

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Products Lab – Madison, WI
September 16, 2004

Members Present:

Jim Heerey, Fred Clark, Ken Ottman, Dennis Brown, Bill Horvath, Mary Jean Huston, Jon Geenen, Bob Rogers, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Bill Ward, Colette Matthews for Wisconsin County Forest Association, Jeff Stier

Members Absent:

Leon Church, Sen. Russ Decker, Rep. Mary Hubler, Troy Brown, Rep. Donald Friske, Sen. Roger Breske

Guests Present:

Teague Prichard, Robert Manwell, Wendy McCown, Al Hastreiter, Larry Matthews, Gene Roark, Mary Brown, Mark Heyde, Roger Nacker, John Koning, Patrick Walsh, Gunnar Bergersen, Eunice Padley, Sarah Attwood, Steve Schmieding, Jason Engle, John Zerbe, Rick Bergman, Earl Gustafson, Anne Archie, Masood Akhtar, Jennifer Schuh, Judy Weinstock, Prof. Don Waller, Mike Prouty, Mark Knaebe, Terry Mace, Alexander DePillis, Dave Vieth, Bob Mather, Jack Hoisington, Dave Kluesner, Jim Rodd, Beth Piliouras

Welcome

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. The Council members and guests introduced themselves. Chairman Souba announced the appointment of Troy Brown to the Council. Troy, President of Kretz Lumber, replaces former Council member Byron Hawkins as the lumber industry representative. Colette Matthews will be the alternate for the Wisconsin County Forest Association until an appointment is made.

Invasive Species Task Group Report - Fred Clark

Recommendations for Action

Fred distributed a draft study report that lists twenty specific recommendations for action that stem from the nine main issues identified at the June Council meeting. They are listed below, the first nine being the highest priority for Council action.

- 1 Endorse the Division of Forestry Budget Proposal
- 2 Do targeted research on the effects and costs of invasives in forestry
- 3 Create an early detection and monitoring program
- 4 Perform invasive plants inventory/assessment on State forest lands
- 5 Perform invasive plants inventory/assessment on all Wisconsin forest lands
- 6 Prioritize and fund invasive species control on state forest lands
- 7 Prioritize and fund invasive species control on private forest lands
- 8 Develop Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species
- 9 Targeted outreach efforts (BMPs) for recreational forest uses
- 10 Create noxious weed legislation
- 11 Create an "Emerging Issues" research working group
- 12 Include invasive species data collection in stand-level forest inventory
- 13 Include invasive species in FIA and other statewide land resource inventories
- 14 Create/support regional information sharing and planning networks for invasive species issues
- 15 Incorporate invasives considerations in Division of Forestry silvicultural handbooks
- 16 Create explicit guidance for incorporating invasive species presence in MFL planning
- 17 Preliminary statewide threat assessment and action plan for invasive plants in forestry
- 18 Develop and strengthen volunteer-based initiatives
- 19 Media-based awareness programs
- 20 Workshops, educational/training programs

The items were placed into three groups - those needing budget allocation to implement, those needing partnerships to implement, and those that could be at least partially implemented with existing resources. The upcoming Governor's Conference on Forestry will be useful as a way of working on the needed partnerships. Invasive species will be one of its themes. Fred hopes to report back at the December Council meeting with results from the conference, and will be seeking guidance from the Council on his task group's next role at that time.

Use of Woody Biomass Task Group Report - Bill Horvath

The task group reviewed the DNR/USFS Forest Inventory Analysis at its first meeting. It showed that forestland acreage and the volume of woody biomass continue to grow, that growth outstrips use by the wood industry, and that the species mix is shifting.

The group has been working with Senator Breske and with Professor Don Nichols and two of his graduate students from the LaFollette Institute in gathering the information necessary to accomplish the ultimate goal of getting a piece of comprehensive legislation in place that will grasp the entire use of woody biomass in the state of Wisconsin. Additional funding must be sought to continue this important work.

One issue the group is working on is how we can use woody biomass for fuel, especially in our school systems. There is no defined effort now. It's only being used in a couple of our schools. Bill introduced three speakers whom he invited to shed some light on the task at hand.

Alexander De Pillis, Wisconsin Division of Energy - Public Policy

Alexander discussed what we do and what we don't have in the way of public policy in Wisconsin. There is a lot of interest in the use of Woody Biomass, but the interest is fragmented. One policy we have is Afforestation, State Statute 1.12(c). We also have the DNR and the Forest Service, primary and secondary wood products directories, good people, rules, the statewide program Focus on Energy through which marketing and equipment grants can be obtained, a case study on wood-fired energy, examples and history. What we don't have is a willingness of local communities to invest. Referendums fail due to tight local budgets. There is a lack of interest and of experience in borrowing. Schools aren't used to the instability and transparency of the wood fuel market. They lack contracting experience. He concluded that there is potential, momentum is favorable, there are good people in the area, but we need a plan.

Richard Bergman, Forest Products Lab, Technical Marketing Unit - Fuels for Schools Program

The Fuels for Schools program was initiated in 2000 by the National Fire Plan. Its purpose is to utilize unmarketable products, help with low cost heat for schools, and help poor rural communities. The main focus of the program has been in Forest Service Regions I and IV, which consist of the states of Montana, North Dakota, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho. For the program to work there needs to be support from the school and community, an engineering assessment, a supply of chips, and financial help. The program provides assistance in all these areas except, of course, community support. Wood can replace natural gas, #2 and #6 fuel oils, propane, electricity, and coal. The initial costs are about twice the cost of a fossil fuel system, with recovery time dependent on the method of financing and the price of various fuels. There will be a General Technical Report (GRT) available on the program in the next month.

Judy Weinstock, Barron School District - Case Study

The Barron Area School District and Barron Memorial Medical Center have been heating with wood chips for over twenty years. A major renovation to the steam heating system was required. The school, hospital, and clinic formed a consortium and borrowed the \$350,000 necessary for conversion to a wood system primarily utilizing existing steam lines. The plant fired up in 1981 and has not been down since. There is a gas back-up system, as the hospital risks being down. There were problems initially finding good chips. The system requires ongoing maintenance. Overall, despite the initial expense and maintenance, the conversion has paid off with gas at \$.52 per therm and wood at \$.32 per therm.

Suggestions from the Council as short-term issues for the task group to focus on are:

- Biofuel - need to address the trade-off of carbon dioxide emissions vs. fossil fuels
- Competition for fuel - assign someone from task group to address
- Use of woody biomass from an ecosystem management perspective (ecosystems changing in the north)
- Implementation of the Fuels for Schools program in Wisconsin with help of legislators and others

ACTION ITEM:

- Bill Horvath will report back to the Council with recommendations in December.

Transportation Issues - Dave Veith

Dave Veith, Director of the Bureau of Highway Operations at WI DOT addressed the issue of lower weight limits for log hauling vehicles compared to other hauling vehicles. A major reason for the difference is an attempt to prevent additional damage to the highway system. Vehicles weighing in at over 80,000 pounds are not allowed on the interstate highway system because it can't have its function as a defense route hampered. Political decisions and safety concerns are other reasons.

Dave explained that DOT is flexible in terms of looking into alternative regulation strategies such as using weight-per-axle and different axle configurations. That, though, requires coordination between local governments and the DOT. Truck-only lanes are possible if roads are proven capable of handling them. They would have to be tested.

Chairman Souba has met with Representative Friske on this, and it remains an issue for the Council.

Revisiting Curtis's Forest Inventory Sites 50 Years Later - Professor Don Waller

In 1950, John T. Curtis of the University of Wisconsin conducted a survey which, using quantitative data, documented and described the plant communities in existence in the state at that time. Between 2000 and 2004, Professor Waller and his team conducted a similar survey revisiting many of the same sites. He shared his findings.

In the north woods, 62 of Curtis's 92 sites were studied. Overall, the number of species hasn't changed much. There was no difference in species per meter. Some significant findings were:

- There were conspicuous losses of species at most sites.
- Most sites gained exotics.
- Ecological changes do not appear to be due to succession.
- The sites are becoming homogenous.
- There is biotic impoverishment.
- Parks that don't allow hunting have lost more species than those that do.
- Animal-pollinated species are decreasing; while those pollinated by other sources are increasing.
- There is no evidence that exotics are having an effect on species losses.
- Other than deer, most of our big undulates have been lost, as have been our big predators.
- Deer are the main catalyst of change.

In the south, the same things are happening, but to a greater degree. Plant diversity is higher in the south. The number of native species is decreasing, especially woodland and savanna types. Exotic plant species are increasing at an alarming rate. Common natives, such as Virginia Creeper, have increased.

Some implications are that:

- housing, road density, and proximity to urban areas are predictors of exotic invasion.
- not allowing hunting makes exotic invasion worse.
- public access makes exotic invasion worse.
- taking deer out of the north would have a big impact.
- decreasing damp forest herbs and increasing dry climate plants in the north may be an indication of climate change, and warrant testing.

- we are not doing a good job of monitoring whole systems, and need to find a basic monitoring system. This is an opportunity to integrate forest and wildlife management, and to foster other partnerships.

Governor's Conference on Forestry Update - Sarah Attwood

The conference will take place November 9th and 10th at Monona Terrace. It will be an opportunity to kick off implementation of the Statewide Forest Plan, build partnerships, and take action. The champions have been meeting. Facilitators have been coaching them. A number of sponsors have come forward. The cost of the conference is estimated to be \$60,000. We have about \$40,000 so far in sponsor support. Invitations and registration materials have gone out to targeted stakeholders to help ensure that key people will be in attendance. There is a media plan underway. The newspapers are starting to engage. Press will be at the conference to report on emerging issues.

There will be two plenary sessions. The Governor has been invited to deliver an opening speech. Participants will choose one of four themes the first day, and one of three on the second. There will be concurrent four-hour work sessions on these themes each day. There will be interactive displays on each theme.

ACTION ITEM:

- Council members should plan to attend, participate in, and network at the Conference on Forestry in addition to their sponsorship of the event.

DECISION ITEM:

- The Council will look at how to move forward with the momentum generated at the Conference at the December meeting.

State Forester's Report

Chief State Forester Paul DeLong passed around three recently released publications relevant to the Forestry Centennial. *In Grandpa's Woods* is a pre-kindergarten book that is available via Trees for Tomorrow. A fourth-grade book entitled *Wisconsin Forest Tales*, produced by LEAF and the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin, is being sent to all schools along with an *Into the Outdoors* video featuring forest songs sung by Ken Lonquist. The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association has put out a coffee table book called *100 Years of Wisconsin Forestry*.

2005 - 2007 Budget Issues

Paul handed out a report entitled *Forestry Account 2004fy Revenues & Spending Authority* showing what happens to the money in the Forestry Account. The biggest expenditure category is program operations. DNR's 2005/2007 Budget Request is not official until after the Natural Resources Board Meeting on September 22. Paul gave a description of initiatives included in the request pending Board approval. Hopefully, these initiatives will be included in the Governor's budget, which will come out in February. They are:

1. Protecting the Wildland-Urban Interface from Fire
2. Meeting Managed Forest Law Responsibilities
3. Growing the Wisconsin Forest-based Economy
4. Mitigating the Impact of Invasive and Non-native Plants, Insects, and Tree Diseases
5. Sustainable Forestry Operations
6. Fire Fighter Safety and Communications
7. Grant Partnerships for Sustainable Forestry
8. Forestry Education and Awareness Center
9. State Forest Legacy Program (would allow DNR to acquire access and development rights)

ACTION ITEM:

- The Council will work on preparing a statement on the Budget Request at the December Council meeting for submission to the Governor before the end of December.

Private Lands Certification Status

Bob Mather gave an update. The Forestry Leadership Team will make a decision on whether private lands should be assessed for certification through the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), the Tree Farm system, both systems, or no system at their meeting on October 14 and 15. After a decision is made, they will proceed with contracting auditors, targeting April for having field auditors here. Audit reports would be available in June. Input from the Council will be sought in September, in hopes of proceeding to the Natural Resources Board in December 2005.

Participation in certification by landowners would be voluntary. There would be no extra cost or obligation to the landowner. Certification lends itself to a structured system. By being in the MFL program, landowners would already be practicing sustainable forestry and be certifiable.

ACTION ITEM:

- Council members are to send comments on MFL certification to Paul DeLong by October 11.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, December 16th. Agenda items will include:

- Review of the Forestry Budget (Advise Governor)
- Outcome of the Governor's Conference on Forestry - continue work on themes forward to the Governor
- State Forester's Report with an outline of the budget
- Legislative Report
- Private forestland certification
- Task group reports

ACTION ITEMS:

- Invite Governor's Conference on Forestry champions to make presentations and recommendations at the next Council meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3.25 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR