

A graphic of the state of Wisconsin in a blue-to-green gradient, with three white evergreen trees in the center.

WISCONSIN FORESTS FIRST

Forest Industry Roadmap and Strategies for Tomorrow



October 1, 2025

Final Budget Bill Language

Act 15 , pages 190-191.

- (10) FOREST-INDUSTRY-WIDE STRATEGIC PLAN. In the 2025-26 fiscal year, the department of natural resources shall award a grant of \$1,000,000 from the appropriation under s. 20.370 (2) (mq) jointly to the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association and the Wisconsin Paper Council to research and develop a recommended forest-industry-wide strategic plan for this state. Upon completion, the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association and the Wisconsin Paper Council shall provide this research and recommended plan to the council on forestry. No later than December 31, 2027, the council on forestry shall provide a report detailing the research outcomes and recommendations to the governor and the chief clerk of each house of the legislature, for distribution to the appropriate standing committees under s. 13.172 (3).

What's Happening



- CoF, DNR, GLTPA, WPC – establish “Executive Committee”
- Branding and Logo (WI ForestsFIRST - Forest Industry Roadmap and Strategies for Tomorrow)
- Grant Award Process
- Draft Working Structure, Partner Roles, Steering Committee
- One-Pager – goal statement, why this why now, scope, deliverables
- Draft Process and Request for Proposals for Project Manager / General Contractor
- In Kind Hours Tracking

Goal Statement



Project Goal: Closely examine Wisconsin's forest industry and its impact on the state's ecological, social and economic well-being for future generations.

This will be accomplished through the development of a strategic planning process that will examine critical forest industry components. The effort will be supported by a coalition of stakeholders and led by the Wisconsin Council on Forestry (CoF), the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) and the Wisconsin Paper Council (WPC). The planning effort will result in the development of a comprehensive, industry-driven strategic plan and actionable roadmap to be delivered by December 2027. The strategic plan will represent a statewide vision for an environmentally sustainable, economically robust and diverse forward-looking industry built on an assessment of Wisconsin's strengths and capacities and future market opportunities. We aim to develop practical solutions enhancing current business and attracting new wood using industries to ensure forest health for future generations.

Guiding principle –a healthy resilient forest industry is critical to maintaining healthy functioning forests for the benefits they provide to people and nature. It is essential that Wisconsin's established environmental standards and sustainable forest management remain uncompromised in all project components, analyses, and outcomes, even as adjustments are considered.

Operating Structure and Governance

DRAFT 10-01-2025

Executive Committee

Members

- Council on Forestry Chair and the council Vice Chair
- Great Lakes Timber Professionals Executive Director (CoF member)
- Wisconsin Paper Council President and the council Director of Operations
- WDNR Chief State Forester (CoF member)
- Steering Committee Representative (Possible CoF member)
- Project Manager

Charge

The Executive Committee will operate as a group to direct the overall WI Forests FIRST project, including selecting the Project Manager (PM), overseeing the PM consulting services, approving receipt of final reports and PM payments, and overseeing grant-related documentation and related procedures. GLTPA is the fiscal agent for managing grant monies and communication with WDNR grant managers.

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Steering Committee

Members

1. Council on Forestry - Committee Chairs
 - Sound Forestry and Policy Committee, Dr. Adena Rissman
 - Forestry Funding Committee, Jim Hoppe
 - Forest Products Utilization Committee, Rebekah Luedtke
 - Council Profile Committee, (Jim Kerkman and/or Bill Van Lopik)
 - Transportation Committee ?

5. xxx

6. xxx

7. xxx

8. xxx

9. Xxx

10. Xxx

11. Xxx

12. Xxx

13. Xxx

14. Xxx

15. Xxx (note: final number of members on Steering Committee yet to be determined)

Members will be invited to join by the Executive Committee considering input from Council on Forestry members.

Charge

The Steering Committee's charge is to provide assistance to the Project Manager and general guidance on overall project component efforts. This may include review of ongoing work completed by project analysts and consultants to help ensure appropriate information is reviewed and synthesized correctly. The Committee will endeavor to be "in-house" local experts to provide a sounding board for the Project Manager.

The Steering Committee is the opportunity for a stakeholder engagement and additional stakeholder input through Council Committees

Operating Structure and Governance

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- The WI Council on Forestry is engaged through membership on the Executive Committee and Steering Committee, and ultimately responsible for submitting the final project report and actionable recommendations to the state legislature.
- The WDNR is engaged through membership on the Council on Forestry, project Executive Committee (non-voting) and Steering Committee -- helping facilitate data, resources, connections to stakeholders and subject experts. WDNR staff is available to offer input, considerations, and suggestions for a better understanding and informed decision-making process throughout the project.
- The GLTPA is engaged through membership on the Council on Forestry and project Executive Committee.
- The WPC is engaged through stakeholder representation on the Council on Forestry and project Executive Committee.

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Project Manager

A project manager will coordinate and provided project oversight and communication with the Executive Committee and Steering Committee and secure project consultants and experts as needed to complete project component analysis and reports. The project manager will be a non-voting member of the Executive Committee, and along with the Steering Committee chair, manage Steering Committee functions.

What's Next

- By mid-day Wednesday, Oct 8
 - Input from Council members on draft materials
 - Suggestions for project managers / general contractor firms to contact
 - Suggestions for Steering Committee members
- Executive Committee Meets Oct 9
 - Finalize draft documents
 - Develops Steering Committee membership candidates
 - Work on PM / GC “bidders” list
 - Discuss Options for Council Website Section – final materials on CoF site

What's Next



- Week of Oct 13 – invitation reach out to potential project managers
- Exec Committee works on project manager selection process Oct 20 – Nov 21 (+/-)
- Exec Committee works on media messaging
- Steering Committee in place by Nov 18 (+/-)
- Council on Forestry Update at virtual meeting Nov 18
- With Project Manager – work to secure consultants for first two studies, fiber supply and permitting and regulations, to begin those January 2026