

# Governor's Council on Forestry

Grandlodge Waterpark Resort  
805 Creske Avenue  
Rothschild, WI 54474

July 14<sup>th</sup> 2016

**Council Members Present:** Ken Price, Troy Brown, Matt Dallman, Paul DeLong, Tom Hittle, Jim Kerkman, Representative Mursau, Mark Rickenbach, Henry Schienebeck, Jane Severt, Senator Tiffany, Ken Zabel, Nancy Bozek (for Richard Wedepohl), Earl Gustafson (for Jim Hoppe)

**Council Members Absent:** Jim Hoppe, Paul Strong, Virgil Waugh, Richard Wedepohl, Senator Bewley, Representative Milroy

**Guests Present:** Kelsey Pickart, Rebecca Diebel, Bob Nack, Greg Edge, Darcy Widmayer, Monica Zachay, Steve Swenson, Laurie Gharis, Sarah Gilbert, Darcie Howard, Dani Jones, Jessie Augustyn, Scott Walter, Keith McCaffrey, Robin Ginner, Jeremy Holtz, Curt Rollman, Sara Bredesen

Chair Schienebeck called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM with introductions of Council Members and guests.

## Meeting Minutes

### Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education

**Laurie Gharis and Darcie Howard**

The Council welcomed Laurie and Darcie to their new roles with the Wisconsin Center for Environmental Education (WCEE). Laurie and Darcie outlined their goals for WCEE to support healthy and sustainable schools, provide professional development for K-12 teachers, evenly distribute education resources, facilitate networks, improve communication, and provide learning opportunities for K-12 students while supporting undergraduates and graduates. They hope to accomplish all of this by using innovative approaches, regardless of challenges that may arise. Laurie and Darcie expressed their excitement to partner with the Council and other forestry organizations to provide valuable resources to the community.

### Trees for Tomorrow

**Robin Ginner**

Robin Ginner, Executive Director, provided an overview of Trees for Tomorrow for the Council. Trees for Tomorrow started as a conservation camp at a time when forests were decimated recovering from the cutover period. It was led by a group of industry executives who hoped to see woods that were plentiful again. They planted millions of seedlings and saw the regeneration begin, then turned their efforts to helping community members with forest management. Trees for Tomorrow took their efforts to the next level by teaching kids about practicing sustainable management while responsibly harvesting timber. The mission is to use transformative educational experiences to teach stewardship and sustainability. The group is led by professional educators who stress hands on experience.

Bob Nack and Greg Edge of the Department of Natural Resources provided an overview on efforts to monitor and assess deer impacts on forest regeneration. They provided information on previous initiatives and research in this area and a potential forest regeneration monitoring protocol. Challenges to monitoring include finding damage that is not always evident, cumulative damage, legacy effects, deer distribution discrepancies, and cost. Current resources that support monitoring efforts include the USFS Forest Inventory & Analysis (FIA) and the Wisconsin Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI). The Deer Trustee Report in 2012 emphasized local involvement in decision making, increased communication, and use of population objectives rather than numeric goals. Through this process, County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) were developed across Wisconsin.

Members of CDACs represent forestry, agriculture, tourism, local hunting clubs, urban-metro, and transportation. Each council also includes a Deer Management Assistance Program representative, a DNR Wildlife, Law Enforcement, and Forestry liaison, as well as a tribal rep and a Conservation Congress rep. The goal of these committees is to gather public opinion on deer populations, review and consider scientific metrics on herd trends and impacts on habitat, and provide the department with recommendations on deer population objectives.

Bob and Greg stressed the difficulties they face to develop recommendations at both a regional and local scale due to variances in deer population and demographics between, and even within each county. They hope that with Forest Regeneration Monitoring (FRM) we can learn about forest regeneration composition and recruitment by forest type, local and regional variation in deer browse impacts, and future forest growth and productivity trends. Management boundaries are revisited every 3 years and an increase in deer herd is considered a 20% population jump within that 3 years.

The ultimate goal of the program is to find a balance between having a healthy deer population and healthy forest regeneration while keeping the hunters of Wisconsin happy. However, balancing hunter expectations and land management objectives proves difficult.

A few council members suggested using the MFL program to aid in data collection or using deer-less area as a control for forest regeneration. Jane stressed that the council should take a collective approach on the subject as they move forward. Matt suggested obtaining a multi stakeholder buy-in to get financial support for more research. Tom was in support of this idea but felt that presenting another paper to CDAC members would not be sufficient to create change, but rather a completely different message to hunters or mindset change from the forestry community may be what is necessary. These sentiments were supported by multiple members.

Paul D. mentioned it is important to realize that tradeoffs are required. With the new way the state is setting deer goals, it is based on who shows up. Currently, the hunter voice is being heard because they are showing up and affecting the broader dialogue occurring, so the question asked right now is how do population levels ultimately affect the quality of the hunt. The forestry voice is absent or underwhelming as it relates to the dialogue at present. He appreciates Jane's leadership on this to get

foresters gathered as a community to ensure their needs are heard. Many members felt that the Council on Forestry Position on Deer Management document should be updated.

**Action Item:** Jane will lead a committee (Ken Price, Jim Kerkman, Tom Hittle, Matt Dallman) to bring a proposal that includes social, economic, and environmental considerations regarding the Council's standpoint on deer management to the September 14-15 meeting.

### **LUNCH – 12:00 PM**

#### **Private Forest Landowner Initiatives**

##### **Division of Forestry Initiatives**

**Nicole Potvin (WDNR)**

Nicole presented on techniques the Department of Natural Resources uses to engage woodland owners. Techniques include direct mailings, walk-throughs with landowners, and encouragement to develop stewardship plans for eligible cost sharing.

##### **Reaching Unengaged Woodland Owners**

**Steve Swensen ( Aldo Leopold Foundation)**

Steve spoke on behalf of the Aldo Leopold Foundation to share their techniques in communicating with private landowners. They strive to sustain diversity, productivity, and function of woodlands with an emphasis on continuous improvement and an increased return on investment. They offer a variety of resources to cater to different levels of engagement. Steve told the council about the database they have begun to keep to track of engaged landowners. Landowners who received a visit from a forester were significantly more likely to carry out stewardship practices.

##### **Wisconsin's Deer Management Assistance Program**

**Bob Nack (WDNR)**

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) is designed to provide professional assistance to private landowners and public land managers to improve habitat for deer and other wildlife. It encourages peer to peer learning and networking as well as information sharing. The goal of the program is to promote sound land stewardship practices by providing outreach and education information to landowners. Three different levels of assistance exist to cover the extent of deer and wildlife management needs landowners may have. It is also possible to enroll multiple pieces of land under one program. The Department has been offering workshops around the state to encourage enrollment, improve awareness of options available to landowners, and foster networking. The result so far has been wonderful and over 80% of enrollees rate the program as "good" or "very good". Bob noted that about half of the DMAP landowners are also enrolled in MFL.

##### **The Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership**

**Curt Rollman (WDNR)**

Curt Rollman presented information on the Wisconsin Young Forest Partnership program to the Council. The goal of this program is to establish a landscape-scale conservation approach that can deliver young forest habitat on suitable lands across Wisconsin. In order to meet this goal, the program attempts to create young forest habitat for high conservation priority declining wildlife species, increase active

forest management on private lands, support local economies by promoting a healthy timber industry, and improve outdoor recreation opportunities to view and pursue wildlife. Many partners play a part in this program to suit whatever needs the landowner has. The project started with six counties and has since grown to 21 as of 2015. Targeted letters were sent out, to which 128 landowners responded. All received advice regardless of their property's potential and 52 site visits were conducted. Of the 52 site visits, 34 landowners received a forest management plan from WDNR and 35 landowners have already begun planning work into 2017. Future goals include promoting more aspen acreage, continuing to engage landowners with no previous management history, and encourage private land management.

**Forestry & Landowner Engagement in the St. Croix** **Monica Zachay (St. Croix River Association)**

Monica spoke to promote the link between sustainable forestry and water quality. Her hope is that through coordination, landscape stewardship planning, education and outreach, and demonstration projects the St. Croix River Association can become an advocate for "Forests for Clean Water". By hosting workshops and attending forestry conferences they plan to build on partnerships and continue momentum to improve water quality of the St. Croix and its tributaries.

**Update on Wisconsin Forest Practice Study** **Henry Schienebeck (Chair)**

Chair Schienebeck shared that there is money left over from these projects that he hopes will be used for any needs that arise from the recommendations we will receive from the committees on September 15<sup>th</sup>. Senator Tiffany felt it would be good to send any leftover money back to prove how efficiently the studies were conducted. Clarification was given that anyone choosing to peer review the reports may do so, as they are posted publicly on the Council's website.

**Legislature Report** **Representative Mursau**

Representative Mursau will be working to reinstate the Wisconsin Environmental Education Board in the next budget.

**State Forester Report** **Paul DeLong (Chief State Forester)**

MFL and Cutting Notice program guidance is now out for a 21 day comment period. The MFL Program Guidance is to help assist in the implementation of the new MFL Legislation and builds on the initial interim guidance issued when the Legislation first passed. The next will be to draft Administrative Rule language. The Cutting Notice Guidance updates Chapter 20 of the Forest Tax Law Handbook to reflect the MFL Legislation.

**Action Item:** Kelsey will send a link to the MFL program guidance documents to council members and interested parties through GovDelivery.

The WDNR Alignment roll out is still planned for later this summer. There is no fixed date yet but the council will receive a notice when we are sure of a date.

A draft will go out later today (July 14<sup>th</sup>) of the Forestry Headquarters Relocation Proposal for public comment. Forty-three communities responded to the Request for Information (RFI) and the department is recommending Rhinelander, Wausau, and Hayward. Paul clarified that this proposal was requested by the legislature. Once public comment is reviewed, the proposal will go to the Governor and the legislature for consideration as part of the 2017-2019 biennial budget.

Four terms expired on the Silviculture Guidance Team (terms are three year rotating). A call for applications will go out soon for:

- a. University/Forest Service Research (expires June 2019)
- b. Resource Conservation (expires June 2019)
- c. Logging Professional (expires June 2019)
- d. Consulting Foresters (expires June 2019)
- e. Forest Ecology (expires June 2018 – previous incumbent stepped down)

Applications will be reviewed by Jane and Henry, and Carmen Hardin and Doug Brown as co-chairs of SGT, with a recommendation to Paul, as Chief State Forester.

The Division of Forestry will be initiating a review of the EAB Silviculture Guidelines later this year to take into account recent research and the current known infestation in the state. The process has not been fully developed yet.

The Annosum Root Rot Treatment Guidelines are still on schedule to be reviewed starting this fall.

## **Dispute Resolution Process Update**

**Tom Hittle**

Steigerwaldt Land Services was awarded the contract to administer the new Dispute Resolution Process (DRP). The DRP Administrator is an independent, third-party contractor with administrative oversight responsibility for the Tax Law DRP. The DRP Administrator will act solely as the overseer of the process, and will not be involved in resolving disputes or act in other mediation type activities. The Administrator will secure and manage qualified Forestry Mediators and Experts who will participate in dispute resolutions on the DNR's behalf.

The Administrator will be the initial point of contact for parties seeking use of the DRP and will decide, with the assistance of the DNR, if the conflict is appropriate for the process. If the landowner agrees to participate and the dispute proceeds, the Administrator acts through the defined process to establish a Mediator or a panel of Experts. The Administrator continues to facilitate the process by acquiring and disseminating pertinent case information, assuring that timelines are met and procedures are followed and, upon completion, forwards the outcome to the State Forester.

Throughout this process, the Administrator will act to maintain records of the process to document the information needed for periodic program reports and that may aid in determining appropriate revisions to improve the DRP. The Administrator is also responsible for payment to the Mediators and Experts for labor per the terms of the contract with the State.

A proposed project timeline and work plan is as follows:

**Project Timeline and Work Plan - Table 1**

Date	Task Description
July 1, 2016	Contract start date
July 1 – July 15	Initial Administrator and DNR start-up meeting
July 15 – July 22	Public outreach message methodology confirmed and deployed
July 15 – July 22	Solicitation for forestry Mediators and Experts begins, evaluation criteria process developed
July 15 – August 15	Tracking and case management database and forms developed
August 15	Start-up update to DNR
August 15 – August 31	Mediator selections and list of Experts confirmed, including biographies and geographic availability
September 1	DRP operational
September 15	Update presentation to WI Council on Forestry
November 1	Update to DNR
January 15, 2017	Draft Council on Forestry report to DNR for review
February 1	Report submitted to Council on Forestry Chair, with presentation to follow
2017	Periodic review/solicitation of Mediators and Experts and general project administration with updates to DNR and Council on Forestry
February 2018	Complete DRP analysis for process improvements and lessons learned with recommendations report completed
June 30, 2018	Initial Administrator contract end date

**Action Item:** Kelsey will send out an email calling for September 14<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> Field Tour location suggestions. There will be a 2 week deadline for comments. Once proposals are compiled, Kelsey will send them to council members to vote on. The tour location should be finalized by mid-August.

Meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM