

Forest Health Needs in Wisconsin



Our positions

Wisconsin forests support a \$37.8 billion timber industry, clean water and air, wildlife habitat, and a \$9.8 billion outdoor recreation market. Wisconsin's forest health focus must grow to keep pace with new insect, disease, and plant invasions and threats from storms, unplanned fires, and extreme weather. To address these threats and sustain the diversity and benefits of Wisconsin forests, the Council supports these priorities:

- Increase capacity at the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources 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 private woodland owners through expansion of the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program
- Develop a forest industry strategic plan to facilitate this industry's significant contributions to maintaining vigorous and healthy forests

Forest health problems need attention

Wisconsin residents, businesses, and municipalities have all been impacted by forest health problems. Tree death and defoliation caused by insects and disease, along with the effects of invasive plants, all impact forest regeneration. Through prevention, short-term response, tree resistance breeding, planting, land conservation, and planning, we can help to sustain Wisconsin's forest benefits. Forest health costs are already occurring:

\$400 million

Timber value (gross stumpage) of standing ash trees will be lost from emerald ash borer

1 billion trees

will be lost to emerald ash borer alone

374,000 acres

defoliated by spongy moth in 2023

32 million trees

planted 2021-2023, a significant investment that needs to be protected



Paper and forest products industry

“The success of Wisconsin’s paper and forest products industry depends on healthy forests and sustainable timber supplies, but invasive species and diseases **threaten wood quality, disrupt operations, and endanger jobs**. With disease and invasive species causing hundreds of millions in losses in Wisconsin, the economic impact extends throughout the supply chain. To safeguard the industry and rural communities, investments in prevention, early response, and sustainable management are essential, ensuring forest health, economic resilience, and continued access to natural resources for future growth.”

- Shawn Brantmeier, Wisconsin Paper Council

Urban forests

“The incessant proliferation of the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle over the past two decades has had **devastating effects for urban and community forestry**. Proving to be almost 100% fatal to untreated ash trees, EAB was a stark reminder of the risks of low tree species diversity. Cities that failed to plan and budget for an EAB infestation found themselves with hundreds of dead ash trees, presenting a **public safety concern**. We are reminded not to take the trees around us--or their health--for granted.” - Jordan Skiff, Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council

County forests

“**Maintaining healthy forest ecosystems is a foundation** of the county forests’ ability to provide public benefits including wood products, recreation and wildlife, and clean air and water across 2.4+ million acres in 30 counties. Exotic insects and diseases, and non-native invasive species have **enormous negative effects and add annual expenses** for monitoring and control. County forest ecosystems have been negatively altered by the loss of tree species (American Elm and Butternut), threats to Oaks (Spongy Moth) and Ash (Emerald Ash Borer), and non-native plants like Garlic Mustard. If other pests currently present elsewhere come to Wisconsin, that could have tremendous negative impacts (such as Asian Long-Horned Beetle and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid).”

- Mark Heyde, Wisconsin County Forests Association

Rural landowner

“Invasive species are **taking over** the wooded area of my property. In some areas it is so bad that native plants cannot regenerate. I have aggressively treated invasive plants since 2015. I have gained a lot of ground but **still have a long way to go**. This was my grandparents original homestead.”

- Pat Kluz, woods owner

426,000 family woodland owners have 9.7 million acres in Wisconsin

Timber producers

“**Forest health and a healthy forest industry go together**. One cannot exist long term without the other. Implementation of Wisconsin’s sustainable forest management plan continues to provide healthy forests essential for our economic, social, and ecological wellbeing, and will continue doing so for **generations to come**.”

Henry Schienebeck, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association

