



WISCONSIN COUNCIL ON FORESTRY

Jim Doyle, Governor

Reply to:

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Frederic Souba, Jr.
Chairman
Wisconsin Rapids

March 27, 2007

Mary Jean Huston
Vice Chair
Madison

The Honorable Jim Doyle
115 East State Capitol
Madison, WI 53702

Jeffrey Stier
Secretary
Madison

Michael Bolton
Plover

Dear Governor Doyle:

Sen. Roger M. Breske
Eland

I am writing on behalf of the Council on Forestry to express the Council's views on the Knowles/Nelson Stewardship Program. At our meeting on March 13, 2007, the Council voted to express to you our views on this important program.

Dennis Brown
Rhineland

The Council, composed of a diverse set of interests associated with Wisconsin's forests, believes Stewardship is an important tool for furthering the capacity of our forests to provide the full array of economic, environmental and social benefits long into the future. Focused public investment in the acquisition of land, both in fee and in part, can help assure the long-term maintenance of forests and the public values they provide.

Troy Brown
Antigo

Leon Church
Appleton

Fred Clark
Baraboo

One tool identified by the Council as particularly valuable for maintaining forests is the acquisition of conservation easements on large blocks of working forest lands. With increasing pressure on industrial owners to divest of their forest lands, we have seen both the parcelization of large blocks of land and the closure of land open for generations to the public for recreation. Large block working forest easements maintain the land in private ownership, facilitate the maintenance of the capacity of the forest to sustainably produce products that support both the local and statewide economies, and assure that land is open for hunting and other forms of public recreation. Protecting these public benefits in this way is accomplished with a lower investment of public funds. At this point in time, almost 90% of the nearly one million acres of industrial forest lands do not have any long-term protection. The public values at risk are immense.

Sen. Russ Decker
Schofield

Paul DeLong
Madison

Rep. Donald Friske
Merrill

James Heerey
New Auburn

William Horvath
Stevens Point

Rep. Mary Hubler
Rice Lake

The Council also supports increasing the ability of counties to work in partnership with the State to mitigate the fragmentation of forests. The State has partnered with counties for over 75 years to sustainably manage forests. In discussions about reauthorizing the Stewardship Program, the Council encourages the DNR, Governor and Legislature to improve the ability of counties managing their forests in partnership with the State to cost-share acquisition of forest land that can be managed collaboratively to enhance the public benefits we all derive from these forests.

Colette Matthews
Tomahawk

Kenneth Ottman
Milwaukee

Robert Rogers
Custer

William Ward
Green Bay

It is important that the Stewardship Program be implemented in a manner that provides a positive return to the public for their investment. Given the wide array of benefits our forests provide, the Council urges that Stewardship be designed and implemented in a

manner that conserves forests, and does so using tools and partnerships that can stretch available funds while maximizing public benefits.

Sincerely,

Fred Souba
Chair

Cc: Wisconsin State Legislature
Natural Resources Board