



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON FORESTRY

Tony Evers, Governor

councilonforestry.wi.gov

Reply to: P.O. Box 7921
Madison, WI 53707-7921
Office: (715) 367-3966
Email: hittle.tomj@gmail.com

October 9, 2025

Tom Hittle
Chair

Matt Dallman
Vice-Chair

Heather
Berklund

Brad Dorff

James Hoppe

Buddy Huffaker

James Kerkman

Rebekah
Luedtke

Rep. Lori
Palmeri

Rep. Jeffrey
Mursau

Erik Rantala

Dr. Adena
Rissman

Henry
Schienebeck

Sen. Jamie Wall

Sen. Romaine
Quinn

Jordan Skiff

Janelle Crocker

Dr. William Van
Lopik

Senator Romaine Quinn

Chair, Senate Committee on Insurance, Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry

State Capital

P.O. Box 7882, Madison, WI 53707-7882

RE: Forestry Revitalization Act – Senate Bill 456 Committee Hearing

Senator Quinn and Members of the Committee on Insurance, Housing, Rural Issues and Forestry:

As the Wisconsin Council on Forestry is comprised of broad forestry stakeholder representation, we are providing our input on the Forestry Revitalization Act (SB456). The prospect of a new, reasonably large, market for wood fiber obtained sustainably from Wisconsin forests is an exciting opportunity. The Council has long been an advocate of efforts to support, develop and diversify our forest industry to provide commercial markets to support healthy forests, healthy rural communities, and the state's overall economy. Wisconsin's recent investment in the forest industry-wide strategic plan and roadmap effort, recommended and promoted by the Council, exemplifies the recognition that we must proactively invest in our forest industry. While Wisconsin remains the number one paper producing state in the nation, our forest industries are facing many challenges, as are our forests. Risks to both go hand in hand and impact each other.

A tenet of the Council is that a healthy resilient forest industry is critical to maintaining healthy functioning forests for the benefits they provide to Wisconsinites and our natural ecosystems. It is essential that Wisconsin's established environmental standards and sustainable forest management remain uncompromised throughout our work to support the industry and wood markets.

The Council is also aware that Wisconsin is in a competitive position for new forest industries. Wisconsin is not alone in struggling with challenges being faced by their state's forest industries. Nationally, the forest products industry has been changing steadily over the past 3 decades. More recently, the forest products sector across the U.S. has been experiencing a dramatic increase in [facility closures](#). Hundreds of sawmills and wood products facilities have closed over the last decade. In a recent 18-month span at least 150 forest products businesses have closed, eliminating well over 10,000 family supporting jobs in the U.S.


Continued

While we look forward to exciting opportunities for Wisconsin to attract new industries and markets, we also recognize the importance of supporting our existing industry partners, who have worked with landowners, forest managers and timber producers for decades. As a result, we now have a forest in Wisconsin that grows more than two times the amount of fiber that we harvest on an annual basis and supports an industry that contributes \$42 billion in total economic value to the state. Therefore, it is imperative we do not inadvertently create market advantages for new wood using businesses that risk compromising the existing industry.

A new industry that would create demand for raw forest products materials on the scale of what is being proposed can be expected to raise questions, especially considering the range and diversity of stakeholders. The Council greatly appreciates efforts of involved legislators and industry representatives to communicate and be transparent with what could be shared about their plans and vision. It is understood that given the accelerated timeframe for the legislation and the fact that this is a new business venture and industry for Wisconsin that the level of due diligence needed to answer all stakeholder questions may not be reasonable to expect.

In summary, the Council on Forestry is supportive of efforts to work with new prospective forest industries that provide additional wood markets and new jobs, and that support strong rural communities, all in a manner that considers the existing industry, is socially sustainable, and meets Wisconsin's long-standing tradition of established environmental standards.

Tom Hittle

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tom Hittle".

Wisconsin Council on Forestry Chair

*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 Nicolet National Forest Supervisor Janelle Crocker abstain as signatories.