



# WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON FORESTRY

Tony Evers, Governor  
councilonforestry.wi.gov

Reply to: P.O. Box 7921  
Madison, WI 53707-7921  
Email: [hittle.tomj@gmail.com](mailto:hittle.tomj@gmail.com)

May 8, 2025

Tom Hittle  
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Sen. Jamie Wall

Sen. Romaine  
Quinn

Jordan Skiff

Dr. William Van  
Lopik

To:

Governor Tony Evers,  
Senator Romaine Quinn, Chair - Senate Committee on Insurance, Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry,  
Representative Jeff Mursau, Chair - Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

## RE: Federal Budget Threats to Wisconsin's Forests

The Wisconsin Council on Forestry continues its focus on recommending and promoting efforts to support healthy, resilient, and productive forests [amid increasing threats](#). We recognize and appreciate the acknowledgement of the Council's work and the essential budgetary considerations needed to support these endeavors in the 2025-'27 Executive Biennial Budget.

While the federal policy and budget mechanisms are very much in flux, **we are deeply concerned about how funding and staff cuts will impact Wisconsin's ability to support our forests** and the vast environmental, social, and economic benefits they provide.

**We are asking your administration and our state legislators to closely monitor this evolving situation, assess the risks, alert stakeholders, and support work to mitigate impacts**, in partnership with the Department of Natural Resources, other impacted state and local federal agencies, our universities and research facilities, and our federal legislators.

Federal funding cuts would impact Wisconsin's 17 million acres of forestland and the Wisconsin Forest Industry including:

- **Private woodland owner services:** Loss of financial assistance from USDA (Department of Agriculture) Natural Resources Conservation Service such as EQIP (Environmental Quality Incentives Program) for private land management assistance to address invasive species, forest health issues, soil and land conservation, disaster recovery and many other silviculture best management practices, will negatively impact private forestland which comprises 60% of Wisconsin's forests. We are also concerned about cuts to community wildfire prevention funding for state, private and tribal landholders.

- **Wood products innovation and USFS research:** Declines in US Forest Service funding threaten the Forest Products Laboratory which creates innovations in using the Nation's wood resources wisely and efficiently, while keeping forests healthy. The US Forest Service's Northern Research Station Forest Inventory and Analysis information is widely used to address local and regional issues related to trends in forest extent, health and productivity; land cover and land use change; and the changing demographics of private forest landowners.
- **University training, research, and extension:**
  - Reports indicate significant reductions likely to USDA research and outreach funding, which would dramatically decrease benefits to forestry. This includes research and outreach on forest products, economic markets, rural development, farm and woodland owners, and forest ecosystems. Training forestry students at UW Stevens Point and Madison is also supported in part through federal funding.
  - Forestry Extension programs, provided by the Universities of Wisconsin, rely on several sources of federal funding to provide assistance to forest landowners and forestry professionals in making management decisions that foster sustainability of Wisconsin's forests and forest-based economies.
- **WI DNR:** A loss of federal funding and position(s) would significantly impact the WI DNR Division of Forestry's ability to fully meet the Division's purpose in serving the public and resource needs. Program areas potentially impacted include:
  - Forest fire prevention and suppression
  - Urban forestry
  - Workforce development and community education through DNR supported UWSP programs
  - Investments in Forest Legacy and Working Forest Conservation Easements
  - Forest health mapping, analysis, prevention and control
  - Invasive species education, prevention and control
  - Forest products services, Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA), Timber Products Output (TPO) survey data and analysis, and industry trainings
  - Reforestation
- **Tribes:** Federal funding supports tribal forest management and other tribal functions. Federal funding declines would also impact students, research and teaching in Wisconsin's two tribal colleges: College of Menominee Nation (CMN) and the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe University (LCOOU).

By fostering a collective commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of Wisconsin's forests, we can ensure that our forests continue to enrich our lives and environment and support jobs for Wisconsinites for generations to come. Federal and state funding for the programs and people devoted to keeping our forests as forests is critical to the sound stewardship of our state's natural resources. Wisconsin forests shape our way of life supporting a \$37.8 billion timber industry, clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and a \$9.8 billion outdoor recreation market. Over half of Wisconsin land is covered by forests (17 million acres) that provide a wealth of benefits. Most forests are on private land (9.7 million acres owned by individuals and families).

Current ecological, economic, and social trends are affecting the stability and resilience of our forests and forest-based economy. These trends are being felt across the state, with potentially significant effects on the quality and condition of forests and the other ecosystems they support. Wisconsin's forest health focus must grow to keep pace with new insect, disease, invasive species and climate risks. Research and development in forestry sciences can provide innovative solutions to combat these emerging threats and optimize the utilization of forest resources that support nearly 60,000

full-time jobs. We urge all not to overlook and disregard the importance of our forests and the need to advocate for the necessary funding.

Additional issues related to transportation and global trade are important for Wisconsin forestry and are also in need of being addressed. The Council on Forestry will continue to work with the community of forestry stakeholders to tackle and communicate issues as they arise.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Hittle". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tom" and last name "Hittle" clearly distinguishable.

Tom Hittle  
Wisconsin Council on Forestry Chair

Cc:

WI Federal Senate and Representative legislators

Members - WI Senate Committee on Insurance, Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry

Members - WI Assembly Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation

WI DNR Secretary Hyun

\*Please note that due to the nature of their public positions, Council members Representatives Jeffrey Mursau and Lori Palmeri, Senators Romaine Quinn and Jamie Wall, State Forester Heather Berklund, and Chequamegon interim representative Sitka Pence abstain as signatories.