

## Wisconsin Council on Forestry: Wednesday, Oct 1, 2025

Rhineland DNR Service Center, Conference Room 1, 107 Sutliff Ave, Rhineland, WI  
and via Zoom – [Register for the Zoom meeting here](#)

Council Members		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Hittle, <i>Chair</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Henry Schienebeck	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Van Lopik
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Matt Dallman, <i>Vice Chair</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Hoppe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Brad Dorff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heather Berklund, <i>Chief State Forester</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Kerkman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adena Rissman
<input type="checkbox"/> Senator Romaine Quinn	<input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-Forestry Consultants	<input type="checkbox"/> Buddy Huffaker
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senator Jamie Wall	<input type="checkbox"/> Janelle Crocker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebekah Luedtke
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Jeff Mursau	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jordan Skiff	<input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-Builders
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Lori Palmeri	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erik Rantala	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Next Meeting:</b> Potential virtual meeting Nov 18 <sup>z</sup> ; Next full council meeting January 27		

## Agenda

Wednesday, Oct 1	Notes: <i>Decisions, Action Items, Assignments</i>
<b>9:00 AM</b> Welcome & Member Introductions (Chair Hittle) 20 min	Council introductions and welcome. Council extends support and condolences for Adam Zirbel, late DNR Forester.
<b>9:20 AM</b> Chair Update 10 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council reviews public noticing guidelines. If a meeting involves six or more council members, they should notify Abby to initiate public notice process as early as possible. It is best practice to public notice meetings for Council Committees even if there are less than six, though not a requirement.</li> <li>• Council reviews proposed 2026 meeting dates. No objections from Council members. Abby will send calendar invitations.</li> <li>• Chair Hittle is in touch with the MN Forest Resource Council (MN FRC); have discussed a one-day joint meeting between Council and MN FRC. Cloquet has been offered as a potential location.                         <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council members are supportive. Need clarity on how this may work with current DNR budget limitations. A virtual option would likely be available as well.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• DNR tax law handbook on MFL large land ownership administration is out for comment through October 7<sup>th</sup>.</li> </ul>

<p><b>9:30 AM</b> Open Forum for Council Members 30 min</p>	<p>Henry Schienebeck</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Log-a-Load for Kids Northwest chapter was recognized for their 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.</li> <li>• Secure Rural Schools (SRS) money has not yet been reauthorized. Several states will send children accompanied by an adult to speak with the Speaker in late October. Looking for a WI and MI school to participate, expenses paid.</li> <li>• Forest Products week: approved several transportation requests to MTE for Forest Products Week.</li> </ul> <p>Jim Kerkman</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Society of American Foresters meeting to take place at the end of October in Stevens Point. The focus will be on red pine regeneration. Chair Hittle will give the welcoming remarks.</li> <li>• Forest History Association will be gathering with Beth Fiend, DNR Forestry Specialist, at the upcoming meeting to unveil revitalized landmark pines kiosk in NHAL.</li> </ul>
<p><b>10:00 AM</b> Legislative Updates 20 min</p>	<p>Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Bill updates and thoughts from Legislators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative Mursau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ This will be huge for the logging industry.</li> <li>○ Moving fast because of competition with other states to get the start up going.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Senator Wall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In the learning phase on SAF as this came up quickly. Big economic development bills such as this often first go through WEDC. It is atypical for this to have started out in the political branches of government. No official opinion yet.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Rep. Palmeri <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Public hearing scheduled for Oct. 9. Still in the learning phase</li> <li>○ AB222 Agriculture committee meeting on tax credit for SAF on September 16.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Chair Hittle would like to reach a consensus on Council stance to craft a letter to the legislature. Item tabled and will be discussed again at 10:55 am</b></p> <p>Other legislative updates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative Mursau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Several companies working with test plots for different applications of Biochar. Data is coming soon.</li> <li>○ Researching Shou Sugi Ban, which is prevalent in western US. Charred Cedar is used as fire retardant siding on homes and is a potential place to expand logging market.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Senator Wall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Knowles Nelson Stewardship Fund is on its last legs. Several proposals and ongoing discussions to reinstate it in some form.</li> <li>○ Senator Quinn’s bill to fix a problem with a County Forester in a constituent county passed in the senate, still waiting to be taken up in the assembly</li> <li>○ Working on a bipartisan bill to give DNR access to full range of fees associated with withdrawal or placement of lands in MFL Program.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rep Palmeri: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fixing a small problem in the Every Kid Outdoors State Park Waiver which required a federal version in order to be used.</li> <li>○ Celebrated the 125th anniversary of state parks in Wisconsin and tried to tie this in with red pine and oak seed gathering, though permitting process proved difficult.</li> <li>○ Also enthusiastic about research on Shou Sugi Ban.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>10:20 AM</b>  State Forester Update  National Forest Update  20 min</p>	<p>State Forester Update:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FY26 state budget allotments for forestry have been finalized, Maggie will discuss forestry related budget outcomes later in the agenda; specific to division allocations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The 2023-25 biennial budget permanently reduced the Division of Forestry's supplies and services budget line (aka supply line) by \$675,200 per year.</li> <li>○ DNR did receive several budget initiatives that will provide one-time support for: forest protection (fire), Aeronautics (aircraft modernization, flight safety equipment and training), SkyIMD cameras to mount to some aircraft (FY26 only), Single Engine Aircraft Tanker (SEAT) contract costs, radio equipment maintenance / updates, invasive species (Spongy Moth) treatments, software licenses</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Division is at a 6% vacancy rate. Continuing to hire aggressively <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Deputy Division Administrator is starting the recruitment process.</li> <li>○ Forestry Technician / Mechanic in the Equipment Research and Development shop in Tomahawk is going through the recruitment process.</li> <li>○ Forest Management &amp; Ecology Research Scientist out of Rhinelander just completed the interview process.</li> <li>○ North Central Tax Law Team Leader position just completed interviews.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Fire Season <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 15 DoF Staff attended the GLFFC Annual Meeting in Egg Harbor, WI in September, representing 8 different committees including: Executive, Operations, Prevention, Aeronautics, Prescribed Fire, Law Enforcement, Training and Communications. WI DNR DoF hosted the GLFFC AGM.</li> <li>○ 115 staff contributed to Out of State Assignments</li> <li>○ Wisconsin has seen 991 fires YTD burning 2,287 acres YTD in DNR protection areas (an increase from 10-year average).</li> <li>○ Have hit almost 30,000 hours for prescribed burning. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A fact sheet on prescribed fire and carbon dynamics was completed about 3 years ago and is available: <a href="#">Carbon Dynamics in Relation to Prescribed Fire in the Lake States.</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• BMP Monitoring on Non-Industrial Private Forest Lands has begun. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Volunteers from within the Department and external partners will collect data on 37 private land sites selected for monitoring this year. To date, 1028 timber sales</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

have been evaluated for BMP application and effectiveness since 1995 (this total does NOT include the 37 sites being sampled this fall)

- Silvicultural Guidance Team Membership has been finalized. Welcome returning members Mike Demchik and Ron Eckstein, and new members Andrew Beebe, Tim Pulskamp, Allan Braun and Tom Carlson. Members serve a 3-year term provide valuable contributions to the development of Wisconsin's silviculture guidance resources.
- USFS Temporary Bridge Grant status
  - Round 1 of the previously awarded \$169, 000 grant was put out for bid. There were no bidders on the timber mats, however 2 bids were received for construction of 2 larger, engineered bridges. ADM Welding was awarded the bid for these bridges.
  - A second round of bidding for timber mats was put out in May/June and was awarded to Martin Mats LLC for the remaining \$94,402 on that initial grant.
  - A modification package (second application) for the Wisconsin Temporary Bridge program was submitted in April 2025 with a funding amount request of \$453,902. This application is currently under review with USFS.
- Research Agenda
  - The 2-year agenda identifies priority research needs for the Division and provides a framework for current and future investment in research projects. It did not change from the previous research agenda. This will be brought to the Council at a future date.
- Japanese stiltgrass found in 4 new counties in 1 month, first find in La Crosse County in 2020. New finds on private property in Dane, Grant, Rock and Walworth counties. At least 2 may have been introduced during timber sales. Survey and control efforts are ongoing, but resources are minimal.
- Forest Products Week activities Oct 20-24.
  - Partners that assisted in the planning included: UW-SP, WDNR, WEDC, WI Paper Council, GLTPA, LSLA, WCFA, UW- Extension, NTC
  - The first day's event kicks off with an expert panel discussion. This panel represents a rare opportunity to hear from Wisconsin experts and leaders, a cross-section of forest products industry. They will highlight how forestry intersects with community, economic development, workforce needs, ecological sustainability, recreation, and policy. This moderated discussion will be presented to an invited audience and will be recorded.
  - Tours will be hosted throughout the week at various locations including logging sites, sawmills, paper manufacturers, secondary wood products and urban wood manufacturers.
- Wisconsin Secondary Wood Industry Assessment

- The survey will help illuminate trends in raw material use, residue generation, and potential markets. Aims to identify workforce skills and training programs needed to support a strong and sustainable wood products industry.
  - The findings from this assessment will directly support the Forest Products Services program in its efforts to update and expand the Wisconsin Wood-Using Industry Directory.
- Seedling sales for spring 2026 planting will begin Oct 6 at 8:00am. The nursery has good inventories of maples, oaks and spruce. Other species such as pine and shrubs are in limited supply.
- Urban Forestry:
  - The 2026 DNR urban forestry grant application period is open until October 1, 2025. Cities, villages, towns, counties, tribes and 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations in (or conducting their projects in) Wisconsin can apply for a regular or startup 2026 Urban Forestry (UF) grant.
  - The urban forestry grant application, guidance document and grant assessment were updated. This was the first major update since 2015 and is intended to improve the process for applicants and streamline processes. The updates also more clearly articulate the 2026 DNR UF program funding priorities: Increase tree canopy cover, improve urban forest health, and build community capacity.
  - There were two storms that led to declared States of Emergency, activating the urban forestry storm grants.
  - Fall 2025 marks one year into the Inflation Reduction Act's investment in Wisconsin's urban forests. First year accomplishments include: 5723 trees inventoried (including trees, stumps, and potential planting sites), 760 trees maintained (including trees that have been planted, removed or stump ground to make a new planting site), 652 trees planted (planted directly by grantees, or through a tree giveaway), 112 people receiving arboriculture and urban forestry workforce development, Over a dozen public hearings and meetings have occurred, and initial tree board meetings have begun.
- Aeronautics:
  - Participated in an Air Coordination annual simulation exercise on 8/21 in Janesville, (each simulation is different, search and rescue, etc.) Attendees included WI Emergency Mgmt., the Trail ambassadors, Army National Guard, State Patrol, DNR pilots, Civil air patrol, at least 6 other local agencies.
  - DNR's role will be to use the cameras mounted to the aircraft to capture images.
  - Worked with the Civil Air Patrol on visual search procedures allowing us to gain valuable knowledge and experience in their operations and those procedures.
  - Assisted in the flooding impact assessment in southeast WI in August.
- Equipment, Research and Development: Working through Heavy Equipment upgrades

- 157 WFLGP Awards were issued on August 1, 2025 totaling over \$540K. This included a majority of federal funding through our current USDA grant, and some state funding
- GNA: national priority for management of NTL forestlands.
  - One of the USDA Forest Service's priorities is to strive to fully implement National Forest allowable harvest goals based on existing management plans utilizing and enhancing use of partnership agreements including Shared Stewardship and GNA.
  - There are many factors influencing how this will be accomplished nationally.
  - At this time, the CNNF will be increasing their current annual harvest volume to achieve this federal priority and more fully implement the CNNF management plan.
  - Through some advocacy, including via NASF, funding has been allocated to the CNNF to put toward CNNF and DNR's GNA partnership to provide additional options for how to accomplish these updated targets.
  - DNR is executing a new GNA Agreement with CNNF to account for the incoming funds and increased volume.
  - DNR will continue to utilize all options for implementing GNA including FTE and LTE staff time, county partnerships, consulting foresters, overtime, etc.
  - NASF will also soon be launching a GNA subcommittee and while the focus will be on western states, will advocate to ensure Great Lakes region is represented.
  - There are still unknowns related to harvesting on national forest lands and GNA specifically as it relates to the lack of a new Farm Bill.
- County Forest, Tax Law, and Department Lands audits conducted successfully with no Corrective Action Requests issued across the three certificates.
- Chapter 310, Tax Law Dispute Resolution Process and Appendix 310A [Finalized and published.](#)
  - Per handbook guidance Chief State Forester will keep the Council on Forestry updated on DRP cases and overall status of the system.
  - DRP website will be updated to include new links to new chapter and the following flowchart for landowners.
- The following proposals to the Forest Tax Law Handbook have been posted for Stakeholder input through 10/7/25.
  - [Forest Tax Law Handbook Chapter 207 Large Ownership \(Account\) Administration \[PDF\]](#)
  - [Appendix 207A, Document Review Checklist \[PDF\]](#)
- Annual resource aid payments totaling \$1,237,500 issued on September 15<sup>th</sup> to counties having more than 40,000 acres of enrolled Forest Crop Law (FCL) and Managed Forest Law (MFL) lands. The payment is apportioned among counties on the basis of their share of total eligible acreage. This year 37 counties will receive payment.
  - Quarterly withdrawal tax payment distributions to municipalities were made July 15, for a State total of \$341,713.14

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o FY2025 MFL/FCL/CFL Annual Aid Payments to municipalities were made June 11. Total amounts are: \$698,288.26 for MFL, \$6,224.15 for FCL, \$1,518,838.42 for CFL (totaling \$2,223,350.83)</li> <li>• Heather will be taking over as chair for NMSFA, also serving on the FIA committee and Fire National Committee. Heather has been in Washington D.C. advocating for needs for supporting WI forestry and industry needs.</li> </ul>
<b>10:40 AM Break, 15 min</b>	
<b>10:55 AM</b> <b>Inserted ITEM: Further Discussion on SAF Bill SB-456</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An early draft of the bill was circulated to Council members.</li> <li>• Given Council charge to advise the governor and legislature, Chair Hittle feels the Council should weigh in on the subject.</li> <li>• Given the many unknowns with this bill and its impacts, and the many outstanding questions, a generic statement of support will be drafted by Chair Hittle. Any Council member may abstain as a signatory.</li> <li>• Council should express their stance to oppose, abstain, or agree as signatory by Oct. 7.</li> </ul>
<b>10:55 AM</b> Red Pine and Oak Reforestation Initiative Update (Rebekah Luedtke, WCFA Executive Director) <i>Action Item: Approve recommendations</i> 20 min	Summary materials from the reforestation roundtable can be found in the meeting materials. More information to come.
<b>11:15 AM</b> Biennial Budget Update (Maggie Hutter, DNR Budget Director) 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Operational needs were consistently provided for via one-time allotments in forestry</li> <li>• Several forestry grants and subawards awarded including Industry Strategic Plan and Roadmap funding, WFLGP, County Sustainable Forestry Grants, County Forest Administration Grants, County Forest Wildlife Habitat Grants.</li> <li>• The previous Division of Forestry supply line cut of 5% was not restored.</li> <li>• Other items not in the 2025-27 budget include: WI Forestry Careers Pathway program funding, LEAF program support, forestry liaison and support position, nursery operations funding, WisFIRS IT support, GPR transfer rate adjustment.</li> <li>• Lapse provision for unspent stewardship funds was also not approved.</li> </ul>
<b>11:30 AM</b> Council Discussion on Budget Priorities (Chair Hittle) 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council discusses options for budget advocacy between biennial budget cycles.</li> <li>• LEAF, WI Forestry Center all do important work that is at risk with current cuts to funding.</li> <li>• Forestry SEG account is in good condition, even with spending in the current budget. It could support funding for programs in need, even considering substantial draw for SAF needs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o A potential option discussed to write a bill to give DNR increased spending authority. This would need to happen quickly.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The Council will have a place to start because budget motions exist for each item for which the Council advocated.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:45 AM</b> WEDC Update (Kietra Olson, Rural Initiatives Manager; Office of Rural Prosperity) 20 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WEDC will be part of forest products week. COO will be moderating the panel on day one.</li> <li>• Kietra attended the May 20 meeting and spoke on an outreach piece on forest industry and forest products. Working to create a promotional piece to talk about economic impacts of industry in rural areas. Hoping to connect this to how people in rural communities can engage with forestry, forests, and industry.</li> <li>• WEDC leadership does a shop local campaign each year. Trying to highlight Wisconsin wood products. Council has been helpful in providing several leads for that. Hoping to share the product in November.</li> <li>• WEDC is excited about the WI Forests FIRST project. Potential for some collaboration (at least in terms of media) with WI Forests FIRST group.</li> </ul>
<p><b>12:05 PM Lunch, 45 min</b></p>	
<p><b>12:50 PM</b> Strategic Plan and Roadmap Update (Chair Hittle) 50 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This effort is 5 years in the making, beginning in 2020 with Verso Mill closure</li> <li>• \$1 million grant from DNR awarded to GLTPA and WI Paper Council to come up with plan and roadmap.</li> <li>• Council must deliver the research/plan and recommendations to the governor and legislature.</li> <li>• Looking for the right balance of people to get this project far and to have it move quickly</li> <li>• Chair Hittle describes current operational and organizational structure</li> <li>• <a href="#">One Pager</a> put together by Executive Committee will be the base for all communication at this time.</li> <li>• Need for a third-party project manager. Position information piece was shared with the Council for review.</li> <li>• Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council members should share input on draft materials, suggestions for project managers/firms, and suggestions for Steering Committee members by Oct. 8.</li> <li>○ Figure out website organization of materials.</li> <li>○ Executive Committee will begin project manager selection process</li> <li>○ Work on media messaging</li> <li>○ Steering committee will be in place by mid-November (Virtual CoF meeting Nov. 18)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Access the presentation: <a href="#">Oct 1 CoF Roadmap.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>1:40 PM</b> Trees for Tomorrow Update (Cheryl Todea, Executive Director; Trees for Tomorrow) 15 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A rich history of providing education to students, youth groups, families, and others since 1945.</li> <li>• Located on a 35+ acre campus in Eagle River</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host environmental education programming, workforce development initiatives, community engagement programs. Facilities are also available for meetings and conferences</li> <li>• There are several opportunities for support and partnership. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Trees for Tomorrow scholarship program allows students to visit without paying the full associated cost.</li> <li>○ Trees for Tomorrow fundraises to bring in \$500,000+ annually</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Access the presentation: <a href="#">Trees for Tomorrow PowerPoint Presentation</a></li> </ul>
<b>1:55 PM Break, 15 min</b>	
<p><b>2:10 PM</b> Mass Timber</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• White Pine CLT Feasibility (Alex Anderson, DNR Forest Products Specialist &amp; Xinfeng Xie, Associate Professor, Forest Biomaterials Director; Michigan Technological University)</li> <li>• Economic Feasibility of Mass Timber Manufacturing in WI (Ram Dahal, DNR Forest Economist &amp; Ichchha Thapa, Ph.D. Candidate; Michigan State University)</li> <li>• Wood Symposium Report (Elle Soderberg, DNR Forest Products Specialist)</li> </ul> <p>75 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preliminary results from CLT study found that white pine panels teste are almost 9x stronger than the requirements. Models underestimate actual strength of white pine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ White pine in an underutilized species in the state.</li> <li>○ Location does matter; slower-growing trees are more durable</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Economic Feasibility of Mass Timber Manufacturing in WI:</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Outlines opportunities, challenges and barriers to mass timber constructions:</li> <li>○ From pre 1980s to present day, interest and potential in mass timber has increased</li> <li>○ This study examined hotspots for softwood availability, identified potential location for manufacturing facility, procurement zone, and estimate feedstock availability, analyzed the economic impact of operating a new mass timber manufacturing facility.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <a href="#">Wood Symposium Report:</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Brought together architects, engineers, wood users, state/university/federal employees, and others to explore topics in mass timber and urban wood.</li> <li>○ Symposium was hosted at the Milwaukee Art Museum and included presentations, vendor booths, and tours of Milwaukee’s Ascent building and Baird Center.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>3:25 PM</b> SFAP Highlights Report (Lenny Betker, DNR Forestry Division Planner &amp; Abby Widell, DNR Forestry Associate Division Planner) 30 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council members received a draft of the 2025 SFAP Highlights Report in September</li> <li>• This process was kicked off with the Council at the May meeting as DNR wanted to engage Forestry partners in sharing accomplishments for the report.</li> <li>• Just over 20 submissions from partners were received and nearly all incorporated into the report.</li> <li>• Those who submitted accomplishments are encouraged to read them over and let Abby know if they have any suggestions, questions, or concerns by Oct. 15.</li> <li>• DNR will keep the Council in the loop as the final report is submitted in January.</li> <li>• Access the presentation: <a href="#">SFAPHighlightsReport.pdf</a></li> </ul>
<b>3:55 PM ADJOURN</b>	

