

# WFPS Outreach & Training Accomplishment Report

## Topic: Landowner Outreach

### **WFPS Recommendations:**

1. Outreach is a challenge to fund. The elimination of WEEB grants and increasing budget constraints with public entities (e.g., WDNR, UWEX) have and will continue to limit landowner outreach capacity and programming innovation. What constitutes adequate funding is beyond the team's scope, but new resources will be needed to ensure impact, as will funding cycles that permit experimentation and risk-taking (i.e., > 1 year). Expanded partnerships with programs such as the SFI SI Committee's grant program, which includes a public outreach section, has potential.
2. Coordination has long been sought, but never achieved because it is no one's job. Shared information might yield insights into geographic coverage, timing, and intended audiences toward gaps in program offerings, creation of a speakers' bureau, etc. Council should work to identify an entity or entities to investigate the feasibility of greater coordination.
3. New funding should include expectations for program evaluation and current efforts should be encouraged to do this as well. Evaluation will allow us to identify what is working and how program offerings might be improved. For example, if program evaluation was coordinated across a large numbers of program sponsors, we could construct a robust understanding of the collective benefit of outreach programs and their interconnectedness.

### **WFPS Assignments:**

14.1 Following the completion of the legislative fiscal audit on the Forestry Account, The Wisconsin Council on Forestry will consider priority funding for public and landowner outreach needs.

Assigned Party: Wisconsin Council on Forestry

Estimated Delivery Date: December 2018

15.1 The WDNR Division of Forestry and UW-Extension will create a Team to review current outreach efforts in WI and how / if coordination might enhance outreach effectiveness. This Team would also analyze the priority of outreach needs.

Assigned Party: WDNR Division of Forestry/UW-Extension

Estimated Delivery Date: June 2018

*Implementation Note: WDNR Private Forestry Outreach Specialist will lead WDNR Forestry efforts on this assignment. Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee could have involvement as well.*

16.1 Develop a standardized system for monitoring and evaluating WDNR training and outreach efforts  
Assigned Party: WDNR Division of Admin. Bureau of Environmental Analysis and Sustainability/UW-Extension

Estimated Delivery Date: June 2018

*Implementation Note: WDNR Point of Contact for this is Carmen Hardin (Bureau of Applied Forestry) and Mike Warnke (Deputy Division Admin)*

### **Ties to July 2014 WFPS Economically Burdensome Topics:**

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**Accomplishments during the Reporting Cycle:*****Accomplishments related to Assignment 15.1; particularly related to the evaluation of outreach efforts***

In August of 2017, the Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee (WPFAC) engaged in a facilitated discussion about private woodland owner engagement in Wisconsin. As a result of that discussion, WPFAC was able to see that, despite the different backgrounds and interests of the committee members, they had very similar ideas about the positive outcomes that result from private woodland owner engagement (e.g. landowners are educated and engaged, expanded support for forestry in society, improved forest health, sustainable forest management, sustainable forest economy, etc.). They saw value in continuing the discussions around these shared outcomes which led to the convening of an adhoc committee. This adhoc committee went on to develop a [report](#) of recommendations entitled, “The Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee Recommendations to Wisconsin’s Chief State Forester for Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowner Engagement for 2018-2022.” The report was shared with WPFAC who supported by overwhelming majority to approve and submit the report to Fred Souba, who granted his approval on March 12, 2018.

Three noteworthy recommendations were put forward in WPFAC’s report:

1. Support the 5-year goal of connecting 20,000 new non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners with a resource professional to move 1,000,000 acres toward sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.
2. Encourage Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Division of Forestry and University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEXT) to explore opportunities to align their public resources to achieve this goal.
3. Encourage all stakeholders in the Wisconsin forestry community to adopt and embrace a landowner engagement model and strive to invest their unique resources and abilities towards this ambitious goal.

In addition to these three recommendations, the report describes the need for an intentional and cooperative approach to woodland owner engagement including a model for the engagement process, and a prioritized list of outcomes and strategies. The model shows how DNR and various partnering agencies and organizations within the forestry community work with landowners at different points along a continuum. By acknowledging this and using a cooperative approach, the goal is to make collaboration within the forestry community more effective (increase cooperation, reduce duplication of efforts, build on successful efforts, etc.). The report also emphasizes evaluation and tracking, which are essential to better understand the effectiveness of our approaches and actions, and permit us to be flexible and adjust as we move forward to achieve our desired goals and create the foundation for electronic landowner files.

The WDNR Division of Forestry has already taken action to promote success in reaching non-MFL woodland owners by increasing the amount of time for our integrated foresters and technicians to work with landowners, and through the recent hiring of a Private Forestry Outreach Specialist. WDNR has also developed a Private Forestry Education and Outreach Strategy, which was approved by the WDNR

Strategic Leadership Team in June 2018. WPFAC's report of recommendations was the basis for the strategy, which supports WDNR integrated foresters completing 3,000 annual walk-throughs with private landowners in service to the goal of reaching 20,000 new woodland owners over the next five years.

The Division of Forestry is also continuing its commitment to working more strategically with UW-Extension. As the two primary state agencies who work in private forestry, both are ready to roll up their sleeves and work together on the recommendations in the WPFAC report. Meetings have taken place with the two agencies as they framed out a more impactful partnership for FY19 and beyond, using the recommendations from the WPFAC report as the basis for discussion. Quarterly update meetings have been scheduled with education and outreach (E/O) representatives from both agencies beginning fall 2018. The goals of the initial meeting are to debrief recent Learn About Your Land (LAYL) sessions including the implementation of new E/O materials (e.g. forester bio sheets, landowner one-pager and sign-up sheet), improved tracking and scheduled forester walk-throughs.

Additionally, UW-Stevens Point is in the early stages of the development of a statewide Education and Outreach Coalition working in partnership with WDNR and other partners from the forestry community. The drafted mission is to provide a forum to coordinate forestry outreach and professional development efforts on a statewide level to increase awareness and sustainable stewardship of Wisconsin's forest resources. This will be accomplished through strategic coordination and implementation of forestry training and outreach opportunities focused on landowners, and private and public foresters.

The goals of the Coalition include:

- Coordinate efforts to efficiently and effectively utilize our resources (time, funding, personnel, supplies, mailing lists, etc.)
- Provide multiple avenues for accessing and connecting with forestry information and natural resource professionals
- Create guidelines and recommendations to standardize forest stewardship practices and messaging

Additionally, two significant collaborative E/O tests with partners took place beginning spring 2018:

- **WoodsCamp:** Partnership between WDNR private forestry and WoodsCamp/American Forest Foundation, Aldo Leopold Foundation, UW-Ext, My Wisconsin Woods and My Lake Superior Northwoods for a six-month test in the driftless and Lake Superior basin areas. The goal is to increase the number of previously unengaged landowner connections to a local forester in priority landscapes by offering a simple way to start down the path of land stewardship through use of targeted social media, customized emails and phone calls direct to the landowner to schedule a walk-through. Discussion is currently in progress to determine feasibility of a statewide rollout.
- **Wisconsin Woodlands Owners Association (WWOA):** Development of landowner testimonial videos and radio spots of 3 WWOA members with a land legacy message including how their foresters help them achieve their land management goals. A 2 week statewide media plan that included :30 radio spots, and static ads and :15 video segments on Facebook and Internet display ads. This effort drove visitors to WWOA's website to find a forester, join WWOA or learn

more about land legacy. Three 3-minute videos were also created to use for distribution to landowners, on websites and YouTube channels by DNR, WWOA, USFS, etc.

**Next Steps:**

- Prioritize which partners are key to engage first; launch a partner engagement process as soon as possible (DNR) to ensure achievement on the next million acre goal.
- For the E/O Coalition, next steps include:
  - Identification of lead agency
  - Establishment of goals and objectives, activities, member parameters, decisionmaking process, meeting structure and logistics, and participation between meetings
  - Implementation of a closed group communication tool
  - Development and implementation of a shared calendar of events and initiatives
- DNR and UWEX will continue to strategize outreach/education/evaluation efforts for the remainder of FY19.

### Accomplishments related to Assignment 16.1

WDNR Division of Forestry recognizes the need for a statewide database that WDNR Integrated Foresters could utilize for tracking private woodland owners and their activities. Such a system would allow WDNR to 1) understand if/how landowners respond to our various outreach campaigns, 2) track landowners' movement along a continuum of engagement, and 3) track our progress on achieving [The Next Million Acres](#). Having that information would allow us to evaluate our outreach methods to understand their effectiveness, and then adapt our methods as needed.

A statewide landowner database will also allow us to use that powerful information to design our outreach campaigns and develop our marketing materials to target landowners based on the information we know about them.

This type of database would allow us to begin transitioning away from our hard copy landowner files into an electronic system. An electronic system has many benefits including accessibility by all integrated foresters/technicians, more consistency in information collected and stored, eases transitions as foresters move or change jobs, etc.

WDNR has identified both long-term and short-term objectives.

Long-term Objective: Modify the current WisFIRS database to accommodate non-MFL woodland owner information and tracking, and be able to evaluate outreach efforts on the individual, project, regional and statewide level.

Short-term Objective: Until WisFIRS is ready, the WDNR needs an interim solution to evaluating their outreach efforts and to begin tracking WDNR forester/landowner interactions statewide.

WDNR is in active discussions with a potential partner to work cooperatively with to achieve the short-term objective, building off of partner database efforts that have been very successful at a regional scale.

#### **Next Steps:**

- WDNR hopes to begin work on the short-term objective and begin making progress before the end of calendar year 2018 on an interim database solution.
- DNR private forestry plans to coordinate with other DNR divisions and external partners in the forestry community to determine the feasibility of a statewide non-MFL database. This would include landowner files and outreach tracking and monitoring, portions of which would be accessible as appropriate to integrated and Cooperating Foresters, landowners, and key partners involved in engaging and moving NIPF woodland owners toward our goal of The Next Million Acres moved toward stewardship action.