our statutory charge of advising the Governor, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), other state agencies and legislators.

The Council sees our role as including efforts to proactively assess a wide host of forestry issues so that we can inform and advise forestry stakeholders and policy makers on actions that can be taken now to mitigate negative or enhance positive long-term outcomes.



Sustainable forestry practices and effective conservation strategies are essential for maintaining the delicate balance between economic growth and environmental stewardship. As such, continued collaboration and commitment from all stakeholders are vital to ensuring the future prosperity of both Wisconsin's forests and its forest products industry.

The council could not succeed in its mission without the support provided by the DNR; support that starts with the Secretary's Office, and the Chief State Forester and includes experts from a multitude of DNR teams.

The Council also greatly appreciates participation and values the input offered by a wide variety of additional forestry stakeholders and would like to thank those who serve on Council committees and attended Council meetings and share their unique perspectives, experiences, expertise and valuable information.

This report is available at: <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/BiennialReport.aspx>

Respectfully Submitted,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Hittle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being the most prominent.

Thomas Hittle  
Council on Forestry Chair



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Dallman". The signature is cursive and flows from left to right.

Matt Dallman  
Council on Forestry Vice Chair

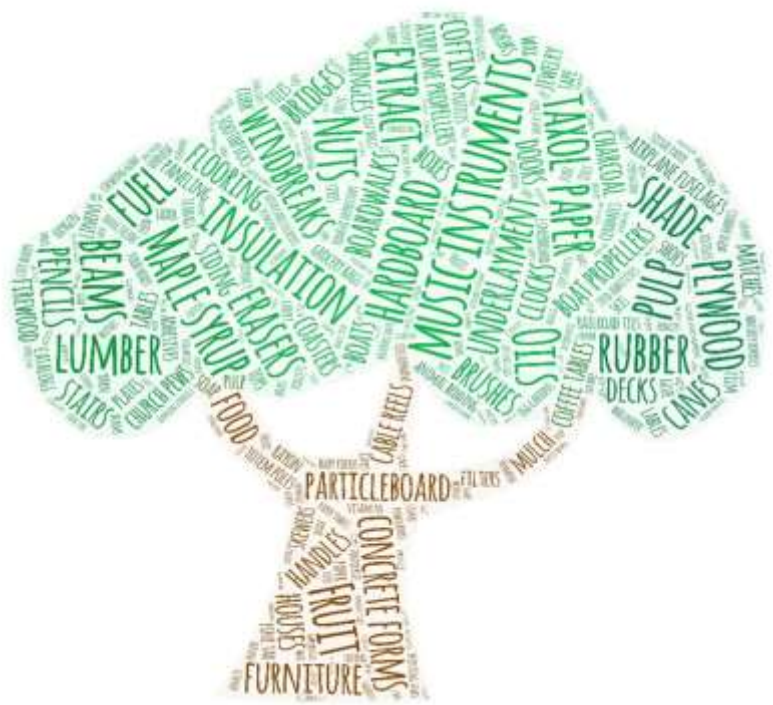
# Recommendations

Within the Council's role to advise the governor, legislature, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Department of Commerce, and other state agencies on a host of forestry issues in the state, periodically the Council will provide recommendations on various forestry topics. This section highlights recommendations the Council is required to provide in [Wis. Stat. § 26.02\(2\)](#). The Council also makes other recommendations based on pertinent topics and issues, for the 2023-2024 biennium, these can be found in the Accomplishments section of this report.

## Recommendations for increasing economic development of the forestry industry and employment in the forestry industry (Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)7.)

Economic development in Wisconsin's forest industries includes impacts on all sections of the wood fiber supply and product chain from forestland owners, through timber producers, those in the transportation business, pulp, paper, and board mills, and secondary wood manufacturers. Employment in this industry is key to the prosperity of Wisconsin's rural communities, as evidenced by the industry's role in many of Wisconsin's more rural counties (<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/forestbusinesses/factsheets>).

- Number one employer in seven counties: Florence, Marathon, Price, Rusk, Taylor, Trempealeau and Winnebago.
- One of the top 10 employers in 28 counties: Adams, Ashland, Brown, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Florence, Forest, Iron, Kewaunee, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Marquette, Oconto, Outagamie, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Shawano, Taylor, Trempealeau, Washburn, Waupaca, Winnebago and Wood.
- Number one industry for value-added in eight counties: Brown, Marinette, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Taylor, Trempealeau and Winnebago.
- One of the top 10 industries for value-added in 31 counties: Adams, Ashland, Brown, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dunn, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Marinette, Marquette, Oconto, Oneida, Outagamie, Portage, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Shawano, Taylor, Trempealeau, Washburn, Washington, Waupaca, Winnebago and Wood.
- Number one for industry output in 18 counties: Adams, Ashland, Brown, Crawford, Dunn, Florence, Iron, Langlade, Marinette, Oneida, Outagamie, Price, Rusk, Sawyer, Trempealeau, Waupaca, Winnebago and Wood.
- One of the top 10 industries for industry output in 42 counties: Adams, Ashland, Barron, Bayfield, Brown, Chippewa, Clark, Crawford, Dodge, Dunn, Eau Claire, Florence, Forest, Grant, Iron, Kewaunee, Langlade, Lincoln, Manitowish, Marathon, Marinette, Marquette, Oconto, Oneida, Outagamie, Polk, Portage, Price, Racine, Rusk, Sawyer, Shawano, Sheboygan, St. Croix, Taylor, Trempealeau, Vilas, Washburn, Washington, Waupaca, Winnebago and Wood.



Products from trees./ Credit: Wisconsin County Forests Association



Economic development should support existing businesses, and at the same time endeavor to develop, grow and diversify markets. Key components include:

- Regional and global market growth
- Job creation
- Workforce development initiatives
- Adoption of new technologies
- Steady supply of appropriately priced wood fiber
- Environmental quality safeguards that do not unreasonably restrain business

The **Council is recommending the development of a comprehensive forest industry strategic plan and roadmap**. This effort would include examining Wisconsin's related industry and forest strengths and limitations impeding continued development as well as determining the necessary actionable items to achieve future defined industry goals.

The Council has recommended that the initial strategic plan effort focus on identifying and developing recommendations to address key factors potentially limiting the ability of existing forest products industries to operate profitably and expand, as well as any real or perceived factors preventing new industries from locating in Wisconsin. This would include examining industry regulatory and permitting issues and a wood fiber availability study. For additional information see:

- [Wisconsin's Forest Products Industry Signs of Challenges Ahead](#)
- [Strategic Plan Request: Governor Evers 12/05/2024](#)

To better understand current, and as close to real-time as feasible, forest products markets and the forest economy, the **Council is also recommending enhanced and routine periodic efforts to monitor, track, and report harvest levels and pertinent economic metrics**. A cooperative effort between the DNR Division of Forestry, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the UW-Madison Division of Extension Natural Resources Institute, and the Wisconsin Paper Council is envisioned as a potential coalition of partners to facilitate this effort.

**Recommendations as to staffing and funding needs for forestry programs and other conservation programs related to forestry that are conducted by the state to support and enhance development of forest resources (Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)9)**

Forests in Wisconsin are one of the most powerful economic drivers and one of Wisconsin's best environmental assets. Funding for forestry programs is an investment that supports vigorous and resilient forests throughout our rural and urban communities across the state. By keeping forests as forests, Wisconsin can better address challenges from climate change, and foster the additional benefits that forests provide for clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and outdoor recreation.

#### Budget Priorities

Council on Forestry members and the Council's budget committee participants that represent the broader forestry community developed the following budget related priorities. Because the Council's defined role is to advise the governor, legislator, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Commerce and other state agencies it is the **Council's advice that legislative and agency leadership closely consider the following budget recommendations that will support Wisconsin's critically important forest products industry and promote healthy forests**.

- Restore from the Forestry SEG account the Division of Forestry's 2023 –'25 biennial budget cut in funding for supplies and services, continue funding the Forestry Account at levels consistent with the cancelled Forestry Mill Tax process and stop transfers from the Forestry SEG account to non-forestry related programs.
- Increase funding for the UWSP College of Natural Resources LEAF-Wisconsin's K12 Forestry Education Program and

the Wisconsin Forestry Center.

- Increase funding for the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP).
- Increase funding for the Division's information technology (IT) needs and the Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS).
- Increase efforts and funding to support issues related to maintaining healthy forests and to mitigate dangers associated with declining forests due to pests and invasive species.
- Support needs related to the Governor's tree planting pledge as part of the Global Trillion Trees Initiative.
- Support efforts to maintain healthy forests and mitigate dangers associated with declining forests due to pests and invasive species including:
  - ◊ Increase capacity at the DNR for forest health management and research.
  - ◊ Increase capacity at the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection for forest pest inspections, surveys and response.
- Support the Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP). Healthy forests depend on a healthy forest products industry, and a healthy industry requires an efficient and effective transportation infrastructure.
- Support Wisconsin's working forests and the economic value they provide by reauthorizing the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program.
- Increase efforts and funding to communicate and educate the public about the importance of Wisconsin's forests and forest industry.
- Establish and fund dedicated staff and resources for the Wisconsin Council on Forestry operations.
- Advocate for and support the Wisconsin Council on Forestry and Council partner's efforts to continue to develop a strategic plan and roadmap for Wisconsin's forest industries to support, diversify and develop our industry, foster rural prosperity and maintain this industry's important contribution to the state's economy.

For additional information on the Council's state forestry budget recommendations see:

<https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/BudgetPapers.aspx>

### Wisconsin's Forest Legacy Program

As referenced in the Accomplishments section, the Council's September 2024 meeting highlighted Wisconsin's investment the [Forest Legacy Program](#) and working forest conservation easements. The goals of this program include:

- maintaining large, forested blocks and their ability to provide opportunities for traditional forest uses, including the gathering of forest products;
- protecting fish and wildlife habitats that support diverse populations, including threatened, endangered or rare species;
- protecting known cultural resources such as rivers or trails that served as historical human migration routes;
- maintaining the opportunity for forests to buffer and protect inland lakes and streams;
- preserving those areas that provide a rich scenic experience; and
- maintaining opportunities for public recreation.

[The DNR's Forest Economics and Ecology Section research](#) suggests working forest conservation easements have a net positive benefit when it comes to the forest products and the tourism economy and small but positive impact on municipal expenditures related to road building and maintenance, public safety, sanitary, human services and school costs.

Wisconsin currently has more than 360,000 acres under easement. The DNR has program coordination, administration and oversight responsibilities and while up to 75% of the costs to acquire an easement can be obtained from the Fed-



eral Forest Legacy Program, the program does not provide funding for administration costs related to the long-term compliance monitoring. Currently the Division of Forestry has 0.5FTE assigned to oversee the program. Because the Forest Legacy Program has a positive benefit to the forest community, as well as the state's tourism and recreation economy, **the Council recommends the state allocate additional resources to increase administrative and oversight capacity for the Wisconsin's Forest Legacy Program.**

## Recommendations as to the need to increase the public's knowledge and awareness of forestry issues (Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)10)

Wisconsin's forestry community recognizes the need to increase the public's forestry knowledge and awareness to have an informed electorate that understands and supports sustainable forestry in Wisconsin. The Council's 2022 report, *The future of Wisconsin's Forest Products Economy – Summary of Focus Group Discussions* ([REDS](#)) included communication as one of five recommendation category topics (others included policy, collaborations with education institutions, products, and transportation and infrastructure). Communication recommendations were summarized in two statements, with a sample of a session contributor's actual comments below in italics:

- **Promote and expand collaborations and communication between stakeholders towards improved work relations, productive discussions, and state-wide commitment and involvement.** *"...The internal and external stakeholders of the forest industry must continue to collaborate to maintain what WI forest industry is already doing well..."*
- **Increase publicity and public awareness of the quality, sustainability, and benefits of forest products to people and communities.** *"...Educate the consumer on the reality of this, this is a sustainable industry, this is that alternative to the plastic, and all the other good things that come with it..."*

[View The Future of Wisconsin's Forest Products Economy – Summary of Focus Group Discussions Report.](#)

The Council continues to recommend and advocate for support of programs that have a track record of successfully increasing the public's knowledge and awareness of forestry issues, such as:

- **Log-a-Load events:** The Great Lakes Timber Professionals coordinate multiple Log-a-Load-For Kids events. At these events, thousands of school children get to see logging equipment in action and participate in other educational activities as the loggers donate their time and the value of a load of logs to the Children's Miracle Network.
- **Forest Exploration Center:** The nonprofit Forest Exploration Center continues to develop forestry education opportunities on the 67-acre property owned by the DNR in Wauwatosa. The Council visited the center in September 2022.
- **Trees For Tomorrow:** Trees For Tomorrow in Eagle River has been educating students about Wisconsin forestry since 1944 and has reached hundreds of thousands of students at their accredited school over the years.

- **My Wisconsin Woods:** a partnership of the Wisconsin DNR and the Aldo Leopold Foundation, has become a trusted source of information with a communications platform that empowers woodland owners with the knowledge and tools necessary to identify and start realizing their goals. This program introduces landowners to sustainable forest management practices through inclusive offers and communications, connecting them to the wider forestry community's programs and services.



Log-a-Load event at Norbert Rich School Forest in 2023./ Photo Credit: DNR

The Council additionally is recommending increased funding through the DNR by adjusting annual spending authority for forestry education and innovative curriculum development through the UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC) and LEAF-Wisconsin's k-12 Forestry Education Program to keep pace with an ever-evolving forest industry and health risks forests are facing.

- LEAF was created in 2001 to develop and support teachers with forestry knowledge, lessons, and skills needed to effectively teach elementary through high school aged students about Wisconsin's forests. LEAF strives to ensure all K-12 students can understand the importance of Wisconsin's forests and their sustainable management. Funding has been static since 2011.
- The WFC, established in 2020, serves the needs of Wisconsin's forestry community through workforce recruitment and development, forestry professional development, applied research, and community outreach. Its largest initiative to date is the Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition (WFCC), which addresses the urgent need for skilled employees in the forest industry through skills-based curriculum for high school students and immersive training programs for forest operations and mill technology careers. Of the numerous challenges facing Wisconsin's forest industry, workforce recruitment and training remain among the most pressing.



# Council Accomplishments and Strategic Success

In the 2023-2024 biennium, the Council held 10 meetings with meeting locations in Madison, Antigo, Baraboo, and Rhinelander. To meet the Council's statutory role as an advisor, the Council strives to learn about a wide range of topics that currently are, or could in the future, influence the Wisconsin forestry community. This allows the Council to be informed, ready and available to offer reliable information, advice or recommendations to policy and decision makers. Council past meeting agendas, minutes, and documents can be accessed on the Council's website here: <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/MeetingsArchive.aspx>

One significant effort the Council undertook in this biennium was to determine where their existing efforts and initiatives align with [Wisconsin's 2020 State Forest Action Plan \(SFAP\)](#), and where they may consider expanding efforts based on the priorities identified in the plan. The 2020 SFAP was developed by Wisconsin's forestry community and serves as a critical framework to guide the work of forestry in Wisconsin. To complete this effort, the Council Chair, Vice Chair, and committees completed an analysis identifying which of the goals and strategies outlined in the SFAP align with their objectives. This effort underscores the importance of both the SFAP and the Council's efforts as well as ensures that the Council is focused on the priorities that were identified by the larger forestry community. The following accomplishments of the Council are presented as they connect to goals and priorities outlined in the SFAP.

**Council Strategic Goal:** Promote the benefits of sound forest management and policies that provide ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits for present and future generations

## Related 2020 WI SFAP Goals

- B.** Forested landscapes provide connectivity between patches of forests of all seral stages & types for forest-dependent species & related natural communities
- H.** Forested land & ecosystem functions are maximized, while losses due to forest health threats are minimized.
- L.** Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets & non-market forest benefits.

## Council Accomplishments

- The Council's Sound Forestry and Policy Committee, led by Dr. Adena Rissman convened with members of the forestry community several times to discuss pertinent topics, including:
  - ◇ Wisconsin Forestry and the Farm Bill
  - ◇ Diverse and Healthy Forests, Markets and Communities
  - ◇ Silviculture guidance for a changing world including climate adaptation and mitigation and old growth management and reforestation challenges
  - ◇ Forest health – preventing and responding to insect and pathogen outbreaks
  - ◇ Agroforestry – food forests, silvopasture and maple syrup
  - ◇ State Forest Action Plan, connections and priorities
  - ◇ Priorities and action items for the Council on Forestry
  - ◇ Managed Forest Law Dispute Resolution Process
- Dr. Rissman's committee started a Council initiative on forest health and created a position paper to address these forest health threats and sustain the diversity and benefits of Wisconsin forests. [Forest Health Needs in Wisconsin, Council on Forestry 11 19 2024.pdf](#)

- A letter was drafted by the Council to the USDA Forest Service in response to the USDA's request for input regarding Land Management Direction for Old Growth Forest Conditions Across the National Forest System. [WI CoF Land Management Plan for Old Growth Comments to USDA.pdf](#) The Council also invited Society of American Forester (SAF) Chief Executive Officer Terry Baker for a virtual presentation of SAF's position and work related to the USDA old growth discussion.
- The Council began a new initiative in 2024 to examine and recommend possible solutions to address an imbalance in age class distribution in the state's red pine and oak forests, over concern that the acreage of young stands in these two forest types was steadily decreasing and the challenges impacting private and public landowners face regenerating these forests. [CoF Pine Oak 11 19 2024.pdf](#)
- The Council's 2023 fall meeting was held at the Aldo Leopold Foundation in Baraboo, where the Council was able learn more about the Foundation's efforts along with field tours of the Leopold Pines and various private and conservancy forests. Unique forest management opportunities and challenges were discussed.
- The Council's 2024 fall meeting was centered on working forest conservation easements and a field tour of the Pelican River Forest. The Council heard perspectives on the Pelican River Forest from the current landowner and local community members and leaders. DNR staff provided background information on conservation easements and research results on impacts to local communities, which generally show positive outcomes. The Council was able to hear and discuss challenges that arose during the final acquisition of the easement on the Pelican Forest. The Council was an early advocate of the Pelican River working forest easement Project drafting a letter late in 2022. [Pelican River Forest Council on Forestry Letter of Support 10 20 2022.pdf](#) Additional information was provided by the DNR at the November 2024 meeting on the Knowles Nelson Stewardship program and its' significance to the Wisconsin forestry community.
- Recognizing the importance of the Managed Forest Law (MFL) for supporting sound and sustainable forest management on private Wisconsin forestlands, and providing timber of the state's industries, the Council invited members from Buffalo County government to provide their perspectives on challenges they face at the local level with lands enrolled in the MFL. This was coordinated with Council member Senator Jeff Smith. <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Meetings/ManagedForestLawBuffaloCounty.pdf>



Council on Forestry members and guests in front of the "Shack" at the Leopold Center. From left to right: Don Hoffman (guest), Rebekah Luedtke, Heather Berklund, RJ Wickham (guest), Ralph Heiser (guest), Dr. Adena Rissman, Brad Dorff, Jordan Skiff, Dr. William Van Lopik, Matt Dallman, Tom Hittle, Jim Hoppe, Erik Rantala, Henry Schienebeck, Buddy Huffaker, Julie Church (guest) and Jim Kerkman. / Photo courtesy of Tom Hittle.

**Council Strategic Goal:** Raise awareness, and advocate for, the critical role our state's transportation plays in supporting the timber industry

#### Related 2020 WI SFAP Goals

**M.** The forest products industry remains competitive in both the domestic and global/international markets

## Council Accomplishments

- The Council's Transportation Committee, led by Henry Schienebeck, provided periodic updates to the Council on local, state, and federal issues and legislation impacting transportation of wood and forest products.

- With Mr. Schienebeck's assistance, the Council drafted a letter to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation in support of the Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP) [WI CoF ARIP Support 12 11 24.pdf](#)

**Council Strategic Goal:** Enhance the Council's profile and ability to be viewed as the source of expertise on broad forestry topics in Wisconsin

#### Related 2020 WI SFAP Goals

**R.** Private forest landowners are better connected to each other through peer groups and networking opportunities.

## Council Accomplishments

- Efforts kicked off late in 2023 with technical and design support from the DNR to fully update and re-design [the Council's website](#). As the website serves as an archive of Council information and efforts, historic information was retained and better organized, and revisions made to enhance user access to posted material. The website is now routinely updated with information coming out from the Council and articles on Council activities.
- Council Chair Hittle testified in February 2024 at the Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage regarding Assembly Bill 1030 pertaining to adjustments in deer hunting and harvest levels in northern Wisconsin forests, followed with a letter to the Senate Committee on Financial Institutions and Sporting Heritage on a similar legislative bill.

More on the Council's position on deer and forestry impacts can be found here: <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/DeerImpacts/Default.aspx>

- The Council hosted special guests Wisconsin Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski and USDA Forest Service Eastern Region Regional Forester Tony Dixon and Deputy Regional Forester Jim Copeland at its May 2024 meeting. The Council's meetings also included visits from the DNR's Northern Region Director James Yach, and from the Office of the Governor, Northeast Wisconsin Regional Director Carl Woitekaitis. The Chair and Vice-Chair also participated in a virtual meeting with Lieutenant Governor Sara Rodriguez to discuss the Council's work and a variety of forestry topics.
- Chair Hittle attended the September 2023 Legislative Field Tour sponsored by Senator Romaine Quinn, the Great Lakes Timber Professionals and the Wisconsin County Forest Association and the Washburn County Forest. Tour stops and topics included but were not limited to, visiting an active harvesting operation, learning why forestry matters to Wisconsin and to all those who live and visit here, exploring why Wisconsin forests remain healthy through active and sustainable management and discussing opportunities to promote future opportunities and success.
- The Council on Forestry's work to advocate for healthy forests, healthy rural communities and a healthy forest products industry was referenced in Wisconsin's Green Fire's paper - *Wisconsin Forests at Risk: Engaging Wisconsinites in Another Century of Forest Conservation* ([https://wigreenfire.org/2019/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/WGF\\_2024\\_OppsNow\\_Forests\\_final.pdf](https://wigreenfire.org/2019/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/WGF_2024_OppsNow_Forests_final.pdf)). Council members Mr. Hittle, Mr. Dallman and Dr. Rissman individually contributed to the development of this paper. The Council received periodic updates from Wisconsin's Green Fire representatives during the development. The paper identified several challenges Wisconsin's forests are facing and offered these three general broad themes to describe the types of actions and investments that are believed needed today:

- ◇ Promote Forest Productivity, Forest Health, and Diverse Forest Conditions
- ◇ Support Transition and Adaptation in our Forest Products Sector
- ◇ Sustain our Forest Landscape by Incentivizing and Supporting Forest Owners, and Looking Across Ownerships

The report concluded with a "A Call To Action"

*Just when we need healthy, diverse, and productive forests more than ever, our forests are facing threats that can prevent them from serving as effective solutions to our greatest conservation challenges. We can no longer assume that Wisconsin forests will continue to predictably and consistently provide wood, food, water, air, rec-*



recreation, cultural and spiritual values, and countless other benefits to Wisconsinites without new investments and new commitments to forest conservation.

*“Once we learn to see policies, budgets, and commitments on the land, we know that decisions made inside matter for our forests outside. It’s time to recommit to forest recovery in the face of slow and rapid threats. Working together, we can sustain and renew forest diversity, health, and abundance.” Dr. Adena Rissman*

*Wisconsin has successfully faced forest conservation challenges before, and we can do so again. It is time to apply the spirit of the Wisconsin Idea for our forests, using a foundation of sound science, current information, and ideas that build on past successes while embracing new concepts.*

*This problem solving needs to begin with a statewide conversation with all of our forest stakeholders at the table, including local, county, state, federal, and tribal leaders, conservation and industry organizations, and all communities with a direct or indirect stake in forests. As a statutorily created stakeholder body with broad representation, the **Wisconsin Council on Forestry** is well positioned to help initiate and guide such discussions.*

## Council Strategic Goal: Explore options for stable state funding for forestry and the programs the DNR’s budget supports

### Related 2020 WI SFAP Goals

- O. Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.
- I. Forest health threats are identified & managed in a fashion that is adaptive & responsive to multiple values.
- C. Keep forests as forests to maintain the long-term value & benefits they provide.

## Council Accomplishments

- The Council’s Forestry Funding committee, led by Council member Jim Hoppe and including community members from the Wisconsin Paper Council, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, UWSP LEAF Program, and Wisconsin Green Fire met four times over this two-year period to discuss funding priorities for the Council to consider, along with meeting to discuss how Council funding efforts would align with the State Forest Action Plan.
- The Council also heard budget related presentations on the U.S Farm Bill and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) forestry funding options and opportunities, as well as receiving periodic updates from the DNR Budget and Grants Section.
- Leading up to the Wisconsin 2025-2027 Biennial Budget legislative efforts, the Council’s Chair and Vice-Chair met with DNR Deputy Secretary Steven Little and virtually with Jacob Pankratz, Senior Policy Advisor – Office of the Governor, to convey the Council’s forestry budget priorities for this next biennium. Details on the Council’s budget recommendations are included in the Recommendations section earlier in this report.

## Council Strategic Goal: Research, promote, and support efforts to increase utilization of the State’s forest products

### Related 2020 WI SFAP Goals

- L. Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets & non-market forest benefits.

## Council Accomplishments

- As detailed earlier in the Recommendations section, The Council has been engaged in an initiative to recommend and advocate for the development of a comprehensive forest industry strategic plan and roadmap. The Council has recommended that the initial strategic plan effort focus on identifying and developing recommendations to address key factors potentially limiting the ability of existing forest products industries to operate profitably and expand, as

well as any real or perceived factors preventing new industries from locating in Wisconsin.

- As part of the Council's May 2023 meeting in Antigo members and guests toured North Central Wood Technology Center of Excellence and the Kretz Lumber. <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Meetings/COF%20Meeting%20Summary%20May%202023.pdf>
- The Council heard a proposal for a statewide television forestry public awareness campaign initiated by the Wisconsin County Forest Association and Great Lakes Timber Professionals at its November 2023 meeting. The campaign ultimately would not move forward due to a lack of funding.
  - ◇ Sample video clip: <https://youtu.be/wTtUj2WJH-8>
  - ◇ [Public Awareness Campaign presentation](#)
- Also at the Council's November 2023 meeting, members and guests learned about the UW Oshkosh Center for Customized Research and Services and a joint project with the Wisconsin Paper Council to develop a strategic framework for Wisconsin's paper industry. The project included a two-year effort to obtain feedback from company leaders, industry experts and young professionals.
- To stay abreast of timber market conditions, as part of the January 2024 meeting, the Council heard at presentations on stumpage markets from the Forest Data Network group and the status of timber sales and trends on state and county forest lands from Division of Forestry staff.
- At the March 2024 meeting the Council learned about:
  - ◇ Regulations for Attracting Business to WI from the DNR Sustainability & Business Support staff
  - ◇ Forest Products WI Economic Contributions and an analysis related to locating a mass timber manufacturing plant in Wisconsin, along with a presentation on the extent of Wisconsin's forest resources from DNR Forest Products Service staff the Timber Products Output (TPO) reporting
- The Council continues to utilize the new website as a tactical means for addressing the goal; "Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets & non-market forest benefits" by highlighting stories on the website on how Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets and non-market forest benefits.

## Other Accomplishments Not Related to SFAP Goals and Strategies

The Council's strategic goals and the State Forest Action Plan (SFAP) were aligned for the vast majority of the Council's focus and topics addressed in 2023 and 2024. However, the Council occasionally hears information and includes agenda items that do not fit neatly in the goals identified within the SFAP, additionally some required tasks of the Council are not mentioned in the SFAP. A sample of these include:

- **State Harvest Volumes:** Wis. Stat. § 28.025(3)(a)2 requires the DNR to report biennially to the Council the total timber harvest on state lands; establish an annual allowable timber harvest for these same properties or groups of properties; and maintain a current inventory of forest resources on state forested lands.

If the DNR submits a report indicating that the timber harvest in any biennium is less than 90 percent, or more than 110 percent, of the allowable timber harvest, the Council is required to prepare a report to the Governor, DNR, and appropriate standing committees of the legislature containing the reasons for noncompliance and recommendations on methods of ensuring that the timber harvest is consistent with the annual allowable timber harvest established by the department.

View supporting material on 2021-2022 state harvest volumes:

- [DNR Presentation of state harvest trends](#)
- [Council submitted report](#)
- [DNR submitted report](#)
- [DNR submitted memo](#)

With harvest levels just slightly below the 90 percent threshold in 2021 – 2022 (reported by the DNR to the Council in 2023), the Council submitted a report to the appropriate individuals.

Past and ongoing reporting efforts, (including the initial 2023-2024 harvest volume report from the DNR to the Council) related to the state harvest volume statutory requirements are included on the Council's website here: <https://councilonforestry.wi.gov/Pages/StateTimberReport.aspx>

- **Dispute Resolution Process (DRP):** The Council has a history of working with the DNR on the Managed Forest Law Dispute Resolution Process.

View DRP reports:

- [Tax Law DRP Reports](#)

Annual reports are required to be provided to the Council for review of the DRP by the program contracted administrator. The Council has the opportunity to analyze the program for process improvements and lessons learned and provide recommendations to address unforeseen complications in its administration. The Council also was engaged by the DNR in the fall of 2024 to offer early comments on potential program and administration revisions.

- **Forest Regeneration and Monitoring (FRM):** The Division on Forestry periodically updates the Council on the Division's Forest Regeneration Monitoring program. The Forest Regeneration Monitoring Program was initiated in 2018 to better assess the status and investigate trends of naturally regenerating forests across the state and to further provide data reflecting forest regeneration success or failure to be used in Wisconsin's deer population goal-setting process. The Council's objective is to be informed about the status of forest regeneration around the state.

View the most recent FRM report:

- [2022 FRM report](#)



# 2023-2024 Other Required Content

## The magnitude and extent of forest resources in Wisconsin

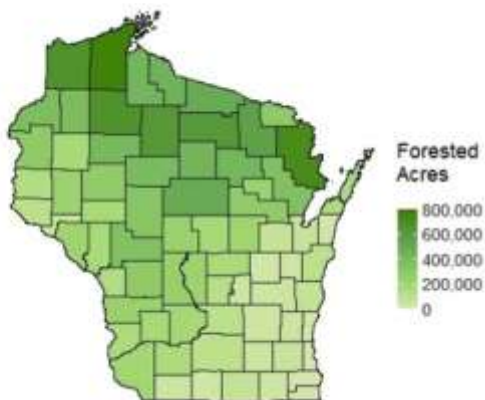
(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)1)

### Forest Resources

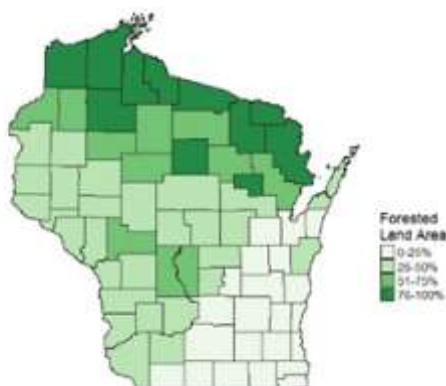
Forested acreage in Wisconsin has trended upward since the 1960's, steadily increasing to 17 million acres in 2015 and has remained relatively stable for the last decade.

WI Land Cover	Acres
<b>Total Forested Acres</b>	16,993,313 (47%)
<b>Urban Forests</b>	373,580 (1%)
<b>Non-forested Acres</b>	17,619,978 (48%)
<b>Water</b>	1,315,708 (4%)

Counties in the northern portion of the state have the most forested acres and percent of forested area by county. Forested acres and percent of forest land area tend to decrease moving south and east through the state.



Forested Acres in WI by county



Percent forested land area in WI by county

For more information on WI Forests, view the following resources:

- [Wisconsin FIA "One-Click Fact Sheet"](#)
- [Wisconsin FIA Interactive Report](#)
- [FIA BIGMAP Forest Carbon and Above Ground Biomass Dashboard](#)

### Trends in Total Forest Area

According to the U.S. Forest Service's National Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program, between 2015 and 2022 98% of Wisconsin's forested land stayed as forest. The total annual net loss of forested land was approximately 7,600 acres mostly due to development and wetland conversion. Potential causes of wetland conversion include flooding and loss of tree cover in forested wetlands from emerald ash borer.

### Resources Available for Management

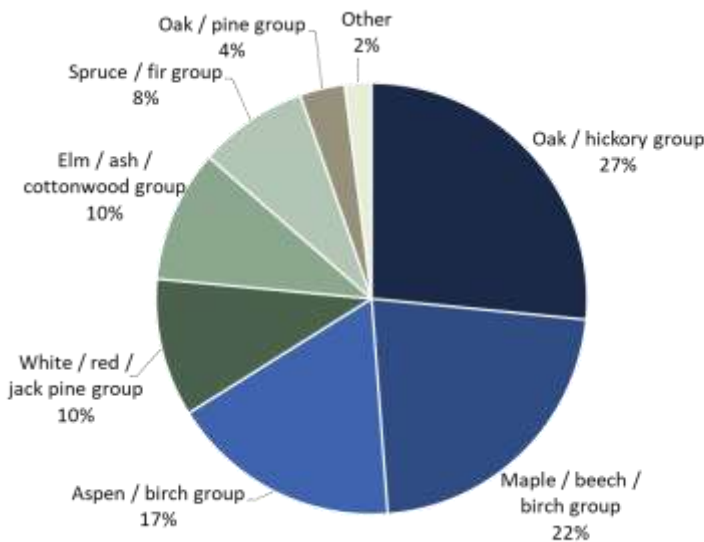
The amount of forested acreage available for timber management to supply raw materials for Wisconsin's forest industry is also limited by several factors. The Wisconsin Wood Supply Assessment, completed in 2016 for the Wisconsin Forest Practice Study, reported that about 30% of private forest acres were in forest tracts that are smaller than 20 acres and more expensive to harvest and more often belonging to those less willing to harvest. The overall assessment of timber availability showed that statewide about 62% of nonfederal forest acres were considered potentially available for timber production.

View the Council on Forestry's [Wisconsin Wood Supply Assessment](#) for more information.

## Forest Composition

### Acres of forest land by forest type

The most abundant forest types in Wisconsin are hardwood forest types. The oak-hickory forest type group makes up the most acreage at 4.5 million acres, or 27% of Wisconsin's forests; followed by the maple-beech-birch group (northern hardwoods) at 22%, and aspen-birch at 17%. While most of Wisconsin's forest are hardwood types, there are also significant softwood types occupying large areas, especially in north and central parts of the state.



Forest Type Group	Acres	%
Oak / hickory group	4,511,374	27%
Maple / beech / birch group	3,781,733	22%
Aspen / birch group	2,940,596	17%
White / red / jack pine group	1,759,894	10%
Elm / ash / cottonwood group	1,687,388	10%
Spruce / fir group	1,398,148	8%
Oak / pine group	573,175	3%
Other	341,004	2%

### Species composition by forest type

Maps showing the distribution of these forest types can be found on the next page.

**Oak-hickory** – the most common forest type found throughout Wisconsin is the oak-hickory forest type group. These forests account for over 4.5 million acres, or 27% of Wisconsin's forests and are characterized by

northern red oak, red maple, white oak, northern pin oak, black oak, basswood, shagbark hickory, and bur oak. Since 1983, there has been an 8% increase in the acreage of oak-hickory forests throughout the state. This increase is concentrated on drier, sandier sites while richer sites are commonly succeeding to mesic hardwood species.

**Maple-Beech-Birch** – the second most common forest type found in Wisconsin is the maple-beech-birch forest type group, or northern hardwood forests. Found primarily throughout the northern portion of the state, this forest type makes up 22% of the state's forestland and is characterized by sugar and red maples, basswood, northern red oak, white ash, beech, eastern hemlock, and yellow birch. Since 1983, there has been a 4% decrease in this forest type.

**Aspen-Birch** – Aspen-birch forest type group makes up 17% of Wisconsin's forestland and is found primarily in the northern third of the state. Common species that characterize this forest type include quaking aspen, bigtooth aspen, paper birch, red maple, and balsam fir. Aspen-birch forests have decreased across the state by 11% since 1983.

**White-Red-Jack Pine** – the white, red, and jack pine forest type group covers 10% of forest land in Wisconsin. These forests are found throughout the state in a variety of habitat types and characteristics can vary from jack pine barrens to red pine plantations. Common associates of this forest type include eastern hemlock, red maple, quaking aspen, sugar maple, and balsam fir. Since 1983 there has been a 2% increase in the pine forest type in Wisconsin.

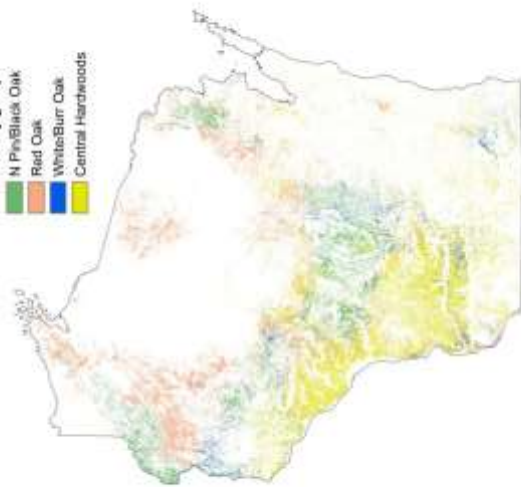
**Elm-Ash-Cottonwood** – the elm-ash-cottonwood forest type group is a lowland type that makes up roughly 10% of forests in Wisconsin. Common species include elm, cottonwood, black ash, green ash, silver maple, and red maple. There has been a 1% increase in this forest cover type across Wisconsin since 1983.

**Spruce-Fir** – the spruce-fir forest type group is diverse and covers 8% of Wisconsin's forest land. The type is most common in wet forests in the north and often surrounds bogs. Common tree species include northern white cedar, tamarack, black spruce, balsam fir, and white spruce. There has been a 3% decrease in this forest cover type across Wisconsin since 1983.

# Maps of Forest Type Distribution Across Wisconsin

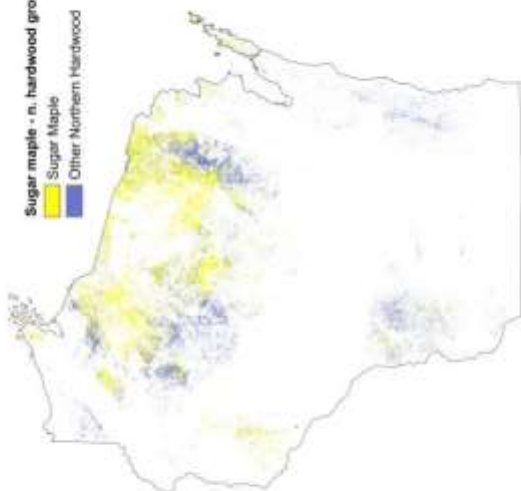
Oak-hickory

Oak - hickory group  
 N Pin/Black Oak  
 Red Oak  
 White/Burr Oak  
 Central Hardwoods



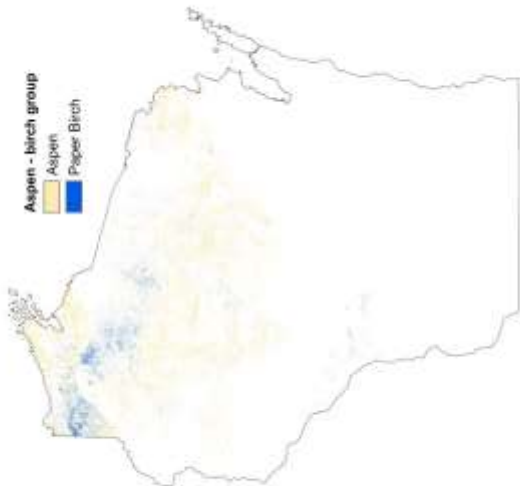
Maple-Beech-Birch

Sugar maple - n. hardwood group  
 Sugar Maple  
 Other Northern Hardwood



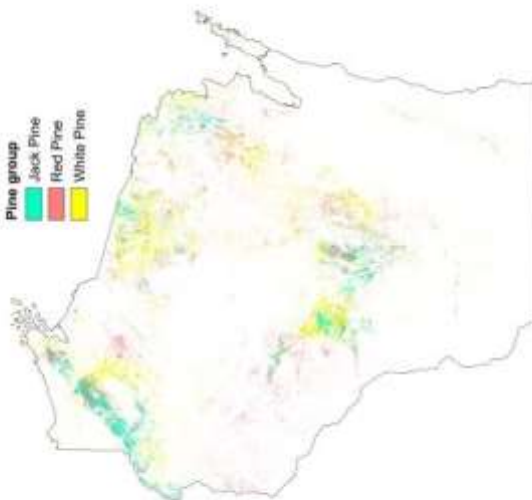
Aspen-Birch

Aspen - birch group  
 Aspen  
 Paper Birch



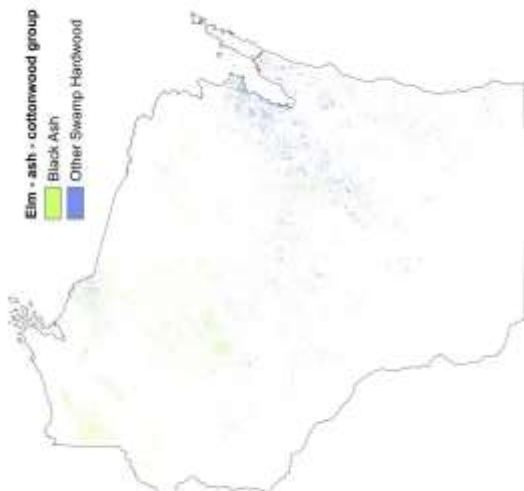
White-Red-Jack Pine

Pine group  
 Jack Pine  
 Red Pine  
 White Pine



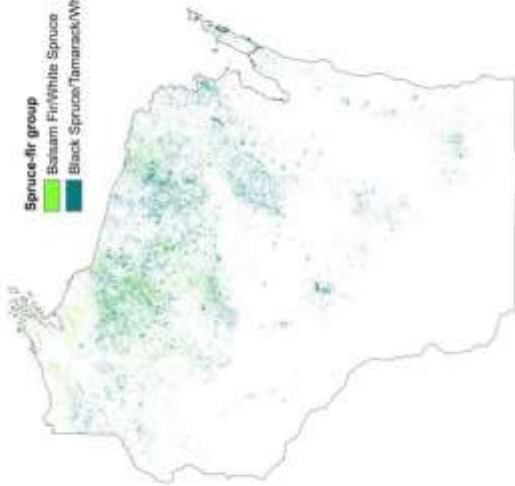
Elm-Ash-Cottonwood

Elm - ash - cottonwood group  
 Black Ash  
 Other Swamp Hardwood



Spruce-Fir

Spruce-fir group  
 Balsam Fir/White Spruce  
 Black Spruce/Tamarack/White Cedar





### Age class by forest type



- Wisconsin's forests are aging.
- In the 2022 inventory, the mean stand age in Wisconsin was 62.5 years, up from 50.6 years in the 1983 inventory.
- Most forests in Wisconsin are 40-100 years old.
- Approximately 10% are 20 years old or younger and 8% are more than 100 years old.

The forest types proportionally most represented in the younger age class are aspen, oak-hickory, and pine; the latter two predominantly associated with dry sites. The forest types proportionally most represented in the over 100-year age classes are oak-hickory, maple-beech-birch, and spruce-fir.

### Volume by species



- In 2022, there were 28.3 billion cubic feet of growing stock volume, of which 7.8 billion or 27.5% were conifer and 20.6 billion were hardwood.
- The highest volume softwood species were red pine, eastern white pine, northern white-cedar and hemlock.
- The highest volume hardwood species were sugar maple, red maple, northern red oak, and quaking aspen.

### Growth vs. removals\*



- WI forests are growing at a rate that exceeds harvest by a ratio of 2.4-to-1.
- Average net annual growth\*\* exceeded harvests and other removals by 405 million cubic feet.
- During the period between inventories, average annual net growth was 734 million cubic feet. Average annual removals were 328 million cubic feet, about 45% of average net annual growth.

*\*Growth to removal ratio is a typical measure of sustainability. A ratio above 1 indicates a strong supply of timber, while maintaining the ecological, environmental, and recreational values of Wisconsin forests.*

*\*\*Mortality is considered when calculating net growth. Growing stock average annual mortality was 281 million cubic feet during this timeframe.*

*Data Sources: Data Referenced in the Forest Composition and Characteristics sections is primarily from FIA data. This data is generally updated every 7-10 years.*

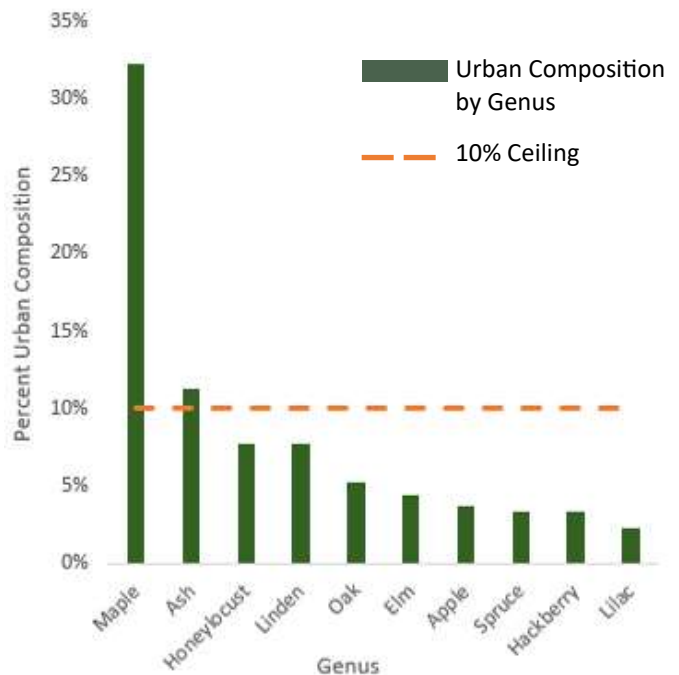
*Wisconsin Forest Inventory Analysis Data. (2023). USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station. [FIA DataMart](#) | [US Forest Service Research and Development](#)*

## Urban Forest Resources

Wisconsin's Census-defined urban areas include 584 square miles of woody vegetation, covering about 33% of the state's urban land, according to a recent Urban Tree Canopy (UTC) assessment based on 2020 aerial imagery. While urban areas represent only 3.3% of the Wisconsin's total land area they contain 67% of its population.

### Diversity of Urban Trees

There are over 1.1 million locally managed trees listed in the Wisconsin Community Tree Map, a compilation of tree inventories from around the state. The maple genus makes up 32.3% of those trees, followed by ash (11.3%) and honeylocust (7.8%). The overrepresentation of maple trees poses a risk of overwhelming losses should a future insect or disease target maple trees. However, diversity is improving. The three most common genera make up 51.4% of all trees, but the most common genera planted in the last decade compose only 36.4%.



View the [WI Community tree map](#)

# Forest Health

## Drought, spongy moth and oak leafroller cause oak decline

Severe drought in summer 2023 persisted through winter 2023/2024, which had record-low snowfall and was the warmest since 1895. Although spring 2024 was the fourth wettest on record, drought returned by late summer and continued into fall.

View the new [spongy moth resource center](#) website launched by DNR, DATCP, and UWEX to assist land-owners with ID and management strategies. For information about DATCP’s Slow the Spread aerial treatments see the ‘Aerial Spraying’ tab. For regulatory information about quarantines and firewood movement see the ‘Regulations’ tab.

The dry spring of 2023 allowed spongy moth populations to surge, resulting in more than 374,000 acres of forest impacted, the most ever in Wisconsin. Caterpillar feeding damage was still widespread in 2024 with more than 334,000 acres affected before the wet spring weather led to widespread caterpillar mortality, largely ending the outbreak. To manage nuisance caterpillars in high-use areas, aerial applications of **Foray** (*Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki*) were conducted over 625 acres at four properties in 2023, and 928 acres at six properties in 2024.

Record Spongy Moth Damage Years (Top 3 since 2000)	
Year	Acres of Forest Impacted
2023	374,000
2010	346,749
2024	334,071



Three Spongy Moth caterpillars on a leaf./ Photo Credit: DNR

Oak mortality increased as trees, weakened by drought and repeated defoliation from spongy moth and oak leafroller, became susceptible to native insects and fungi.



Spongy moth and oak leafroller defoliation mapped in 2023 and 2024. / Map Credit: DNR

## Oak Wilt (*Bretziella fagacearum*)

- Oak wilt has been found in 66 of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. It has not yet been found in six counties: Calumet, Door, Iron, Kewaunee, Manitowoc and Taylor.
- The DNR published results of girdle herbicide treatment as a management tool and started evaluation of rapid response as a management tool in collaboration with Michigan DNR, Minnesota DNR and US Forest Service

View the [results of the girdle herbicide treatment study](#).



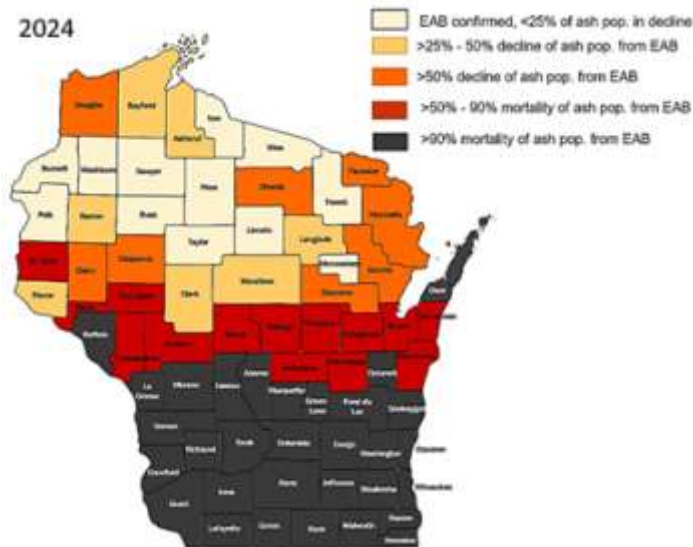
Leaves with Oak Wilt Symptoms./ Photo Credit: DNR



### Emerald Ash Borer (*Agrilus planipennis*, EAB)

- EAB continued its spread across Wisconsin and is now found in all 72 counties.
- EAB is common across the southern half of the state and has already caused extensive mortality of ash. Widescale decline and mortality is still uncommon in northern counties, but it will be dramatic when it starts to occur given the huge acreage of black ash swamp and the role it plays in the hydrology of northern Wisconsin.
- Biological control efforts for EAB have continued and successful establishment has been confirmed.

View the [Wisconsin EAB website](#) where DNR staff partnered with DATCP and UW-Extension to track the spread of EAB.



Map of percentages of ash decline and mortality by county in Wisconsin. / Map Credit: DNR



Emerald Ash Borer Larva. / Photo Credit: DNR

### Heterobasidion Root Disease (*Heterobasidion irregulare*, HRD)

- HRD was confirmed for the first time in Door County in 2024.
- The DNR is currently evaluating soil microorganism communities in healthy and HRD infested pine stands to determine if some pine stands are more susceptible than others.



Wisconsin counties with HRD detections; 2024 new county find in red. / Map Credit: Wisconsin DNR



This HRD fruiting body on a dead white spruce was the first detection of the disease in Door County in 2024. / Photo Credit: DNR

### Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA)

- HWA has not yet been found in WI but is rapidly expanding along the Lake Michigan shoreline in Michigan.
- The DNR is developing an HWA response and management plan for Wisconsin in collaboration with partners and is investigating traps to detect HWA and funding options.



Hemlock branch with many white cottony egg sacs that are produced by hemlock woolly adelgid. / Photo Credit: DNR



## Terrestrial Invasive Plants: Collaborative Management

- Terrestrial invasive plants continue to be a major threat to forest sustainability by limiting native tree seedling regeneration, reducing plant diversity and increasing management costs.
- The DNR administered the Weed Management Area-Private Forest Grant Program (WMA-PFGP), which funded 8 projects in FY24 and 7 in FY25.
- The first find of Japanese stilt grass in Wisconsin at the Coulee Experimental forest led to a collaborative project with researchers at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse to learn about the phenology of this new invasive.



Japanese stilt grass is a new invasive plant to Wisconsin found for the first time at the Coulee Experimental Forest. / Photo Credit: DNR

## Fire Management

Wildland fire management in Wisconsin prioritizes the protection of human life, property and natural resources from unwanted wildfires while strategically using prescribed fires to enhance our natural communities and the ecosystems we manage. Education, safety and training programs and an extensive network of partners, including fire departments which play a critical role, are utilized to suppress, manage and prepare for fires statewide.

### Grant Funding

Annually, approx. \$1 million is awarded to fire departments for personal protective equipment, fire prevention supplies, training, equipment, vehicles, etc.

Annually approx. \$300,000 federal grant funds are allocated to reduce wildfire risks through planning, fuel reduction and education.

### 2023-2024 Fire Seasons

2023 brought a typical spring wildfire season, with fire activity starting in the southern portion of the state and moving north as snow disappeared. Three significant fires occurred in 2023. Arcadia (3,036 acres) and Jack Pine (87 acres) both occurred on the same spring day within 40 miles of each other, requiring evacuation and road closures. Due to summer drought conditions, the third fire, Pallet (714 acres), occurred in June. However, 2024 brought an early spring with snow-free conditions statewide, leading to heavier than average wildfire activity.

View real-time and historic wildfire and prescribed fire data on DNR [Fire Management Dashboards](#).

The following two tables summarize DNR wildfire responses and prescribed burns for 2023 and 2024.

Year	Wildfires	Acres burned
2023	1,073	4,816
2024	1,135	2,527
<b>10 yr. average</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>1,819</b>

Year	Prescribed burns	Acres treated
2023	291	28,541
2024	268	34,803
Annual goal	180	25,000



The Puchyan Fire occurred on Oct. 18, 2024 in Green Lake County and burned 646 acres. / Photo Credit: DNR

# Current use of forest products and the benefits to the state

(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)2)

## Economic Impact

Wisconsin's forest products industry plays a vital role in the state economy and has remained one of the leading manufacturing sectors in the state for decades. In 2022, forest products manufacturing jobs represented 10.8% of the total manufacturing jobs in the state.

Forestry ranks among Wisconsin's top 10 industries by output and value-added and is the No. 1 employer in seven counties: Florence, Marathon, Price, Rusk, Taylor, Trempealeau and Winnebago.

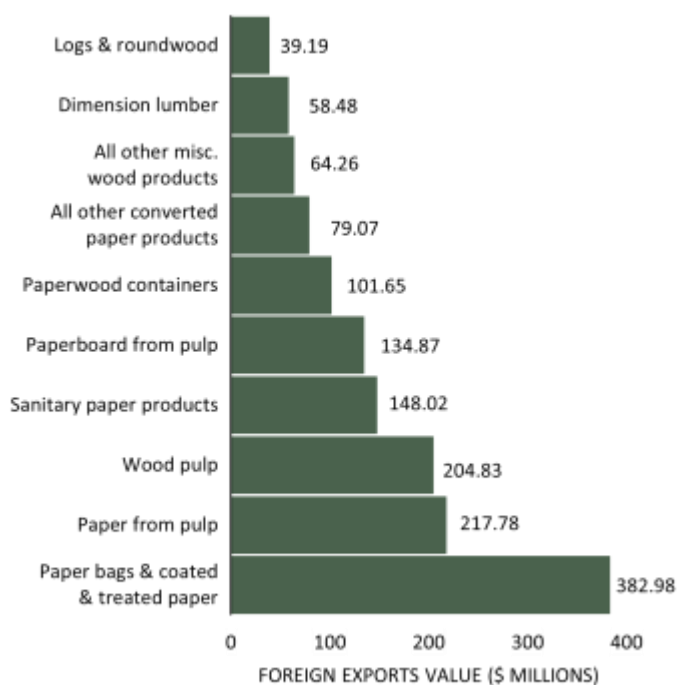
**#1** Paper-producing state

**\$1.6 Billion** Foreign Exports

**\$18.2 Billion** Domestic Exports

### Forest Products Businesses Shape the Economy

- WI has more than 1,000 companies in the primary and secondary forest products sectors.
- Every 100 jobs in forestry supports 114 additional jobs in the state.
- Forestry is 2.3% of state GDP or 1 out of every \$45 produced



Direct Economic Output			
	Employment	Output	Value Added
Forestry and Logging	4,487 jobs	\$366.5 mill	\$215.9 mill
Pulp and Paper	27,724 jobs	\$17.5 bill	\$5.4 bill
Wood/Furniture Products	25,684 jobs	\$6.8 bill	\$2.8 bill
<b>Total</b>	<b>57,895 jobs</b>	<b>\$24.7 bill</b>	<b>\$8.4 bill</b>

### Urban Forest Industry Economic Contribution

- The urban forest industry in Wisconsin includes private industries (e.g. landscaping services, nursery and tree production), investor-owned utilities, local and state government, higher education, and non-profit organizations.
- Every dollar generated in urban forestry contributed an additional \$0.63 to the state's economy.
- Every 100 jobs in urban forestry resulted in another 34 jobs in other sectors of our economy.
- Urban forestry businesses and employees paid over \$41 million in state and local taxes and about \$96 million in federal taxes.

Urban Forestry Contributions		
	Employment	Output
<b>Direct</b>	12,517 jobs	\$966 mill
<b>Indirect</b>	4,208 jobs	\$632 mill
<b>Total</b>	<b>16,725 jobs</b>	<b>\$1.6 bill</b>

### Employment Trends Provide Critical Information on Economic Health of the Forest Products Sector

- The pulp market in the state continues to experience a decline, largely due to the ongoing closure of pulp and paper facilities.
- Urban wood utilization reached a peak during the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by increased interest in

woodworking hobbies and the purchase of portable sawmills. Since then, the industry has stabilized and is now maintaining a more consistent pace.

Forest Products Employment Trends		
	Forest Products (Total)	% Change to Previous Year
2018	63,893 Jobs	0.42
2019	61,291 Jobs	-4.07
2020	58,000 Jobs	-5.37
2021	57,895 Jobs	-0.18
2022	57,079 Jobs	-1.41

### Economic Impacts of Forest-Based Tourism and Recreation

Forested land provides economic benefits to Wisconsin through strong tourism and recreation sectors. Nationally, recreational use of National Forest System lands supported approximately 177,800 jobs and contributed \$15.2 billion to the GDP in 2022. At the local level, a 2023 case study found that out-of-town visitors to Nine-Mile County Forest Recreation Area generated \$3.25 million for the Marathon County economy. These examples

highlight the importance of forest-based tourism and recreation in driving economic growth, but comprehensive data on the socio-economic impact of Wisconsin's forests are limited. More targeted research is needed to fully understand the economic contributions and the relationship of tourism and recreation with Wisconsin's forested landscapes.

- View the full reports:
- [Recommendations for Regional Economic Development Through Sustainable Forest Products and Outdoor Recreation.](#)
  - [Nine Mile County Forest: The Economic and Visitor Impact for Marathon County.](#)

*Data Sources: Data referenced in the Economic Impact section is based on the IMPLAN calculation process to estimate economic impacts using the most recent data available; 2022 for general economic impact statistics and forest products businesses; urban forestry data is from 2018. Additional research and data have been collected in the years following and are currently under analysis.*

*IMPLAN® model, 2022 Data, using inputs provided by the user and IMPLAN Group LLC, IMPLAN System (data and software), 16905 Northcross Dr., Suite 120, Huntersville, NC 28078 [www.IMPLAN.com](http://www.IMPLAN.com)*

*Estimations and assumptions were made outside of IMPLAN to evaluate the impact of Wisconsin's forest products industry.*

## Projected future demand and benefits, and possible economic opportunities for forest products

### Future of Forest Products

Market growth for Wisconsin forest products presents significant economic opportunities for the state. Promising areas of advancement include the pulp and paper, wood and furniture, and urban wood industries, as well as the development of a mass timber facility and a more reliable transportation system for moving forest products statewide. These opportunities can lead to job creation, business retention and expansion, carbon storage benefits, and the increased utilization of underused urban and rural forest resources. Furthermore, strong and diverse forest product markets are closely linked to healthy, well-managed forests. The development of new products and markets holds great potential for driving economic growth.

#### Pulp & Paper

As the pulp and paper markets continue to face challenges, the future demand for forest products is expected to evolve. With the closure of pulp mills across the state, there is a critical need for advanced pulp manufacturing

*(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)3 & 6)*

solutions. Increased investment in markets such as packaging materials and renewable fuels could have a significant economic impact, potentially alleviating ongoing challenges in the pulp sector.

- The Wisconsin Institute for Sustainable Technology at UW-Stevens Point, is working to advance Wisconsin's changing pulp and paper industry. One example of this includes a project funded through a USFS Wood Innovations grant that explores the substitution potential of bleached eucalyptus kraft with fiber from significantly underutilized northern hardwood species.

#### Mass Timber

Wisconsin has emerged as a leading example in mass timber infrastructure development. Through partnerships in the Great Lakes Mass Timber Collaborative, Wisconsin has become a leading example in the United States in terms of mass timber construction. Leveraging the state's abundant forest resources, the establishment of a mass



timber or cross laminated timber facility presents a significant economic opportunity for the forest products industry.

- Milwaukee is home to one of the largest mass timber buildings the Ascent luxury apartment building.
- A study with Michigan Technological University and the USDA Forest Products Laboratory is testing Eastern white pine mass timber panels for durability, aiming to promote this underutilized species for CLT use.



**Baker's Place, a 14-story hybrid mass timber construction located in Madison. / Photo Credit: DNR**

### Wood & Furniture Products

Substitute products have increasingly become significant competitors to traditional wood-based materials. Home improvement products, such as vinyl flooring, have experienced notable growth in recent years. Expanding businesses to develop more wood-based building materials is crucial for both economic growth and meeting housing demands.

- A UW Extension study on consumer perceptions of underutilized Wisconsin wood species is in its final analysis phase
- Despite housing market fluctuations, demand for remodeling and construction materials remains steady.

### Urban Wood Utilization

Urban forests are a crucial component of community infrastructure, contributing to both environmental sustainability and urban development. Supporting urban wood markets is both economically and environmentally beneficial, fostering sustainable practices while promoting local industries.

- In partnership with the Urban Wood Network, the DNR supports Wisconsin's urban wood community through technical assistance, outreach, and education for network members, municipalities, and residents.
- In recent years, the urban wood industry has experienced significant growth, with increasing emphasis on utilizing wood from urban trees.
- Urban wood use programs seek to divert resources from waste streams for beneficial uses. This practice also adds a distinct narrative to each piece, reflecting its unique origins.

### Transportation

Consideration of an enhanced rail system across the state could significantly benefit both primary and secondary forest products businesses. The DNR serves as a representative for forest products sector along with industry partners on Wisconsin Intermodal transportation group working to bring better rail systems back to the state of Wisconsin. A more advanced rail infrastructure would facilitate the increased export of forest products, both within Wisconsin and to markets beyond the state.

### Biochar

Biochar is an emerging market and the DNR has engaged in public outreach and education in this field. The further development of Biochar could bring a market to low value wood fiber in Wisconsin and could be utilized across the state to grow higher quality wood species.

- A current study is being done in research on the use of biochar as a soil amendment at Wilson State Nursery in Boscobel, WI.



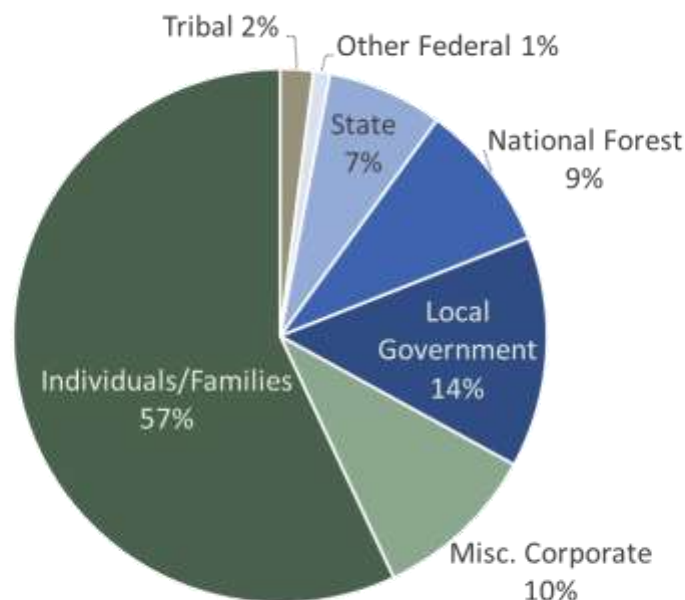
**Biochar applied at Wilson State Nursery in Boscobel. Following application, the biochar was rototilled into the test beds. / Photo Credit: DNR**

## Types of owners, forms of ownership and reasons for ownership

(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)4)

### Forest Ownership

Wisconsin's forests are owned by a variety of public and private entities.



#### Private Land

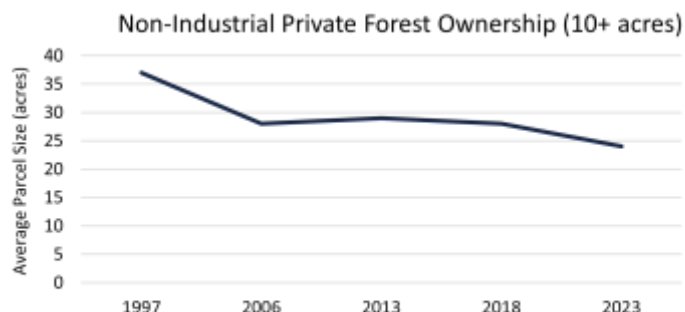
Nearly 70% of forest land in Wisconsin (11.8 million acres) is privately owned, with nonindustrial private forest owners (individuals and families) owning an estimated 9.7 million acres. Corporations own an estimated 1.5 million acres, Native American tribes own 0.4 million acres, and other private owners, including conservation organizations and unincorporated clubs and partnerships, own an estimated 0.3 million acres.

#### Public Land

The federal government, including the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Department of Defense, manages approximately 1.6 million acres of forest land in Wisconsin. The National Forest land is comprised of over 1.5 million acres owned and managed by the U.S. Forest Service in the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. State lands are comprised primarily of land owned and managed by the DNR (over 1.6 million acres) and the Bureau of Commissioners of Public Lands (approximately 77,000 acres). Local government includes 2.4 million acres of land enrolled in Wisconsin's County Forest Law as well as other county owned forest land. Wisconsin cities and villages cover 2 million acres, almost 6% of the state's total land area.

#### Number of Private Landowners and Parcel Sizes

Forest parcelization and fragmentation continue to contribute to the trend toward more landowners owning small parcels of land. Since 2006, the average parcel size of family forest owners owning 10+ acres has decreased from 37 acres to less than 26 acres. This downward trend is expected to continue.



This continued pattern of land ownership in Wisconsin impacts the availability of forested acreage for timber management, which is essential for meeting landowner objectives and supplying raw materials to the forest industry. Conducting forest operations on small parcels is both economically and operationally challenging as operational costs increase as parcel size gets smaller. Other factors affecting forest management activities on small parcels include access, increased fixed costs of logging equipment (e.g., moving equipment) and low-value products. Foresters and other natural resource professionals are challenged with meeting individual landowner management objectives as more landowners own smaller forests. Additionally, less forestland under long-term management, reduces recreational opportunities and decreases forest habitat quality.

#### Forest Industry Ownership

Over the past twenty-six years, ownership of large private industrial forest land has declined considerably as they continue to divest their ownership interests. Declining enrollment in Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law (MFL) 'large account' (>1,000 acres) serves as an indicator of this downward trend. In 1999, nearly 1.2 million acres were enrolled in the program. In 2025, enrolled acres is about 668,000 acres. Conservation easements are a commonly used tool to protect these and other important forestlands threatened with conversion non-forest uses, sale and/or subdivision and parcellation.

## Reasons for Owning Forest Land

The USDA Forest Service – Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program conducts the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) to quantify who owns the forests of the United States, why they own them, how

they use them and what they intend to do with them. In Wisconsin, forests are owned by public and private entities, with nearly 70% of forest land owned by private landowners for a variety of reasons.

While many individuals own forestland for uses other than growing and producing forest products, nearly two-thirds (64%) of the raw materials that supply Wisconsin's forest products industry come from private forest lands. Implementing sustainable forest management practices benefits wildlife and the habitat they rely on, recreational activities and improved hunting opportunities for a variety of game and non-game species.

## Landowner Behavior

Understanding the characteristics, attitudes, and behaviors of NIPF ownerships is critical for developing and delivering effective programs, policies, and services. For example, the majority (about 75%) of NIPF landowners in Wisconsin do not have a written management plan to help guide their management decisions. Other factors influencing landowner management decisions include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lack of knowledge or experience with land management decisions
- Unfamiliarity with resources and services available to assist with decision making
- Government mistrust
- Conflicting management goals and objectives

Landowner awareness and understanding of programs available to assist with their management needs continues to be low.

## Wisconsin Landowner Demographics & Intergenerational Transfer of Ownership

Forty-five percent of NIPF land in the U.S. is owned by individuals over the age of 65. Nearly half of the nation's

### Top 5 Reasons for Owning Forests

- Wildlife habitat
- Beauty or Scenery
- Hunting
- Nature protection
- Privacy



NIPF owners will be deciding the future of their land in the coming years (i.e., sell, bequeath, convert to another use, conserve). Notably, NIPF landowners in Wisconsin show a similar trend. The average age of NIPF owners in Wisconsin is 61 years with 57% of the family forest land owned by those who are at least 65 years of age. Sixty percent of family forest owners have at least one female owner; overall, women comprise 30% of single-owner landowners in Wisconsin. Since 2006, Wisconsin has seen a threefold increase in women woodland owners.

As landowners age, the way they transfer their land to the next generation will, at least in part, determine the future of Wisconsin's forests and how they are managed.

### Primary Decision Maker Demographics

61 years

(average age)

89%

male

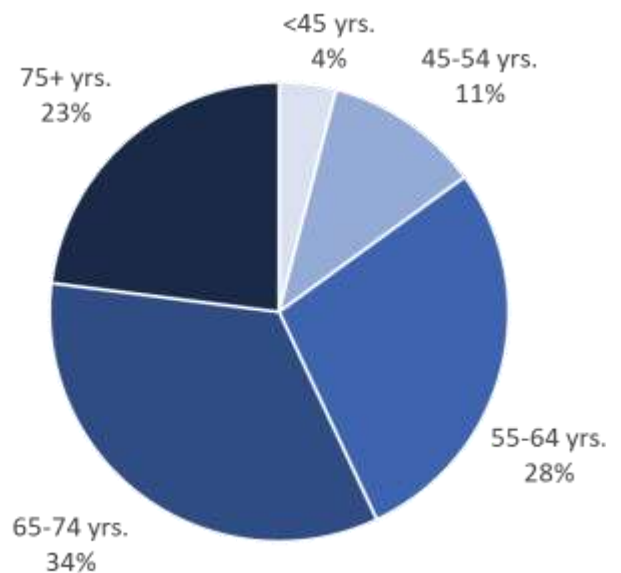
39%

possess college degree

<1%

minority

Nearly 60% of Wisconsin forest landowners identify the opportunity to leave a legacy for their family as a reason for owning the land.



### Nonindustrial Private Forest Landowner (NIPF) ownership in Wisconsin by age

*Data Sources: Data Referenced in the Forest Ownership Section is primarily from the National Woodland Owner Survey (NWOS) which is updated in full every five years.*

*National Woodland Owner Survey (1997-2023). USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station. [National Woodland Owner Survey \(NWOS\)](#) | [US Forest Service Research and Development](#)*



# Success of incentives to stimulate the development of forest resources

(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)5)

## Technical Assistance

### DNR Foresters

DNR integrated foresters serve every Wisconsin county and provide professional planning and technical advice to Wisconsin's non-industrial private forest landowners. Throughout Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024, DNR integrated foresters met with landowners on their property, educated woodland owners about forest management, built relationships with woodland owners and partners, and connected woodland owners to the resources they need to implement forest management activities.

	State Fiscal Year 2023	State Fiscal Year 2024
Site Visits Completed	1,320	1,067
Stewardship Plans Written	211	320
Tree Planting Practices Completed	33	18

### Cooperating Foresters

Established in 1989, the Cooperating Forester Program is a cooperative effort between the DNR and private-sector consulting foresters who offer services and assistance to private forest landowners. Through this partnership, the department refers landowner requests for assistance to participating Cooperating Foresters.

Currently, there are over 200 businesses, nearly 300 individuals, participating in the Cooperating Forester Program. Participation in the Cooperating Forester program remains steady. The DNR continues to support and maximize the use of private-sector consulting foresters through referrals, training and certifications to ensure a highly skilled workforce is available for landowner seeking forest management assistance.

View the DNR maintained [Forestry Assistance Locator \(FAL\)](#), an online directory of Cooperating Forester businesses and individuals.

## Conservation Easements

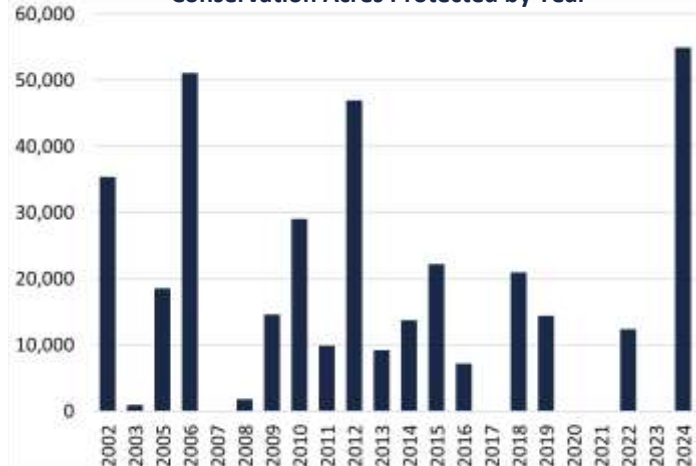
Wisconsin's Forest Legacy Program (FLP) identifies and protects environmentally important private forestlands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses that pro-

vide the highest conservation value and public benefit. The department leverages funding from the federal FLP and the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program (KNSP) to protect large blocks of unfragmented working forest landscapes for the purpose(s) of maintaining traditional uses to keep working forests working. Working forest conservation easements in WI protect in excess of 360,000 acres.

Conservation Easement Total Acres Protected



Conservation Acres Protected by Year

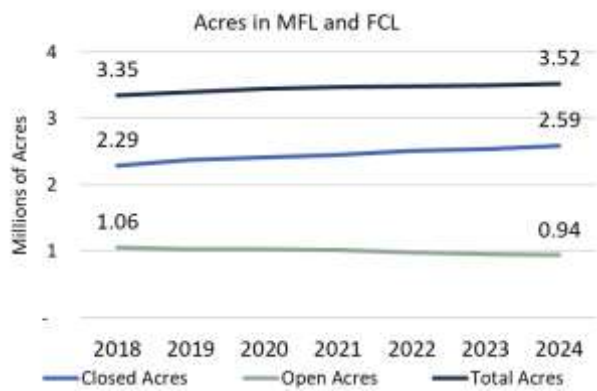


## Forest Tax Law Programs

The Managed Forest Law (MFL) and Forest Crop Law (FCL) authorized in Wis. Stat. § 77.01 and 77.80, creates landowner property tax incentive programs that encourages Wisconsin's private landowners to sustainably manage their woodlands. The FCL program ceased new enrollments in 1985.

The MFL program, widely recognized as a model program for addressing landowners' interests while promoting the public benefits of sustainable forestry, allows participants to contribute to natural resource management and benefit from significant property tax reductions.

A key requirement of the MFL program is the development of comprehensive management plans, which promote sustainable forestry through harvesting and thinning timber, planting trees, controlling erosion, managing wildlife, and enhancing aesthetics. Plans must be prepared either by one of the currently 195 Certified Plan Writers (CPW) or, in their absence, the DNR.



### MFL and FCL Enrollment

**50,554** Landowners      **3,523,813** Acres

26.6% open to hunting, fishing, hiking, cross country skiing and sightseeing\*.

\*All lands in FCL are open to public access for

### 2023 and 2024 Tax Law Program Contributions

#### Wood Harvested

With over 60% of Wisconsin's forests owned by private landowners, Wisconsin's forest tax laws facilitate a consistent flow of raw forest products to market and maintain healthy forests for the future.

**169,843\*** Truckloads

**1,868,268** Cord Equivalents

\*This number is likely an underestimate of wood harvested on MFL and FCL lands during the biennium, as it does not include wood harvested from cutting reports that were submitted after May 5, 2025.

#### Mandatory practices

**10,374** Practices

**160,279** Acres

Mandatory practices are largely commercial timber harvests and thinning practices. However, they may also include tree planting, release, site preparation and other practices to ensure that forests are healthy and actively growing.

#### Resource Aid Payments to counties

Pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 23.09(18), annual resource aid

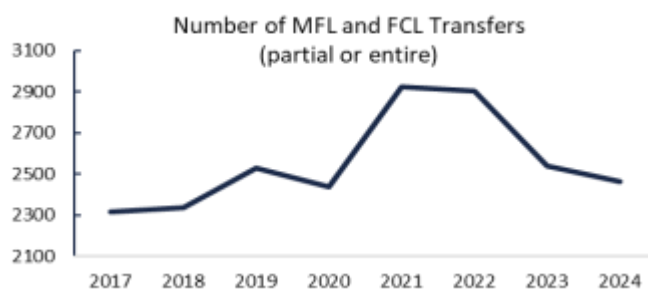
payments are issued to counties having more than 40,000 acres of enrolled FCL and MFL lands. The payment is apportioned among counties on the basis of their share of total eligible acreage.

**\$1,237,500** In 2023

**\$1,237,500** In 2024

### Program Administration

2015 WI Act 358 gave landowners added flexibility to partition and withdraw lands. Since that time, the DNR has seen fluctuations in the number of transfers and withdrawals requested. While increases in transfer and withdrawal orders do increase administrative workload, there has not been a decrease in the amount of land enrolled in the program, which continues to increase in acreage. Withdrawal payments to municipalities amounted to \$1,521,473.07 in 2023 and \$2,917,495.64 in 2024.



### County Forest Programs

The Wisconsin County Forest Program has 30 counties with over 2.4 million acres, and provides a variety of incentives and assistance to encourage sustainable forest management practices and promote the social economic and ecological benefits of forests, including: comprehensive land use plans, cost-share, grants, and loan programs, technical assistance, and certification.

#### County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plans

The Wisconsin County Forest Program offers assistance in developing and implementing County Forest 15-year management plans. These plans identify management goals, which lay the groundwork of long-term planning in managing all aspects of the County Forest including timber production, recreation, wildlife/fisheries. County Forest timber management provides benefits for local economies and recreational opportunities.

## Cost-Share, Grants and Loan Programs

The following programs offer cost-share, grants, and loans to help counties implement forest management practices, such as tree planting or timber harvest, land acquisition, and administrator grants. These programs can help offset the cost of implementing forest management practices.

- County Forest Administrator Grants
- Sustainable Forestry Grants
- Forest Wildlife Habitat Improvement “Nickel-An-Acre” Grants
- Knowles-Nelson funds to support land acquisition

More information on WI’s County Forest Program can be found through [WI County Forests Association](#).

## Technical Assistance

The DNR provides direct technical assistance to counties to help manage their forests sustainably. This can include assistance with forest inventory, forest regeneration, timber sale establishment and administration, wildlife habitat management, and forest health assessments in addition to technical assistance with computer applications and management guidelines.

## Forest Certification

Forest certification is the objective review of on-the-ground forest management practices against standards that address environmental, social, and economic issues from an independent third party. Certified forests show conformance to standards through 3rd party audits by a certification body who also issues and manages certificates. The DNR manages certificates on behalf of Wisconsin DNR managed lands, MFL group certified lands and County Forest Lands. Nearly 6.5 million acres of these lands are certified to one or more of the following certification systems: Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®), Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®), and American Tree Farm System® (ATFS). Wisconsin contains more certified acres than any other state in the nation. Having voluntarily participated in forest certification since 2004 the ma-

<b>DNR</b>	Dual certified FSC and SFI 1.65 million acres
<b>Managed Forest Law (MFL) Group Certificate</b>	Dual certified FSC and ATFS 2.37 million acres
<b>Wisconsin County Forests</b>	Dual FSC and SFI 1.76 million acres FSC Only 35,000 acres SFI Only 610,000 acres

turity of these programs is reflected in the low level of audit findings annually.

## Good Neighbor Authority

The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) is a federal program that allows states to enter into agreements with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) to conduct forest management activities on national forest lands. Wisconsin was the first state in the country to have a GNA Agreement, and the first state to have established and sold timber as part of an agreement.

## Increased Forest Management Activities

GNA allows the DNR to perform forest management and restoration activities including timber harvesting, forest regeneration, data surveys, habitat management, invasive species control and infrastructure improvements on national forest lands. These actions help implement the forest plan, improve forest health, reduce risk of catastrophic wildfire, and enhance wildlife habitat.

## Additional Revenue

Under GNA, the revenue generated from forest management activities on national forest lands is retained by the DNR, which it uses to cover costs of implementation. Since 2015, the DNR has sold 197 timber sales, totaling 32,395 acres, with a bid value of \$20,003,371.00. Funds left over after expenses are covered are used to perform a wide variety of restoration projects collaboratively selected by DNR and USFS. So far, over \$4,300,000 in revenue funds have supported a wide variety of restoration projects such as silviculture prescription writing, common stand exams, bat acoustic data analysis, culvert replacements, and hazardous fuels reduction.

## Local Industries

Management activities under GNA create jobs in rural communities such as logging, road construction, and other related industries. GNA allows for habitat enhancement and improved access to national forest lands for recreational activities, such as hunting, fishing, and hiking. This benefits communities and tourism industries.

## Partnerships

The DNR works in partnership with counties, private consultants, and non-profits to accomplish GNA projects. Several counties have all signed agreements with the state and contract to assist with timber sale establishment and administration. The DNR also contracts with private consultants and non-profits for timber marking, timber cruising, timber sale establishment, and a variety of restoration projects.



## Financial Assistance

### Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program

The Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) encourages private forest landowners to manage their lands in a manner that benefits the state's forest resources and the people of the state. WFLGP provides technical assistance and cost sharing to private landowners to protect and enhance their forested lands, and to protect the water resources. The program allows qualified landowners to be reimbursed up to 50% of the eligible costs of eligible practices incurred by the landowner up to the predetermined component "not-to-exceed" rates.

The state appropriation for WFLGP was approximately \$1,087,900 each fiscal year. Maximum cost share is \$10,000 per landowner per year. Due to limited funding, typical wait for landowners once applying for WFLGP is 6-18 months before they receive a grant award and can begin work on eligible practices.

### Environmental Quality Incentive Program

The Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) administered by the Natural Resources Conservation

Service (NRCS) provides up to 75% cost share assistance to eligible landowners. During the 2023-24 reporting period over 1,900 forestry contracts were funded in the amount of \$10.27 million. The DNR Forestry Division provides important technical assistance services to NRCS to ensure forestry practices are implemented correctly and compliance with program requirements.

### Conservation Stewardship Program

The Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) provides financial assistance to landowners who practice good stewardship on their land and are willing to take additional steps to maintain and improve their existing conservation systems by adopting additional conservation activities to address priority resource concerns. DNR Forestry provides important technical assistance services to NRCS to ensure forestry practices are implemented correctly and compliance with program requirements.

More information on EQUIP and CSP for 2023-2024 can be found in the [FY-2023](#) and [FY-2024](#) Wisconsin NRCS annual reports.

Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program				
Number of practices and dollars encumbered by practice for fiscal years 2023 and 2024. Dollars are based on the estimated cost of reimbursement (50% of practice cost) upon application approval. These are not actual amounts paid out to landowners.				
Practice	Fiscal Year 2023		Fiscal Year 2024	
	Grants Awarded (#)	Dollars (\$)	Grants Awarded (#)	Dollars (\$)
Undesirable species control	279	632,282	241	654,767
Stewardship plans and revisions	112	59,076	80	40,689
Site preparation	137	147,723	108	139,336
Tree plantings	137	217,878	97	166,875
Crop tree release	30	32,596	28	38,557
Seedling protection	26	29,218	5	2,700
Exclusion fencing	10	26,794	11	17,260
Erosion control	11	5,014	11	3,484
Pruning	7	2,650	6	2,800
Direct seeding	5	2,125	1	70
Total	754	1,155,356	588	1,066,538

## Urban Forestry Grants

In 2023 and 2024, \$5,885,998 state and federal funding was awarded through the DNR Urban Forestry Program to improve the community urban forest resource throughout Wisconsin. The state legislature increased the program's biennial budget by \$350,000 to expand grant opportunities.

The Urban Forestry Grant Program offers 50% cost-share funding to cities, villages, towns, counties, tribes, and nonprofit organizations. Priority projects included work on both public and private trees—such as management plans, ordinances, staff training, education, inventories, tree boards, and planting. The two main grant types are:

- **Regular Grants** (up to \$25,000): for established urban forestry programs
- **Startup Grants** (up to \$5,000): for new or developing efforts

The Urban Forestry Team also administers two no-match programs:

### Catastrophic Storm Grants

Annually, 20% of state grant funds are reserved for emergencies. Following the governor's June 2024 State of Emergency declaration (Executive Order #232), eight communities requested \$234,440 and received \$139,920 for storm-related tree repair, removal, or replacement.

Grant type	Year	Totals	
		# Awards	\$ Amount
Regular	2024	45	855,362
	2023	41	688,635
Start Up	2024	20	89,304
	2023	24	112,777
Catastrophic Storm	2024	8	139,920
	2023	0	0
Inflation Reduction Act	2024	13	4,000,000
	2023	0	0
Totals	2024	86	5,084,586
	2023	65	801,412

### Inflation Reduction (IRA) Grants.

Through a one-time \$4 million federal allocation, the program is enhancing tree canopy in Wisconsin disadvantaged communities through tree planting, hazard tree removal, and workforce development. This highly oversubscribed grant program received 61 proposals requesting \$16.5 million. Thirteen proposals were funded and represent Wisconsin small and medium-sized municipalities, tribes, non-profits and a county.

		Total Amount (\$)	
		2023	2024
Municipality by Population	<= 1,000 to 25,000	592,354	955,752
	25,001 to 50,000	50,000	441,822
	> 50,000	64,356	1,040,314
	County	54,083	528,482
	Tribes	0	686,352
	Nonprofits	40,619	1,431,864
Urban Forestry Zones	West	113,757	1,249,210
	North Central	159,066	1,099,289
	Northeast	169,536	180,584
	South Central	233,199	1,020,112
	East Central	42,165	340,371
	Southeast	83,689	1,195,020

View project summaries and locations on DNR's [Urban Forestry Website](#).

# Effect of state and local governmental laws and policy on forest management and the location of markets for forest products

(Wis. Stat. § 26.02(2)(a)8)

## 2023-2024 Legislation

Session	Assembly Bills Proposed	Assembly Bills Passed into Law	Senate Bills Proposed	Senate Bills Passed into Law
2005-06	23	11	4	1
2007-08	9	1	6	1
2009-10	25	5	15	4
2011-12	13	1	10	6
2013-14	18	6	16	6
2015-16	7	1	5	1
2017-18	6	1	6	1
2019-20	3	2	3	2
2021-22	7	1	7	2
2023-24	7	0	6	0

The following bills did not pass into law:

[SB1070/AB1162](#): County forest administration grant eligibility changes

[AB43/SB70](#): County forest administration grants and county sustainable forestry program: appropriation changes

[AB269/SB264](#): Foreign adversary prohibited from acquiring agricultural or forestry land in this state

[AB349/SB348](#): Foreign ownership of agricultural and forestry land: limitations and exceptions revised; enforcement authority transferred from AG to DATCP

[AB1093/SB999](#): Open MFL with roads or trails for vehicular travel: public access requirements and DOT MFL roads and trails maintenance grants

[AB511/SB484](#): Oversize or overweight vehicles transporting forest products: permit modifications

[AB819](#): Planting trees to address urban heat islands: urban forestry grants program revisions to include; emergency rule provision

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