

## Wisconsin Council on Forestry: Tuesday, March 11, 2025

State Natural Resources Building (GEF 2), Room G09, 101 S. Webster Street, Madison, WI 53707  
and via Zoom – [Register for the Zoom meeting here](#)

Council Members		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Hittle, <i>Chair</i>	<input 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Juris Repsa	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buddy Huffaker
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senator Jamie Wall	<input type="checkbox"/> Sitka Pence, <i>Interim Representative</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Rebekah Luedtke
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Jeff Mursau	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jordan Skiff	<input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-Builders
<input type="checkbox"/> Representative Lori Palmeri	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erik Rantala	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Next Meeting: Tuesday, May 20, 2025</b>		

## Agenda

Tuesday, March 11	Notes: <i>Decisions, Action Items, Assignments</i>
<b>9:00 AM</b> Welcome & Member Introductions (Chair Hittle) 20 min	Council Introductions and Welcome.
<b>9:20 AM</b> Chair Update 10 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair Hittle shares plans and asks for feedback on holding a fall meeting at Kemp Station in October, which would act as the singular fall meeting, combining the September and November meeting. Kemp station is available at the beginning or end of October.</li> <li>• The May 20<sup>th</sup> Council meeting will be held in Merrill.</li> <li>• SAF is holding a National Rising Professionals conference in Madison in early April. Tom Hittle will be speaking at the event</li> <li>• Tom is in discussions with WEDC to promote wood products. The campaign is focused on companies that use WI wood to produce products that are available to the WI consumer.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In need of examples of companies that fit the criteria. Half a dozen or so small businesses are needed. Council members should share these as soon as they can.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>9:30 AM</b> Open Forum for Council Members 30 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tom German on behalf of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reforestation efforts reflected in the state budget with sums devoted to replanting. Welcome development, still a long way to go. Also hoping for funds to improve internal roads.</li> <li>○ Secondary wood users at UW Extension. Council can reach out to Tricia Gorby</li> <li>● James Kerkman: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Seeing an upward trend with website views</li> <li>○ Wants to do a regression analysis to see if apparent uptick is statistically significant</li> <li>○ Website is in good shape, DNR staff are solving a few issues.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Buddy Huffaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ National Forest Foundation Board convention is taking place in Madison in late April. Board is intentionally trying to expand and have a presence in the Midwest and Eastern US.</li> <li>○ Huffaker has identified certain people who should attend; they can expect invitations shortly.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Buddy Huffaker: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Asks for Council's opinion on producing a statement from Council to Legislative community on concern about federal cuts and policies that may be impacting Wisconsin's forestry sector.</li> <li>○ Tom Hittle: There is precedent where the council has sent a statement to congressional representatives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Buddy and Matt will work together to draft a short letter. Council will review around the first of April, electronic approval.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Regarding tariffs and moving wood: a lot is unknown from Jim Hoppe and Erik Rantala's perspective. Forest Resource Association may have good information (Tim O'hara is the contact)</li> <li>○ Potential topic for the May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting: updates on federal budget and tariff implications.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>10:00 AM</b> Legislative Updates 20 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Senator Wall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bill on County Forest Administrator Grant education requirements was circulated though not proposed</li> <li>○ Bill prohibiting foreign adversaries from purchasing agricultural land was proposed</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Rep. Mursau: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Budget drafting is the major focus right now; in the assembly budget items need to go to JFC as a bill draft</li> <li>○ Intends to draft budget item for the Council's Strategic Plan and Roadmap</li> <li>○ Encourages council to continue to reach out to legislators for support on budget priorities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<p><b>10:20 AM</b> DNR Secretary Hyun Introduction 15 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Secretary Karen Hyun introduced herself to the council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council members introduced themselves to Sec. Hyun</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Hyun is pushing for priorities put forth in in the Governor’s budget</li> <li>○ Hyun’s confirmation hearing is upcoming, but date is TBD</li> <li>○ Jim Hoppe adds that the supply chain is very important in remaining a top paper producing state: rails, roads, management of state forests, etc.</li> <li>○ Hyun shares she is willing to work with other cabinet members to provide more support where discussion across agencies is needed</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>10:35 AM</b> State Forester Update National Forest Update 20 min</p>	<p>National Forester Update (Given by Chair Hittle):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sitka Pence, interim USFS representative was unable to attend today’s meeting. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ She has been in the state for a few years and currently serves as CNNF Deputy Forest Supervisor</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Not much they are able to share at the moment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Federal situation is continuing to evolve</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>State Forester Update (Heather Berklund):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Division is at an 8% vacancy rate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The following positions are in recruitment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Forester Senior positions (up to 15 across the state, closes 3/13/25)</li> <li>▪ Equipment Operations Team Leader (Tomahawk) – working through HR process</li> <li>▪ Aeronautics Pilot (Madison &amp; Siren) – working through HR process</li> <li>▪ Forestry Fabrication Technician – Mechanic – working through HR process</li> <li>▪ North Central Tax Law Team Leader – working through HR process</li> <li>▪ Final recruitment for ESA position</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ The division has hired the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Eli Anozsko new Silviculturist/FR Ecologist (Rhinelanders starting 3/24) - he formerly worked at Tree Haven/UWSP</li> <li>▪ Bobbi Webster new Trillion Trees Coordinator (Washburn, starting 4/7)</li> <li>▪ FR Technician (Grantsburg, starting 4/7)</li> <li>▪ Brian Cole new Forest Products Specialist (Green Bay, started 2/24) - Cole holds a Master of Forestry from the University of Maine and a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from the University of Massachusetts. His professional experience includes building product sales and purchasing. The FPS Team is now fully staffed.</li> <li>▪ Forest Health Specialist positions (in Fitchburg and West Central locations, starting 6/30) Note: Becky hasn’t shared this information with her team yet since we’re still waiting on the office location of the WC FH Specialist.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Work Planning will begin for field staff next month (where we prioritize workload and determine what we can accomplish with our given priorities and staffing availability for FY26)
  - Looking toward where we can adapt due to vacancies and other impacts
- Early Start to Fire Season
  - January was busiest on record with 75 fires for 166 acres
  - YTD 140 fires for 401 acres responses – Debris Burning #1 cause
    - Saved 72 structures and lost 1
  - Prescribed Burn Activity
    - 5 burns for 429 acres
- Internal Fire Program Review is underway
  - DNR Secretary approved a Certificated Burn Boss initiative in partnership with Wisconsin Prescribed Fire Council
- The [Prescribed Burn Handbook 4360.5](#) approved in February 2025
- Urban Forestry Wisconsin Arborist Association Meeting
  - The Wisconsin Arborist Association and Wisconsin DNR Urban Forestry program co-hosted their annual conference on February 16-18. This is always one of the biggest events of the year within the arboriculture and urban forestry industries. There were 946 attendees this year, the highest mark ever. There were 37 different speakers comprised of representatives from private industry, non-profit organizations, local and state government, and educational institutions. Presentation and demonstration topics are diverse, ranging from technical standards to predicting storm failure to workplace safety to tree selection.
- Tax Law
  - Chapter 310 of the Forest Tax Law Handbook pertaining Dispute Resolution Process has been updated to reflect feedback from SLT and CoF.
  - Working through Handbook update process to solicit public input
    - Intent is to post for public input in April with final guidance published in July.
  - **MFL/FCL Master Lists** have been updated for 2025 and are available online (<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/forestlandowners/reports>)
  - **WisFIRS Update – MFL Plan Template Project**
    - IT specialists in development. Expect new management plan template will be available for 2027 applications (Applications submitted by the June 1, 2026 deadline). CPW training planned for Summer 2025. Will implement a black out period where new plans (2027 enrollments) will not be accepted until training has been provided.
    - The changes intend to increase accuracy and efficiency of CPWs in plan preparation with fewer returns, decrease the time spent by TLFS' in plan

review, and improve landowner's understanding and cognition of their resource and the subsequent responsibilities outlined in the management plan.

- **Implementation of WI Act 235**
  - Tax Law working with Division IT to update WisFIRS to be able to maintain judicial officer addresses confidential. Will have a process to implement by the effective date of April 1, 2025.
- **Certified Plan Writer**
  - 2025 MFL recertification deadline was February 28<sup>th</sup>. This is a required training and working with individuals who have failed to complete.
  - As of 2/26/25, we have 195 CPWs
- **MFL Certified Group**
  - Internal Audit scheduled for the week of April 7<sup>th</sup> across the NC Tax Law Team.
  - External Audit scheduled for the week of August 18<sup>th</sup> across the NW Tax Law Team.
- **Partnerships**
  - Tax Law is partnering with [FISTA](#) to offer a training on submitting an approvable MFL Cutting Notice to be offered November 6<sup>th</sup> in Hayward.
  - Working with [Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership \(WYFP\)](#) to identify MFL landowners with non-mandatory practice to encourage grouse and woodcock habitat by connecting landowner with cost-sharing and grant incentives. Also working to identify large blocks of aspen that can be broken up to create multiple age classes.
- Forest Appreciation Week is upcoming
  - Governor's Trillion Tree Report
  - 51,000 free seedlings will go to 4<sup>th</sup> graders for arbor day
- Forest Health
  - Monitoring Spongy moth (administered by DATCP)
    - It is uncertain what areas will be sprayed for SM in 2025. There are three different agencies involved in spraying. They are:
    - **DNR:** There are 546 acres of DNR managed lands for suppression that will be sprayed with Btk. These blocks will be sprayed regardless of what happens the Slow the Spread (StS) acres. The cost per acre is locked in.
    - **DATCP:** Their plan is to spray 3,000 acres for the STS program with Btk. If DATCP does not receive FS funds, they hope to treat 900 acres of the highest priority StS blocks.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Forest Service:</b> The FS is slated to treat 56,000 acres in Wisconsin for mating disruption (not Btk). This is part of a national contract that FS administers and we are unsure of the status.</li> <li>○ Council brings up watch groups for Hemlock Woolly Adelgid <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DNR staff are working on a plan and also working with Michigan DNR</li> <li>▪ Tennessee is working extensively with HWA control</li> <li>▪ Michigan DNR is spending nearly 2 million a year on HWA so it may be prudent to keep in mind that WI DNR may need to be planning on allocating funds in the future.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>10:55 AM Break, 15 min</b>	
<b>11:10 AM</b> State Forest Action Plan Update (Vice Chair Dallman) 10 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Last meeting the Council discussed where work intersects with SFAP. There was an assignment to create 2 fact sheets <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ TNC marketing and communications colleague is on call to help with the design for these fact sheets</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Ongoing question: once we have these fact sheets, what do we do with them?</li> </ul>
<b>11:20 AM</b> Age Distribution of Red Pine and Oak Update (Shawn Brantmeier, WI Paper Council) 10 min	Red Pine/Oak subcommittee met following Rebekah Luedtke’s update in January <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subcommittee accessed TPO and FIA data on Red Pine harvest, utilization, and markets</li> <li>• Discussion between WCFA, WI DNR, and Bell Timber. There is interest in greater landowner assistance with site prep.</li> <li>• Red Pine seedling shortage: limited window for collecting viable seeds may impact reforestation efforts</li> <li>• Next steps: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Stakeholder meeting to ensure response is coordinated (Hosted by WCFA in Merrill) in early June with 20-40 stakeholders</li> <li>○ Possible funding opportunities through the Secretary of State’s office</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Question regarding a system for cone collection on public land brought forth</li> </ul>
<b>11:30</b> State Budget Update (Maggie Hutter, DNR Budget Director) 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maggie Hutter provided a presentation on the Governor’s Budget and next steps in the state budget process. <a href="#">[Presentation posted on the website]</a></li> </ul>
<b>11:45 AM</b> Review and Input on Council State Budget Communications to Legislators (Chair Hittle) 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One page budget letter has been developed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ No creation of new material/content, just a reformat of what the Council has already approved. Therefore no need for formal approval</li> </ul> </li> <li>• This letter will be on the Council website</li> <li>• Hittle encourages anyone to contact legislators with their support of the budget items and letter.</li> <li>• Open call for suggestions with content or formatting</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suggestion to make the title more clear</li> <li>○ Suggestion to make the contact information at the bottom of the page stand out more</li> </ul>
<b>12:00 PM Lunch, 45 min</b>	
<p><b>12:45</b> Biennial Report Initial Input (Chair Hittle) 30 min</p>	<p>Chair Hittle discusses what is different about 23-24 report vs previous years. Looking for more feedback ahead of May 20<sup>th</sup> meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommendations closely aligned with the work of the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Aligns with 25-27 biennial budget request</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Feedback provided during discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reference or include trends in state harvest volumes</li> <li>○ Include reference to accomplishment around using the website to highlight stories about utilization of state’s forest products</li> <li>○ Include monetary value to tourism and recreation in the forestry industry; currently very heavy on industry/economic. May be something in the SFAP.</li> <li>○ General comments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some strategic goals are cut off</li> <li>○ Maps on page 19 are hard to read- could we make the non-forested area be white?</li> <li>○ Clarify the statistic that every \$1 contributes another \$ .63</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Council sees this work as something that can be used strategically. Need to think about the use of this document</li> </ul> <p>Council should get their comments in by Early April or Mid-April; will approve at the May council meeting. This report is due June 1<sup>st</sup> and we’d like to avoid overhauls on content too close to due date.</p>
<p><b>1:15 PM</b> Timber Producer Challenges: Landowner and Manager Perspectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karl Welch, Timber Program Manager; USFS</li> <li>• Jim Warren, Forestry Field Operations Bureau Director; WI DNR</li> <li>• Joe Mattke, Vice President- Field Operations; Steigerwaldt Land Services</li> <li>• Erik Rantala, Forester; Kretz Lumber</li> </ul> <p>60 min</p>	<p>Inability to deliver on contracts is a result of the market and broad supply chain. Timber producer challenges from various perspectives will be shared during this item.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Karl Welch: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ CNNF spans 11 counties; therefore operates in multiple different markets</li> <li>○ Concern that wood isn’t being harvested at a high enough rate</li> <li>○ Seeing less competitive interest per contract</li> <li>○ Selling values are generally down (<a href="#">see 7-year timber sale trends</a>)</li> <li>○ Significant challenges: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Loss of large pulpwood consumers. Curtailment of roundwood (producers going for recycled), climate related challenges: shorter winter seasons, floods and windstorms, spread of oak wilt, seasonal restrictions applied to timber sales, species guidance impacting time to operate on sales</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ What’s being done:</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

- Ensuring prices are in line to foster competitive interest
  - Offering most sales to 4-5 year contracts to account for shorter logging seasons
  - Working to inform public on stewardship contracts
    - No down payment or periodic payments in not harvesting stumpage, where regular timber sales require both of those things
    - Stewardship agreement with Ruffed Grouse Society
  - Substantial overriding public interest- extending and redetermining rates on Nat. Forest timber sales- all contracts with 20% or more pulpwood (this is nationwide) are eligible for 2-year no cost extension
- Working to keep mystification out of federal contracts
- Jim Warren:
  - DNR has 1.5 million acres (700,000 acres forested)
  - As of October, 450 total sales were in active status (42 have expired in Jan of 2025 and 156 will expire in July 2025). Only 59 of 450 are beyond first contract period
  - Challenges to avoid predicting what the market will need but still being flexible
  - Flexibilities for contracted operators:
    - Went from 2 to 3-year contracts (there is flexibility for 1-4 yr contracts)
    - Ability to extend contracts (reference guides for foresters) at no cost, but this can create potential inconsistencies across the state
    - In 2022, following Verso Mill closure, DNR gave 3 options: remain under contract, 1 more year at 0% stumpage increase, or return sale and DNR maintains 15% performance bond
  - DNR continues to think about greater flexibility and Heather checks in with other states. More discussion is important.
- Joe Mattke
  - Works with timberland owners, team currently manages 400,000 acres of properties in upper great lakes region
  - Challenges:
    - Markets are a concern because of fluctuations, seeing reduction on bidders in sales, private landowners have agendas that may not align with natural processes, environmental conditions hamper productivity (drought and other extreme weather leads to washed out roads, shorter frozen periods)
    - Economic issues like site prep as well as cultural issues surrounding hunting, landowner expectations, and neighbor relations are also significant challenges.
  - Solutions:
    - Change merchandise specs, increase flexibility with timing restrictions by taking an “as long as conditions permit” approach, increase contract

	<p>lengths, waive price increase for stumpage extension, and move away from lump sum sales to help ease financial burden</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erik Rantala <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Significant challenge in trying to pay a competitive wage to loggers while paying landowners a competitive stumpage rate</li> <li>○ Logging rates are not changing with time but costs are increasing (insurance, moving, etc.)</li> <li>○ Environmental challenges are narrowing windows, workforce is aging, new loggers are not being recruited at a comparable rate</li> <li>○ Discussed impacts of overproduction, standards, and site conditions.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>What does this progression look like?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of bidders is declining (not necessarily at a faster rate, too early to say)</li> <li>• There are peaks and valleys. Hard to tell if we are in a prolonged valley. Also hard to say with so much change in technology over the past 20 years.</li> <li>• Supply and demand is balanced, there has been a drop in stumpage value that seems consistent over time</li> </ul>
<p><b>2:15 PM Break, 15 min</b></p>	
<p><b>2:30 PM</b>  Extension Forestry Program and Wisconsin Forestry Center: Updates and Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tricia Gorby, Assistant Dean and Director; Natural Resources Institute, UW Madison Division of Extension</li> <li>• Steve Hubbard, Director and Extension Specialist; WI Forestry Center, UW-Stevens Point</li> </ul> <p>60 min</p>	<p>Chair Hittle Introduces Extension and Forestry Center. Highlights hope for more coalescence of these entities in the future</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tricia Gorby introduces the Natural Resources Institute as one of 6 institutes in Extension and funds several centers on campus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ NRI aligns with CoF on following strategic goals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote benefits of sound forest management and policies that provide ecological, economic, social, and cultural benefits for current and future generations</li> <li>▪ Research, promote and support efforts to increase utilization of the state’s forest products</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Steve Hubbard introduces the WI Forestry Center <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Shares an overview of Scott Bove’s work, which is focused on applied approaches to our forest products industries, taking global strategies and making them work at a local level, working collaboratively with interactive partners embedded in WI forestry community.</li> <li>○ Wisconsin Forestry Center goal is to pay attention to what the industry is telling us to drive what kinds of products/projects we’re working on.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• See <a href="#">presentation on the website</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>3:30 PM ADJOURN</b></p>	