

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Product Lab – Madison, WI
September 13, 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, Michael Bolton, Mark Rickenbach representing Jeff Stier, Dale Dorow representing Colette Matthews, Tim Gary representing Rep. Don Friske

Members Absent:

Sen. Russ Decker, Dennis Brown, Jeff Stier, Troy Brown, Bob Rogers, Rep. Don Friske, Colette Matthews

Guests Present:

Sec. Scott Hassett, Amy Peterson, Mary Brown, Bob Manwell, Tom Scharff, Gene Roark, Patrick Walsh, Mike Prouty, Vern Everson, Elroy Zemke, Tim Eisele, Stefan Bergmann, David Liska, Laura Wyatt

Welcome and Introduction

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:36 a.m. Council Members and guests introduced themselves. Chair Souba welcomed DNR Secretary Scott Hassett. Scott expressed appreciation for all the work the Council has done and for working with the DNR toward achieving such accomplishments as the certification of our state, county, and MFL land, the latter being the largest such project in the United States. The Governor's Conference on Forestry in 2004 raised awareness of, and initiated action on, important issues like invasives, maintaining a strong forest-based economy, private forest stewardship, and fragmentation. Scott expressed his interest in hearing the Council's discussion on deer impacts, as the DNR has some difficult challenges in deer management, overpopulation being a major one. He wants to bring the issue of forest regeneration out front in the hope of gaining public understanding of the problems caused by overpopulation. Chair Souba thanked the Secretary for supporting the Council.

Deer Impacts on Forests – Mary Jean Huston for the Council Task Force on Deer

At the June 13th Council meeting, the Task Force on Deer was formed and charged with gathering the information necessary to develop a statement of why the issue of deer is important to forestry concerns in Wisconsin and with developing steps to take the issue forward. In response, the Task Force prepared a briefing proposal, *Deer Herbivory in Wisconsin Forests*, and distributed it to the Council. Mary Jean Huston discussed the highlights. At issue is the deer herd in Wisconsin being above recommended levels, resulting in browse negatively impacting the biodiversity and regeneration of our forests, threatening the sustainability of both forest ecosystems and forest products into the future.

Wisconsin has 14.7 million acres of commercial forest land at stake. Our main tool to control the herd has been sport hunting. Efforts at control have not always been successful due to limited hunting capacity, opposition to changes in hunting seasons and regulations, and the fact that the public enjoys seeing deer on the landscape. Deer forage selectively. Other mammals, birds, and insects are affected due to changes in the forest. Sustained over-browsing will cause, and may have already caused, changes that will be very difficult to reverse. This could threaten the sustainability of forestry as we know it in Wisconsin. If we are going to act and have an impact on the issue, the time is now.

The role of the Council is to identify forestry issues that the Governor and Legislature need to be aware of. Toward this end, the Task Force proposed three potential actions for Council Consideration:

1. Provide the Governor and the Legislature with a position paper expressing its support for the Department of Natural Resources' management efforts to bring deer numbers down and encourage even lower numbers.

2. Provide the Governor and the Legislature with a position paper expressing its concern that deer herbivory is a serious problem that, if not addressed, will affect the ecological and economic sustainability of Wisconsin's forests.
3. Suggest potential venues for addressing the issue of deer herbivory, such as a set of conferences.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Rep. Hubler (seconded by Bill Ward) that the Council provide the Governor and the Legislature with a position paper expressing 1) its support for the Department of Natural Resources' management efforts to bring deer numbers down, and 2) its concern that deer herbivory is a serious problem that, if not addressed, will affect the sustainability of forestry in Wisconsin passed unanimously. A copy of the letter will be sent to the Conservation Congress.
- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Rep. Hubler) that the Council, in its advisory role to the DNR, direct the Department to gather together existing research and statistical data relative to the impact of deer on trees and organize it to identify where information is available and where it is lacking passed unanimously.
- A motion by Michael Bolton (seconded by Fred Souba.) that the information requested from the DNR be discussed at the December Council meeting and that the letter expressing the Council's support and concerns be sent to the Governor and Legislature in January passed unanimously.
- A PR campaign to publicize the letter will be discussed at the December meeting.
- The Task Force on Deer's third potential action for Council consideration, concerning potential venues for addressing the issue, will be discussed at the December Council meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul DeLong will work with DNR to gather the data prior to the December Council meeting.
- The Task Force on Deer will work on drafting the letter to the Governor and Legislature for review by the Council at its December meeting.

Criteria & Indicators Initiative - Paul DeLong and Amy Peterson

Paul DeLong distributed an issue brief on the Wisconsin Criteria and Indicator Proposal to Council members in early June, and at the June 13th meeting asked them to consider whether or not they'd like to play a role. He is asking for a decision from the Council today.

Amy Peterson, Associate Planner with the Division of Forestry, gave some background information and an overview of the project, which she described as a tool to determine if management practices are sustainable in forestry. The 1992 Earth Summit was the catalyst for creating a process to identify a method for measuring forest sustainability. In 1993, a seminar, known as the *Montreal Process*, was held in Montreal, Canada to identify measurable criteria and indicators (C&I) for monitoring sustainable forest management. Seven criteria and 67 indicators were developed there that have since been widely utilized to quantify sustainable forestry. The Northeastern Area Association of State Foresters has focused on eighteen of those 67 indicators for use on a regional basis.

Currently, criteria and indicators are set up as part of the implementation of the State Forest Plan. Trends and issues have been identified. Now indicators that let us know how we're doing need to be identified. December 2007 is the target date to have them chosen. It is important to involve as many stakeholders as possible in the process. To accomplish this, the Division of Forestry has planned the following strategies for public involvement:

1. Hold stakeholder meetings both at the beginning of the project for input, and after criteria and indicators are chosen to update partners.
2. Develop an email distribution list to provide updates to partners and interested parties.
3. Develop an internet network where partners can provide policy and data updates, and where opportunities will be provided to link the core indicators to related monitoring, assessment, and research efforts.

The leadership teams of the Council on Forestry have a need to monitor sustainability in our forests. By selecting indicators and desired outcomes based on those indicators, there will be a set of tools available to

describe and measure progress toward future forest sustainability. Formal support from the Council would provide official backing for the initiative, engage an array of forestry partners in the decision making process, and lend a sense of credibility to the C&I development process.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Rep. Hubler) that the Council take a leadership role in the development of the Criteria & Indicators by creating an Advisory Committee passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEM:

- Chair Souba will contact and appoint Council members and possibly others within the next two months to form the Criteria & Indicators Advisory Committee.

State Forester's Report - Paul DeLong

FY '07-09 DNR Budget Submission

The DNR budget has not yet been submitted by the Natural Resources Board, so it is not yet a public document. For this reason, Paul could not share details of the submission. He was able, however, to highlight some of the key categories contained in it, including:

- Initiatives for controlling the spread of invasive plants and pests, including EAB
- Sustaining Wisconsin's forests and furthering work on state lands
- Meeting the costs of information technology
- Emergency firefighting issues, including the Cooperator Program
- The State Forest Legacy Program
- The Managed Forest Land Public Grant Access Program
- Biomass Grant Program
- Training
- Moving pilots to Forestry because of their use in fire detection and suppression

ACTION ITEM:

- Paul DeLong will share the actual budget submission with the Council in December.

EAB Update

Paul reported the first confirmed finding of Emerald Ash Borer in Illinois at the June 13th Council meeting. Since then, there have been three more independent confirmations there. At least two of them were from firewood. Maryland has found EAB again, and is trying to determine whether or not it was actually eradicated in the first place. Wisconsin plans to increase the level of survey work being done.

Limiting human movement of EAB is critical since natural movement is slow. Last month, a permanent rule was approved by the Natural Resources Board prohibiting firewood originating from more than 50 miles away from being transported onto state property. It will not go into effect until January 1st, to allow time for identification of certified sources of firewood. The state has been approached by a retailer of firewood that will kiln-dry firewood to certify that it won't spread EAB. Of \$7.6 million from APHIS for EAB eradication in Illinois and Wisconsin, Wisconsin will be getting just under \$1 million, which will be going to DATCP toward survey work and tracing firewood from find sites to determine if any of it is being brought into Wisconsin. The US Forest Service's Northern Research Station is coordinating research on the issue; however, existing research capacity is not being fully utilized. The Council could weigh in on the federal role before the Federal Budget is approved. The Governor's Budget will be coming out in February. Time is of the essence if we are to have any effect.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Rep. Hubler) that the Council communicate the urgency for federal funding relative to Emerald Ash Borer to our Congressional Delegation passed unanimously.

Website Update – Paul DeLong

Paul reminded Council members to check the wisconsinforestry.org website for any meeting materials they may be missing or want to check on. The site contains past minutes, agendas, presentations, and just about everything else Council-related.

Wisconsin’s Consortium on Bio-based Industry – Tom Scharff, Chair

The twenty-member consortium was formed as a requirement of Executive Order #101 relating to the development and promotion of biobased industry. It was charged with finding out what the state needs to do to further promote the bioeconomy and with delivering a final report to the Governor, which it did in June. Tom Scharff, Director of Power and Energy at Stora Enso, distributed copies of the report and gave an overview.

A bioeconomy would benefit Wisconsin by:

- Creating jobs and business opportunities. Many jobs would be created in rural areas, near the source of the raw materials used to produce bioenergy.
- Reducing dependence on imported energy. A significant share of the money now used to purchase fossil fuel, over \$18 billion annually, would be kept in the state and reinvested.
- Reducing environmental and greenhouse gas impacts. Air and water waste streams could be recovered. Biomass is carbon-neutral and is sustainable, while there is a limited supply of oil and other fossil fuels.

The Consortium developed the following core strategies for development of the bioeconomy in Wisconsin:

1. Apply biotechnology to existing industries.
2. Strengthen and enhance emerging biobased industries so that they can take leadership positions.
3. Develop and establish leadership in “leapfrog” technologies.

Final Report Recommendations

The Consortium made the following recommendations to the Governor:

1. ***Create the Wisconsin Bioindustry Partnership (WBIP)***. The WBIP will be charged with detailing the implementation mechanisms of the Consortium’s recommendations after they are accepted by the Governor. It will be co-chaired by DNR Secretary Scott Hassett and DATCP Secretary Rod Nilsestuen. Efforts to identify other members will begin in the next two months. The intent is that the partnership be industry-driven.
2. ***Build research and development capacity***. The University of Wisconsin’s world-class research facilities and education system and the Wisconsin Technical College System will be utilized.
3. ***Develop specialized business support programs***. The WBIP will be responsible for assuring that training, financing, tax incentives, and help in finding partners are available to entrepreneurs.
4. ***Build markets and demand***. The implementation plan should include a public education campaign, consider a state procurement policy that favors bio-based products, and identify other purchasing incentives.

Next Steps – Administrative, Legislative, Etc.

Chair Souba read a letter he received from Representative Friske requesting that the Council consider developing a formal opinion of the final report outlining how its recommendations could be implemented in a way that maintains the balance between agriculture and forestry. He also expressed his opinion that the Council should offer its assistance to the Governor in implementing the recommendations.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Ken Ottman) that Forestry have balanced representation in the WBIP, including representation from the Council on Forestry, passed unanimously.
- A motion by Bill Ward (seconded by Mary Jean Huston) that the Council send a letter to the Governor supporting his decision to have the WBIP co-chaired by representatives of both Forestry and Agriculture passed unanimously.

Working Group Updates

Biomass Work Group – Bill Horvath

The Work Group met yesterday. It is working toward increasing demand for and supply of wood products. Governor Doyle has stated that Wisconsin will have four university campuses that are energy-independent, which makes the need more urgent. The 31 components of the comprehensive piece of legislation which have been under development since June of 2004 have been identified, and are being looked at in detail. Some opposition is expected to the Work Group's final report, as some of its recommendations call for rather broad changes. Some of its recommendations include:

- Establishment of a fund to encourage school districts to convert to wood heat.
- Tax incentives for homeowners for the use of biomass for heat.
- Several grant proposals.
- Building bridges with wood instead of steel.
- Use of wooden road signs.
- Increased research.

Sen. Breske has offered to utilize his office to start the drafting process. At least eleven of the recommendations have already been given to the Legislative Reference Bureau. Rep. Friske is doing work to help get those parts drafted. The next step will be to review the drafts in December, and begin putting the comprehensive package together. The total package will be ready by the March Council meeting. The National Council of State Legislature is awaiting the package, possibly to use as a model for other states.

ACTION ITEM:

- Bill Horvath will bring a write-up on each of the 31 individual components of the proposed legislation to the December Council meeting.

Invasives Work Group – Fred Clark

The Forestry Invasives Leadership Team met on August 10th at Devil's Lake. Fred gave a status report on each of the four BMP tracks for invasive species:

Forestry BMPs – The Forestry BMP effort is about a third of the way through the technical development stage. Many issues still need to be addressed, and concerns about the costs, benefits and implications of the standards need to be worked through.

Urban Forestry BMPs – A Committee Chair has been selected and participants are being sought from a number of different organizations. The Wisconsin Urban Forestry Council will be shepherding the project.

Utility and Transportation Right-of-Way BMPs – This large and complex issue includes utility, pipeline, and electrical rights-of-way. Informal discussions through a scoping session with a small group of participants including representatives from the PSC, American Transmission Company, towns and counties is seen as a best first step in approaching the issue.

Recreational Forest User BMPs – There is considerable interest in this effort. So far, eighteen different stakeholder groups have been identified who could be part of the core effort to initiate the process. A number of organizations are already represented, including members of the Wisconsin ATV Association, the Conservation Congress, and the Wisconsin Society for Ornithology. Contacts are being made to see what the people who represent these groups anticipate. If the Council does not object, the Work Group would like to follow up with formal invitations to join an advisory committee, similar to the one formed for the Forestry BMP effort, to look at how to develop technical standards. Sources of funding need to be identified before much more progress can be made in that area.

DECISION ITEM:

- A Recreational Forest User BMP Advisory Committee will be formed.

ACTION ITEM:

- An invitation letter will be sent to potential members of the Advisory Committee in the next couple of weeks, after Fred shares a draft of the letter with Council members.

Legislative Update – Tim Gary (for Rep. Friske)

Though things have been quiet over the summer, a few Administrative Rules have come before the Committee. The permanent rule on EAB was received, and is expected to be in place soon. It replaces the emergency rule. The annual change to the stumpage rate was approved. Implementation of the Bio-fuels Research and Development Program, which came out of the budget passed last year, is slated to begin this year. The DNR has \$500,000 to work with, and the Request for Proposals has gone out.

In other matters, Rep. John Ainsworth of the Assembly Committee on Forestry has announced that he will not be running for re-election.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Rep. Mary Hubler (seconded by Fred Souba) that the Council send a letter of appreciation to Rep. John Ainsworth noting his retirement and his contributions to forestry passed unanimously.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, December 20th in Madison. Topics will include:

- The Deer Issue
- Components of the Proposed Woody Biomass Legislation
- State Forester's Report, with the DNR Budget Submission as the main topic
- Status of MFL Applications
- Criteria and Indicators Update
- Consortium on Bio-based Industry Update
- Legislative Report with update on post-election changes in committee composition

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR