

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Product Lab – Madison, WI
December 20, 2006

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Fred Clark, Sen. Roger Breske, Rep. Mary Hubler, Leon Church, Bill Ward, Mary Jean Huston, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Jeff Stier, David Majewski representing Colette Matthews, Rep. Don Friske, Bob Rogers, Troy Brown

Members Absent:

Sen. Russ Decker, Dennis Brown, Colette Matthews, Michael Bolton

Guests Present:

Anne Archie, Mary Brown, Bob Manwell, Gene Roark, Patrick Walsh, Mike Prouty, Tim Eisele, Stefan Bergmann, Gunnar Bergersen, Masood Akhtar, Darrell Zastrow, Kirsten Held, Todd Watson, Terry Mace, Earl Gustafson

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:33 a.m. Council Members and guests introduced themselves.

Deer Impacts on Forests

Paul DeLong expressed his appreciation for all the work done by DNR's Wildlife Management and Forestry Research staff on this issue. Much data has been gathered, and more updated inventory information is anticipated to be available soon. There is a great need to educate the public about the impacts of high deer numbers. Many hunters would like to see more deer. Private landowners are often disappointed if they don't see them, and won't allow hunting on their land. The DNR goal setting process for the size of the herd includes public input, and would be a great venue for raising the profile of this issue.

Communicating with the Governor and Legislature - Anne Archie, Chair, Task Force on Deer

At the September 13th Council meeting, the Task Force on Deer was assigned the job of drafting a letter and position paper to the Governor and Legislature communicating the Council's position on deer herbivory and its support of DNR management efforts to bring deer numbers down. Anne Archie asked the Council to decide whether drafts of these documents prepared by the Task Force embodied what it wanted sent out. After discussion, it was decided that, with some minor revisions clarifying and emphasizing the Council position, the documents were well done and adequately conveyed the Council's concerns. They will be sent out in January after revision.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Jim Heerey (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council's letter to Governor Doyle expressing its concerns on the size of the deer population include the following two sentences:
 - 1) "Herd reduction measures used to date have not been effective.", and
 - 2) "We believe that more aggressive measures are needed."was denied, with one vote in favor, and thirteen opposed.
- A motion by Paul DeLong (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the second bullet under the "Council Position" section of the position paper be revised to read:

"The Council supports management efforts of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources to manage the deer herd at the goals identified in administrative code. These goals must take into account the impact of deer density on forest sustainability. At current goals, deer numbers need to be reduced in many areas of the state."

- was amended by Bill Ward to position the last sentence separately as a third bullet. The amended motion passed unanimously with latitude for editorial flexibility.
- A motion by Fred Clark (seconded by Bill Horvath) that the authors of the Council's letter to Governor Doyle on the size of the deer population redraft the letter to incorporate the Council position stated in the position paper passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Mary Jean Huston will make the agreed upon modifications to the letter to the Governor and to the position paper.
- Pending the receipt of updated inventory information, Paul DeLong will give a detailed presentation on the status of our forests at the March Council meeting.

Woody Biomass Legislation – Bill Horvath

The Woody Biomass Task Force began working toward its goal of the production and utilization of woody biomass in April of 2004. Things have changed drastically since then. The high cost of oil and natural gas, and the desire for energy independence have sparked a demand for bio-fuels and bio-chemicals, and created new challenges in the areas of woody biomass supply and demand. For example, Governor Doyle wants four of our university campuses to be energy independent within five years. To replace 7,000 tons of coal and natural gas at the UW - Stevens Point campus alone would require bringing 1,750 semi-truck loads of wood and chips into the facility every year. Forest fragmentation has led to wood supply problems, as smaller parcels result in reduced access. The Task Force was surprised to discover that the majority of wood waste in our landfills is from demolition materials. Only a fraction is from trees and branches. Demolition materials are likely to contain hazardous chemicals, creating another barrier to the supply. The 31 "Components for Comprehensive Legislation for the Production and Utilization of Woody Biomass" contained in the Woody Biomass Task Force's *Draft Report to the Council on Forestry*, which Bill distributed to the Council, attempt to address these issues of supply and demand.

Review and Approval of Legislative Package

The offices of Senator Breske and Representative Friske are being used to draft the specific components of the legislation. At least half have now been drafted and reviewed by the Task Force. These include:

- Market-based approaches.
- A \$75,000 grant to research ways to improve more transparent measures for woody biomass.
- Removal of barriers.
- School programs and education of landowners.
- Use of woody biomass from forests in the context of other use of the forests, not as a single focus.

Comments also indicate concerns for:

- The lack of a precise definition for woody biomass.
- Potential competition for higher-value uses.
- Stand-alone economics (projects being subsidized up front, then falling into disuse).

The Task Force members themselves are not aligned on the value of all 31 items. Some could be dealt with through administrative rule rather than through legislation. It would be helpful for the Council to weigh in on the items. There followed a discussion of whether it was better to narrow the list of components to those that are broadly supported or to draft for all 31. It was agreed that it would be better to focus on a group of components where there is general agreement and be able to move forward with recommendations in March, than to get bogged down in debating issues and miss this window of opportunity.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Council members will send their comments on the 31 components of the comprehensive piece of legislation to both Bill Horvath and Mary Brown by February 1st indicating which components they could support as members of the Council, and which they would need more information on.
- Mary Brown will forward all comments received to the Council.
- Bill Horvath will share the Council's comments with the Woody Biomass Task Force, which will produce a list of components for Council support based on these comments.

- Bill Horvath will distribute a draft of the list of components for Council support to the Council members in advance of the March Council meeting.
- Bill Horvath will bring the list of components for Council support produced by the Woody Biomass Task Force to the March Council meeting for Council discussion and action.
- Paul DeLong will obtain BTU data on unutilized forest land, and will send it out to the Council.

State Forester's Report - Paul DeLong

Paul acknowledged Anne Archie, who announced that she will be leaving her position as Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest Supervisor to work for State and Private Forestry in New Hampshire. Jeannie Higgins will act as interim Forest Service representative on the Council.

FY '07-09 DNR Budget Submission

Paul distributed a description of the initiatives contained in the DNR budget submitted by the Natural Resources Board. He highlighted the topics, which include:

- Mitigating Invasive Insects and Plants – contains a modest EAB initiative as well as an invasive plants initiative.
- Strengthening Emergency Fire Response – increases resources for cooperative areas of the state.
- Mitigating Forest Fragmentation – includes initiatives for the State Forest Legacy Program and for the MFL Public Access Grant Program.
- Transfer 13 FTE from the CAES Division to the Forestry Division – moves pilot positions currently salaried through the Forestry Account into the Division of Forestry.
- Forestry Biomass Research and Development – asks for \$1,000,000 to leverage \$4,000,000 of federal funding to support R&D technologies for using forestry biomass as an energy source.
- Managing Sustainable ATV Trail Systems – requests funding from the ATV Account of the Conservation Fund to promote sustainable ATV use on public lands.
- Budget Reduction Plan - outlines potential cuts in response to DOA's request that state agencies submit reduction plans. It is uncertain whether these reductions will be implemented.
- Statutory Language Requests – which include:
 - State Forest Legacy Program and Appropriation
 - Managed Forest Law Public Access Grant Program
 - Karner Blue Butterfly Habitat Conservation Plan Appropriation
 - Authorization to Expand Emergency Vehicle Fleet
 - Timber Sale Revenue Appropriation
 - Forestry Biomass R&D Grant Program Continuing Appropriation

The MFL Public Access Grant Program request prompted some discussion. Concern was expressed that MFL fees might be more appropriately used to provide technical assistance to private landowners than to provide public access for recreational purposes. Paul explained that the compromise was intended to keep more people in the MFL, which is a significant tool for maintaining long-term forest sustainability.

The DNR has also requested that a piece of legislation be included in the budget process that would give communities in which an emergency has been declared by the Governor priority for use of Urban Forestry Grants with no requirement for matching.

The Governor's Budget will be out in February. It should be finalized by July 1st for the next biennium.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Jim Heerey) that the Council support the transfer of excess MFL fees to counties for budgetary items in lieu of the proposed public access grant program was denied, with one vote in favor and fourteen opposed.

MFL Application Numbers

Paul reported that there would be 1,912 new MFL applications effective January 1, 2007. Of those, 309 were prepared by consultants. Landowners have until May 15 to apply for the January 1, 2008 effective date. The DNR has received 805 petitions to be considered so far, of which 674 have gone through the referral process. Of those that have cleared, only 15 have not been picked up by private consultants.

DNR will be making a legislative request to simplify the MFL by having only one deadline to get a completed plan to the DNR to process and get entered under the law. Currently, the application process involves two deadlines, one on May 15 and one on July 1. DNR is also seeking modification to the MFL to reduce the amount of severance tax paid on timber damaged directly by fire or storm to account for the significant loss of value. They will ask the Natural Resources Board to put it out for hearing for a rule change.

Criteria and Indicators Update

Members have been appointed to Wisconsin's Forest Sustainability Framework Advisory Committee from industry, government, the University of Wisconsin, non-profit agencies, the private sector, and the Tribes. Mark Rickenbach, UW – Madison, is the Chair. Paul distributed a current membership list.

Consortium on Bio-based Industry Update

The Governor has reviewed the Consortium's report, and has asked DNR Secretary Scott Hassett and DATCP Secretary Rod Nilsestuen, Co-chairs, to move forward. They are looking into development of a wood-based cellulosic ethanol strategy. There could be something available to look at in March.

ACTION ITEM:

In response to a request by Governor Doyle for an assessment of Council members' interest in continuing to serve on the Council on Forestry, Paul DeLong will send an email message to members asking them to indicate in their response whether or not they wish to continue to serve.

Invasives BMPs Update – Fred Clark

The Forestry Invasives Leadership Team met on August 10th at Devil's Lake and held a conference call on December 19th. Most of their focus is on efforts to develop voluntary best practices for invasive species and on causal mechanisms. Fred expressed his gratitude to the Division of Forestry for having acted on many of the recommendations contained in the 2004 Invasive Species Task Group Report without requiring a Council vote on them. Fred gave a progress report on each of the four BMP tracks for invasive species:

Utility and Transportation Right-of-Way BMPs – This most immature of the efforts attempts to deal with one of the main ways that invasives are spread. A scoping session will be organized in early winter with six to eight utility and agency heads to get feedback. They hope to come out with a voluntary set of standards.

Urban Forestry BMPs – The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council is leading the effort, which could roll out as soon as 2009. It is intended to reach nursery, landscape, and arboriculture communities.

Recreational Forest User BMPs – There have been good indications of support among organizations for this effort, particularly from ATV and snowmobile associations. An advisory group will be brought together. A letter went out earlier this month to 24 organizations to kick off the effort. The next stage will be to decide what sort of outreach campaign will be involved. Funding is still being sought

Forestry BMPs – This is the lead effort right now. Significant progress has been made since the first meeting in 2006. A fourteen member advisory committee has been established to make decisions. Members include Gene Roark, Todd Watson, and Dave Majewski. Rules of engagement have been established. A technical committee has formed to draft products for decision-making or further development. They are working on an outline for what the BMP product will look like. It now has ten chapters and appendices. All products must be approved by

the Advisory Committee before going out to the public. Hopefully, what is learned in this process will make progress easier in the other three tracks. The next meeting is planned for February.

Legislative Update – Rep. Friske and Sen. Breske

Committee assignments have been made. Representative Friske is Chair of the Forestry Committee. He has asked Rep. Ott, Chair of the Agricultural Committee, to sit on the Forestry Committee. There is now a Biofuels and Sustainable Energy Committee. Its emphasis seems to be on agriculture, and it has no representation from the Forestry Committee. Representative Friske will ask Gene Hahn, Chair of the Committee, to keep him informed of developments.

Senator Breske is Chair of the Transportation, Tourism, and Insurance Committee. It is looking into the large number of Workmen's Compensation issues that sawmills are reporting, and at how to protect tourism from the impacts of invasive species on our trees and lakes. He'll have more to report in March.

Paul DeLong added that the DNR expects to go to the Natural Resources Board in January with the Departmentwide Invasives Legislative Initiative. The Divisions of Forestry, Land, and Water worked on it together. The Green Sheet should be done by the second week of January.

ACTION ITEM:

Paul DeLong will send the Green Sheet for the Departmentwide Invasives Legislative Initiative to the Council when it becomes available.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The Council will meet in 2007 on March 13th, June 12th, September 11th, and December 18th – all Tuesdays. Meetings will commence at 9:30 a.m. and end by approximately 3:00 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:06 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR