

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
State Lab of Hygiene – Madison, Wisconsin
March 8, 2011

Members Present:

Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Paul DeLong, Jim Hoppe, Jim Kerkman representing Bob Rogers, Jane Severt, Matt Dallman, Paul Strong, Troy Brown, Fred Souba, Kimberly Quast, Henry Schienebeck representing professional loggers.

Members Absent:

Bob Rogers, Sen. Kathleen Vinehout, Michael Bolton, Sen. Bob Jauch

Guests Present:

Mary Brown, Rebecca Gass, Sara Bredesen, Jeff Barkley, Eunice Padley, Carmen Wagner, Sara Bredeson, Darrell Zastrow, Mark Heyde, Richard Wedepohl

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:43 a.m. The members and other guests introduced themselves. Fred announced that this would be Bill Horvath's last Council meeting, and thanked him on behalf of the Council and himself for his contributions to the Council. He said that his outspoken nature and passion for forestry were assets that had served the Council well, and that he would be missed. Bill said that he'd enjoyed every moment.

Status of Council Membership – Paul DeLong

Paul has heard from the Governor's office, and is pleased that they seem to be moving relatively quickly on making membership decisions. It clearly wants the Council to keep moving ahead with its work. However, some Council members have still not responded to an email message Paul sent them related to applying for membership if they are interested in continuing to serve on the Council, or sending a message indicating that they are not. Paul soon expects to receive a list of the status of those that were received, and will follow up. Legislative members are selected outside the regular process, and Paul is not sure where they are in that process now. Paul will share any news as he receives it.

Statewide Forest Strategy Implementation – Rebecca Gass, Fred Souba, Paul DeLong

Rebecca distributed a historical list of all the work the Council had done to date on the Statewide Forest Strategy. Chair Souba thanked the Council members who had taken the time to rank the list of actions revised at the December meeting, and said that Rebecca would lead the group through that list of actions that they'd been requested to rank before today's meeting. Rebecca distributed a summary showing the average rank given by Council members to each action. Fred announced that he'd asked Jim Hoppe to chair a subcommittee tasked with fleshing out an implementation plan that would report back to the Council with recommendations on how it should attack the actions selected from the revised list today. Matt Dallman, Ken Ottman, Henry Shienebeck, and Troy Brown volunteered to staff the subcommittee.

Finalize Role for Council in Strategy Implementation

Rebecca suggested that the Council members go through the revised list of actions discussed at the December 14th meeting, and pick at least one of the actions from each of the nine strategy categories by show of hands, using the actions' ranking as a reference, to be acted on. The agreed upon items are listed below in green, by category:

Collaboration and Partnerships

⇒ The Council convenes a meeting like the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry to discuss issues.

Landowner Coordination

⇒ The Council wants to become better informed about coordination, and more knowledgeable about what's going on in the state relative to it before moving forward on this

Private Land Sustainability

- ⇒ The Council needs to be an advocate for more private forestry assistance to landowners.
- ⇒ The Council should develop a recommended list of private forestry topics that it promotes as most important for other organizations to focus on when conducting outreach and education.
- ⇒ Make more of an effort to work with local governments and increase their knowledge of forestry.
- ⇒ Determine whether there is a next step in private land certification.

Chair Souba suggests getting on the agendas for town meetings and using the results of the MFL Legislative Study to inform local governments.

Parcelization

- ⇒ Put parcelization on a Council meeting agenda soon, to help the Council understand all factors involved.

Collaboration and Large Scale Planning

- ⇒ Assist the collaborations between towns, counties, and other governments, and facilitate discussions on issues such as transportation. Help inform them of forestry issues and ways to work across boundaries.
- ⇒ Create a forum to promote understanding by the general public of the benefits of large blocks of forest and landscape planning.

Climate

- ⇒ Bring a range of climate change experts to the Council so it can be better informed on the issue. Also get information on mitigation and adaptation.
- ⇒ WICCI could update the Council on their results.

Energy

- ⇒ Follow up on evaluating the Biomass Harvesting Guidelines (BHG).
- ⇒ Request research on the limited science identified with BHG, and evaluate the results.
- ⇒ Advocate for new markets, being careful how markets transpire. Protect existing markets.

Forest Value

- ⇒ Raise awareness about why investing in forest conservation is important and start more initiatives to get information out to the general public.
- ⇒ Make a connection to the Urban Forestry Council, or at least become better informed about what it is working on.

Ken Ottman suggested that the Urban Forestry Council host a summer tour, as part of the Council on Forestry summer field tour. Chair Souba agreed that it would be a good idea and will consider putting it on the agenda for the June 2012 Council meeting.

Deer

- ⇒ Inform debate. Address the issue specifically in regard to forestry.

Jim Hoppe's subcommittee will get together on its own to look at the above items in detail so that it can come back to the June Council meeting with specifics on how the Council will address each of the priority categories.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A Council subcommittee consisting of Matt Dallman, Ken Ottman, Henry Shienebeck, and Troy Brown, with Jim Hoppe as Chair, will flesh out the actions selected by the Council during today's discussion, and come back to the Council's June meeting with recommendations for their implementation.
- A report on the findings of the MFL Legislative Study Committee will be an agenda item for the June Council meeting.

Biomass Harvest Guideline Review – Carmen Wagner, Jeff Barkley, Eunice Padley

The Council accepted the Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines (BHG) Implementation Plan at its March 2009 meeting. Carmen, Jeff, and Eunice brought the Council up to date on the status of the implementation, how far along it is, and how successful it has been so far. They delivered a PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Update on

Wisconsin's Forestland Woody Biomass Harvesting Guidelines", with Carmen giving a review and update on the development and implementation of the BMPs, Jeff covering biomass harvesting experience on public land, and Eunice giving an update on research projects. The presentation is attached:



COF_BHG_Update_3_8_11_v1_HO.pdf..

Jeff pointed out that it takes some time after implementation to get compliance, so it is too early yet to accurately gauge how the Guidelines are doing. More sales will be available to evaluate at this time next year. The Soils Subcommittee will be meeting in April. If it proposes major changes to how the soils guidelines are interpreted, the Council will want to discuss any significant deviations at its June meeting. Eunice noted that three important research studies which will provide much needed information on wildlife and on nutrients will not be complete by March 2012. For this reason, the Council might be better served by revisiting the BHGs in 2013, versus 2012 as originally planned. Chair Souba said that it was important to put something together for the Council on the pros and cons of revisiting the BHGs in 2012 versus 2013, and also on the scope of the revisit. Carmen let everyone know that she had copies of the updated Guidelines available if anyone wanted one.

DECISION ITEM:

- Eunice Padley will return to the Council's June meeting to share the findings of the Soils Subcommittee.

ACTION ITEM:

- Paul DeLong will coordinate the creation of a document outlining the advantages and consequences of the Council revisiting the BHGs in March 2012 versus 2013, and provide it to the Council members.

State Forester's Report – Paul DeLong

Paul announced that the Forest Products Laboratory was celebrating its centennial this year, and that John Koning had compiled a book in honor of the occasion entitled, "Forest Products Laboratory 1910-2010 -- Celebrating a Century of Accomplishments". Koning provided Paul with copies of the book for all Council members. Paul Strong added that Chris Risbrudt, currently Director of the Lab, would be retiring at the end of March.

Division Strategic Direction

The Division received approximately 50 external and 100 internal comments on its draft Strategic Direction, and is currently working through those comments. Paul thanked all present that provided comments. When it completes its work, the Forestry Leadership Team will have a discussion with Secretary Stepp to ensure that the Strategic Direction is in line with the priorities of the new administration, and then hopefully, present it to the Natural Resources Board (NRB) in May. The Division's intention is to finalize the Strategic Direction based on existing resources, and then adjust it if necessary to respond to the impacts of the biennial budget. An implementation plan will be developed in the second half of 2011, and will be shared with the Council at a meeting later this year.

FY `11-13 State Budget Update

The budget was released by the Governor last week. The Legislature has yet to take action on it. An allocation to pay for master leases for the Division's radio communications work is being funded, but it is the only item being funded from the list of items in the DNR Budget that was approved by the NRB in September. Over \$2 million of other costs, for items such as mileage and Information Technology will have to come from cuts somewhere else. No increase in the reimbursement rates for fire department suppression was included, though fire departments are expected to be raising their rates as shared revenues are being cut back.

As for budget reductions, 66 positions that have been vacant for over a year will be eliminated, three of which will be from Forestry. The Governor proposes maintaining the \$13.5 million yearly draw from the Forestry Account to pay Stewardship Debt. Currently, around \$4 million of the \$5½ million total allotted for Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILT) comes from the Forestry Account each year. The rest is General Purpose Revenue. The Governor proposes increasing the total annual amount coming out of the Forestry Account by \$1.3 million over the biennium. The Governor maintained Stewardship at full funding, but changed some provisions, most notably

putting an emphasis on fee acquisition. Doing Conservation Easements for development rights, public access, and sustainable management for timber purposes were specifically highlighted as uses for Stewardship. There would no longer be PILT payments for new acquisitions. Local units of government would have to pass a nonbinding resolution expressing their support or lack thereof for use of Stewardship. County forests were highlighted as a component of Stewardship going forward. Paul expects that there will be significantly more dialog on the topic of Stewardship in the Legislature.

Administration Priorities

Three priorities have been clearly highlighted by both Governor Walker and Secretary Stepp:

1. Jobs – Jobs are the top priority. The forests of Wisconsin are major job producers. We need to find ways to maintain and strengthen the base we have and to build on it.
2. Regulatory Streamlining – We need to improve timeliness, efficiency, and expeditiousness in our regulatory programs. We need to look into what customers are experiencing when they are dealing with programs such as the MFL, or applying for burn permits and the like.
3. Customer Service – We need to look at how well we are helping people meet their objectives. We need to look at the experience of people working with us. There should be consistency in the way they are treated. They should get the same level of service no matter where they are located.

Paul is trying to arrange for Secretary Stepp to speak with the Council at one of its upcoming meetings.

Pitching a “Forest Economic Summit”

Paul proposed that holding a summit would be a great way to get the collective forestry community together to identify common issues, to advocate, and to lay out courses for action. However, since this is one of the possible Council actions that was just chosen to be further developed by Jim Hoppe’s subcommittee, Paul is comfortable with leaving it up to that group to follow through with a plan.

Other Issues

When asked how the Forestry Division’s portion of the DNR Budget is being affected by the continuing Federal resolution, Paul replied that the biggest effect in FY 2011 is on the Legacy Program. In FY 2012, the programs that are taking significant cuts are Forest Health, State Fire Assistance, and Forest Inventory Analysis (FIA). It looks like the Forest Service is considering a move to a seven year FIA cycle. The President’s FY’12 budget has been released to Congress, so we’ll know the outcome for State and Private Forestry after Congress addresses both the FY’11 and FY’12 budgets.

Legislative Issues – Paul DeLong

Paul anticipates some change to Legislative representation on the Council. The Assembly Forestry Committee held an initial informational meeting to familiarize its new members with the issues. They discussed the draft Strategic Direction and got highlights of the Forest Health Report that was put out last year.

MFL Legislative Council Study Update

The Council Study was completed in January. Legislation is now being drafted and will be introduced to both the Assembly Committee on Forestry, chaired by Rep. Mursau, and the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Higher Education, chaired by Sen. Kapanke. Neither course of action nor timeframe are clear right now. The Legislature will be working aggressively to get the biennial budget done before the July 1st deadline, but is planning to continue doing other work as that work progresses.

Legislative Tour – Jane Severt

Jane, Henry Shienebeck, Earl Gustafson, and John DePlissis had a conference call on March 7th to discuss the proposed Legislative tour. At the suggestion of Tim Gary from Rep. Mursaus’s office, they are considering holding something in August in the northern part of the state after the Budget has passed. They would like to involve the members of the Assembly Committee on Forestry, the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry and Higher Education, and the Legislative Aides. Representatives Bewley and Tiffany have expressed a desire to hold Forestry Committee hearings in Northern Wisconsin. Rep. Mursau has concurred. They have not heard from the Senate Committee members yet, but Earl hopes to get a chance to discuss the idea with Sen. Kapanke soon. Bill

Horvath suggested holding a joint hearing of the Senate and Assembly Committees in conjunction with the tour to ensure that the Legislators' mileage expenses are covered while they are out of their districts.

Henry proposed a late Thursday hearing followed by a Friday tour beginning at a forest with high mortality, then moving on to an active forest, showing them the whole spectrum. Chair Souba added that since the Governor's main focus is on jobs, consideration should also be given to arranging a tour of a forest products manufacturing facility of some type, and having the owner or other key person talk about the forest's value, and what it has done for that community. Troy Brown offered Kretz Lumber, where observers could watch logs coming in and being cut, as one possibility. Chair Souba assured Jane that the Council would do whatever it could to support her group's efforts to bring this about.

June Meeting Agenda and Field Tour – Fred Souba

The Council's next regular meeting will take place on June 14, 2011 in Madison. Tentative agenda items include:

- MFL Legislative Council Study Results
- BHG Soils Subcommittee Findings
- Priority Council Actions Relative to the Strategy – report from Jim Hoppe's subcommittee
- Strategic Direction – report on plan for operation
- Forest Exploration Center – invite new Director to speak
- Legislative Tour Update – Jane Severt
- State Forester's Report
- Legislative Update

The field tour for Council members will take place in August in conjunction with the Legislative tour that is being planned, rather than in June as previously stated.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:26 p.m.

Submitted by:
Mary Brown, WDNR