**COUNCIL ON FORESTRY MEETING**

**Date:** 7/29/20

**Location:** Zoom meeting

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| **Council Members:** | **Guests:** |  |  |
| [x]  Tom Hittle, *Chair* | [x]  Kenneth Price | Faye Bokelman, *DNR* | Ron Eckstein | Andrew Hart |
| [x]  Matt Dallman, *Vice Chair* | [x]  Paul Strong | Rebecca Diebel, *DNR* | Gretchen Marshall | Skya Murphy |
| [x]  Mike Warnke, *sub* *Chief State Forester* | [x]  Jordan Skiff | Collin Buntrock, *DNR* | Nancy Bozek, | Dylan Stenz |
| [x]  Senator Janet Bewley | [x]  Jason Sjostrom | Heather Berklund, DNR | Kelliann Blazek | Randy Cooper |
| [ ]  Senator | [x]  William Van Lopik |  | Beckie Gaskill | R.J. Wickham |
| [ ]  Representative Beth Meyers | [x]  Gary Halpin | Erin Green | Richard Wedepohl | Robert Peterson |
| [x]  Representative Jeff Mursau | [x]  Michael Bolton | Doug Brown | Cory Bruce | Mitch Ohly |
| [x]  Henry Schienebeck | [x]  Adena Rissman | Tony Johnson | Ashley Beatty | Tim Eisele |
| [x]  James Hoppe | [x]  Buddy Huffaker | Lauren Dupey | Ann Calhoun | Josh Burling |
| [x]  James Kerkman | [x]  Rebekah Luedtke |  | **Next Meeting:** September 16-17, 2020 |
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| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Committee Updates:* Transportation – *Schienebeck*
* Profile – *Kerkman/Van Lopik*
* Funding – *Hoppe*
* Utilization – *Skiff*
* Sound Forestry & Policy - *Rissman*
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| **Transportation**: * Members: Schienebeck, Skiff, Sjostrom, Don Nelson (Domtar)

The Transportation Committee met on 7/9 and discussed railroad issues, local road issues, and trails being used year-round. The committee is contemplating having speakers from the DOT and Forest Service present to them on transportation issues they are encountering and may decide to recruit additional committee members from these agencies. **Profile**: * Members: Kerkman, Van Lopik, Huffaker, Skiff, Andy Hart (NRCS), Tricia Gorby (UW-Extension)

The Profile Committee met on 7/17 and decided on their goals, audiences, and possible external partners. The team’s next steps will be to hone their initiative ideas and action items and bring these to the Council later for review.**Funding**: * Members: Hoppe, Luedtke, Representative Mursau, Gretchen Marshall (LEAF), Mitch Ohly (WI Paper Council), Nancy Bozek (WWOA), Fred Clark (WI Green Fire), Jeff Stagg (DNR)

At their 6/30 meeting, the Funding Committee was learned more about state forestry funding and they brainstormed initiative ideas and possible action items considering the Governor’s request that state agencies cut their budgets for 2020-21. The committee met again on 7/21 where they learned more about federal forestry funding and discussed possible action items. **Utilization**:* Members: Skiff, Halpin, Sjostrom, Price, Richard Wedepohl (private woodland owner), Scott Bowe (UW), Collin Buntrock (DNR)

The Utilization Committee met last week to discuss initiative ideas and decided to focus on 12 of them. The team will hone their initiative ideas at future meetings and when they are finalized, the list will be shared with the Council and posted to the website. **Sound Forestry & Policy**:* Members: Rissman, Huffaker, Gordy Mouw (Sustainable Forestry Initiative), Ron Eckstein (Wildlife Society), Randy Cooper (WWOA), Todd Pond (GLTPA), Mike Dockry (University of Minnesota), Katie Fernholz (Dovetail Partners), Andy Stoltman (DNR)

The Governor’s Climate Change Task Force had not included the role of forestry in combatting climate change. The Sound Forestry & Policy Committee drafted a letter to the Task Force giving them some background information on how forestry can help address climate adaptation and mitigation and giving 13 suggestions on how to use Wisconsin’s forests and forest industries to address climate change.During the meeting, the Council reviewed the letter and suggested edits. After the meeting, the edited letter was sent to Council members for personal approval or abstention and the final draft was sent to Governor’s Climate Change Task Force on 7/31. |
| **Agenda Item** | **Decisions** | **Assignments/Follow Up** |
| Panel on current wood markets |  |  |
| The Council heard from a variety of individuals in the forestry sector about the current state of the wood markets. Panel members included:* Collin Buntrock: DNR - Forest Products Team Leader
* Michael Bolton: United Steel Workers (*Council member*)
* Bob Peterson: Domtar
* Henry Schienebeck: Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (*Council member*)
* Ken Price: Valley View Forestry (*Council member*)

The closing of the VERSO mill and the COVID-19 pandemic have far reaching impacts:* The VERSO mill closure affects not just the mill workers, but the surrounding towns, the state of Wisconsin, and surrounding states as well.
	+ The towns surrounding the mill will suffer from loss of income from local residents, businesses, taxes, etc.
	+ The VERSO closure means that wood needs to be shipped farther to get to working mills (an extra expense), increases their risk, and can cause delays in production
	+ There is limited ability for Lake States markets to absorb this volume of pulpwood and residue
* The COVID-19 pandemic has affected the industry by slowing the housing market, slowing overseas exports, and halting the need for graphic paper due to less newspaper ads, business/school printing, etc.
* The drop in stumpage prices could affect the MFL program and sustainable forestry in the state because owners may not see the value in consulting a forester or setting up a timber sale when loggers are less interested and the owner will get less for the wood.
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| Updates from:* Legislators
* DNR, State Forester
* CNNF, Superintendent
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| **Legislator Updates**: * Representative Jeff Mursau is engaged in budget discussions and working with the Division of Forestry on MFL issues.

 **DNR State Forester Updates**: Mike Warnke• The Wisconsin Forest Action Plan was submitted to USFS on June 30th and is circulating for approval. * The DNR has entered Phase 2. All buildings are closed to the public and most staff are teleworking. Only selected employees are allowed in the facilities and they must follow strict COVID safety guidelines. Virtual meetings are highly encouraged; in-person meetings are limited to 10 participants and must receive approval from the Secretary’s Office.
* Governor Evers has asked state agencies to identify $250 million in cost savings for the FY20-21. The DNR share of this total is approximately $5 million. Most cuts will be taken out of other Divisions. There is a state hiring freeze, but Forestry got approval to hire 11 new Forestry Technicians so they can be trained and ready for duty by next year’s fire season. Interviews for the Chief State Forester position are set to start in August.
* Chapters 6, 7, 8, and Appendix F of the Bat HCP are out for review and public comments are due August 21st.
* NASF is supporting some forestry assistance plans being circulated in federal legislatures, including the Treating Tribes and Counties as Good Neighbors Act and Growing Climate Solutions Act. The Great American Outdoors Act passed the House and Senate and is expected to be signed by the President in July. The Great American Outdoors Act would permanently and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) at $900 million annually. It would also put nearly $2 billion each year for five years toward reducing the current $20 billion in deferred maintenance on public lands, including those managed by the USDA Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management.
* MFL: NR-46 passed in February and became effective on March 1st; ; DNR Tax Law staff are working on education about the new rules/process for identifying high risk.

**CNNF Superintendent Updates**: Paul Strong* Office buildings remain closed, but outdoor assets (except group camping) are open. Most employees are teleworking, but field work continues on blowdown recovery.
* Fuel reduction activities continue in blowdown area, especially against private land boundaries and along roads. The vast majority of these are through commercial timber sales, but an increasing amount is non-commercial fuels treatments.
* Continue to sell large amounts of damaged timber from the blowdown area and as a result, have achieved more than the 155MMBF goal originally planned for Timber Volume Sold in FY20.
* Nearly $500,000 has been added to Cooperative Road Agreements with towns to maintain and improve roads in the blowdown area, many of which are important access and haul routes.
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