

## Wisconsin Council on Forestry: Tuesday, November 18, 2025

Virtual 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 type="checkbox"/> Senator Jamie Wall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Janelle Crocker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Rebekah Luedtke
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Jeff Mursau	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jordan Skiff	<input type="checkbox"/> OPEN-Builders
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Representative Lori Palmeri	<input type="checkbox"/> Erik Rantala	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Next Meeting:</b> Next council meeting: January 27		

## Agenda

Tuesday, November 18	Notes: <i>Decisions, Action Items, Assignments</i>
<b>9:00 AM</b> Welcome & Member Introductions (Chair Hittle) 20 min	Council welcomes new member Eric Olson, representing consulting foresters. An opening for a builder position remains.
<b>9:20 AM</b> Chair Update 5 min	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continuing to stay connected with MN FRC, though Councils will not be convening in January due to current DNR travel constraints, considering spring meeting</li> <li>• January meeting will likely be held in Merrill or Madison                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Suggestion to look into UWSP Forest Lab for future meetings.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Request from Paul Fowler to have a Council representative on the 2026 Forest Products Week Planning Committee.</li> </ul>
<b>9:25 AM</b> Open Forum for Council Members 10 min	Rebekah Luedtke: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WCFA initiative: 2026 is “the year of safety” stemming from internal recognition that the organization could do a better job promoting safety among foresters, loggers, truckers, and others. Other council members are encouraged to participate with their stakeholder groups or share information with other partners.</li> <li>• Forestry Works initiative is active in many states to address forestry workforce challenges. Stephanie, head of Forestry Works is located in Alabama and would be happy to talk to the Council about what this could look like in WI. Cited as a potential future agenda item.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="https://forestryworks.com/">https://forestryworks.com/</a></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="https://forestryworks.com/minnesota">https://forestryworks.com/minnesota</a></li> </ul>
<p><b>9:35 AM</b> Forestry Program Funding Efforts (Chair Hittle) 20 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council is interested in continuing to recommend funding for UW Forestry Center and LEAF. They are working with Representative Mursau to get this funding secured outside of the budget cycle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ These funding requests as well as several others that Council advocated for did not go through during 25-27 budget cycle.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• From WCFA perspective, WisFIRS IT support is critical piece for the work of many partners. Would be worth requesting funding for this out of budget cycle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council cites potential for a DNR staff member to educate Council on what WisFIRS is and how it is used at the January meeting. Other suggestions to connect with consultants and private land WisFIRS users to understand their needs.</li> <li>○ In the meantime, Chair Hittle and Chief State Forester will work to gather background information that would provide appropriate support for the backbone of a bill.</li> <li>○ Redrafting the bill should be a priority to get it on people’s radars as soon as possible.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>9:55 AM</b> WI Forests FIRST Update on Steering Committee and Project Manager (Chair Hittle) 30 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive request for letters of interest for a project manager. Committee heard from nine firms, ranging from very advanced in project management to firms very advanced in forestry industry. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Selected four firms to move forward with virtual scripted interview process. Executive committee will decide who they will move forward with and request official proposal.</li> <li>○ Goal to have a project manager ready to begin by mid-December.</li> <li>○ Executive committee is impressed with the caliber of applicants</li> </ul> </li> <li>• WI Forests FIRST has a place on the Council website where people can access information.</li> <li>• Looking next to set up steering committee. Will include Council Committee Chairs and is still open to other stakeholder groups. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Still looking for recommendations there.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>10:25 AM Break, 15 min</b></p>	
<p><b>10:40 AM</b> Sustainable Aviation Fuel Update (Chair Hittle) <i>Potential Action Item</i> 45 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No action item will be presented during this topic.</li> <li>• Chair Hittle shared the Council’s letter in a testimony at public hearing in October. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Position was that Council is supportive of initiatives to develop and diversity industry, but they do not have enough information to weigh in specifically on the proposed plant in Hayward.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Council has an opportunity to weigh in, are working to learn more in order to meet statutory role to advise and provide recommendations.</li> <li>● Adena Rissman, Chair of the Sound Forestry and Policy Committee gave a presentation based on information learned during recent Sound Forestry and Policy Committee meeting (<a href="#">SAF slides review TNC, MFRC 11-18-25.pdf</a>)</li> <li>● Council members discuss outstanding questions and information needs.</li> <li>● Chair Hittle proposes Adena puts together a document of key questions we've heard and circulate this among Council Members. Potential to facilitate another meeting invite experts who can answer these questions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:25 AM</b>  Red Pine and Oak Initiative Update (Chair Hittle)  <i>Action Item: Approve Recommendations</i>  10 min</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Initiative assesses what we know about red pine and oak.</li> <li>● Chair Hittle circulated a draft of recommendations (<a href="#">COF Red Pine and Oak Recommendations Draft Nov 18 Mtng.pdf</a>). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Identified trend that we are not replacing red pine at the rate we historically have been. Confirmed by WisFIRs.</li> <li>○ Causes are wide ranging including land conversion and change in management objectives.</li> <li>○ Includes a list recommendations put together by those working on the forest age class initiative and those at the reforestation roundtable.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Council discusses the reality of advancing some of these recommendations without increasing capacity.</li> <li>● Jordan Skiff makes motion to accept letter as is.</li> <li>● Rebekah Luedtke seconds the motion.</li> <li>● No discussion, no one dissents motion, no one opposes using unanimous consent.</li> <li>● Motion carries. Draft will be finalized and sent to addressees.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:35 AM</b>  Legislative Updates  10 min</p>	<p>Representative Mursau:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Working on funding for the LEAF program and other forestry education efforts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Heard that this is an important item and is working to get the bill out</li> <li>○ Representative Palmeri notes she is supportive of bill.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Trying to move SAF bill along in the legislature. There have been a few funding roadblocks.</li> <li>● Two bills for Stewardship Reauthorization heard in Forestry, Parks, and Outdoor Recreation committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rep. Mursau is trying to keep the program alive but recognizes there is a large base who feel that the state has enough land. Put some considerations for this in the bill, which passed out of committee on a six-six vote.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Kate Thickens on behalf of Senator Wall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● MFL Recording Fees bill will be introduced shortly.</li> <li>● County Forest Administrator Grant Eligibility bill has passed both Senate and Assembly.</li> </ul> <p>Jack Fitzgerald of behalf of Senator Quinn:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Still working to get the SAF bill moving through the legislature. It passed out of the Senate Ag committee. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Note from Mursau Office that Assembly was late to getting the SAF bill to a committee, so it was recently referred to Ways and Means committee rather than Forestry Committee. There will likely be a hearing after the first of the year.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>11:45 AM</b>  State Forester Update  National Forest Update  10 min</p>	<p>No State Forester Updates shared due to time constraints.  Janelle Crocker, USFS Representative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• US Forest Service and many government agencies are returning to work after lapse in government funds, which led to 43 day shutdown.</li> <li>• Currently, Forest Service is included in the continuing resolution until January. USFS is funded through Department of the Interior.</li> <li>• USFS will be looking at last FY and moving into next FY</li> <li>• Farm Bill is extended through Continuing Resolution's end.</li> <li>• Work continued through shutdown on CNNF for anything related to health, safety and administration priorities. Fire, timber, recreation, access, and energy. This included fuelwood permits. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Government closure looked different at different levels</li> <li>○ CNNF is not expecting any delays in projects but they are still getting up to speed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• There have been some organizational changes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ acting regional forester is no longer acting. Regional forester 8 (southern region) now has leadership over both regions. Gourdy bloom will stay on in a deputy role to support. This is an interim shift to fill gaps.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Secretary Rollins did release a reorganization plan for which comment period has closed.</li> </ul>
<p><b>11:55 AM</b>  Wrap Up  5 min</p>	
<p><b>12:00 PM, Adjourn</b></p>	