

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Products Lab - Madison, WI
March 17, 2005

Members Present:

Jeff Stier, Rep. Donald Friske, Rep. Mary Hubble, Bill Horvath, Fred Clark, Bill Ward, Mary Jean Huston, Robert Rogers, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Troy Brown, Dennis Brown, Sen Roger Breske, Leon Church

Members Absent:

Jon Geenen, Ken Ottman, Sen. Russ Decker

Guests Present:

Dave Hollenberg, John W. Koning, Jr., Gunnar Bergerson, Earl Gustafson, Gene Roark, Tim Laatsch, Roger Nacker, Mike Miller, Tia Nelson, Al Hastreiter, Allison Hellman, Mike Prouty, Bob Manwell, Mary Brown, Jeff Niese, Patrick Walsh, Masood Akhtar, Sarah Attwood, Chris Caldwell

Welcome

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. The Council members and guests introduced themselves.

Federal Budget - Mike Prouty and Mike Miller

In recognition of Wisconsin's 100th year of forestry, Mike Prouty presented Paul DeLong with a letter addressed to Governor Doyle and signed by the Chief of the Forest Service, and a plaque for excellence and service in forestry.

In 2005, State and Private Forestry received 345 million dollars for its cooperative programs. Of that, Wisconsin has received 5.7 million dollars so far. It has been used to fund the Cooperative Fire, Volunteer Fire, Forest Health Protection, Urban and Community Forestry, Forest Legacy, and Stewardship programs. For 2006, the President's budget has proposed 248 million dollars for State and Private Forestry. There are significant cuts across the board to all but the legacy program, which increases from 57 to 80 million dollars. For Wisconsin, the 55% decrease in Cooperative Forest Health funds will potentially have significant negative impacts on Gypsy Moth suppression invasive species management.

To help the Chief of the Forest Service become a more informed advocate for state and private forestry, NASF has formed a team of state and federal foresters to try to find others outside of NASF and the Forest Service, such as private landowners and people from industry and environmental groups, to talk about the role of private forest lands. They will be holding three regional workshops, which they hope will produce a list of recommendations.

The National Forests are working with a flat budget, and will continue to do so into 2006. Despite this, they have been able to change where funds are allocated. They've made reductions in forest planning while increasing the timber program. A new program has been initiated to increase timber output from the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest by 5 million a year for the next five years. Overall, there were 5 million dollars from timber sales in 2004, of which the counties received about 1.2 million.

Associate Chief Sally Collins made a statement that the Forest Service is going to look at, and possibly field test, forest certification on the National Forest System. The Chequamegon-Nicolet was named as one of the forests that could be a pilot for it to look at what it would mean to be certified.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Leon Church) that the Council express its concerns to Wisconsin's Congressional Delegation for the Federal Forest Service budget and its impact on the State of Wisconsin was passed unanimously.
- The Council will communicate its concerns for the Federal Forest Service budget in the form of a letter to the Congressional Delegation as soon as possible.

Conference on Forestry Implementation Steering Committee - Sarah Attwood and Paul DeLong

The goal of the Conference was to kick off implementation of the Statewide Forest Plan and to get partners together to address issues. The Implementation Steering Committee was established in December with Paul as Chair, Fred Souba, one member from the UW Extension and one from the Wisconsin Academy of Science, Arts and Letters. They are trying to keep the momentum going that began at the last Council meeting. On April 4th they will bring the theme leaders together to look at which issues come forward individually and which might be best addressed collectively. They will also discuss a proposed framework for implementation of the Statewide Forest Plan, copies of which were distributed to the Council members. The themes that emerged at the Governor's Conference on Forestry overlap most of the initiatives that the Council had began working on prior to the Conference with the exception of biomass. The Council's Woody Biomass Task Group will continue its work with Bill Horvath as Champion. Most of the Champions from the Governor's Conference have made commitments to lead the efforts for progress on their themes.

ACTION ITEM:

- Council members are to offer any feedback on the proposed Framework for Implementation of the Statewide Forest Plan to Paul DeLong.

Council on Forestry's Biennial Report to the Governor: a template - Paul DeLong

Chapter 26 of the Wisconsin Statutes requires the Council to produce a biennial report. That report is due by the end of June 2005. Allison Hellman, with the help of other Forestry Division staff, has developed a template of a format to use in preparation of the report. It describes the Council's accomplishments of the past year and a half, outlining its work on the priorities identified at its inception and on the Governor's Conference on Forestry themes. It contains bullets for the statutes, and lists documents from which those preparing the report can obtain information. It concludes with final thoughts of the Chair. Paul asked for the Council's approval of the template. Allison will take the lead in coordinating the work.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Leon Church (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council approve the template for preparation of its biennial report to the Governor passed unanimously.
- The Council will vote on approval of the draft report at its June meeting.

ACTION ITEM:

- Paul DeLong will distribute a draft of the report to Council members in advance of the June Council meeting.

Woody Biomass Task Group - Bill Horvath

Bill distributed his task group report and a study entitled *Biomass as Feedstock for a Bioenergy and Bioproducts Industry* to the group. The vision of the task group is to make sure that the wood supply in Wisconsin is wholesome and is available to everyone, including our existing industries. In the end, it will include comprehensive legislation that can be taken to the state legislature for implementation to ensure that we can keep the wood supply flowing and wind up with sustainable forests in Wisconsin. At its next meeting, on April 4th, the group will start looking at all the elements that will be needed in that piece of legislation. Two main issues the task group is looking at are:

1. *How to get at the wood supply.* We need to work with landowners on the things they are interested in rather than on the things we are interested in. (The inability to access small

tracts of land in order to harvest large tracts of timber is a problem shared with the wood products industry, and is likely to become a bigger problem as fragmentation increases.)

2. *How to explore, with other industry, ways we can use the billion tons of biomass we have in the state*

They have two two-million dollar applications in. One is to start a Schools for Fuels Program in Wisconsin. The other, with Agriculture and Energy, is to look at ways to help stabilize the logging industry and set up mechanisms to reach the landowners. There are 264,000 landowners that need to be identified. The Fish and Wildlife Service has expressed an interest in funding activities that help reduce invasive species through sustainable forestry. NRCS has agreed to set up a woody biomass standard. They are pursuing another grant from NRCS to implement that standard on a statewide basis.

Board of Commissioners of Public Land - Tia Nelson

Tia Nelson, Executive Secretary, gave an overview of her agency, which she believes can help relieve the problem of limited access to timberland by reducing fragmentation. The BCPL was originally granted 10 million acres across the state. Most of it was sold. There are 78,000 acres remaining, of which about 30,000 are managed for forestry. They have competitive bid timber sales each fall. This was their biggest year, with \$840,000 in revenues. They do hand and mechanized cutting and tree planting. They can trade, but not buy land.

A land consolidation plan, which would improve timberland management, was approved by the Commissioners in July of 2003. Currently, ninety percent of their land is located within nine counties. The other ten percent is scattered across twenty-four counties. This plan would dispose of some of the scattered parcels and reinvest the proceeds into consolidation of the larger blocks. Benefits of the land consolidation plan include:

- Aggregation of BCPL timberlands.
- Improved management access to lands.
- Fragmentation addressed.
- Reduced cost of forest management.
- Increased timberland use.

The BCPL has submitted a plan to the legislature requesting Land Bank Authority to help achieve the Consolidation Plan, and is asking the Council for its support. Land Bank Authority would allow the BCPL to use the proceeds from the sale of unproductive parcels for acquiring land to consolidate the larger blocks, thus increasing timber revenue and public access and reducing forest fragmentation. The unproductive parcels would be screened and then sold. The proceeds would then be placed into the Land Bank. Parcels in the consolidation zone would be identified and acquired with funds from the Land Bank. The BCPL can help sustain working forests, reduce fragmentation, and forge partnerships with industry, private landowners, and other government agencies. Land Bank Authority is the key.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Mary Jean Huston (seconded by Fred Clark) that the Council support the Land Bank concept was passed unanimously.

State Forester's Report - Paul DeLong

2005 - 2007 Budget Status

Chief State Forester Paul DeLong reported that the budget has been officially submitted to the legislature. The agency briefing for the DNR is scheduled for March 30th. Voting on the budget will start on April 12th. It is uncertain when the Natural Resources budget will come before the Joint Finance Committee. There are certain to be deliberations on portions of it. A total of 40.75 positions are being cut in the Governor's budget. Of those, 34.75 are in Private Forestry, with the remainder in Public Awareness and the Karner Blue Butterfly program. The funding for these positions is slated to remain in the budget. If the money is preserved, DNR will be looking into alternative delivery methods to get the required work done. There are many complications involved, such as union regulations that prohibit contracting for services as the result of a layoff. Not only do positions have to be cut, but vacancies have to be lined up with required functions and with locations, which presents quite a challenge. It is hoped that vacancies can be used in a way that

minimizes disruption of affected staff. Paul distributed a letter sent by the Urban Forestry Council to DNR Secretary Scott Hassett following their meeting after the release of the Governor's budget. It expresses their concerns regarding the budget.

Private Landowner Certification

The field audit has been completed for certification through the Tree Farm system. The Managed Forest Law program was found to conform with, and in some areas exceed, Tree Farm standards. The MFL backlog and the progress that has been made in reducing it were acknowledged. Our managed forestlands can be certified, with the only requirement being that we give notification to landowners giving them the opportunity to opt out. The overall cost is estimated to be less than twenty thousand dollars a year for certification of a potential two million acres of land. Paul asked the Council if there were any objections with proceeding to accept certification of the MFL program and notification of landowners under the program of their opportunities to opt out if they wish not to become certified. There were none.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Fred Souba (seconded by Jim Heerey) that the Council supports the DNR proceeding with certification of the Managed Forest Law program under the American Tree Farm system passed unanimously.

Paul announced that on March 18th, 27 out of 29 counties would be accepting certification, with 25 under SFI, 16 under FSC, and 14 under both. Two small counties opted out. Chairman Souba distributed a draft resolution in recognition of this, and asked the Council for its acceptance.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council accept the resolution commending the individual county forests, the Wisconsin County Forests Association and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources for achieving certification passed unanimously.

Legislative Report - Rep. Don Friske

Rep. Friske distributed his report to the Council. He announced his plan to, at some point in this budget process, have a budget initiative that will allow, encourage and help fund a professional logger certification program through North Central Technical College, and possibly Nicolet, that hopefully will increase the number of qualified loggers in the field. Three bills were discussed at the March Assembly Committee on Forestry hearing. AB 7, MFL Parcels in Multiple Towns, states that any parcel of ten or more contiguous acres should be allowed under the MFL. No one testified against it. AB 9, 15-Year County Forest Plans, mirrors a bill passed by the Assembly last year. AB 59, the Right to Forest bill, needs to go through some language revisions before being approved. There will be a Joint Assembly Committee on the Environment and Committee on Forestry hearing March 30th on deer herd management and forest regeneration to examine the effects of overgrazing.

Also on March 30, the Assembly Committee on Forestry will take testimony on AB 165, Raw Forest Product Theft, which prevents contract loggers from failing to compensate landowners, and on AB 254, Wisconsin's Healthy Forest Initiative. This bill primarily consolidates the authority and responsibility for management of Wisconsin's forested acres with the Chief State Forester. It removes authority from DATCP to be the initial responder on insect and invasive species matters. It also requires the DNR to set allowable timber harvest goals. Deviations of more than ten per cent from the established goals would need to be reported to the Council on Forestry, who would then give their recommendations. The bill is still in the amendable stage. Rep. Friske expressed his desire that the Council take a position on it. The Council discussed the bill and agreed that they should study the bill in depth and that their comments on its various aspects should be communicated to Rep. Friske in a timely manner.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Fred Clark (seconded by Jim Heerey) that the Executive Committee and others identified by the chair, review the omnibus Bill AB 254, solicit input from all Council members, and bring recommendations before the Council in June passed unanimously.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The June meeting will take place on June 21st, preceded by a half-day tour on June 20th. They will both tentatively be held at Treehaven.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Bob Rogers will check on the availability of the Treehaven facility and let Mary Brown know.
- Council members will send ideas for agenda items to Mary Brown.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 PM.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR