

Meeting Minutes

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

Members Present:

Jeff Stier, Rep. Mary Hubler, Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Fred Clark, Bill Ward, Leon Church, Mary Jean Huston, Robert Rogers, Rep. Donald Friske, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Troy Brown

Members Absent:

Sen. Russ Decker, Jon Geenen, Sen. Roger Breske, Dennis Brown

Guests Present:

Colette Matthews, Robert Manwell, Wendy McCown, Jim Rodd, Larry Matthews, Gene Roark, Mary Brown, Darrell Zastrow, Earl Gustafson, Masood Akhtar, Tim Eisele, Gene Francisco, Mark Heyde, Tim Mulhern, Roger Nacker, John Koning, Eunice Padley, Patrick Walsh, Peter Murray, Lisa MacKinnon, Allison Hellman, Anne Archie, Robert Olszewski, Lynn Wilson, David Bernstein, Sarah Attwood, Jeremy Solin, Ken Genskow, Tia Nelson, Michael Strigel, John DuPlissis, E.G. Nadeau, Gunnar Bergersen, Debbie Yarmark, Brent English, Steve Schmieding, Jack Hoisington, David Mladenoff

Welcome

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. He welcomed the many guests present. Guests and Council members introduced themselves.

Governor's Conference on Forestry Follow-up

Fred thanked the champions and sponsors of the Governor's Conference on Forestry, which took place in November at the Monona Terrace Convention Center. Over 250 participated. At the conference Governor Doyle announced the signing of the Great Lakes Forest Accord, the formation of his Consortium on Biorefinery Technology, and the Wisconsin Center for Sustainable Forestry Business to be located at the Forest Products Lab. Fred announced the formation of an oversight committee for coordinating and facilitating follow-up of the work that was begun at the conference. The four members include himself, Paul DeLong or his designee from the DNR, Ken Genskow, and Mike Strigel.

• Theme Champion Reports

Conserving Wisconsin's Biological Diversity - Mary Jean Huston

A good mix of about 60 people was at this session. The twelve-member planning group met twice and came up with four goals important to conserving the state's biological diversity:

- 1.) That our decisions, conservation work, and management are based on sound science.
- 2.) That our public policies in the state support the conservation of biological diversity.
- 3.) That our citizens value the conservation of biological diversity and see its importance.
- 4.) That the state has a long-term vision to anticipate challenges to biological diversity.

Five recommendations emerged when working on these goals:

- 1.) Invest in and maintain an inventory and monitoring program that can be the foundation of biological diversity work in the state.
- 2.) Biological diversity conservation in this state should be based on landscape plans.
- 3.) Develop a system of reference areas to use as a baseline to monitor changes in biological diversity.
- 4.) Provide incentives for managers and landowners to conserve biological diversity.
- 5.) Use marketing, education and outreach so Wisconsin citizens and landowners value conserving biological diversity and good management for natural resources, and do not see managing

natural resources for biological diversity as at cross purposes with forest management and economic sustainability.

The possibility of the Council on Forestry being instrumental in the outreach effort was discussed, as was its commissioning of a white paper to look at the economic benefits of ecological diversity.

Enhancing Wisconsin's Urban Forests - Ken Ottman

Over 81% of the people in the state live in urban areas. Urban forestry is driven by local communities. Increasing urbanization, pressures on local budgets, and the threat of exotic invasive species were identified as three key issues affecting urban forests. The 65 people participating broke into four independent workgroups that focused on:

- ◆ The erosion of funding for urban forestry.
- ◆ Development, urbanization, fragmentation and the decline of the urban forest canopy.
- ◆ Invasive species in the urban forest.
- ◆ Meeting the needs of Wisconsin communities.

Three statewide initiatives for consideration by the Council on Forestry and the state forestry organizations emerged from these work sessions:

- 1.) Develop a continuous statewide urban forest assessment program.
- 2.) Launch a statewide urban forest public awareness and education campaign.
- 3.) Identify, contain, and minimize the biological and socioeconomic impact of exotic pests and plants on Wisconsin's urban and rural forestland.

Minimizing Recreational Use Conflicts in Wisconsin's Forests - Deb Yarmark for Dave Marcouiller

The 41 participants broke into four workgroups, each working on a key issue identified by the leadership team. The four issues they worked on were:

- 1.) Ensuring that the full spectrum of forest-based recreational opportunities is available to the public, while ensuring that public forestlands are managed for their economic benefits and ecological integrity.
- 2.) Ensuring that the "Wisconsin Trail Network" is efficient, effective, meets recreational demand, has minimal impact on forest resources, and is properly maintained
- 3.) Meeting the needs of both the motorized (ATV) and non-motorized recreation sectors, while maintaining the ecological integrity of Wisconsin's forests.
- 4.) Ensuring that Wisconsin's citizens and visitors have a basic understanding of the state's forest communities, forestry practices and human impacts.

The outcome of this session were four recommendations:

- 1.) Revitalize the State Trails Council.
- 2.) Support and promote recreation research.
- 3.) Support and promote education and interpretation services.
- 4.) Increase funding for recreation management.

Enhancing Assistance to Wisconsin's Private Forest Landowners - John DuPlissis

There were approximately 21 people who served on a planning team that used the Statewide Forest Plan as a basis in identifying four key issues. They formulated recommendations for action on each.

I. Private Forestry Assistance

Recommendations

- ◆ Create a centralized point of contact for forestry information.
- ◆ Use new approaches to market forestry.

II. Forest Certification

Recommendation

- ◆ Develop a program for private landowners to participate in a forest certification program.

III. Property Taxes

Recommendations

- ◆ That the Governor appoint a task force to conduct a comprehensive study of lands based on use value assessment to protect the natural resources of the state.
- ◆ That the DNR in cooperation with the Department of Revenue develop and implement a system of property tax assessment that reduces the tax on properties with conservation easements.
- ◆ That the DNR work with agency, industry, organizations and the Land Trust community to create a forest landowner incentive fund to cost-share transaction costs of setting up conservation easements.

IV. Changing Forest Land Owners Demographics

Recommendations

- ◆ Develop a systematic survey to better understand who the new forest landowners are.
- ◆ That the DNR work with the UW in cooperation with interested groups to develop a system to identify new family forest owners through tracking land transactions.

Maintaining Wisconsin's Forest-based Economy - Brent English

The group was diverse. Speakers included David Refkin of Time-Warner and Gene Francisco, Director of the Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association. Brent brought up a few items of particular interest. The idea of biorefinery was new to the group. David Refkin commented on the lack of investment in our ability to produce paper and other wood-based products. We are behind the rest of the world.

Some of the resources identified as necessary to achieve identified actions were support of the Managed Forest Law and other certification programs, and of a master logger certification program. There is a high school/technical school program called "Wood Links" that teaches students about opportunities to make their living in the forest industry. There should be more emphasis on that. Specific recommendations for action are:

Short-term

- ◆ Increase present efforts to work with the NIPF to manage their timberlands in a sustainable manner.
- ◆ Increase efforts to ensure forestry mill tax is used for appropriate purposes - assisting forestry.
- ◆ Continue support of the present pilot study in the application of Green Tier.

Long-term

- ◆ Work with the Professional Loggers Association to support the Master Loggers Certification Program.
- ◆ Continue support of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's Biomass Task Force.
- ◆ Increase efforts to increase the use of instate alternative power production.
- ◆ Continue to work with the industry, including the transportation industry to remove barriers that reduce the re-investment in infrastructure.

Managing the Impacts of Changes to Wisconsin's Land Use and Forest Ownership - Lisa MacKinnon

The group focused on the impacts of fragmentation and parcelization. Despite a lack of funding and staff necessary to carry them out, they identified goals and formulated recommendations for action:

I. Maintain and expand viable tracts of forestland for all the values they provide.

Recommendations

- ◆ Create a Governor's Task Force on industrial forest retention.
- ◆ Consider use value assessment for forestlands.
- ◆ Provide adequate professional forestry assistance to landowners.
- ◆ Develop and promote best practices for development in forested areas.
- ◆ Promote the use of the Managed Forest Law.
- ◆ Encourage sustainable forest management for clean water.
- ◆ Continue to educate policy makers about the public benefits of forests and forestry.
- ◆ Promote the use of conservation easements on working forestlands.
- ◆ Enact tax incentives for forested lands.
- ◆ Analyze the effects of restrictions by local governments on forest management.

- II. Promote public understanding.
 - Recommendations
 - ◆ Conduct a forest use/value poll of public to determine the most effective messages.
 - ◆ Include forests in community planning
 - ◆ Commission a white paper on parcelization and loss of industrial lands.
 - ◆ Provide information at time of sale to new forest landowners about sustainable use.
 - ◆ Educate on how fragmentation affects forest ecosystems and multiple forest uses.
- III. Identify economically, ecologically, and socially important forest lands.
 - Recommendations
 - ◆ Identify water recharge areas. Target for initial educational efforts.
 - ◆ Identify areas where parcelization/fragmentation would mean lost opportunities for land protection.
 - ◆ Develop landscape level analysis to identify core areas and corridors.
 - ◆ Create a "State of the Forests" report.
 - ◆ Identify what drives parcelization and fragmentation in the state.
 - ◆ Develop a statewide GIS layer for land ownership.
 - ◆ Define important and unique forestlands.

Colette Matthews cited the need to look at getting the most out of the land despite parcelization.

Minimizing the Threat of Invasive Exotic Species to Wisconsin's Forests - Fred Clark

The session attracted a group of 67 people, who got a lot of important work done. Partnerships were formed and people were committed. They focused on four issues from the task group report that was presented to the Council:

- 1.) Forestry best practices for invasive species.
- 2.) Research, survey and monitoring needs - need for a central repository.
- 3.) Partnerships and cooperative management (between owners).
- 4.) Information, education, and outreach - need to develop a central point of contact for resources.

The group had three recommendations for action:

- ◆ Endorse of the DNR budget request to fund an invasive species program.
- ◆ Recognize the need for revision of state statutes and related administrative rules to develop comprehensive invasive species laws.
- ◆ Request staff support from the Division of Forestry to continue the co-ordination and leadership efforts needed to advance the strategies identified at the conference.

ACTION ITEM:

- The Council will put the Implementation Steering Committee together. They'll meet with the champions, look for common ground, then look for areas where it is possible to move forward in a partnership mode and where there is the support to move recommendations forward.
- **Conference Evaluations - Ken Genskow, University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension**
Ken, who was instrumental in planning the conference, said that about one-fifth of the conference participants filled out evaluations. The conference was one step on a continuum to build partnerships. Its success will be dependent on what happens in the next one to two years.
- **Next Steps and Council Role**
The budget, being discussed at this meeting, was the only issue identified as requiring action before the March Council meeting. Chairman Souba regards it as the role of the Council in its advisory capacity to identify issues and priorities to bring to the appropriate groups or individuals at the next level to support efforts to implement the Statewide Plan.

ACTION ITEM:

- The Oversight Team will identify overlapping areas between the Governor's Conference theme groups and the Council task groups and report back to the Council with recommendations that the two are in agreement on.

Plum Creek in Wisconsin - Lynn Wilson

Plum Creek began as a spin-off of Burlington Northern Railroad in 1989. It has grown steadily, becoming the second largest landowner in the country after merging with Georgia-Pacific in 2001. It owns 8.1 million acres, 524,000 of which are in Wisconsin. Lynn gave an overview of the company's operations in the state, emphasizing its wolf research, voluntary support of the Karner Blue Butterfly Conservation Plan, and ongoing study of the Argonne Pine Marten. There is public land access, and they have both snowmobile and ski trail agreements. The land is managed parcel by parcel and by age class and cover type. Robert Olszewski, Vice-president of Environmental Affairs and Communications, is guiding the development of the framework for the company's SFI certification. Due to an SFI amendment process, he said that participation in SFI will spur industrial partnerships with the state on invasives and other issues.

State Forester's Report

Private Lands Certification

Chief State Forester Paul DeLong reported that a decision was made by the Forestry Leadership Team in November to proceed with American Tree Farm (ATF) certification assessment of private lands, and not with Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). Dual certification is still possible in the future, however, FSC certification presents funding challenges that can't be met at this time. This will be the largest certification, by number of landowners, in the world.

ACTION ITEM:

- After the full assessment is complete, probably in March, Paul will present the results to the Council for a decision on whether to proceed with full certification.

Fiscal Year 2005-07 Budget Submission

Paul distributed a summary of initiatives contained in the Department's budget submission and of proposed reductions in Department staffing. The package submitted is dependent on the Forestry Division being permitted to retain the funding for the 32 positions proposed to be cut. Paul and Jack Hoisington, Forestry Division Budget Manager, discussed items that those present expressed a particular interest in. There was much concern about the \$8,000,000 per year in debt service listed as a draw from the Forestry Account. The Sustainable Forestry Opportunities item (Line 5123) asks for the equivalent of twelve FTEs (or 22,000 hours) targeted toward land and resource management work. This will be accomplished by using limited-term employees. Reductions in staffing will be in MFL and Stewardship plan writing, and in administration of federal cost-share programs which will be contracted for in the private sector. The Natural Resources Board sent a letter to the Governor on December 15th along with the budget, expressing concerns about the reduction of staff paid from segregated accounts.

Chair Souba proposed that the Council address the Governor, as is its responsibility, on the position cuts and Forestry Account monies. A discussion followed on the content of the proposed communication. Bill Horvath moved that the Council take the position that the Forestry Account was intended to fund the Division of Forestry and its activities in forestry in the state of Wisconsin, and that it opposes the use of that fund for debt service. Further, that this Council is opposed to debt reduction becoming a line item in the DNR budget. Ken Ottman seconded the motion. Bill Ward moved that the Council urge the Governor to restore the 32 (forestry) positions that are cut in the currently proposed budget. Bob Rogers seconded the motion.

DECISION ITEMS:

- The Council will express feedback to the Governor, Department of Administration, and the legislature together on the Forestry Account monies and position cuts as two separate issues no later than early January, before the budget is finalized.

- A motion was carried that the points to be included in the communication to the Governor regarding the Forestry Account will be that the Forestry Fund Account is to be used for forestry programs in Wisconsin, not for debt service, and that the Council's recommendation is not to see a line item for debt reduction in the DNR budget from the Forestry Account. One member was opposed and one abstained.
- The communication to the Governor regarding position cuts will focus on growth in the mill tax, unmet programmatic needs, and the fact that as we move toward certification, which the Council was given the charge to do, we see that this may have impacts on that as we move forward in certification in the MFL program.

ACTION ITEM:

- The Executive Committee will prepare a draft letter expressing the Council's recommendations to the Governor on the proposed budget for the review and comment of the full Council.

Woody Biomass Task Group Report - Bill Horvath

The task group has set out to do a massive study of all legislation nationwide that exists in all state governments relative to utilization of woody biomass. Professor Don Nichols of the La Follette Institute and two graduate students have been enlisted to work on the study. The resulting data will be used for two purposes: 1) to develop a comprehensive piece of legislation on woody biomass similar to the recycling bill, and 2) to develop model legislation which will go to the state legislature as suggested legislation. Bill motioned for the Council to support five recommendations put forth by the task group. *

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Leon Church) that the Council support adoption of the Workplan for the legislation study to be conducted by the U.W. La Follette Institute was passed unanimously.
- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bill Ward) that the Council endorse a "Fuel for Schools" program was passed unanimously.
- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bob Rogers) that the Council support the recommendation that the State of Wisconsin develop a pilot project with the U.W. Stevens Point and St. Michael's Hospital was passed unanimously.
- A motion by Bill Horvath that the Council support utilization of woody biomass for heating and cooling energy be extended to the Wisconsin Prison system and the campuses of the technical colleges was passed unanimously.
- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Troy Brown) regarding schools that the Council support the recommendation that legislation be modified to exempt capital expenditures for heating facilities that convert to renewable resources including wood, and that a district implementing a new system be guaranteed the same level of state aid funding that the new construction receives passed unanimously.

* Council members Rep. Don Friske and Rep. Mary Hubler were not present to vote.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, March 17th. The Council's Biennium Report to the Governor, which is due by June 1, 2005, will be discussed. Paul DeLong will present a template to the Council for preparing the report. The Federal Budget will also be discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown, WDNR