

## Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry  
Hotel Mead – Wisconsin Rapids, WI  
June 13, 2006

### **Members Present:**

Jeff Stier, Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Fred Clark, Bill Ward, Mary Jean Huston, Robert Rogers, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Rep. Donald Friske, Colette Matthews

### **Members Absent:**

Sen. Roger Breske, Sen. Russ Decker, Rep. Mary Hubler, Leon Church, Dennis Brown, Michael Bolton, Troy Brown

### **Guests Present:**

Anne Archie, Earl Gustafson, Mary Brown, Allison Hellman, Jim Warren, T.J. Morice, Paul Pingrey, Bill Walker, Joe Kovach, Bob Mather, Rep. Marlin Schneider, Dennis Seevers, Cynthia Keefer, Louise Clemency, Tim Laatsch, John DuPlissis, Kirsten Held

### **Welcome and Introduction**

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 8:07 a.m. Tim Laatsch of Stora Enso, former member of the Governor's Council on Forestry, welcomed all present. He urged the Wisconsin Council on Forestry to do everything in its power to avoid Wisconsin's forests being taken for granted, and thanked its members for all their work in protecting our forests. Council members and guests introduced themselves. Chair Souba welcomed Anne Archie to the table, representing the United States Forest Service.

Chair Souba gave a synopsis of the Council's June 12<sup>th</sup> tour of the area coordinated by John DuPlissis and his staff at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point. It began at the Griffith Nursery with an in-depth look at State nursery operations. The next stop was the Big Flats Town Hall where Nancy Livingston, who lost almost all of her tree farm acres in the Cottonville Fire, was interviewed. Nancy has become a community leader, getting people together to replant and educating them about forest fires. DNR issues relating to forest fires were looked at, and there was a review of the Firewise Program and problems encountered in efforts to protect homes in the forest. The final stop was to Plum Creek's land to look at deer impacts and damage. Impacts on reforestation efforts in red pine were evident.

### **ACTION ITEM:**

- Paul DeLong will follow-up on Nancy Livingston's suggestions for improvements in such areas as dealing with catastrophic loss with the DNR, and report back to the Council.

### **Stora Enso in Wisconsin – Fred Souba**

The presenter was unable to attend this meeting, so the item was tabled. Fred asked that it be rescheduled.

### **DECISION ITEM:**

- *Stora Enso in Wisconsin* will be an agenda item for the September 2006 Council on Forestry meeting.

### **Deer Impacts on Forests – Council Recommendations**

The issue of how the growing deer population impacts forests was explored in detail at the March 8<sup>th</sup> Council meeting. Shortly thereafter, Representatives Friske and Gunderson held a legislative hearing exploring the matter further.

Council members engaged in a brainstorming session on possible strategies and recommendations. They discussed the need to find ways to educate the public about the impacts. Most people who are not private

woodland owners are unaware of the problem. Some hunters would actually like to see more deer. One way to get the word out to hunters would be to send out flyers with hunting licenses. A public opinion poll could be valuable in guiding leaders. At some point, the Council might issue a formal opinion or press release on the issue, and this could be used as an opportunity to identify areas influencing impacts such as baiting and feeding, seasons, and cultural attitudes. A coalition of interests, including deer hunting groups and environmental groups, could be created. The Council could sponsor a forum, similar to the Governor's Conference on Forestry, to bring people together in an effort to find common ground.

Representative Friske stated that the role of the Council is to identify issues in forestry that the Executive Branch needs to be made aware of. Paul DeLong said that the Council should advise the Governor and Legislature that this is an issue, and of the manner in which it recommends addressing it.

Chair Souba noted three main themes arising from this discussion:

1. Education.
2. Importance of raising the issue.
3. Bringing a coalition of people together.

DECISION ITEMS:

- The Council resolved to form a task group charged with 1) gathering the information necessary to develop a statement of why the issue of deer is important to forestry concerns in Wisconsin, and 2) developing steps for taking the issue forward.
- Jeff Stier, Mary Jean Huston, and Anne Archie will staff the task group, with Anne serving as Chair. Others may be recruited, enlisted or consulted with by the members.
- The task group is to complete its work and distribute a synopsis to Council members for review in advance of the September 2006 Council meeting.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul DeLong will recommend that some space be devoted to the issue of deer impacts on forests in DNR's *Natural Resources Magazine*.
- Mary Jean Huston will check into the feasibility of holding a discussion at Wingspread in Racine to find common ground among opinion leaders on the deer issue.
- The Council task group will report to the Council at the September Council meeting.

**Roadless Area Review Process - Paul DeLong and Jim Warren**

The federal rule that became effective on May 15, 2005 established a petitioning process that provides Governors an opportunity to seek establishment of or adjustments to management requirements for National Forest System roadless areas in their states. Up to 25 roadless areas within the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest could be affected. The DNR is seeking public comment on each of these areas between May 19<sup>th</sup> and July 17<sup>th</sup> through open houses, individual contacts with the tribes, and through a web-based system. These comments will be summarized and will be submitted to the Governor hopefully between August 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> to aide in his decision on the content of his petition.

Jim Warren used a Power Point presentation to give an overview of the web-based system. Users will be able to view each of the 25 areas on a map, select individual areas, and read area descriptions, biological information, historical activity, and management area descriptions which include how recreation and transportation are addressed. They will then be able to comment on whether or not they support each area of management and what adjustments in management they would like to see made, if any. Kirsten Held and her staff are helping to manage the incoming data.

Some Council members expressed concern that most people would interpret "roadless" areas as wilderness areas without any roads, while in fact none of these areas are completely roadless. Most are in the "selective harvest" category, while a few are classified as "semi-primitive, non-motorized." The detailed information given in the web-based system and at the open house sessions should make that more clear. There was also some concern that the web-based system for commenting on the roadless areas might be confusing and require a bit of time if comments were offered on multiple areas.

## **State Forester's Report - Paul DeLong**

### Bio-Industry Consortium Recommendations

Although the Consortium has not yet released its report, Chief State Forester Paul DeLong was able to share some of its highlights. The Bio-based Industry Consortium is looking for opportunities where Wisconsin, with its strong agricultural and forestry resources, can be competitive in the bio-based economy. Emerging “leap-frog” technologies offer opportunities to make money from industrial waste or by-products, such as manure, corn stover and woody biomass. Sugars can be extracted from wood at the pulp mill to make wood-based cellulosic ethanol prior to pulping the wood. Corn stover can also be used to make cellulosic ethanol. A Madison-based company, Virent, has developed a process that turns sugars into hydrogen gas for fuel. The key recommendation of the report is the creation of a Wisconsin bio-industry partnership that will be a focal point for actualizing broad recommendations into specific applications and technologies.

Paul noted that it has been a challenge to highlight forests in the equation, and acknowledged all the work that Earl Gustafson and Tom Scharff have done in this regard.

### ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul will arrange for someone from the Bio-Industry Consortium to speak about the forestry aspects at a future Council meeting.
- Paul will send Council members a link to the Consortium’s report when it is posted to the website.

### Alternatives for Delivering Private Forestry Services (Paul Pingrey)

Paul Pingrey, DNR Private Forest Certification Specialist, gave an overview of Wisconsin’s private forestry program, possibly the strongest in the country. It utilizes a combination of DNR service foresters, private Cooperating Foresters and other partners. Wisconsin had 12,500 new forest management plans between 1997 and 2004, almost twice the number of any other state. Currently, 230 DNR staff perform the equivalent private forestry work of 94 full-time private forestry positions in combination with their other duties. The number of Cooperating Forester firms has increased from 83 in 1998 to 121 in 2006, with the cooperators’ share of private timber sales also on the increase. The partnership between DNR and Cooperating Foresters is working.

In an effort to determine if Wisconsin’s program could be improved, the Council asked at its March 2006 meeting that other private forestry service delivery methods be explored, focusing on Michigan’s model. Paul Pingrey was assigned the task, and to date has only had time to look in detail at Michigan’s decentralized Conservation District (CD) approach, which he gave a presentation on. Michigan’s private forestry program was similar to Wisconsin’s, but was cut deeply due to funding problems. The Michigan Association of Conservation Districts was formed in 1998. It consists of eighty districts roughly aligned with the counties, though not actually part of county government. It serves as a gateway for getting assistance from other agencies. Not all of the CDs have foresters. The state funds twenty forester positions that are shared by the CDs. Three additional forester positions are funded entirely by three of the CDs. The Michigan DNR has seven staff foresters who provide some oversight and training to these 23 CD foresters. CD forester assistance is available in less than two-thirds of the state.

The following are characteristics of Michigan’s Conservation Districts:

- They are not non-profit organizations.
- They are not authorized to levy taxes.
- They can ask county commissioners to raise taxes on the ballot to support their work.
- They can act as businesses, owning property, accepting gifts, and raising funds from work done.
- They don’t have the right of eminent domain, and can’t generally mandate conservation practices.
- Each district is on its own to obtain funding through any number of sources, including state and county allocations, tree seedling sales, grants, fee-for-fee services, and fundraising events.

Debra Huff, Michigan DNR Forest Stewardship Coordinator made some further observations:

- Some of the CDs have excellent, competent, experienced foresters.

- There is a high turnover rate among CD foresters due to low pay and no chance for advancement.
- CDs charge for most services, including basic forestry planning and plan implementation.
- There is little consistency in training or quality monitoring.
- There is a tendency to avoid writing forest stewardship plans that would come under DNR review.

In talking with forest stewardship coordinators from other northeastern states at a recent Forest Resources Program Leaders meeting, Paul made the following general observations about other programs:

- Some states have integrated forestry programs like Wisconsin's, maximizing staff efficiency.
- Who does what is sometimes tied to administration of other programs.
- There is a great range in enforcement authority and in pay and benefits.
- Policies on fees for services vary.
- Some states with Cooperating Forester programs have no standards or detailed agreements, and some have no resources for monitoring, resulting in questionable quality and consistency.
- How fees affect landowner participation in sustainable forestry is not clear.
- Public/private partnerships might hold promise.

DECISION ITEM:

- The effects of fragmentation on private forestry will be a topic at a future Council meeting.

Working Lands Initiative Report

Paul introduced Bill Walker from DATCP, lead staff of the Working Lands Steering Committee, who came to discuss the rough draft of the *Working Lands Initiative Final Report*, which was previously distributed to Council members, and Allison Hellman, DNR's lead on the Initiative. The Committee is nearing its conclusion. The purpose of the draft was to give the Steering Committee a focus for discussion. In the introductory material, the Committee has tried to keep agriculture and forestry on par, though the recommendations are more for agriculture, since the forestry world is far ahead of agriculture now in progress, with many programs already in existence. A summary section details these programs. One of the first things the Committee agreed on was to recommend a state-funded purchase of development rights grant program. It also recommends efforts to increase urban density. It found that it is very worthwhile when acquiring land, to coordinate with forestry on such items as agricultural preservation programs, purchase and development rights, and agricultural planning. Dealing with an aging population will be important in the future for both agriculture and logging. Learning to deal with new kinds of landowners will also be a challenge. The Committee meets monthly. The final report is due in August. Paul encouraged Council members to take the opportunity to send feedback or comments on content to either Allison or Bill via email.

EAB Rules Status

An emergency rule is now in place with respect to the movement of firewood from out of state onto our State parks and forests. Overall public reaction and cooperation has been good. A permanent rule will go before the Natural Resources Board the week of June 26<sup>th</sup> that will request a public hearing on a rule whereby the DNR would prohibit firewood originating from more than 50 miles away from a property. The hearing will be held while people are camping. Because interstate commerce is involved, an assessment is being done to determine specifically who--DNR, APHIS, DATCP--or the Forest Service has authority to do what. Paul announced that he was just informed that EAB has been found in Aurora, Illinois, southwest of Chicago, the closest find to Wisconsin to date.

ACTION ITEM:

- Paul will share the results of the agency authority assessment with the Council when it is available.

Paul DeLong's Speech on the Future of Forestry

At the request of a Council member at the March meeting, Paul delivered the presentation he made to staff at the Forestry Division Statewide Meeting earlier this year entitled *Going Out on a Limb: A Look at the Future of Forestry*.

#### Other Items

- ***Invader Crusader Award*** – Dennis Seevers from the Governor’s Council on Invasive Species presented the Invader Crusader Award to Fred Clark for taking a true leadership role in the fight against invasive species. He has developed the Best Management Practices for Invasive Species. He serves as a role model, working one-on-one with private landowners, helping them learn to identify invasive species on their land, and to prevent their spread.
- ***Wild Rivers Legacy Forest*** – The Wild Rivers Legacy Forest, a 65,000 acre site rich in hardwoods, was acquired using a conservation easement for less than half the cost of the land. This acquisition is important from a DNR standpoint as it addresses the issue of fragmentation, and maintains the key public values of open access for recreation, development rights, and a commitment to protecting long-term sustainable forestry in support of the local and statewide economies and the quality of the environment. Mary Jean Huston added that it is a very good use of public funds. It is a productive piece of land for timber. It provides biological natural resource values to the region and is close to other managed land.
- ***Criteria and Indicators Document*** – Paul has distributed a document to Council members on having the Council take a role in criteria and indicators statewide to dovetail the work that they do on state lands. He’ll ask the Council to make a decision in September as to whether they’d like to play a role or not.

#### ACTION ITEM:

- Paul will plan an informational presentation on criteria and indicators for the September Council Meeting.

#### **Biomass Working Group Update – Bill Horvath**

Bill reported a lot of public interest in the Task Force. It met last on March 21<sup>st</sup> and will meet next on June 20<sup>th</sup>. Discussion will continue on the 31 potential components of the comprehensive piece of legislation for the production and utilization of woody biomass in Wisconsin which the Task Force will provide to the Council and the State Legislature. A proposal may be ready by September. The Task Force is waiting for the final report of the Bio-industry Consortium to see how the proposed legislation fits in with this effort.

The following are other developments of significance:

- Meetings are taking place with Chevron, the Governor’s staff, and school associations to discuss a statewide Fuel for Schools program. Wisconsin currently has nine school districts burning wood.
- Discussions have begun with the Ruffed Grouse Society and the Wild Turkey Federation about a project in Vernon County that could increase biomass production for possible use by Exel Energy and achieve other forest management and wildlife benefits. The Wild Turkey Federation has \$320,000 in a superfund for Wisconsin alone.
- The Weyawega Cheese Factory has converted to wood.
- Meetings are still taking place with the UW – Stevens Point on the wood fuel pilot project. Some issues have come up with the Department of Administration that must be dealt with.
- The Governor announced a \$75,000 grant for a feasibility report on the proposed Upper Great Lakes Timber and Biomass Commodity Exchange. An application has been submitted for a \$250,000 Department of Energy/Department of Agriculture grant. If funded, it would take the Exchange through the timber, pulpwood, and wood residue phases.
- Marth Industries, a manufacturer of wood flour, shavings, and pellets plans to expand production in Northern Wisconsin to complement production at their Marathon County facilities.
- A meeting on Forest Stewardship contracting in the USFS took place with National Forest staff, Gene Francisco of the Professional Loggers Association, and Colette Matthews of the Wisconsin County Forests Association.

**ACTION ITEM:**

- Mary Brown will distribute a copy of the Report of the Woody Biomass Task Force with the minutes of this Council meeting.

**Legislative Update – Representative Don Friske**

The Legislature is out of session until July 12<sup>th</sup>. Rep. Friske participated in two hearings over the last couple of months. The Forestry and Natural Resources Committees held a hearing on deer browsing. The Forestry and Property Rights Committees held a hearing on the Wild Rivers International Papers purchase. No one present questioned the value of keeping a continuous block of land in timber management. It was agreed that keeping the land in one block is of benefit. Rep. Friske thanked the DNR and forestry interests for a rewarding session. Seventeen forestry bills dealing with many sensitive issues were passed, which says something about the quality of the Division of Forestry. The Nature Conservancy and 1000 Friends of Wisconsin were also instrumental in getting the bills through. The next session convenes January 3<sup>rd</sup>. Legislation prepared by September should start being drafted in October to be ready for consideration in January.

**Next Meeting and Adjourn**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, September 13<sup>th</sup> in Madison. Topics will include:

- Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA) Data Report
- Stora Enso in Wisconsin presentation
- Follow-up from Council's June 12<sup>th</sup> tour (Nancy Livingston's recommendations)
- Report from Deer Task Force
- Budget and Legislation
- Fragmentation Briefing
- Criteria and Indicators project
- Legislative Report
- Website Update – wisconsinforestry.org

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown, WDNR