

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Products Lab – Madison, WI
December 14, 2010

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Paul DeLong, Jim Hoppe, Bob Rogers, Jane Severt, Matt Dallman, Leon Church, Fred Souba, Kimberly Quast, Rep. Fred Clark

Members Absent:

Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Paul Strong, Michael Bolton, Sen. Bob Jauch, Rep. Don Friske, Troy Brown

Guests Present:

Bob Mather, Mary Brown, Rebecca Gass, Gunnar Bergersen, Sara Bredesen, Mark Rickenbach, Joel Nilsestuen, Earl Gustafson, Steve Schmieding

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. He reported the death of long-time Council member Dennis Brown, and said that he planned to send a letter expressing the Council's sympathy and its appreciation of Denny's service to his family. Fred introduced recently appointed Council member Kimberly Quast, representing the consulting foresters, and welcomed her to the meeting. The guests and other members in attendance introduced themselves.

Logger Survey – Mark Rickenbach

The first logging survey was done in 2004. It focused on both Wisconsin and the upper peninsula of Michigan. Mark and his team will be conducting another survey in Wisconsin that will build on that work. It will revisit the logging sector in an attempt to determine who is still here, who has entered the sector, and how much capacity is out there compared to what was out there in 2003. Michigan is doing its own survey of all the logging firms in Michigan. Great Lakes Timber Producers Association (GLTPA) provided Mark a sample of their logger members. He also contacted the County Forestry Association and the DNR for a listing of cooperating foresters by county. Mark said that the surveys would be sent out next year to coincide with spring breakup. He has gotten some support from Wisconsin Bioenergy Initiative. When Mark asked Chair Souba for NewPage Corporation's input, Fred thought it would be a good idea to invite him to this meeting to discuss how the Council might be able to support his efforts. The survey project has three objectives:

1. Describe the status and capacity of the region's logging sector with an emphasis on assessing change since the last study.
2. Determine the factors that either impede or enhance the sector's capacity to innovate around forest-based bio-energy.
3. Communicate findings to decision makers and policymakers at all levels toward ensuring an adequate logging sector capacity for both traditional and emerging markets.

Increasing Participation

Mark plans to do phone follow-ups to find out why some people didn't respond. Mark is looking for help getting the word out to loggers about the project. He plans to go to logging meetings and talk to folks there. GLPTA put an article about it in the last edition of its magazine. Mark will repackage it and give it to Council member Jim Hoppe, so he can have his company, Packaging Corporation of America, send it out as a flier with an upcoming mailing. Fred Souba said that NewPage would do the same. The information gathered from the survey will generate a UW Extension report, and will be used in various ways to raise people's awareness about this sector. There has been concern that we are losing loggers. Mark wants to try to get a sense of what the loss in capacity is so we can try to hold on to those we have. He will return to the Council to share the results of the survey.

Statewide Forest Strategy Implementation – Fred Souba, Paul DeLong, Rebecca Gass

At its October meeting, the Council discussed its role in implementing the nine strategies it identified as priority items to be addressed over the next few years. Facilitated by Rebecca Gass, a list of possible actions for the Council to take to help implement the strategies was developed and sent out to Council members, but some of those actions were not clearly defined. By continuing the discussion from the last meeting, the goal at today's meeting is to clarify those actions, add any additional ones, and ultimately to prioritize the final list of actions.

Refine Role for the Council

Paul led the Council in a discussion to clarify Council actions where needed for each of the nine strategies. They are listed below with the possible actions identified. Today's discussion points and its conclusions are in red.

- I. **Collaboration and Partnerships** – *Develop collaborations and partnerships to engage all forestry stakeholders.*
 1. More discussion needed on how the Council wants to develop collaborations and partnerships.
 - a. Can consider collaboration and partnerships as Council looks at each issue (e.g. research – with educational community, local government).

Suggestions included bringing issues to a large forum like the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry that led to development of the BMPs, and bringing smaller groups together to discuss specific issues. Individual Council members could address specific issues with affected partners.

⇒ **Conclusion: The role of the Council could be as a convener.**
- II. **Landowner Collaboration** – *Increase the functional size of forest blocks by encouraging coordination of management of clusters of forest ownerships.*
 1. Discuss issues around coordination to advise the Governor and Legislature, and develop a strategy.
 - a. As part of the discussion, need to decide what size forest should be focused on.
 2. Study activity in other areas of the country with cooperatives and other coordination methods.
 3. Encourage coordination by sharing information on its benefits with the public.
 4. Discuss further to gain a better understanding of the issue before deciding on specific Council actions.

⇒ **Conclusion: The Council will identify specific actions after the MFL Legislative Study Committee concludes its work.**
- III. **Private Land Sustainability** – *Increase acreage of privately owned forests managed based on generally accepted forest management practices and encourage a tax structure that favors well-managed forests.*
 1. Address how to share information that will gain support of local governments for private forestry. (e.g. share information/data on the value of forests and forest industry by county)
 2. Work to control misconceptions local governments have about the value of keeping forests in forests. Raise awareness.
 3. Assess results of Legislative Council Study and determine Council role in promoting issues or outcomes.
 - a. Host webinars to share results of Legislative Council Study on MFL and raise awareness of results.
 4. Determine whether there is a next step in private land certification.
 - a. Focus on non-MFL landowners to increase the amount of certified forests.

Paul asked members if they had any more actions to add. Kim Quast suggested that the Council develop a list of recommended topics to inform other groups trying to conduct outreach and education about available grant information. Fred Souba said that the Council needs to determine how to build on the relationship between the landowner, logger, and forester.

⇒ **Conclusion: The Council needs to be an advocate for getting private forest assistance.**
- IV. **Parcelization** – *Reduce the rate of ownership parcelization of small forest blocks.*
 1. Advocate that available resources, such as Stewardship funds, be put toward reducing parcelization.
 2. Keep economic benefits of forests up front to raise awareness of benefits of keeping forests as forests.
 3. Explore alternative incentives that could be used to favor large parcels.
 - a. Then provide recommendations.

Bill Horvath said that the issue of people pressure as a factor has not been addressed well in Wisconsin.

⇒ **Conclusion: One more possible Council action is to become more educated about parcelization, and then try raising awareness about it.**

V. **Collaboration and Large-Scale Planning** – Strengthen collaborative and large-scale planning at the town, county, state and federal levels.

1. Focus on parcelization.
2. Focus on transportation issues that can be addressed with multiple levels of government.
3. Make recommendations to the Governor and Legislature on providing incentives to reduce parcelization.
4. Encourage public land managers to plan at large scale by providing support.
5. Create a forum to promote understanding by the general public of the benefits of large blocks of forest.
To help clarify Actions 1 and 2, Bill Horvath offered that at the township level, parcelization results from adding more and more access roads, and that the Council could take action by getting the towns and counties together to address the problem. Chair Souba wanted to clarify that the terms “collaboration and large-scale planning” as used here refer to how landowners and government can coordinate on multiple, often-overlapping activities.

⇒ **Conclusions:**

- **A role of the Council is to effectively engage town and county governments on the issue of why forests matter.**
- **Action 4 is not a role of the Council, and will be dropped.**
- **Action 5 should have “and landscape level planning” added on.**

VI. **Climate** – Ensure that climate policy reflects the potential contributions that forest conservation and sustainable management can make to achieving substantial net reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

1. Bring a range of climate change experts to the Council so it can be better informed on the issue. Also get information on mitigation and adaptation.
2. Form subcommittees on specific topic areas.
3. Use some venue, such as the Governor’s Conference on Forestry, to convene a diversity of groups and individuals to converse about climate change issues and forests.
 - a. Provide education and understanding to stakeholders, possibly through a conference format.
4. Develop an issue paper and other materials for the Legislature, which will be discussing mitigation.
 - a. Evaluate how to position Wisconsin to gain from mitigation measures.
Chair Souba said that with this being such a multifaceted issue, it is important that the Council stay focused on what climate change means to the sustainability of our forests. Jane Severt said that the Council had an obligation to try to raise public awareness of information available on climate, and how it relates to forest certification.

⇒ **Conclusion: The Council is in a position to play a leadership role in this strategy.**

VII. **Energy** – Collect information and develop policy to ensure efficient and sustainable use of our forest resources in regards to energy production.

1. Follow up on evaluating the Biomass Harvesting Guidelines (BHG).
2. Request research on the limited science identified with BHG and evaluate the results.
3. Promote the energy use avoidance benefit provided by urban forests.
4. Educate, through a public forum, on the benefits of burning wood.
5. Advocate for new markets, being careful how markets transpire. Protect existing markets.
6. Look at urban wood waste issues and ways to address better utilization of our wood resource.

⇒ **Conclusion: The actions for this strategy are acceptable and require no further discussion.**

VIII. **Forest Value** – Invest in forest conservation to contribute to a strong economy and provide clean water and air, wildlife, and other ecosystem services.

1. Raise awareness about why investing in forest conservation is important through an educational forum.
2. Make public investment in available data. Make sure it is up to date. Support prompt reporting of data.
 - a. Formulate questions to be further evaluated and share with institutions that collect and analyze data to guide their work. Help institutions know what data their shareholders want or need.
3. Ask Urban Forestry Council to educate and inform the Council on Forestry on the benefits of urban forests. Possibly have a joint meeting and/or form a partnership with the Urban Forestry Council.
4. Make public announcements on important issues, possibly through press releases. Announce major accomplishments by different organizations at meeting metrics or other benchmarks. Could use the Sustainability Framework metrics as measures of success.

⇒ **Conclusion: The actions for this strategy are acceptable and require no further discussion.**

IX. **Deer** – *Encourage the forestry community to be engaged in deer management issues with an understanding of the long-term significance of deer impacts on sustainable forestry. Increase scientific knowledge needed to understand the economic, ecological and social impacts of various deer populations (and associated herbivory) on forests.*

1. Raise awareness of private landowners, especially absentee ones, about what they can do.
2. Inform debate. Address the issue specifically in regard to forestry. Be persistent. Share monetary value of the effects deer have on forests and the forest industry versus the hunting industry.
3. Be more aggressive if issue with regeneration and meeting certification standards arises. (Need to make others aware of the cost to retain forests.)
4. Council should be present at the state level when there are debates or public forums on deer management.

Members discussed how the deer issue relates to other issues such as parcelization and private land management. Bill Horvath pointed out that landowners with ten acres or less are less likely to permit hunting on their land because of the danger. The public needs to know that deer are high in some areas. Kim Quast said that it is time for someone to come forward with concrete numbers and scenarios because deer are such a high profile topic now.

⇒ ***Conclusion: It is a role of the Council to start an initiative to get facts and figures out to the public. The initiative could include a demo on state land showing the effects of different deer scenarios.***

Rebecca pointed out that quite a few possible actions had been identified, and that they could need to be prioritized. It was agreed that she would consolidate them all into a cleaner list and distribute it to Council members to review and follow up on at the next meeting. Chair Souba asked her if she would put all of the work the Council has done on the Strategy into one document so that the Council of the new administration can see how it was done. Paul DeLong said it would be a great transition document, and that it is the Council's responsibility to provide it. It could serve as the Council's Strategic Plan, identifying the issues relative to forestry that it might address over the next five years.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Rebecca Gass will incorporate the actions and changes identified today into the list of possible Council actions that was produced after the October Council meeting, and distribute the cleaned up list to members.
- Rebecca will poll Council members before the March Council meeting about whether the possible actions by the Council to help implement the nine strategies need to be prioritized.
- If Rebecca finds the majority of Council members polled feel that the possible Council actions should be prioritized, she will ask each of them to prioritize the actions and bring their lists to the March meeting.

DECISION ITEMS:

- Rebecca Gass will pull all the work the Council did on the Statewide Forest Strategy into one document that will serve as a transition document by the Council of the new administration, and bring it to the March Council meeting.
- The list of possible Council actions relative to the Strategy will be finalized at the March Council meeting.

Division of Forestry Strategic Direction – Paul DeLong and Rebecca Gass

The Division of Forestry Strategic Direction states what the Division's niche and role will be in addressing major issues and priority topics over the next five years and beyond. It identifies priority work for the Division. It also demonstrates that state funds are being used appropriately.

Development of the Strategic Direction began in July with the Division identifying its role in each item of the Statewide Forest Strategy and possible actions to take to implement them. The result was the first draft of the Strategic Direction, which was sent out for review, comment, and feedback in September. The feedback was taken into consideration and a full draft was developed. It proposes Division of Forestry roles for eight main program areas that include all the work the Division does:

1. County Forests
2. Fire Protection
3. Forest Health

4. Nurseries
5. Private Forestry
6. State Lands
7. Urban and Community Forests
8. Utilization and Marketing

Each program's section includes a description of what the Division considers its niche to be, as well as several Intent Statements, or Division proposals to either change or maintain elements of a program. Research and other topics that transcend all eight programs comprise a ninth category - Cross Program Activities. The Division will be seeking public, partner, and staff input from December 17th until February 4th. It will be distributed electronically to the Council members, its distribution list of interested parties, and a wide array of other affected interests. It will be also be available in the Statewide Forest Planning area of the Division of Forestry website. Respondents will be asked whether they agree or disagree with general and specific items, such as the Intent Statements, and most importantly why. They will be asked to describe what specific areas they would like to see investments increased or decreased in, where they would make tradeoffs, and why, focusing their thought on outcomes. The Strategic Direction will be finalized after all input is received and considered, probably in late winter. The new Secretary will have a decision making role.

Investment in forests contributes to the state's economy, environment, and quality of life. Paul said that this is an important time to clearly articulate the value of investment in forests, and the Strategic Direction does that, as well as showing how to best utilize our public investment. The timing of the draft is good in that it will be available to inform a new administration's decision-making.

ACTION ITEMS:

- To facilitate those commenting on the draft, Paul DeLong will see that the relative level of investment allocated to each program area is provided to the Council in some simple format.

Legislative Issues – Rep. Fred Clark

MFL Legislative Council Study Update

Two new voting members have been added to the MFL Study Committee since Rep. Clark briefed the Council in September: Retired UW Stevens Point Professor Alan Haney, and Scott Henker from Plum Creek. The Public Access Subcommittee and the Tax and Revenue Subcommittee have each been working on specific elements of the Law. Legislative Council staff who support the Committee and its drafting attorneys are in the process of preparing bill drafts for full Committee review at the next meeting, which is being rescheduled for the second week of January due to a possible conflict with the Legislature going into session on December 15th. The delay is for the best, as it affords more time for the Committee to get its bill drafts out, and time for Council on Forestry members to review them. Rep. Clark gave an overview of some of the Committee's proposals:

- An adjustment to the tax rate that would allow owners going into the program to pay a rate that's either based on the statewide average, as it currently is, or based on the actual assessed value of their property.
- A recommendation that the majority of revenue generated by the program be distributed between the counties and townships, similar to how closed fees are distributed. The money could be used to secure public access.
- A provision that the Forestry Account retain a percentage of closed acreage fees.
- Incentives to allow more innovative management that would hopefully increase pilot forest enterprise areas.
- Requirement that the Department develop rules allowing groups of owners to participate, develop plans for suites of properties, and provide guidance for groups. Groups would be treated like big-block owners.
- Removal of the ban on leasing.
- Creation of a Board of Review for the MFL made up of a DNR service forester, an SAF forester, a University forester, a consulting forester, and a county forest administrator, that would have advisory responsibility to the State Forester. It would provide a third party opinion in disputes involving Silviculture Handbook adherence and forest management, though DNR would make final decisions, as it alone administers the MFL.

All changes are prospective, and are meant to bring more equity to the program. The rules won't be altered for anyone already in the program. Representative Clark said that almost all of the feedback they've gotten about the MFL has been about problems with it. He will circulate the bill drafts to the Council when they are ready, and said that the Committee would welcome their comments.

2011-2012 Legislative Committees

Representative Mursau has been named Chair of the Assembly Forestry Committee, which historically has been consistently bipartisan and focused on building better forests. In the Senate, forestry has been placed in a new committee chaired by Senator Kapanke, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Higher Education. Rep. Clark agreed with Paul DeLong that it is important to ensure that Legislative Leaders are aware of the importance of Forestry in Wisconsin.

ACTION ITEM:

- Representative Clark will distribute the finalized MFL bill drafts to Council members before the full MFL Study Committee reviews them in January.

Council Biennial Report – Fred Souba

2009-2010 Report

A draft of the *2009-2010 Biennial Report of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry* was distributed to Council members for their review prior to today's meeting. Chair Souba asked members for their comments. Bill Horvath called attention to the need for a number of minor corrections and changes and the need for some additional information to be inserted, particularly the fact that the feasibility study for the Great Lakes Biomass Commodity Exchange that the Council supported had been completed, and that the main mission of the Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association is education. Chair Souba agreed, and added that FISTA training for loggers should be included as well. Matt Dallman said that the importance of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program should be mentioned under Forest Industry Ownership.

Possible Legislative Changes

After the Council discussion in October about the possibility of requesting a statutory modification that would strike the ten required elements of its Biennial Report and replace them with items that the Council worked on during the biennium, a survey was sent to the members asking them whether each of the ten elements should be kept or eliminated, and how often each needed to be reported on if kept. The results were inconclusive, so the discussion was continued.

Members were in agreement that although the Report contains valuable information, it is so long that most people don't read it. Paul DeLong suggested that if the Report is not reaching its desired audience, producing it is not the best use of staff resources. Since, as Paul indicated, most of the ten statutorily required elements of the Report are already reported on every five years in the Statewide Assessment, and the others are reported on elsewhere, the Council members agreed that a statutory change to eliminate the requirement should be pursued. Paul agreed with Ken Ottman's suggestion that the Council could better reach its audience by producing a report similar to that of the Urban Forestry Council, five pages long or less, on trends that affect Wisconsin, identifying challenges and opportunities, and referencing the Council website for more detailed information. Council members could deliver it in person to the legislators, who would then be able to learn about the issues at a glance.

The next step in the process is to get language written to request the statutory change. Paul agreed to draft the language and then bring it before the Council.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council accept the draft *2009-2010 Wisconsin Council on Forestry Biennial Report* with the discussed edits and additions passed unanimously.
- A motion by Jane Severt (seconded by Ken Ottman) that the Council work toward the elimination of the ten elements currently required by statute to be included in the report, and that it prepare a biennial report to include information at its own discretion passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Bill Horvath will indicate all of his edits on a copy of the draft report and send them to Paul DeLong for incorporation so that the report can be finalized before December 31st.
- Paul DeLong will draft language to request a statutory change to eliminate the requirement that the Council report on the ten elements currently listed in the statute pertaining to the Council on Forestry.
- Paul DeLong will bring the above-mentioned language before the Council after drafting it.

State Forester's Report

Administration Transition

The transition to the new administration is ongoing. The Governor-Elect has named both his Chief and Deputy Chief-of-Staff, but has made no cabinet appointments yet. When a new DNR Secretary is named, that person will be responsible for putting together the Secretary's Office Team, which includes a Deputy Secretary, Executive Assistant, and appointed Administrators, that include Paul's Forestry Division Administrator position. Paul made the observation that jobs is a main focus of the Governor-Elect's, and with forests being such a key component of the state's economy, forestry will be getting a lot of attention.

FY 11-13 State Budget Update

State agency budget submissions are in the Legislature now. The State Budget will be put before the Legislature in February. Paul doesn't know what it will look like for the Division. The Division only requested necessary expenses and costs of doing business in the Department's Budget. There were no new initiatives included. It will have to cut things in other areas to pay for necessary radio communications and for information technology updates not funded. Paul will share any new information with the Council via email when he gets it.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul DeLong will share any information he receives pertaining to the new administration's approach to Council appointments with Council members.
- Paul will share information on the State Budget with the Council via email as he receives it.

March Meeting Agenda

The Council will meet next on March 8th, 2011 in Madison. Agenda items are anticipated to include:

- Statewide Forest Strategy
- Legislative Tour Discussion with Jane Severt and John Duplississ
- Biomass Harvest Guidelines Report
- Forest Exploration Center
- State Forester's Report
- Legislative Matters, with an MFL Update
- Speaker about Domtar's biomass combustion project in Rothschild

The remaining quarterly 2011 meetings will take place on June 14th, September 13th, and December 13th.

The Council members will participate in a field tour on June 13th.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:01 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown, WDNR