

## Wisconsin Council on Forestry: Tuesday, March 3, 2026

DNR Northeast Region Headquarters, Lake Michigan Conference Room, 2984 Shawano Ave, Green Bay, WI 54313  
and via Zoom – [Register for the Zoom meeting here](#)

Council Members		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Hittle, <i>Chair</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Henry Schienebeck	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> William Van Lopik
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Matt Dallman, <i>Vice Chair</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Hoppe	<input type="checkbox"/> Brad Dorff
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heather Berklund, <i>Chief State Forester</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> James Kerkman	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adena Rissman
<input type="checkbox"/> Senator Romaine Quinn	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Eric Olson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Buddy Huffaker
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Senator Jamie Wall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janelle Crocker	<input type="checkbox"/> Rebekah Luedtke
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Jeff Mursau	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jordan Skiff	<input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-Builders
<input type="checkbox"/> Representative Lori Palmeri	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Erik Rantala	
<b>Next Meeting:</b> Next council meeting: <i>May 21</i>		

## Agenda

Tuesday, March 3	Notes: <i>Decisions, Action Items, Assignments</i>
<b>9:00 AM</b> Welcome & Member Introductions (Chair Hittle) 20 min	
<b>9:20 AM</b> Chair Update 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continued communication with MNFRC. Both councils see values in coming together but a joint May meeting was not logistically possible. Currently planning to have each Council's chair introduce their council virtually during respective May meetings.</li> <li>Ron Eckstein and Chair Hittle will speak at an upcoming Science on Tap event for the Forests at Risk topic.</li> <li>Upcoming Rural Policy Institute Summit coordinated by WIST and WEDC. A representative from the Council is encouraged to attend. Chair Hittle can help coordinate the RSVP.</li> </ul>
<b>9:35 AM</b> Open Forum for Council Members 15 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Jim Kerkman shared latest web analysis, showing increasing user/site visit trends.</li> <li>Urban Forestry Council's Biennial Report was recently published. Jordan Skiff, who serves on the Urban Council, provided updates from the CoF in that report, and regularly updates the Urban Council chair after CoF meetings.</li> <li>Henry Schienebeck provided an update on Road Improvement Programs and Mill closures</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 30 Agricultural Road Improvement Program (ARIP) projects were awarded in early March Governor will make announcements when approval is final.</li> <li>○ Billerud Mill is shutting off hardwood delivery for March and April. They are 20% over on hardwood. Encouraging cutting of softwood.</li> <li>○ Ahlstrom Mill in Mosinee plans to shut down in June. Could mean an estimated 40 producers will need a new outlet for their timber.</li> <li>• Jim Hoppe and Henry Schienebeck traveled to DC with the Forest Resource Association. Made several formal requests of legislators to sign onto specific legislation.</li> <li>• Adena Rissman provided an update on brainstorming phase of the reforestation summit. Thinking about potential USDA grants to apply for, or other ways to take work to the next level. Hearing more discussion on Forest Health, markets, and restoration of species. DNR is holding black ash and elm regeneration trials. Those with ideas should reach out to Adena.</li> <li>• Tom German, WI Board of Commissioners of Public Lands head has retired, Tia Nelson will serve as interim replacement.</li> <li>• Fire at Menominee Tribal Enterprises early morning of March 3<sup>rd</sup>. Lost stacker building behind the mill and some bunks of lumber. Fire was discovered early, the mill was not lost, and no one was injured.</li> </ul>
<p><b>9:50 AM</b> Legislative Updates 20 min</p>	<p>Senator Jamie Wall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expects next budget process to be relatively challenging. Last state budget increased spending and cut taxes. Continuing this way would put us in a deficit.</li> <li>• Assembly is no longer in session, senate will meet once more. Not a lot of wiggle room for changes; small ticket items make up the majority of what's moving forward. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ KNNF: from Sen. Wall's perspective, no configuration that could pass. Will run out of Money in June but may be resuscitated after the election.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• SAF bill passed out of the assembly and is now in the senate. Has already gone through senate committee. The bill was passed with an amendment that will involve less risk to the state taxpayer if the project doesn't succeed. The borrowing from the forestry seg account has been eliminated from the bill.</li> </ul> <p>Representative Jeff Mursau:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PFAS legislation to allocate \$125 million for PFAS remediation was passed unanimously in the assembly. Now in the Senate. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Some ~80 million went to private well remediation.</li> <li>○ Addressed some of the paper industries concerns with liabilities so the paper industry is now less responsible than initially.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**10:10 AM**

State Forester Updates  
National Forest Updates  
20 min

Janelle Crocker, USFS:

- USFS and USDA now have a full year of appropriations. Budget is flat with some line items declining. Current admin is focused on efficiency. Secretary is interested in a reorganization of the agency, as announced last year. Just waiting for that to be initiated.
- “Interim Operations”. Sharing of work across borders as USFS is dealing with many vacancies, regionally and in DC.
  - Specifically in WI, there is no longer a regional forester based in Milwaukee. Now reporting to Ken Arney in Atlanta region 8.
  - Largely, work on the ground in the forest has been able to continue.
  - Suspects hiring freeze will continue until after the reorganization. Were able to hire a very small number of seasonal employees.
- Secure Rural Schools and Farm Bill were reauthorized.
- Wood Innovations Program grant continues.
- Priorities for agencies remain: forest management, reforestation, prescribed fire, minerals development, rural prosperity and recreation access.
  - New projects in the hopper: West zone aspen and NEPA. Some have been participating in some north branch work for red pine and northern hardwoods.
- Chief Schultz wants innovation. Efficiencies for landowners and industry alike to work towards.
- Timber harvest: Anticipating 125 million board feet this fiscal year including GNA sales. Looking towards a steady increase towards 140 over the next five years.

Heather Berklund, State Forester:

- At a national level, current focus is on educating on appropriations and putting forth state priorities to various committees.
  - Focused on funding the FIA program, also elevating urban FIA needs.
  - State fire assistance and volunteer fire department assistance grants to ensure viability of wildfire prevention.
  - Signed on with American Hardwoods Council to address market priorities and wood innovation grants.
  - Continuing to monitor the Farm Bill. Pushed at the state level for 20-year GNA agreements.
  - Working to ensure the states have a seat at the table with consolidation not one wildland fire program under DOI. Important to maintain exchange of National firefighting resources.
  - Forest Health: Weighed in on forest health and useful tools. Encouraging use of those tools to identify future needs.
- Keeping a pulse on the Ahlstrom mill closure and looking into data on the impacts. Partial closure means getting data is a little more complex. Will engage with the Council on impacts.

**10:30 AM Break, 15 min**

<p><b>10:45 AM</b>  Evolution of Fire in WI Story Map and DNR Update  (Catherine Koele, DNR Forest Fire Prevention Specialist and  Jim Warren, DNR Forestry Field Operations Bureau Director)  45 min</p>	<p><a href="#">View the fire program update presentation on the Council on Forestry Website</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provided an overview of the fire program</li> <li>• Provided an update on prevention efforts</li> <li>• Demonstrated technology used in the program: WisBURN, dashboards, and fire history story map</li> <li>• Shared thoughts on what is ahead and challenges faced by the fire program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:30 AM</b>  Forest Regeneration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FRM Update (Carmen Hardin, DNR Applied Forestry Bureau Director; Brad Hutnik, DNR Silviculturist; Gabe Spangler, Forest Regeneration Monitoring Coordinator)</li> <li>• Red Pine and Oak Initiative Update (Chair Hittle)</li> </ul> 45 min	<p><a href="#">View the FRM presentation on the Council on Forestry Website</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shared an overview of the goals of the FRM program</li> <li>• Shared status of data collection and reporting</li> <li>• Shared insight into the uses of FRM data at various levels</li> <li>• Discussed program structure, history, staffing, and budget</li> <li>• Program will be finishing the last year of a 3-year cycle. Trends will likely start to emerge after this next year.</li> </ul>
<p><b>12:15 PM Lunch, 45 min</b></p>	
<p><b>1:00 PM</b>  Sustainable Aviation Fuel Update (Chair Hittle)  <i>Potential Action Item</i>  30 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chair Hittle provided a recap on the SAF bill since the last Council on Forestry meeting and offered time to debrief after the quick succession of activity, which ended in a letter of support.</li> <li>• <b>Motion:</b> [Henry Schienebeck] motioned to send a letter to the governor requesting a signature of support for the Forestry Revitalization Act.</li> <li>• <b>Seconded:</b> [Jordan Skiff] seconded the motion for discussion</li> <li>• Council members shared thoughts and perspectives. Both support and concerns were heard.</li> <li>• <b>Roll Call Voice Vote:</b> [Chair Hittle] called for a voice vote, noting that he would vote last. Chair Hittle described blanket abstention for legislative members that will be used. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rebekah Luedtke: Absent</li> <li>○ Buddy Huffaker: Yea</li> <li>○ Adena Rissman: Yea</li> <li>○ Brad Dorff: Absent</li> <li>○ Bill Van Lopik: Yea</li> <li>○ Erik Rantala: Yea</li> <li>○ Jordan Skiff: Yea</li> <li>○ Eric Olson: Yea</li> <li>○ Jim Kerkman: Yea</li> <li>○ Jim Hoppe: Abstain</li> <li>○ Henry Schienebeck: Yea</li> <li>○ Heather Berklund, State Forester: Abstain</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Matt Dallman: Yea</li> <li>○ Tom Hittle: Yea</li> <li>● Motion to provide letter of support for the Forestry Revitalization Act to share with the governor passes during an individual rollcall vote.</li> <li>● Chair Hittle will make edits to the letter and circulate for review.</li> </ul>
<p><b>1:30 PM</b> Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program Overview (Kristin Lambert, DNR Public and Private Forestry Section Chief) 30 min</p>	<p><a href="#">View the WFLGP presentation on the Council on Forestry website</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Kristin Lambert provides an overview of the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP), including the purpose, eligibility, and funding mechanisms.</li> <li>● Describes the grant application process, timeline, and impacts of wait times/</li> </ul>
<p><b>2:00 PM</b> Forestry Program Funding Efforts Update (Chair Hittle) 20 min</p>	<p><a href="#">View the Biennial Budget Timeline Slide on the Council on Forestry website</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Council reviews the timeline and identifies where their action is needed.</li> <li>● For May meeting, the Council would like to hear discussions and recommendations to approve a list of budget priorities to submit to the secretary. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Last time the Council did this, the letter was general in nature and did not include dollar amounts. Something similar would be appropriate again.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Looking for a council member to take over the coordination for the council's budget advocacy and prioritization. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Jordan Skiff is later identified as the lead for this effort.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>2:20 Break, 15 min</b></p>	
<p><b>2:35 PM</b> WI Forests FIRST Update (Chair Hittle/Camoin Associates) 30 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Chair Hittle reminds the Council of the budget bill language that sets up the intent for WI Forests FIRST project.</li> <li>● Camoin Associates provides an update on the WI Forests FIRST project. <a href="#">View the presentation on the Council on Forestry website.</a> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Working on putting the steering committee together to provide local and industry level expertise. Hoping to have them ready to meet in March</li> <li>○ New materials have been uploaded to the WI Forests FIRST page.</li> <li>○ Press release from March 3 officially announced Camoin Associates as project manager.</li> <li>○ Advancing the Wood Supply Assessment: planning to kick off in March</li> <li>○ Beginning to formulate diagnostic questions for the industry roadmap.</li> <li>○ Planning for in-person site visits.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>3:05 PM</b> Forest Industry Inside Perspective (Bill Millard, Granite Valley Products Inc./Rockbridge Sawmill) 30 min</p>	<p><a href="#">View the Industry Inside Perspective presentation on the Council on Forestry website</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Bill Millard shared background on Granite Valley Forest Products. one of the largest hardwood sawmill operations east of the Mississippi.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shared current struggles faced by the industry and some positive recent occurrences</li></ul>
<b>3:35 PM, Adjourn</b>	