



# WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON FORESTRY

Tony Evers, Governor

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Tom Hittle  
Chair

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Sen. Jamie Wall\*

Sen. Romaine  
Quinn\*

Jordan Skiff

Janelle Crocker\*

Dr. William Van  
Lopik

Representative Jerry L. O'Connor  
Chair, Committee on Ways and Means  
Room 109W, State Capital  
P.O. Box 8953, Madison, WI 53708

## RE: Forestry Revitalization Act – Assembly 619 Bill Committee Hearing

Chair O'Connor and Members of the Committee on Ways and Means:

As the Wisconsin Council on Forestry is comprised of broad forestry stakeholder representation, we are providing our input on the Forestry Revitalization Act. 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 Wisconsin 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.

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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 Wisconsin's forestry community and forest industry stakeholders. The Council recognizes the complexity of the Forestry Revitalization Act and the wide-ranging concerns as well as the support voiced by many.

In conclusion, the Council on Forestry endorses initiatives to collaborate with emerging forest industries that open new wood markets and create jobs, while reinforcing the vitality of Wisconsin communities. These efforts must respect existing industry, be socially sustainable, and uphold Wisconsin's established environmental standards. To the extent that the Forestry Revitalization Act achieves these goals—recognizing the need that manufacturers adhere to both market sustainability and certification requirements, as well as Wisconsin's environmental regulations, this legislation deserves support.

Tom Hittle

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas J. Hittle". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

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.

\*\*Council member James Hoppe, representing the interests of the paper and pulp industry on the council, is on record here NOT in support of the council's position expressed herein.