

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Products Lab – Madison, WI
March 17, 2009

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Paul DeLong, Jim Hoppe, Bob Rogers, Rep. Fred Clark, Joel Nilsestuen representing Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Jane Severt, Mary Jean Huston, Rep. Don Friske, Jim Heerey, Linda Parker representing Jeanne Higgins, Leon Church, Michael Bolton

Members Absent:

Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Dennis Brown, Fred Souba, Rep. Mary Hubler, Jeanne Higgins, Jeff Stier, Troy Brown, Sen. Bob Jauch

Guests Present:

Darrell Zastrow, Gunnar Bergersen, Mary Brown, Gerry Mich, Lynn Wilson, Henry Schienebeck, Earl Gustafson, Bob Manwell, Bob Mather, Sarah Herrick, Eunice Padley, Allison Hellman, Carmen Wagner, Gene Roark, E.G. Nadeau, Terry Mace, Jane Cummings Carlson, Tricia Knoot, Bryn Scriver, Thomas Boos, John Koning, Brett Hulsey, Jeff Barkley, Jeremy Solin, Brian Kuhn, Kathy Pielsticker, Sara Bredesen, Debra Kidd, Tim Eisele, Keith Foye, Pam Porter, Steve Schmieding, Karl Martin, Melody Walker

Welcome and Introductions

Vice Chair Mary Jean Huston called the meeting to order at 9:42 a.m. in Chair Souba's absence. The members and guests introduced themselves.

Woody Biomass Harvest Guidelines Implementation – Darrell Zastrow

Darrell acknowledged DNR staff present at today's meeting, Eunice Padley, Karl Martin, Bob Mather, Carmen Wagner, and Sarah Herrick, for their work on the implementation plan. He gave some background on the development of the Guidelines, which were initiated by the Council in 2007 to address a projected increase in demand based in part on the Governor's commitment to energy independence, and influenced by sustainability concerns. When the Council requested assistance, DNR formed a technical team to draft the Guidelines, and an advisory committee of stakeholders was established by the Council to guide the process. The initial draft was sent out to subject matter experts who suggested modifications. An ad hoc committee working on soils also made recommendations. In September of 2008, the fourth draft was presented to the Council, which elected to solicit public input prior to final approval. Public listening sessions were held, and changes were made to the Guidelines based on comments received. At its December 16, 2008 meeting, the Council approved the final draft of *Wisconsin's Forestland Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines* (BHG) pending results of DNR consultation with tribal partners before its March 17th meeting, and development of an implementation plan to be presented at the March 17th meeting.

The 2007 FSC and SFI certification audits of Wisconsin's State and County Forests resulted in issuance of Corrective Action Requests for each, prescribing a two-year process to develop guidelines for retention of coarse woody debris, allowing time for public input. Although the broad stakeholder effort initiated by the Council was applauded in the audit report following the 2008 certification reviews, the report cautioned that adoption of biomass residual guidelines for DNR and County Forest lands are mandatory even if the Council process fails. A Department directive would be expected to apply standards to public lands in time for the 2009 audits.

A tribal consultation process was undertaken beginning with letters being sent out to tribal leaders outlining ways to become engaged, such as through participation in the February listening sessions, contacting staff, or providing written comments. The Division's eight Tribal Liaisons have obtained comments directly from key tribal contacts. Comments have been received from seven of the eleven tribes, and from the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission concerning monitoring protocols, the voluntary nature of the Guidelines, ensuring that information remains science-based, long-term impacts, and the amount of retention. The Division looks forward to continuing tribal consultation.

The Department proposes to move forward with implementation of the Guidelines, and has developed a plan that will use a phased-in approach for Wisconsin's forestry community to work towards implementing the BHGs over a three-year period on State, County, and Managed Forest Law lands. The plan, distributed to Council members last week, consists of six elements, which were discussed extensively at the February public listening sessions. Recommendations for each were modified based on comments received at the sessions from nineteen stakeholder groups and eleven individuals. Comments expressed support for research and concerns for the lack of information and resources, difficulty of implementation in the time allotted, and amount of information that can be obtained from only three years of research. The elements of the plan and final recommendations for each follow:

1. Research – Reallocate \$110,000 of research funding within DNR's Science Services Program to address the highest priority research need: the role of fine woody debris on dry nutrient-poor sandy soils.
Initiate immediately, so initial results can be available by 2011-2012.
2. Site Differentiation – Proceed with development of the Forest Habitat Type Groups tool and the list of soil survey map units by county. Limited basis on-site consultation. Continue to look for help from partners.
3. Training – Have DNR staff provide several (3-5) training sessions during each field season via reallocations of existing staff and travel funds.
*Introduction to BHGs provided to State and County Forests in 2009.
BHG introduction with site differentiation guidance to about 150 people each year starting in 2010.
Field measurement training to about 150 people each year starting in 2011, if methods finalized.
Goal of all training needs being met by 2011 through forestry community partnerships.*
4. Field Implementation – Recommend implementation phased in as follows:
 - DNR-managed State-owned lands: *New timber sales sold starting in spring of 2010.*
 - County Forest lands: *New timber sales sold starting in spring of 2010.*
 - Private Managed Forest Law (MFL): *New Cutting Notice approval beginning January 1, 2011.*
 - Private Forests (not in MFL): *Guidelines available and can be used at the owner's discretion.*
5. Monitoring – Recommend the following:
 - Develop a biomass harvesting checklist to integrate into existing forms for State, County and MFL timber sales with *completion expected by January 2010.*
 - Investigate with partners the development of an integrated monitoring system for the five major landowner categories – Federal, State, County, industrial and non-industrial private with *evaluation completed by January 2012.*
 - Determine the feasibility of collecting data on fine woody debris as part of the Wisconsin State Forest CFI by *January 2012.*
6. Updating and Information Management – Recommend the following:
 - Develop a field manual for the BHGs to help facilitate dissemination of the BHGs and training efforts.
 - Review the BHGs *in three years or sooner* if new monitoring or research data is available.
 - Continue evaluation of appropriateness of including the BHGs in the Forest Management Guidelines.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Leon Church) that the Council accept the Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines Implementation Plan as presented today, and the recommendations of the implementation report, passed unanimously.

Woody Biomass Status in Wisconsin – Terry Mace

Terry, DNR Forest Products Specialist, said that the woody biomass resource is somewhat limited overall because of the high degree of interest in it, although in some areas, such as in Southwestern Wisconsin, demand is very limited. Good competition exists. Based on Forest Inventory Analysis data, it was estimated that in 2007, there were between 2.4 and 2.5 million tons of logging residue in the forests. Terry estimates that number probably dropped to about 2 million in 2008 because sawmills were running at 50% or less capacity, and the amount taken out by the paper industry, and for pellet plants and fuel had not been taken into account. He said that Ponsse has a biomass forwarder being purchased that can hold almost twenty therms, compresses wood, and puts it through a grinder. Woody biomass is definitely part of the energy solution, but can't be the whole solution.

A number of projects have been initiated. Alliant Energy had a proposal for a coal-fired plant in Cassville using 20% biofuels. It was turned down by the PSC, but Alliant is still considering other projects. Xcel Energy has

submitted plans to the PSC to convert the final boiler to wood at its Bay Point Power Plant in Ashland. DTE (Detroit Edison) Energy Services is buying the coal-fired E.J. Stoneman Plant in Cassville, and is in the process of converting it to 40 megawatt capacity wood boiler. It does not need PSC approval to do this, and has entered into contracts with the railroads to buy used ties, and with Rotochopper to grind them. Dairyland Power Cooperative has agreed to purchase all power. The Wisconsin Office of Energy Independence received a grant from the Department of Energy (DOE) to convert small older coal plants as part of its effort to help enable Wisconsin to attain clean energy capacity at the gigawatt scale. In 2006, the Governor directed the University of Wisconsin's Stevens Point, River Falls, and Oshkosh campuses to become energy independent. The Stevens Point and Oshkosh campuses are considering a gasification unit. A smaller plant will be used for cooling in summer and heating in winter. The Green Bay campus is looking at bio-diesel. UW – Madison is in the process of converting its Charter Street boiler from ten to 30 megawatt capacity. Terry recommended that they consider using pellets rather than chips. A porous residue assessment was done, and showed that based on 25 megawatts, they'd be looking at a 60-mile radius to supply the plant with chips. It would take about ten semi-trucks an hour to deliver enough chips, or one train a day.

The Fuels for Schools pilot program is well underway with 45 school districts that have expressed interest, 33 that have had pre-feasibility studies done, and 18 that have had engineering studies. Twelve schools will ultimately be selected for conversion to renewable fuels. Both Flambeau Paper and NewPage have been working at integrating to become biorefineries, a strategy necessary for pulp mills to survive. Both have been awarded \$30 million grants from the DOE, and will be producing liquid fuels, increasing demand for wood. Flambeau is shipping chips to a North Carolina bioplant for testing

There is competition for wood residue. There is a shortage of residues for plants. Most are not running at full capacity because they can't get wood in. Bringing in green chips and drying them has proved costly, and most plants with those capacities barely break even. Bemis is having trouble finding the shavings it needs to make toilet seats. Marth and DeJino's, Inc. are having trouble finding the materials they need to make animal bedding because so many plants are down due to the recession. Manufacturers in Wisconsin can produce 289,000 dry tons annually. There is large amount of idle agricultural land in the state that could potentially be planted to produce biomass. Paul DeLong noted that there have been discussions about such an initiative; however, the State's budget climate is a challenge.

Invasive BMPs for Forest Management – Jane Severt

The Invasive Best Management Practices for Invasive Species were on the agenda for an approval decision at the December Council meeting, but the Advisory Committee hadn't met to review the comments received at that time. The Advisory Committee met in February, discussed the comments received, and made changes based on those comments. The Forestry Invasives Leadership Team met last week and agreed that the track is ready. Jane is asking for Council approval of the Forestry BMP track today.

The completed draft manual went public in July, followed by five public listening sessions throughout the state from August 18th to 22nd. An internal DNR session preceded each. There were 20 internal and 21 external attendees. Comments received both at the sessions and in written format expressed concerns with:

- Education and Training
- Cost of Implementation
- Additional Workload for Practitioners
- Monitoring
- Voluntary vs. Mandatory Nature, especially relating to certification
- MFL implications
- Implementation, particularly which groups will be targeted

The FILT will be sponsoring outreach efforts for all four BMP tracks, which will include implementation of the BMPs. Implementation will include information and education, as well as training. Logger, forester, and landowner groups need, and will all receive, different training. FISTA and the UW – Extension will be involved. Three pilot training sessions are listed in the FISTA training schedule for this year.

The Advisory Committee has identified the need for a condensed manual in printed format for use in the field that can be updated without needing to be replaced. It will contain a listing of the BMPs themselves, as well as fact

sheets for individual invasive species. After June, they will work on determining the cost of getting the manual printed. A funding source has not been found yet, though it may be possible to obtain some funding from the Forest Service.

During the ensuing discussion, consultant Brett Hulsey suggested that the best strategy for removing invasives might be to develop a market for them, and asked if the invasives were going to be mapped. Darrell Zastrow replied that a small portion of state land had been inventoried, and that a constant inventory is needed, which takes resources. Development of a data base is a high priority. He agreed that the idea of marketability holds great potential.

The Natural Resources Board (NRB) order creating Chapter 40, the rule that relates to identification, classification, and control of invasives, went out for public hearings at about the same time that the public listening session were held for the BMPs, which caused some confusion. To clarify, Tom Boos from the Division of Forestry gave an update on the status of the rule. NR 40 was revised after it went out for hearings, and will go to the NRB in April. The revisions improved the rule. Language was incorporated providing exemption in cases of action unknowing or accidental when “reasonable precautions”, which include adherence to the BMPs, are followed.

Jane thanked everyone involved, including DNR staff, for their work on the BMP effort. Vice Chair Huston noted that the BMPs were a tangible outcome of the 2004 Governor’s Conference on Forestry, and congratulated Jane, Fred Clark, and all involved. Paul DeLong acknowledged the US Forest Service State and Private Forestry for the funding it provided that helped move the effort along.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Jane Severt (seconded by Jim Heerey) that the Council approve the Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species as presented passed unanimously.

EAB Plan of Action – Darrell Zastrow and Brian Kuhn

Darrell began by introducing the other key people involved with the EAB effort: Jane Cummings Carlson from the DNR, and Brian Kuhn, Melody Walker, and Kathy Pielsticker from DATCP. APHIS hired two EAB regulatory staff in the last three weeks; the State now has two federally funded regulatory staff. A compliance agreement is in the works. Brian described the survey efforts and findings, and then Darrell gave the Council an overview from a management perspective.

The first EAB infestation discovered in the state was in Newburg in August of 2008. DNR and DATCP have been working cooperatively for the last four or five years on various surveys throughout the state in hopes of buying time for additional detection tools to be made available. Traps were set in all counties of the state. DATCP set over 3,600 purple prism traps. Over 700 of the trap trees were cut and peeled. The latest survey data suggest that the Newburg infestation covers at least a three mile by two mile area just short of 5,000 acres. Brian said that the infestation was there for five years before it was found, and that we won’t be able to eradicate it. We can’t be certain of the limits in any direction. A four county quarantine was instituted. Infested firewood is the main culprit. Movement of firewood is directly tied to 80% of new finds.

Darrell said that this infestation seems to follow a river corridor, and is larger than expected, with tens of thousands of trees infested. Though containment is not feasible, statewide survey and detection, regulatory activities, ash management and utilization, and outreach efforts could slow the spread and reduce the impact of the infestation. We’ve been working with urban and rural landowners, holding workshops on how to improve management, and will be trying to connect potential markets with operators in both urban and rural settings to try to provide services for affected landowners. At meetings held with municipal leaders and landowners, the feedback received has been to “be aggressive.” Though we were successful in competing for a State and Private Forestry grant, we clearly do not have the resources to do on-the-ground management at this time. We are trying to match up resources as the management scenario unfolds.

A question and answer session followed. When asked what we’d learned from previous infestations, Darrell responded that Dutch Elm outbreaks are the closest parallel with EAB. Dutch Elm is a fungus carried by an

insect, which affects large trees. Both spread, are deadly, and difficult to control. However, elm trees regenerate. Ash trees don't. EAB affects all sizes of ash trees. The borers infest the mature trees first, and then they come back for the rest. As far as a timetable for the spread, Jane Cummings Carlson said that the latest model indicates that there will be an infestation in every county by 2020, and that with other studies taken into consideration, it likely will be between then and 2030. She described three ongoing research efforts that are the main tools being used in the Upper Peninsula. The first is a pesticide called Treeage, which is injected into the trees. Then there are "sinks", or girdles, which attract the insects, and are placed around trees. The trees can then be cut and destroyed, slowing the rate of ash mortality. Finally, phloem reduction, removing the resource, can reduce the number of insects, but won't slow the spread. Darrell and Brian are both of the opinion that there are currently more infestations in the state not yet discovered. Darrell believes the State Forester generally has Declaration of Emergency potential on State lands, and that the Governor has potential on all lands. There are criteria in place that would trigger a request for the State Forester to make that declaration. Darrell will confirm this with DNR Legal staff.

A few of the Council members expressed opinions about the control efforts to date. Ken Ottman considers the quarantine area, approximately 1.25 million acres, too large because it allows for wood to be moved from the area legally. He would like to see a more aggressive approach to containment on the State Government level, with infested wood being moved to the center of the infestation instead of out from it. He feels that infested wood should not be seen as a resource, but as a potential poison to the whole state, and that it is the State's responsibility to do all it can to eradicate it. Rep. Clark suggested the use of marshalling yards. Jim Heerey agreed, and suggested some of their cost could be recovered through the sale of firewood. He feels the "slow the spread" approach is too timid, and that something more proactive needs to be done.

Paul DeLong expressed his appreciation for the feedback. He said that this was the worst time for funding, and that we clearly couldn't eradicate EAB. He said that the determination of where to draw the line for the quarantine was a balancing act that was difficult, with no easy solutions.

ACTION ITEM:

- Darrell Zastrow will seek clarification on Declaration of Emergency potential from the DNR Bureau of Legal Services.

Working Lands Initiative – Kathy Pielsticker and Keith Foye

Kathy is the Administrator of the Agricultural Resources Management Division, and Keith handles the farmland preservation programs at DATCP. Kathy distributed a summary of the Working Lands Initiative to Council members. Development of the WLI was prompted by concern over the progressive loss of Wisconsin's cropland areas since the 1980s, when we began losing about 15,000 acres per year. From 1997 to 2003, that number increased to around 30,000 acres annually, primarily due to residential development, also a major factor in the fragmentation of our remaining farmland. Five years ago, DATCP Secretary Rod Nilsestuen brought together a group of about twenty stakeholders to look at how to protect working lands. They came up with a list of recommendations. Three key ones were retained and approved by a steering committee, went out for public comment, and are now being proposed in the Governor's budget. Together they are known as the Working Lands Initiative (WLI), and if passed in the budget, will stimulate our economy by:

- Repositioning and promoting Wisconsin's agriculture for competitiveness
- Promoting significant investments in new and expanded agricultural enterprises
- Permanently stabilizing areas for agricultural investment
- Increasing agriculture's \$51 billion annual contribution to the economy

Kathy and Keith summarized each component of the WLI.

Expand and Modernize the State's Existing Farmland Preservation Program

The existing program was initiated in 1978. Farmland preservation plans were developed by 70 of 72 counties, but are outdated, and their certification will soon expire. Under this proposal, 50% cost sharing grants would be available to counties to facilitate plan development for areas they've identified for preservation. It is expected that approximately fourteen plans a year would be completed between 2011 and 2015. Updated standards would allow for some non-farm use of the land, simplify the certification process and streamline state oversight, improve

consistency between local plans and ordinances, and ensure compliance with state soil and water conservation standards. Farmland Preservation zoning tax credits would be increased for participants. A conversion fee would be assessed when land under farmland preservation zoning is re-zoned for other uses.

Establish Agricultural Enterprise Areas

An Agricultural Enterprise Area (AEA) is an area of contiguous land over 50% in agricultural use located in a farmland preservation area. It can include forest land and natural resource areas. The designation is based on the voluntary participation of at least five farm owners, and can help preserve agricultural areas and promote agricultural development. A tax credit of \$10.00 per acre would be available for land in an AEA under Farmland Preservation zoning, and of \$5.00 per acre for land in an AEA that is not.

Develop a Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement (PACE) Matching Grant Program

Under this proposal, grants would be available to help local governments or nonprofit conservation organizations purchase Agricultural Conservation Easements, which restrict nonagricultural development of the land covered. The state may pay up to 50% of the fair market value of the easement and all transaction costs. Under an easement, the land is retained permanently in farming. If it is sold, it must be sold as farmland. The owner manages the land, retains title to the property, is responsible for property taxes, and can take the Farmland Preservation tax credit. DATCP is hopeful that DNR will purchase 50% of the easements.

A discussion followed the presentation in which Bill Horvath expressed concern, echoed by other Council members, about forestry being referenced only under “other land use” in the AEA portion of the Budget Bill, and thus being treated as an add-on rather than as an equal participant. He said that we should be looking at saving forestland, not just forestland that’s part of a farm. Kathy expressed her concern that tax credits for forestland would be an issue in terms of cost, which could jeopardize the whole bill. Representative Friske agreed with Bill that Forestry needs to be recognized, but pointed out that because the WLI is a DATCP bill, it should only be expected that it would focus on agriculture. He suggested that as an alternative to changing the wording of the bill, the Council might be better served by watching how it goes, and following it with something similar in shape and form modeled to fit the needs of the forests and landowners at stake.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Jim Heerey) that the Council request that the Joint Finance Committee amend Section 9184 and subsequent sections of the Working Lands Initiative Budget Bill to include forestry specifically in the definition of “Agricultural Enterprise Area”, referencing it thereafter as Agricultural Forestry Enterprise Area, failed with one vote in favor, and the remainder opposed.

Forest Certification Implementation Issues – Jane Severt

Jane, who is an advisor to the County Forest Certification Committee, delivered a PowerPoint presentation entitled, *The Evolution of Forest Certification on Wisconsin’s County Forests – A Six Year Journey*, that gave an overview of the certification process from the joint scoping assessment conducted by SFI and FSC in 2003 to where we stand now with 25 counties and 2,187,938 acres certified by SFI, and 19 counties with 1,630,125 acres certified by FSC, with 17 of those counties holding dual certification.

The County Forest Certification Committee began meeting in 2004 to address Corrective Action Requests (CARs), Opportunities for Improvement (OFIs) and other certification issues. The initial FSC scoping assessment identified four OFIs which the Committee is still struggling with:

1. Identification of high conservation value forests.
2. Increasing the level of consultation with Native American tribes.
3. Demonstrating progress in identifying and conserving representative sample areas of existing ecosystems.
4. Monitoring of flora and fauna.

Monitoring is a huge issue. DNR County Forest Specialist Jeff Barkley, also an advisor to the Committee, said that it would cost over \$8 million just to get a continuous monitoring system established, which isn’t feasible.

The 2004 County Forest Audits resulted in only minor CARs from SFI, some of which are still being worked on, and in two major CARs from FSC, one concerning Native American tribes, and the other concerning the need to formally commit to the program. FSC and SFI formally awarded certification to the counties in March, 2005. The 2006 Annual FSC Surveillance Audit closed both of the major 2004 CARs, but opened a large one concerning monitoring practices. The 2008 SFI Surveillance Audit elevated a 2007 OFI concerning green tree retention to a CAR. Jane commented that one of the problems with certification is that there are no instructions offered on how to address CARs.

Jeff Barkley told the Council is that it's great that the Lake States are a leader in certification, but it didn't come easy. With the changing standard and tight budgets, you never quite get the job done. Jane said it is important for the Council to know that though forest certification is a great thing for our state, she doesn't think there's a real appreciation of all the work that goes on behind the scenes. Though the cost of annual surveillance audits and the certification entry itself come out of the State Forestry Fund, the counties have to pay for all indirect costs. The biggest complaint she hears from County Forest Administrators is that they're doing extra work with no monetary benefit, though there has been an increase in demand for FSC certified wood in the last year. The proposed tightening of FSC standards concerns her because the additional monitoring which would be required would be difficult to achieve without additional human and financial resources. She doesn't feel additional monitoring is necessary to assure that we are practicing sustainable forestry in the Lake States. Paul DeLong expressed concern that if the standards are raised too high, the vast majority of responsible forests will be shut out, and the real value of certification, which is separating responsible sustainable forestry from irresponsible forestry, could be lost.

On the positive side, consistency between counties has improved because of certification. Paul DeLong found the certifiers to be flexible when working with them on the conditions for certification of the MFL lands. There have been increased efficiencies in operations, better documentation of practices and training, and improvements in safety and communication. It has been beneficial to have a standard in place, and it is essential to be able to meet growing customer demands for certified wood.

State Forester's Report – Paul DeLong

FY '09-11 State Budget

- Governor's Budget

In addition to the 10% cut required of all agencies, the Governor's Budget contains an additional 1% across the board cut, and a government-wide lapse. DNR's portion is yet to be determined. Paul explained that cuts are permanent, but that lapses are taken only for the duration of the biennial time period. The Division will lose two FTE management positions. It will identify them within the next couple of months.

- Legislative Action on the Budget

The anticipated lapses to Forestry grant programs were turned into cuts, resulting in \$2.7 million of annual grant funds that will cease to exist as of July 1st. WFLGP is being cut by \$545,000, the County Forest Wildlife Grant Program by \$120,000, the Urban Forestry Program by \$529,000, and Fire Department grants by \$448,000. The entire MFL Grants for Public Access Program is being cut, though the authority for it remains in place. There is an increase to Operations based on costs, such as ongoing lease payments, that must be met anyway. The amount coming out of the Forestry Account to pay for Stewardship debt will increase this year from \$13.5 million to \$16 million annually. Secretary Frank testified this morning at an Agency hearing. The Joint Finance Committee will soon be taking action on the Budget.

Federal Stimulus and FY '09 and '10 Budgets

The 2009 Omnibus passed. There is Stimulus funding that effects Forestry. The Forest Service (FS) got \$1.15 billion, a large portion of which will go into National FS funds. State and Private Forestry (S&PF) will get \$250 million for Hazardous Fuels and other programs, and about \$50 million will go to Bioenergy and Forest Health. The Northeastern States were given less than two days to respond to a request for Stimulus projects. Wisconsin submitted 174 of them, only nine of which were forwarded. Linda Parker thinks we may hear about S&PF projects within the week.

Paul announced that the DNR is requesting public input on deer management, and is holding public listening sessions for the 2009 season. Senator Holperin and Representative Hraychuck are having hearings on March 30th in the District and on April 15th in Madison. He urged members to weigh in.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Ken Ottman) that the Council send a recommendation to the Joint Finance Committee that the Urban Forestry Program be reinstated, listing the reasons from the standpoint of conservation, EAB, and energy, was passed with one abstention (DeLong).
- Chair Souba will draft a letter containing the above-stated recommendation, circulate it to Council members, and send it to the JFC, the Assembly Committee on Forestry and the Senate Committee on Transportation, Tourism, Forestry and Natural Resources.
- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Ken Ottman) that the Council send a separate letter to the Joint Finance Committee expressing its concern about increasing use of the Forestry Account for debt reduction was passed with one abstention (DeLong).
- At its June meeting, the Council will discuss a letter received from T.J. Morice suggesting the addition of a Council member representing biomass interests.
- At its June meeting, the Council will discuss the appropriateness of forming a study committee to look into Stewardship Spending.

Legislative Issues –Legislative Representatives

Representative Clark has been working with Senator Holperin on a draft of a bill that would provide for a self-insurance program for loggers through Workmen’s Compensation. It would address the problem that most loggers don’t participate in the program because of high rates. As a follow-up to a Council discussion about the future of the MFL, he checked in with Representatives Friske and Sherman about whether a Legislative Council Study of the MFL would be appropriate. The study wouldn’t occur until about a year from now, but the Council could develop the scope of and build support for the study with the Legislative Council in the interim. Representative Friske said that a fencing bill will be coming up shortly that deals with wooded acres. The Legislative Council Study on Biofuels is finished, and recommendation will be out shortly. The Budget is out. He feels the Committee on Forestry is a good mix now with Representatives Clark and Sherman aboard, and that the Council will have a good audience for its recommendations. Joel Nilsestuen said that MFL continues to be a big issue, and that a coalition of environmentalists, agriculturalists, and foresters has asked for a Legislative Council Study on Deer Baiting and Feeding. Representative Friske said that this is the issue that gets the largest number of calls and letters.

ACTION ITEM:

- Bill Horvath will present the items to be included in a Legislative Council Study of the MFL Program at the September meeting.

June Meeting Agenda and Field Visit Focus – Mary Jean Huston

The Council will meet next on June 16th, with a field visit for Council members on June 15th. Mary Jean asked members for ideas for a focus, and for a location. Paul DeLong said that he and Fred Souba had discussed it, and thought bioenergy should be the focus. The members agreed. Bill Horvath suggested visiting both Xcel Energy and the French Island Power Plant, and seeing some of the work going on with cooperatives, then meeting in LaCrosse. Paul DeLong said the Driftless area was still a possibility. Jane Severt suggested Park Falls as an excellent place to observe what’s going on in both the woods and in the plants, and to get a feel for the scale of operations. Fred Clark thought it would be good to get out in the woods to see firsthand some of the challenges of implementing the Woody Biomass Harvest Guidelines. Mary Jean requested that members forward any ideas they have after the meeting to Chair Souba and Paul DeLong.

Agenda items may include:

- State Budget
- Working Lands Initiative
- Bioenergy Speaker(s), depending on location selected
- Recreation BMPs
- Legislative Council Study on Biofuels
- MFL Tax Study Presentation
- Status of Deer in Forest

- Biofuels and the Market
- Stewardship Funding
- Letter from T.J. Morice
- State Foresters Report
- Legislative Update

The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 p.m.

Submitted by:
Mary Brown
WDNR