

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Department of Natural Resources – Dodgeville, WI
June 17, 2008

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Jeanne Higgins, Jane Severt, Joel Nilsestuen representing Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Mary Jean Huston, Rep. Mary Hubler, Ken Ottman, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Jeff Stier, Tim Gary representing Rep. Don Friske, Fred Clark, Michael Bolton, Jim Hoppe, Robert Rogers

Members Absent:

Rep. Don Friske, Dennis Brown, Sen. Bob Jauch, Troy Brown, Leon Church, Sen. Kathleen Vinehout

Guests Present:

Mike Prouty, Mary Brown, Darrell Zastrow, Steve Ehle, Dave Ladd, Matt Krumenauer, Henry Schienebeck, Laura Wyatt, Brett Hulsey, Tony Langenohl, Gunnar Bergersen

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Fred Souba welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 8:50 a.m. All present introduced themselves. Fred explained that the tour planned for the previous day had been cancelled because the Dodgeville DNR staff was actively engaged in flood relief efforts. Chief State Forester Paul DeLong commended Dodgeville Area Forestry Leader John Nielson, who took the lead on organizing the tour, for serving as Incident Commander of the Baraboo Incident Management Team in the Sauk County volunteer effort. John and all the staff on the IMT have done an excellent job in aiding the affected community.

Invasive BMPs – Fred Clark with Darrell Zastrow

The major focus of the Forestry Invasives Leadership Team (FILT), a Council subcommittee which arose from the Governor's Conference on Forestry in 2004, has been on four Best Management Practices (BMP) efforts, all of which are now up and running. The Forestry BMP effort has reached a milestone in that the FILT has approved a draft of a guidance manual intended for foresters, loggers and woodland owners entitled, *Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species*. Fred circulated a copy of this draft to Council members for review prior to today's meeting, and is asking the Council today for approval to begin preparing for a series of public and stakeholder listening sessions around the state.

Fred gave updates on the other three BMP efforts ("tracks"), and then asked Darrell Zastrow, DNR, a member of the Advisory Committee, to brief the Council on the Forestry effort:

- **Recreational User Track** – The Advisory Committee, composed of 22 stakeholders from around the state, has been meeting since April, 2007, and will be meeting today, June 17th. It expects to have a final set of draft standards ready by fall. Numerous groups, including both the Wisconsin Snowmobile and ATV Associations, are anxious to start promoting BMP adoption. Many will offer support with education and training.
- **Urban Forestry Track** – The effort, in partnership with the Urban Forestry Council, was kicked off by a meeting on May 20th with over 20 representatives of a broad range of stakeholders addressing their collective activities in an attempt to develop voluntary practices. Ken Ottman, Urban Forestry Council Chair, said they are very positive about a successful effort.
- **Transportation and Utility (Right-of-Way) Track** – Dave Siebert, Director of the DNR Office of Energy, is leading coordination of the effort. More than 40 different stakeholders representing utilities, railroads, State agencies, and County, State, and Federal highways, met May 19th. Some believe that developing BMPs will help them demonstrate that they're trying to comply with the invasives rules being developed by the DNR. Trying to encompass all of their activities is a challenge.

- **Forestry Track**– The Advisory Committee believes it now has a product ready to go to the public. The draft *Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species* was approved in May at its last meeting. It contains nine chapters. The first two are introductory. The next four represent the processes that a forester or logger goes through while in the woods. They are followed by chapters on wildlife habitat and fire management, then transport of woody material. The appendices were not distributed to the Council, as they have just been received by the Advisory Committee in draft form. They are the supporting materials for the BMPs, containing lists of species, fact sheets, control information, resources, financial assistance, and references. The BMPs are voluntary, and are written to apply to any operation. Darrell believes that certifiers may well adopt the BMPs as part of their standard. It is, therefore, very important that we make sure they understand what we meant them to be. One practitioner can address a particular BMP in a completely different way than another, based on the nature of his or her operation.

The next steps recommended by the Advisory Committee are:

- 1.) Finalize the draft BMP manual late in June, adjusting language and attaching appendices.
- 2.) Conduct three to four public listening sessions throughout the state from July into August.
- 3.) Make revisions based on comments received to prepare final draft for approval in December.
- 4.) Implementation of BMPs.

Implementation would begin with education and training, possibly in partnership with UW-Extension.

Chair Souba emphasized the need for input from foresters, loggers, and woodland owners, and asked that measures be taken to ensure that these practitioners are well represented at the public meetings. He offered the assistance of the Council if needed. Mary Jean Huston commended Fred Clark for exhibiting the vision and leadership to make this happen, and giving so much of his time. She also commended the DNR Division of Forestry for putting so many of its resources into it. She said that this was exactly the kind of State Forestry planning process that was hoped would come out of the Governor's Conference on Forestry.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bob Rogers (seconded by Mary Jean Huston) that the Council approve release of the draft *Wisconsin's Forestry Best Management Practices for Invasive Species* for public review passed unanimously, with the stipulation that foresters, loggers, and woodland owners be well represented at the listening sessions.
- Fred Clark will come to the September Council meeting with feedback received at the public listening sessions, and will update the Council on what the next steps will be.

Woody Biomass Harvest Guidelines Update – Jim Hoppe

At the March Council meeting, Jim outlined the process that would be followed to develop the Guidelines. He returned today with a presentation to update the Council on progress now that work is underway. The focus of the Biomass Harvest Guidelines (BHG) is woody biomass that comes directly from forestland harvest. It does not address sawdust or mill scraps. It contains both general and site-specific guidelines.

Jim started by commending the DNR Technical Team, comprised of Sarah Herrick, Joe Kovach, Eunice Padley, Carmen Wagner, and Darrell Zastrow, with administrative assistance from Allison Hellman, for their professionalism and team effort. The Advisory Committee, comprised of representatives from 14 different stakeholder groups, will be meeting this month, in August, and perhaps once again after that. Between these representatives and the Expert Reviewers, Jim feels the full spectrum has been covered. The Technical Team drafted the rationale and proposed Guidelines in April, then sent them to the Expert Review Panel for comments on the technical and scientific aspects, which were received by the Technical Team in May. The Review Panel's areas of expertise include, among others:

- Silviculture
- Forest Management
- Forest Economics
- Harvest Systems
- Wood Utilization

- Forest Health
- Forest Hydrology
- Forest Soils
- Forest Vegetation Ecology
- Forest Microbiology
- Fire Management

Revisions were made based on their comments. A second draft of the BHG will be provided for the Advisory Committee to review at its meeting this month. The Advisory Committee members will take the draft back to their stakeholder groups for comment, and provide those comments to the Technical Team in August for revisions as needed. The revised draft will be sent back to the Advisory Committee for approval in September. Then, Jim will present it to the Council on Forestry at its September meeting, requesting permission to solicit public input. The final draft will be brought to the Council for approval in December. If adopted, a determination will need to be made as to whether to incorporate the BHG into the Forest Management Guidelines (FMGs). If incorporated, Natural Resources Board review and public comment will be required, as FMGs are considered NRB policy.

ACTION ITEM:

- Jim Hoppe will bring the draft Forestland Biomass Harvest Guidelines to the September 2008 Council on Forestry meeting for Council approval and further discussion.

Global Warming Task Force Update – Matt Krumenauer

Matt is a Conservation Biologist at the DNR. Though his job is to work on the Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Plan, he volunteered to go beyond the scope of his duties to lend support to the Agriculture and Forestry Workgroup of the Global Warming Task Force (GWTF). Matt gave a presentation which provided an overview of the GWTF and its policy recommendations.

The GWTF was created about a year ago through an executive order, which contained three main charges:

1. To identify short and long-term goals for reducing Wisconsin's share of greenhouse gas emissions.
2. To present policy recommendations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Wisconsin.
3. To advise the Governor on opportunities to grow the state's economy, create new jobs and take advantage of business opportunities presented by this challenge.

Its membership draws from a broad range of interest groups, including industry, nonprofit organizations, environmental groups, and private citizens. It is co-chaired by Tia Nelson, Executive Secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands, and Roy Thilly, CEO of Wisconsin Public Power, Inc. They organized the GWTF into a technical advisory group, and six separate workgroups:

1. Agriculture and Forestry
2. Industry
3. Conservation and Energy Efficiency
4. Carbon Tax/Carbon Cap and Trade
5. Electrical Generation
6. Transportation

Each workgroup started off with a large set of policy options, and then narrowed them down to only the most feasible options for Wisconsin. The resulting six sets were consolidated into one list of options, which was presented for debate to the Task Force as a whole. It found consensus on about 50 of the recommendations, which will be included in the Final Report of the GWTF later this year. Included among the consensus items are all of the Agriculture and Forestry Workgroup's recommendations. Following are those relating to Forestry:

- Afforestation and Reforestation – Enhance WFLGP and MFL to encourage more afforestation, and increase education and assistance.
- Discourage Parcelization and Conversion – Develop a Wisconsin Forest Legacy Program, recommending at least \$4 million annually.
- Engage Private Landowners – Provide outreach, education, technical assistance, financial incentives, and promote sustainable management practices.

- Urban Forestry – Endorse and recommend adoption of the *20 Million by 2020* Urban Forestry initiative goals, and increase Urban Forestry Grant Program and state support resources.
- Advanced Biomass and Biofuel Commercialization – Provide financial support and incentives for supply of bioenergy, including biomass aggregators and infrastructure.

A significant need for more research and development overall was recognized.

The Task Force issued an Interim Report to Governor Doyle on February 19, 2008, containing nine early action policy recommendations on which there was consensus:

1. Energy efficiency program to reduce our electric load by 2% and natural gas load by 1% by 2015.
2. Policy changes in utility rulemaking that promote energy conservation and efficiency.
3. Creation of energy efficiency standards for residential and commercial buildings.
4. State Government leadership by reduction of its own GHG emissions.
5. Requiring energy efficient lighting in common areas and wall-mounted fixtures of rental properties.
6. Creation of the Wisconsin Greenhouse Gas Reduction Initiative, a voluntary motivational program.
7. Great Lakes Wind Study to look at the potential for wind energy development.
8. Wisconsin Geologic Carbon Sequestration Study.
9. Creation of uniform standards for siting wind systems.

Right now, discussion is focusing on areas where there was no consensus. On June 10th, the Co-chairs submitted a compromise proposal, known as the Strawman Proposal, in an attempt to bring the group together in these areas. It includes a recommendation for a national cap and trade system, and is accessible on the DNR website. Comments on the Strawman Proposal are being sought until June 19th at 4:00 PM. Comments submitted after that time will still be accepted. Council members are encouraged to comment.

The Task Force hopes to complete its work and give its final report to the Governor in July. It is likely that various state agencies, including the DNR, PSC, and DATCP, will be given recommendations to begin working on. The PSC is already looking at Wisconsin's potential for carbon storage underground as well as the viability of a study on offshore wind development on Lakes Michigan and Superior. The Legislature will also likely take up some of the recommendations in its new session. Paul DeLong pointed out that both major Presidential candidates have indicated a desire for a cap and trade system. We need to be able to assure that forests are treated appropriately under cap and trade because there will be clear financial incentives that will affect how forests are managed, and if they will remain forests or be converted to other uses.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul DeLong will send a copy of Matt Krumenauer's presentation to Council members.
- Paul DeLong will get a link out to Council members to the website that contains the policy recommendations and the Strawman Proposal.

WoodLINKS Program – Steve Ehle

In addition to being Editor of *Wood Finishing Magazine* and *Wood Digest*, Steve is the State Coordinator for WoodLINKS Wisconsin, a program that creates a link between the wood industry and the schools by offering training and certificate programs to high school and post-secondary school students and instructors. Its primary focus is finding, training, retraining and retaining workers. Affiliated with WoodLINKS – USA, it is a private, nonprofit, 501(c)3. Though funding is always an issue, it does receive financial support from industry and has received funding from DNR grants in 1996, 2004, and 2007. Its Advisory Board consists of two manufacturing representatives, a wood supplier, and two educators. It was founded in 1996 to address a shortage of skilled workers, due in part to a lack of interest among students, and curriculums increasingly geared toward the liberal arts and away from technical education. It attempts to change negative perceptions that exist among students toward the trades. One perception is that they are for men. WoodLINKS has been very successful in enrolling female students, many of whom may never have considered the wood industry as a viable career option otherwise.

WoodLINKS does not provide a curriculum. It does provide guidelines, teacher training, including yearly in-service training, resources, and some supplies such as hardware and veneer, often donated by businesses.

Both the introductory and advanced levels require a certain number of classroom and shop hours and passing a written test. The exam makes up 40% of the grade. Teacher evaluation makes up the remainder. Successful students become certified to a National Industry Standard for employment in the wood products industry. Schools pay a one-time license fee of \$5,000, and students pay \$50 for the test, but private industry usually picks up the cost of both. A large pool of skilled workers is our best defense against global competition. The Department of Public Instruction has been instrumental in referring schools to the program. Steve would like to see a mechanism put in place to identify areas of highest need in the state. The WoodLINKS Program is now offered in 39 technical schools and high schools throughout Wisconsin.

State Forester's Report – Paul DeLong

Paul encouraged Council members and interested parties to participate in the Great Lakes Forest Alliance conference in Madison next week, a great opportunity for dialogue with the states to the east and west of us, as well as with our Canadian neighbors.

State Budget Shortfall

This biennium, for the first time since 1988, there is a shortfall in the Forestry Account. The shortfall, which is entirely separate from the General Purpose Revenue shortfall, is in the area of \$5 million. Since 80% of Forestry Account funding is generated through the mill tax, which is based on property values, the housing market is definitely a factor. In order to get back in the black by July of 2009, the beginning of the next biennium, some lapses will need to be taken. The Division of Forestry does not use General Purpose Revenue, but does use the biggest portion of the Forestry Account, so it is looking for ways to reduce spending while still accomplishing its mission. This year has seen the smallest number of fires since 1931, the year we started keeping track, so some money should be saved in the firefighting area. While no final decisions have been made on reductions, it has been determined that it would make no sense to eliminate funding for existing permanent employees. Vacancies are still being held, not as many limited-term-employee (LTE) positions are being filled, and some projects will likely be delayed or foregone. Decisions will not be shared with the public until after affected partners are informed and understand how they will be impacted.

FY '09-11 State Budget

At its March meeting, the Council formed a subgroup to formulate a potential list of priority initiatives that the Council would like to see included in the State Budget, and to bring the list to the Council for approval. Chair Souba, a member of this Budget workgroup, presented the list of initiatives, in order of priority:

1. Research in the areas of: 1) biomass, 2) certified forest products, and 3) invasives control methods.
2. Creation of technical support for the Fuels for Schools Program.
3. Maintaining fire prevention and suppression programs critical to public safety.
4. Establishment of the '20 Million by 2020' 40% canopy program proposed in the Urban Forestry Council's 2007 Annual Report.
5. Maintaining funding to programs that support forestry BMP guidelines.
6. Creation of a "Driftless Area" program consisting of 21 southwestern counties supporting ongoing federal or private initiative like EQUIP, RC&D biomass, or Trout Unlimited cold water projects.

Chair Souba suggested that the initiatives be communicated by means of a letter from the Council addressed to Chief Forester Paul DeLong and DNR Secretary Matt Frank, and asked Council members for input on a draft of the letter that he'd distributed. In addition to communicating the Council's Budget priorities, the letter contains a paragraph expressing the Council's continuing objection to the use of the Forestry Account to offset GPR shortfalls. Mary Jean Huston suggested rewording this paragraph to clarify that the Council objects specifically to the use of Forestry Account funds to offset shortfalls that are unrelated to forestry or forest conservation. This change, along with a few other minor changes, was agreed to.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Mary Jean Huston (seconded by Ken Ottman) that the Council 1) approve the Budget priorities as listed in the draft letter from the Council to Paul DeLong and Secretary Frank, 2) approve sending the letter, with a copy being sent to the Council members, and 3) authorize the Budget Workgroup to send the letter directly after incorporating the agreed-upon changes, passed unanimously.

FY '09 Federal Budget

The House Subcommittee passed the Interior Appropriations Budget during the week of June 15th. Both the National Forest System and State and Private Forestry are affected. Funding was restored to Fiscal Year '08 levels with inflation factored in. Chair Souba, speaking again on behalf of the Budget Workgroup, proposed that a letter be drafted from the Council to Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation relative to the impacts of the Federal Budget on State and Private Forestry and how programs in Wisconsin will be affected. It would recommend a separate fire fighting budget be created to discourage further depletion of S&PF funds for this purpose, an idea central to the FLAME Act, now gaining momentum.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Ken Ottman (seconded by Fred Clark) that the Council support sending a letter relative to the impacts that the Federal Budget will have on our Forestry programs to our Congressional Delegation passed unanimously.
- An analysis of the Federal Budget by Paul DeLong, and a discussion about sending a letter to our Congressional Delegation on the Budget's potential impacts on our Forestry programs will be a yearly agenda item scheduled for the March Council meeting.

ACTION ITEM:

- Fred Souba will draft a letter to the Wisconsin Congressional Delegation on the impacts of the Budget on State and Private Forestry and its repercussions on Wisconsin Forestry programs, and will send it out after first sending it to the Council for approval.

Farm Bill

Paul distributed a summary of provisions in the 2008 Farm Bill, offering new or enhanced opportunities for forest management, with the EQIP Program showing the greatest potential:

1. **Environmental Quality Incentive Program** – Reauthorized with significant additions regarding forestry. "Forest Management" is an expanded purpose, an eligible "production system", and is included in the definition of a conservation "practice." Non-industrial private forest land and land on which "forest-related products are produced" are included in the definition of "eligible land."
2. **Healthy Forest Reserve Program** – Reauthorized with new provisions. The enrollment cap is deleted. Forest land may enroll through permanent easements. It is funded at \$9.75 million per fiscal year from 2009 to 2012, with no funding for Fiscal Year 2008.
3. **Community Security Program** – restructured to establish a new program entitled the "Conservation Stewardship Program." Forested land is eligible as "an incidental part of an agricultural operation." Non-industrial private forest land can't make up more than 10% of total acres enrolled annually.
4. **Forest Biomass for Energy** – Authorizes the Forest Service to develop a research and development program to promote the use of forest biomass for energy, funded at \$15 million annually for Fiscal Years 2009 through 2012. Priorities for project selection include technology development for use of low-value biomass, integration of forest biomass in biorefineries, development of new transportation fuels, and improved growth and yield of trees for renewable energy.
5. **Emergency Forest Restoration** – A new program that authorizes payments not to exceed 75% of the costs to non-industrial private forest landowners who carry out measures to restore forest land impacted by natural disasters.
6. **Community Forest and Open Space Designations** – A new program open to Tribes, local governments and environmental organizations that provides grants for fee-simple acquisition of forest land threatened by conversion to non-forest use and provides benefits to communities.

Other Program issues in the Farm Bill are a requirement that a statewide assessment be completed by 2010, and a response plan that gets to the issue of areas of priority in the state for different activities. Paul will have more to report on that in the future.

Legislative Issues – Tim Gary

Tim explained that Legislative Council Committees are created every even-numbered year. This year, a Legislative Study Committee on Domestic Biofuels is being created. Forestry will be represented. Representative Hubler has offered to serve on it. The Legislature is not in session now.

Other Issues

Jane Severt will represent the Council at the August 5th Land and Water Conservation Board meeting. She will join John DuPlissis and Patick Murphy, who will be giving a presentation on EQIP funding and discussing the new Farm Bill. Her presence will help keep forestry issues on the State Board's radar.

Dave Ladd, owner of Walnut Hollow, a family-owned wood products business founded 36 years ago, addressed the Council. His business once employed up to 400 people, and is now down to 75 employees. He believes this is a result of competition from China, and that there needs to be a tariff on all wood and paper products coming from China, similar to the one that exists on clothing items, especially in light of the fact that one out of six manufacturing jobs in Wisconsin is either paper or wood related. Chair Souba added that competition with China is indeed a concern for his company, NewPage, and for the country, as well.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on September 16th in Madison. Tentative agenda items include:

- Biomass Harvest Guidelines
- Invasive BMPs – Feedback from Public Listening Sessions
- Biomass Commodity Exchange – Steve Dinehart
- MFL Issues – MFL Task Group
- State Forester's Report – State Budget
- Follow-up on Work of the Global Warming Task Force Agriculture & Forestry Workgroup

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR