



Wisconsin Council on Forestry

Tony Evers, Governor
CouncilOnForestry.wi.gov

June 25, 2024

Reply to: P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921
Email: hittle.tomj@gmail.com

Tom Hittle
Chair

Matt Dallman
Vice-Chair

Heather
Berklund

Brad Dorff

James Hoppe

Buddy Huffaker

James Kerkman

Rebekah Luedtke

Rep. Katrina
Shankland

Rep. Jeffrey
Mursau

Erik Rantala

Juris Repsa

Dr. Adena
Rissman

Henry
Schienebeck

Sen. Jeff Smith

Sen. Romaine
Quinn

Jordan Skiff

Jennifer
Youngblood

Dr. William Van
Lopik

Deputy Secretary Steven Little
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921

RE: Wisconsin Council on Forestry FY2025-27 Budget Priorities

Dear Deputy Secretary Little:

The Wisconsin Council on Forestry is appreciative of the opportunity to discuss forestry related budgetary items important to Wisconsin's forestry community with you and your staff on June 27th. Appointed by the Governor, the Wisconsin Council on Forestry is a diverse group of forestry community leaders who support Wisconsin's efforts to achieve sustainable forestry. The Council was created by State Statute in 2002 to advise the governor, legislature, Department of Natural Resources, and other state agencies on a host of forestry issues, including "staffing and funding needs for forestry programs conducted by the state".

Forests in Wisconsin are one of our most powerful economic drivers and one of our 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.

The Council on Forestry feels strongly that the Department must support and actively advocate for the Division of Forestry operations and programs. Transfers from the Forestry SEG account to support non-forestry related programs are deeply concerning to the forestry community. Cuts to the Division of Forestry's supplies and services funding, as seen in the last budget, threatens the entire communities' efforts to sustainably manage our forest resources.


Council on Forestry members and budget committee participants that represent the broader forestry community have developed the following budget related priorities for the state's next biennial budget, which we want to bring to your attention.

1. Restore from the Forestry SEG account the Division of Forestry's 2023 -'25 biennial budget cut in funding for supplies and services.
2. Increase funding for the UWSP College of Natural Resources LEAF-Wisconsin's K-12 Forestry Education Program and the Wisconsin Forestry Center
3. Increase funding for the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP).
4. Increase funding for the Division's information technology (IT) needs and the Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS).
5. 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.


6. Support needs related to the Governor's tree planting pledge as part of the Global Trillion Trees Initiative.
7. Increase efforts and funding to communicate and educate the public about the importance of Wisconsin's forest industry.
8. Establish and fund dedicated staff and resources for the Wisconsin Council on Forestry operations.
9. 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.

We look forward to discussing these items further during our meeting and the opportunity to follow up afterwards with additional information and details.

Sincerely,



Thomas Hittle
WI Council on Forestry Chair



Matt Dallman
WI Council on Forestry Vice Chair

*Please note that due to the nature of their positions, Representatives Jeffrey Mursau and Katrina Shankland, Senators Romaine Quinn and Jeff Smith, State Forester Heather Berklund, and Chequamegon Nicolet National Forest Supervisor Jenn Youngblood abstain as signatories.