

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Comfort Suites – Hayward, WI
September 15, 2009

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Leon Church, Matt Dallman representing Mary Jean Huston, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Jim Hoppe, Robert Rogers, Jane Severt, Connie Chaney representing Jeanne Higgins, Troy Brown

Members Absent:

Dennis Brown, Rep. Mary Hubler, Sen. Bob Jauch, Mary Jean Huston, Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Michael Bolton, Jeanne Higgins, Rep. Don Friske, Rep. Fred Clark, Jeff Stier

Guests Present:

Kathy Nelson, Mary Brown, Tom Boos, Joe Kovach, Bruce Allison, Henry Schienebeck, Mike Luedeke

Welcome and Introductions – Fred Souba

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves.

Observations from Bioenergy Tours

Council members observed a biomass operation Monday at Futurewood Corporation's facilities in Park Falls, where they saw both a pellet and a biofuel operation, and a biofuel production site. Their tour began at the Flambeau Paper Mill, and concluded before this meeting with a tour of a residential pellet plant in Hayward. Overall, members were very favorably impressed with the talent, determination, creativity, and knowledge of the management and staff they met, and learned a great deal. Some of their observations follow:

- A considerable monetary investment is required to undertake a biomass operation, therefore, the business implications must first be carefully considered.
- It is possible for a company to make pellets out of round wood, and still make a profit.
- There is the potential for a good fuel market in Wisconsin.
- From an economic standpoint, the large volume of material being taken out of the woods is in direct competition with other markets.
- Ensuring that the Woody Biomass Harvest Guidelines are adhered to will be one of the challenges of the future.

Fred passed out copies of a brochure entitled, "Sustainable Management Assistance for Woodland Owners" and an article entitled, "The Best Use of Wood – Environmental Issues", which D.J. Alderman had intended to pass out after the tour on Monday.

ACTION ITEM:

- Chair Souba will draft letters to Bill Gilbert of Flambeau River Papers, D.J. Alderman of Futurewood, and Herb Seeger of Great Lakes Renewable Energy, thanking them for their willingness to share their operations with the Council.

Invasive BMPs – Jane Severt

A letter from Jane to Chair Souba on behalf of the Forestry Invasives Leadership Team (FILT) had been distributed to Council members for their review in advance of today's meeting, along with the final drafts of *Best Management Practices for Preventing the Spread of Invasive Species by Outdoor Recreation Activities* and *Wisconsin's Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Preventing the Introduction & Spread of Invasive Species*. The letter asks the Council to consider acceptance of both products.

Recreation

Jane introduced Tom Boos, Forestry Invasive Plants Coordinator at the DNR, who delivered a PowerPoint presentation entitled, “Wisconsin’s Recreation Best Management Practices for Invasive Species”. It gave an overview of how this BMP effort got to where it is today, and of the next steps should the Council choose to accept the BMPs.

The Advisory Committee, comprised of 30 individuals representing 28 agencies and organizations, began work in 2006 with the goal of providing a set of voluntary guidelines to help limit the spread and introduction of terrestrial invasive species during outdoor recreational activities. They divided the recreational activities into seven types, or “spokes”:

- 1) Animal-based
- 2) Bicycling
- 3) Camping
- 4) Hunting, trapping, angling
- 5) Motorized
- 6) Pedestrian-based
- 7) Land Management

The Advisory Committee, eager to accomplish its goal, put a draft out for public comment from February 13th through March 13th, 2009, along with a web survey. The results were encouraging. Of the 82 comments received, most were in support of the BMPs. Only ten minor changes were made, based on the comments. Both the draft BMPs and the survey are posted on the Council’s page of the WisconsinForestry.org website.

If accepted by the Council, the next steps will be to post the finalized BMPs to both the DNR and the Council on Forestry websites, and to begin outreach and implementation, which the stakeholders want to be involved in. A sticker has already been produced with the slogan, “Slow the Spread by Sole and Tread”. In the hope of giving each recreational “spoke” only the information relevant to its activities, Tom and Kelly Kearns (DNR –Endangered Resources) are developing a pocket guide that can be tailored for a specific audience, and updated easily by removing and adding pages as needed. It contains photographs of many invasives for easy identification. The guide is almost finished, but the DNR doesn’t have much funding available for printing it. There is only enough grant money to print about 5,000 copies. Tom said that a letter from the Council in support of his grant applications would be very helpful. Council members agreed that it is the Council’s responsibility to see the BMP effort through to implementation, and that funding for implementation should be a top priority.

Urban

Jane introduced Bruce Allison, Adjunct Professor of Forestry and Wildlife Ecology at UW-Madison, President of Allison Tree Care, and Chair of the Urban Forestry BMPs for Invasives. Bruce delivered a PowerPoint Presentation entitled, “Wisconsin’s Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Preventing the Introduction and Spread of Invasive Species”, describing the effort’s progression to its current stage and the next steps in the process pending the Council’s approval of the BMPs.

Bruce knew from the beginning that the Urban Forestry BMPs would be controversial because of the diverse economic interests of the stakeholder groups involved. The Advisory Committee, made up of 21 individuals representing different agencies and organizations, began work in May of 2008 with support from one U.S. Forest Service, and three Forestry Division staff. The eight-member Technical Team began work that August. The goal was to limit the introduction and spread of invasive terrestrial plants, insects and diseases. A manual was developed with an audience of those making money in the process of managing urban forestland in mind, and was posted to the Urban Forestry BMP website, along with a survey, during the public comment period, which ran from June 30th to July 30th. After review by the Advisory Committee, 33 changes were made in response to the 98 comments received, none of which conveyed major reservations.

The Advisory Committee and the FILT are in full support of the BMPs. Chair Souba noted, and distributed copies of, a letter of endorsement received from Dr. Les Warner, Chair of the Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council (WUFC). If accepted by the Council today, everyone involved is ready to

begin implementation. An Outreach Committee is being formed, which will focus on information and education.

Paul DeLong said that we are truly breaking new ground with the development of the BMPs, and that other states are eager for us to complete the process so that they can model their own processes after ours. Tom Boos added that the Right-of-Way Track will be going out for public comment in the next few days, and should be ready for the Council to consider for acceptance at its December meeting.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Fred Souba (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council accept the Recreation Best Management Practices for Invasive Species as presented today was approved unanimously.
- A motion by Jim Heerey (seconded by Jim Hoppe) that the Council put together a letter in support of funding for the implementation of the Recreation BMPs passed unanimously.
- A motion by Jim Heerey (seconded by Bill Horvath) that the Council accept the Urban Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species as presented today passed unanimously.
- A letter of thanks will be sent from the Council to those involved in each of the BMP tracks, highlighting the accomplishments of each, and stating that the Council has accepted the BMPs, and is moving forward to support their implementation.
- The above-mentioned letter of thanks will be signed by both Chair Souba and the Chair of the group that each volunteer worked on.
- A letter of thanks will also be sent from the Council to the DNR staff involved in the BMP efforts.
- A master list of addresses for those involved in the BMP effort will be assembled, and be made available to Council members and others to be specified.
- Funding the implementation of the BMPs will be an agenda item for the next Council meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Tom Boos will work on getting staff from DNR, DATCP, and the UW-Extension together to discuss funding for printing the field guides.
- Tom Boos will put a press release put out announcing that the Recreation and Urban Forestry tracks were approved by the Council and will see that it makes mention of those involved in both efforts.

MFL Task Group Report – Bob Rogers

At its December 2008 meeting, the Council adopted a recommendation of the MFL Task Group that the Legislature create a Legislative Council Study Group to review the application of MFL in light of changes that have occurred since its inception. The Council directed the Task Group, Chaired by Bob Rogers, to frame out the details of what the Legislative Council Study would be, and report back at the September 15th Council meeting. In response, the Task Group produced a document entitled, *Managed Forest Law Issues, Report to the Council on Forestry by the MFL Task Group*, which was distributed to members prior to the meeting. The document, which is not finalized, identifies and elaborates on thirteen issues for possible consideration in the Legislative Council Study:

1. Contractual Language
2. Leasing
3. Production of Woody Biomass
4. Protection of High Forest Productivity Benefits
5. Involvement of Local Government
6. Technical Assistance
7. Parcelization and Fragmentation of Forestland
8. Narrow Scope of MFL
9. Tax Levels
10. Vacant Working Lands
11. Program Obsolescence
12. Public Access
13. Lack of Automatic Roll-over

In developing this list, the Task Group drew from information contained in its last report, and from new information received. However, Bob pointed out that some information that might potentially have some

bearing on the document was not received by the Task Group for consideration before it finished the report. In light of this, Bob asked for suggestions and discussion from the Council. A need for input from MFL interest groups other than private landowners, such as WWOA and the pulp and paper industry, for consideration was also identified. It was generally agreed that a document should facilitate the most efficient use of the Legislature's time. Paul DeLong explained that when the Legislature adjourns next May, issues will be identified for study before the commencement of the next session, when they will act on some by putting forward legislation. Therefore, the document should make a clear case for why MFL is an issue to be studied, and should outline the nature of the issues so that the Legislature can determine who it wants involved in the study. It should be written in such a way that someone who knows nothing about the MFL will be able to understand the issues brought forth.

Chair Souba stressed the importance that the Council be the leader in putting the MFL issues forward. To ensure this, it needs to have a document ready for approval from the Task Group at the December meeting. An interim process, utilizing Division of Forestry staff, was identified to get the needed information to Bob for his Task Group to consider in preparing a final document:

1. Broad interest groups are identified.
2. Brief questionnaire is sent to interest group representatives.
3. Questionnaires are returned to Bob for consideration by mid-October.
4. Statement explaining the importance of MFL is developed and issues are outlined.
5. Draft is distributed to Council for comment, and to interested parties, by November.
6. Approval of the Council is sought at the December Council on Forestry meeting.

Chair Souba distributed copies of an email received from Marv Meier relative to MFL and his concerns about procedures followed in the past when changes were made.

DECISION ITEM:

- Bob Rogers will bring a document prepared by the MFL Task Group stating the importance of MFL, and outlining the issues for consideration by a Legislative Council Study, to the December meeting of the Council on Forestry for its approval.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Council members will provide Bob Rogers with the name of an individual who can provide information on behalf of the MFL interest groups that they represent.
- Paul DeLong will arrange for help from Kathy Nelson and other Division of Forestry staff as needed to help the Task Group analyze the information received from the returned questionnaires and frame out the MFL statement of importance and issues.
- Bob Rogers will send a draft document to the Council for comment, and to interested parties of the Council in November.

Deer Impacts on Forests Update – Joe Kovach

Joe, Forest Ecologist, Division of Forestry, expanded on information contained in an outline of current deer issues which was distributed before the meeting. He said that in 1962, the estimated statewide deer population was about 400,000. In the 1980s, the harvest climbed from 167,000 to 350,000, with eight record kills. Then in the early 1990s, the population crashed to the goal. Herd control measures were relaxed, and within a couple of years there was a record harvest of nearly 400,000. In 2000, we had a national record kill of over 600,000 deer. We've never attained that level of harvest since. However, in 2008, there was a total kill of 250,000 deer, higher than any of the record kills throughout the 1980s, and the early 1990s - the tenth largest kill on record. Yet we're hearing that there are no deer on the landscape. Hunting groups have been exerting pressure though DNR Wildlife Management, the Legislature, and the NRB to relax deer control and let the population go up, though it remains well above goal in most of the state. Deer impacts and populations are historically unprecedented.

Deer impacts are very apparent, though they are highly variable from the regional to the local scale. Even where there are supposedly low deer populations, there are clear impacts. However, though impacts are qualitatively evident, we're constantly challenged, and we need quantitative data, which is generally lacking,

partly because deer impacts are so variable. In some areas, deer eat white pine. In other areas, they really don't like white pine. In some areas, they go for hemlock, yet in other areas they don't. Biological interactions are complex and changing, making documentation of impacts difficult. Some initiatives have been undertaken to address documentation:

1. The Deer Impact Consortium – formed recently under the direction of Dr. Don Waller, UW – Madison, Gaylord Nelson Institute, and Dr. Karl Martin, DNR Integrated Science Services (ISS) Wildlife Forest Ecology Researcher, with the objective of designing and establishing a collaborative approach to address issues of deer impacts, research and monitoring, to look at research and monitoring needs and existing support, and try to bring together some partnerships to provide funding and show that there is widespread support.
 2. Research - proposed by DNR, ISS:
 - An extensive project of enclosures, where rather than enclosing deer, a large fence is constructed and a control population of deer is placed within it. It would test populations well below the standard goal for population, at the goal, and above the goal. It's not totally representative of a natural system, but is quite similar. It's fairly long-term as impacts must be monitored over time both on trees and on other vegetation. It is a very well designed, but also very expensive project, expected to cost \$1,500,000 over six years. It's been proposed in the DNR budget process a couple of times, but has never quite made it through, despite broad support. The Consortium supports it, but it is not currently funded.
 - A project to catalog the thousands of different deer enclosures around the state, standardize some of the data that's being collected, and document what is happening within and outside those enclosures. The Consortium supports this. The thought now is that UW and/or DNR would coordinate the research, but a formal proposal hasn't been written up or funded yet.
- Research - proposed by UW – Madison:
Dr. Waller is designing a plant monitoring network that will look at a variety of different stressors on forest ecosystems and impacts on plant composition and movement across the landscape. He has a long interest in deer impacts on both woody and non-woody vegetation and wants to integrate deer impacts into this. He submitted a proposal to the National Fish and Wildlife Federation which includes:
- Evaluation, refining, and standardization of effective and applicable indices of impacts.
 - Documentation of impacts on forest ecosystems using enclosures and browse indices.
 - Opportunities to test the efficacy of citizen-based monitoring.
- There's a very high possibility it will be funded. UW is contributing research assistants and money to it. TNC of Michigan is also contributing money towards it.
3. Monitoring – opportunities identified by DNR and the Consortium to attempt integration of browse monitoring into the continuous forest inventory on state forests, and perhaps into statewide Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) and Recon (reconnaissance of forest lands in specific programs). Alternatives for an efficient and cost effective browse index to document the impacts of deer on tree regeneration are being considered.

There is a lot of debate over deer population goals. Organized hunting groups have a lot of influence, and have had a bearing on things that are going on within the Legislature. Generally, support is for more deer. The current recommendation from Wildlife Management is to increase goals in thirteen Deer Management Units (DMUs), with a decrease in two, resulting in an another overall increase in goals at the statewide level.

No changes are recommended to the DMU boundaries for the time being. A three-year study will be done at UW evaluating the pros and cons of consolidating units. Earn-a-buck was temporarily suspended by the NRB, and will be a decision item at its September meeting. The NRB has also requested an Environmental Impact Statement on deer impacts and management. A number of alternatives are being looked at for 2010, including an expanded hunting season.

Paul DeLong emphasized how important it is that the Department and NRB receive input from the forestry community to ensure that those interests will be heard.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council send a letter reiterating its concerns about deer impacts, along with a copy of the report of the DNR Deer Committee, to Secretary Frank and the Natural Resources Board before the September 23rd Board meeting, passed unanimously.

State Forester's Report – Paul DeLong

FY '09-11 State Budget

Last winter, the Governor's budget was submitted, and the Division had some developments regarding management reductions. Paul shared an email message earlier with Council members and interested parties, which he'd sent to Forestry Division staff, about the next round of reductions that were part of the budget process, over and above the 10% cut taken late last year. It gives a sense of what the nature of those reductions is. He said that he just got word that there would also be a lapse. Lapses are temporary. The initial lapse amount is not expected to be that much, but there could be more yet. It is not known yet if there will be budget repair bill. This is the last scheduled reduction, not counting the lapse. Paul will keep people posted if the Division ends up going into another actual cut process.

Division Organizational Changes

Two management positions were lost as part of the budget process. The Division has gone from having four bureaus to three, and from five field units to four, combining the two southern units into one. A reduction of two senior management positions resulted from these consolidations. Between furloughs and positions that it isn't able to fill, the Division will soon show a net reduction in its capabilities of about 15%. Based on that fact, a list of activities that are either being eliminated or significantly cut back on over at least the next one to two years is being produced, and will be out soon. With Darrell Zastrow now serving as Deputy Forest Division Administrator, there may be some changes in division of duties, but no changes in management of Division operations are expected.

Statewide Assessment & Strategy

Paul distributed a timeline showing deadlines and phases of work being done on the Statewide Forest Assessment and Strategy. Both are required by the Federal Government to be done by June 18, 2010. The hope is to have the Assessment done by December so the next five months can be focused on the Strategy. Paul said that an email would be going out to the Council and others in the next couple of weeks containing a draft of the threats and issues, and key conclusions of the Assessment, for the purpose of getting feedback. The key of the Assessment is to state what the conditions of the forests of the state are, and what conclusions can be drawn from that information. The Strategy looks at what we should do and where we should be investing resources to maximize the ecological, economic, and social values derived from our forests. The plan is to return to the Council in December, and then again in March, giving the Council an opportunity to input into the proposed strategy prior to the federal submission deadline.

Fire Assessment

The Division is conducting an Assessment of the Fire Program, which it plans to have done by next spring. It's being driven in part by the high number of vacancies, and the possibility that things may not get better as far as the budget goes in the immediate future. Knowing where resources are allocated will make it easier to realign work. The Fire Program is the only major program that hasn't been looked at lately; the last time it was looked at in a major way was about fifteen years ago. We will also be using information from other program assessments (e.g., private forestry, urban, forest health, etc.) to inform decisions regarding allocation of DNR resources.

DECISION ITEM:

- The Statewide Assessment and Strategy will be an agenda item for the December and March Council meetings.

Legislative Issues – Paul DeLong

Though none of the Council members from the Legislature were able to come to the meeting, Paul wanted to mention that the MFL is getting a lot of discussion at the Capitol. Other big issues are bioenergy, and a bill on Climate Change. A bill implementing some recommendations of the Global Warming Task Force will be coming forward in the next couple of months with significant recommendations, some with forestry components. Paul will see that any information on them gets forwarded to Council members and others interested.

Council Membership Request – Fred Souba

Chair Souba distributed copies of a letter he received from T.J. Morice, who works for Marth, regarding the possibility of adding someone to the Council to represent biomass interests. Fred has had several conversations with T.J. on this topic. T.J. is not the only person who has brought the topic up, and he has asked Fred to bring the idea to the Council for feedback.

A discussion ensued during which Paul DeLong reminded members that this would require a statute change. The opinions expressed were that it is not in the interest of a smoothly functioning Council to add stakeholders when those stakeholders' interests are represented by groups already on the Council, that they weren't sure that the perspective this person would bring to the table isn't already there, and that other interest groups would then expect to have representation on the Council, too. The Council has generally welcomed opportunities to hear the perspectives of stakeholder groups during discussions at its meetings, and often invites them to speak on relevant topics.

ACTION ITEM:

- Chair Souba will draft a reply to Mr. Morice, sensitive to the importance of biomass energy, explaining that the Council is very open to inviting people to speak when there is a perspective it needs to hear or a group it needs to hear from.

Other Matters

Jane Severt gave a presentation to the Council on the “Woody Biomass/Timber Harvesting and Processing Exposition” held on Potlatch property in Hazelhurst on August 19th and 20th. Over 400 were in attendance, including Representative Friske, Senator Holperin, Randy Romanski from DATCP, and DNR Secretary Matt Frank, who spoke on the first day. The event was pulled together by Don Peterson, and highlighted eight different types and sizes of chippers and grinders involved in the production of biomass.

Bill Horvath announced that WWOA would be going paperless, and that its board decided to create an MFL Division that will focus on MFL and issues dealing with certification, specifically, with woody biomass and carbon sequestration. The new division will report directly to the WWOA Board. Bill has volunteered to head the Division for a three year period, but a decision on leadership has yet to be finalized.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on December 15th in Madison. Possible topics include:

- Funding Implementation of the BMPs
- Right-of-Way BMPs
- LEAF Program
- MFL Report to the Legislative Council
- Statewide Forest Assessment & Strategy

The meeting was adjourned at 2:07 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown, WDNR