

## Wisconsin Council on Forestry Celebrates 20 Years

The Wisconsin Council on Forestry (Council) is a diverse group of leaders in the forestry community who direct Wisconsin's efforts to achieve sustainable forestry. The Council was established by legislation in 2002 when Governor Scott McCallum signed 2001 Wisconsin Act 109, budget repair bill. The Act took effect on July 30, 2002, the day after the publication date for Act 109. After the legislation took effect, Gov. McCallum's successor, Gov. Jim Doyle, made appointments to the Council as required by State Statute 26.02, the law that addresses the membership and duties of the Council. Members on the Council include the state forester and 19 other leaders in the forestry community representing the variety of forestry in Wisconsin. They include non-profit conservation organizations, private landowners, professional foresters, loggers, sawmills, pulp and paper industry, county forests, conservation education and state representatives to name a few.

While the Council as a statutory entity goes back only 20 years, earlier forms of the Council have been in existence since 1982, when Governor Lee Sherman Dreyfus created the Governor's Council on Forest Productivity by Executive Order number 65. In 1987 Governor Tommy Thompson re-created the Council and in the same year changed the name to the Governor's Council on Forestry. Governor Thompson used executive orders in 1991, 1995 and 1999 to re-create the Council.

The forestry community was concerned that executive orders were easily changed and wanted the Council to be a more permanent organization. This corresponded with the re-organization of the DNR in the 1990's and the movement to make the forestry bureau into a division and possibly a department. The forestry community pushed for the Council to be a statutory entity in the late 1990's, finally resulting in 2001 Wisconsin Act 109 creating the Wisconsin Council on Forestry.

The Council's first meeting was on September 26, 2003, more than one year after legislation established the Council. The first meeting included DNR Secretary Scott Hassett and Governor Jim Doyle, both discussing the economic, ecological and social importance of forests and forest management to Wisconsin. That meeting also included decisions on Council operations and ground rules, such as how to make decisions, meeting frequency and location, and the process for identifying Council priorities.

The first Chair of the Council was Fred Souba, with Mary Jean Huston as the Vice-Chair. Fred, Vice President of Wood Supply and Sustainability for NewPage Corporation, served as Chair until 2011 when Henry Schienebeck, the Executive Director of the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association was appointed Chair. In 2019, Tom Hittle, Senior Vice President of Project Coordination/Client Service with Steigerwaldt Land Services was appointed the current Chair.

Mary Jean Huston, State Director of The Nature Conservancy, served as Vice-Chair until 2010, when she was succeeded by Jane Severt, Executive Director of the Wisconsin County Forests Association. In 2019, Matt Dallman, Deputy State Director of The Nature Conservancy, became the present Vice-Chair.

Highlights of the first 20 years of Council work include: invasive species best management practices; woody biomass harvest guidelines; impacts of white-tailed deer on forests; a forestry economic summit; and a forest practices study to address information gaps regarding the costs and benefits of forest policies, regulations and guidelines in Wisconsin.

More information about the Council that includes major initiatives, list of members and their biographies, meeting materials and minutes going back to the first meeting in 2003, and biennial reports on the status of Wisconsin's forest resources and forest industries can be found at [www.councilonforestry.wi.gov](http://www.councilonforestry.wi.gov)



Members of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry at the September 2022 meeting in Milwaukee



The Council and guests touring the Forest Exploration Center at Wauwatosa in 2022.

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