**COUNCIL ON FORESTRY MEETING**

**Date:** 05/26/20

**Location:** Skype Meeting

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| **Council Members:** | **Guests:** |
| [x]  Tom Hittle, *Chair* | [x]  Kenneth Price | Faye Bokelman, *DNR* | Ron Eckstein, *Wildlife Society* |
| [x]  Matt Dallman, *Vice Chair* | [x]  Paul Strong | Rebecca Diebel, *DNR* | Nancy Bozek, *WI Woodland Owners Assoc.* |
| [x]  Mike Warnke, *sub Chief State Forester* | [x]  Jordan Skiff | Heather Berklund, *DNR* | Randy Cooper, *WWOA President* |
| [x]  Senator Janet Bewley | [x]  Jason Sjostrom | Carmen Hardin, *DNR* | Mitch Ohly, *WI Paper Council* |
| [ ]  ~~Senator Tom Tiffany~~ | [x]  William Van Lopik | Collin Buntrock, *DNR* | Cory Bruce, *Representative Mursau’s Office* |
| [x]  Representative Beth Meyers | [ ]  Gary Halpin |  | Debra Zimmerman, *Steigerwaldt* |
| [x]  Representative Jeff Mursau | [x]  Michael Bolton |  | Josh Burling, *Steigerwaldt* |
| [x]  Henry Scheinebeck | [x]  Adena Rissman |  | Mike Delegan, *Steigerwaldt* |
| [x]  James Hoppe | [x]  Buddy Huffaker |  |  |
| [x]  James Kerkman | [x]  Rebekah Luedtke | **Next Meeting:** July 29, 2020 – *location TBD* |
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| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Remarks from Governor Tony Evers & DNR Secretary Preston Cole |  |  |
| Governor Tony Evers and DNR Secretary Preston Cole updated the Council on the current status of the state of Wisconsin and the Department of Natural Resources during the COVID-19 pandemic. |
| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Council Operating Procedures**Presenter:** Chair Hittle | The Council on Forestry approved the updated operating procedures document. |  |
| The Council reviewed the operating procedures document that was updated at their 1/23/20 meeting and took a vote to accept the revised draft. Motion to accept the revised Council operating procedures was made by Jim Kerkman, seconded by Jim Hoppe, and passed on a majority vote with Henry Scheinebeck standing in opposition. *Materials*: |
| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Council Strategic Goals & Committees**Presenter:** Chair Hittle | The Council on Forestry approved their top five strategic goals for 2020. |  |
| The Council reviewed their top five strategic goals for 2020:1. Enhance the Council on Forestry’s profile and ability to be viewed as the source of expertise on broad forestry topics in Wisconsin.
2. Explore options for stable state funding for forestry and the programs the DNR’s budget support
3. Raise awareness, and advocate for, the critical role our state’s transportation infrastructure plays in supporting our timber industry
4. Promote the benefits of sound forest management and policies that provide ecological, economic, social and cultural benefits for present and future generations (*minor edits made to language at the meeting*)
5. Research, promote and support efforts to increase utilization of the State’s forest products

A motion to approve the strategic goals was made by Jordan Skiff, seconded by Bill Van Lopik, and the goals were passed with a unanimous vote of approval by Council members.The Council will be forming committees to develop initiatives and tactics to advance efforts related to these priority goals. Tom and Matt will contact Council members to fill out committee membership.*Materials*:  |
| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Effects of COVID 19 on Forestry in WI |  |  |
| Representatives from Riverside Sawmill, Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA), Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Packaging Corporation of America (PCA), and Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) updated the Council on the effects COVID-19 is having on the forestry industry in Wisconsin.Gary Halpin – *Riverside Sawmill** There is no market for flooring or pallet lumber and prices are falling
* The lumber industry needs to cultivate trading relationships with other countries to survive future market slumps

Rebekah Luedtke – *WCFA** Counties are trying to keep operations as fully functional as possible - there are a variety of operational approaches and levels of quarantining throughout the 30 county forests
* Timber sale auctions proceeded as normal for most counties - 1 or 2 counties delayed auctions, but none were cancelled for the spring
* The biggest financial impact for counties was due to closing campgrounds and public spaces which caused a reduction in income from user fees
	+ Currently, most, if not all campgrounds and public spaces are open with restrictions or modifications. All non-motorized and motorized recreation trails are open, as well as boat landings.

Collin Buntrock – *DNR** Forest products markets are mixed – situation and supply chains continue to evolve. Prior to COVID, wood markets were looking positive due to overseas trade. Since COVID, the housing market has slowed causing uncertainty.
* Sawmills are having difficulties as mulch orders for landscaping were put on hold due to COVID restrictions
* Pulp & paper industry is mixed based on sector - graphic paper decline due to less newspaper ads, school items, etc., but increase in toilet paper and paper towels
* Increase in need for sawdust due to livestock composting at slaughterhouses

Jim Hoppe – *PCA** Operations deemed essential – developed best practices to keep staff safe: disinfect common touch areas, rotate staff time in office, meeting virtually, etc.
* Market demand is varied based on the product: increased demand for toilet paper, packaging, and shipping; decreased demand for communication paper due to quarantine (shipment down 30%)
* Continuing education and certifications being done online

Henry Schienebeck – *GLTPA** Logging is slow as many mills are not accepting any wood right now
* It is hard to identify what issues are due to COVID and which are due to a decreasing market in general
* Logger training is being rescheduled; some education courses are being done online
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| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| State Forester Update:* Mike Warnke, *Deputy Division Administrator*

CNNF Update:* Paul Strong, *Forest Supervisor*
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| **State Forester Update: Mike Warnke, *Deputy Division Administrator**** Effects of COVID-19 at the DNR:
	+ Most DNR staff are working remotely, except for those with fire suppression or field work duties which are deemed essential
	+ The nursery has felt the biggest impact from COVID/social distancing guidelines: 3.5 million seedlings not lifted, 2,000 orders affected, and 3,000 acres not reforested
	+ A hiring freeze has been enacted – with exceptions for essential positions
* The Lake States Forest Bat Habitat Conservation Plan is still working its way through approvals – currently incorporating comments on Chapters 4 & 5 and Appendix E. Once the editing is complete, the plan will undergo National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process approvals.
* Fire suppression:
	+ To date, the DNR has responded to 387 fires (*the largest, near Necedah, burned 234 acres*) which is 30% below the five-year average.
		- The decline in the amount of fires this year is likely tied to the statewide suspension of burning permits.
	+ A temporary cessation of prescribed burning due to COVID allowed partner agencies to provide greater support to suppression efforts.
	+ The DNR contracted with four Single Engine Air Tankers (SEATs) this year to supplement ground resources at the largest tracts of timber that blew over in last summer’s storms. There have not been any ignitions in that hazardous area to date, but the SEATS were launched for fires in other areas.
* National Association of State Foresters (NASF) Update:
	+ Focus on advocating for funding for fire suppression, testing, and PPE for fire crews. Discussions on funding levels and match amounts required by federal programs that support state forestry.
	+ The Forest Action Plan (FAP) deadline has been extended to the end of the year, but Wisconsin is still planning to submit its plan in late June/early July to meet the original deadline.

**CNNF Update: Paul Strong, *Forest Supervisor**** Office buildings remain closed to public use, many employees are in telework status, and most field operations continue
* Prescribed fire activities are on hold until further notice to limit exposure of firefighters needed for fire suppression activities
* Hiring continues for positions left vacant by turnover or retirements
* Selling large amount of damaged timber from the blowdown area while maintaining close to “regular year” sale levels from other four Ranger Districts. Expect to exceed the 155 MMBF originally planned for ‘Timber Volume Sold in FY20’ due largely to sales from the blowdown area and an additional amount of volume prepared and sold by the WDNR under the Good Neighbor Authority agreement.
	+ As of late last week, the CNNF had sold 147MMBF.
* In early May, non-commercial fuels reduction activities commenced in sections of the blowdown area that are against private land boundaries – the vast majority of these are done through commercial timber sales
* Oak wilt is rapidly expanding into northern Wisconsin and the CNNF is in the process of developing treatment actions.
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| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Climate Change Efforts in WI**Presenter:** Carmen Hardin, *DNR Bureau Director*  |  |  |
| Carmen Hardin briefed the Council on the Governor’s executive orders and national commitments that are driving climate change efforts in Wisconsin; as well as the work being done to address these by the DNR, partners, and other state agencies.*Materials*:  |