

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Forest Products Lab – Madison, WI
June 17, 2004

Members Present:

Dennis Brown, Jeff Stier, Mary Hubler, Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Fred Clark, Bill Ward, Mary Jean Huston, Rep. Donald Friske, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Sen. Roger Breske, Michael Bolton (representing Jon Geenen)

Members Absent:

Jon Geenen, Bob Rogers, Leon Church, Sen. Russ Decker

Guests Present:

Teague Prichard, Robert Manwell, Wendy McCown, Jim Rodd, Al Hastreiter, Larry Matthews, Gene Roark, Mary Brown, Darrell Zastrow, Tim Laatsch, Tim Eisele, Mark Heyde, Roger Nacker, John Koning, Colette Matthews, Patrick Walsh, Gunnar Bergersen, Kelly Kearns, Eunice Padley, Sarah Attwood, Jackie Guzman, Sterling Strathe, Ken Genskow, Marci Schmit

Welcome

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. The Council members and guests introduced themselves. Chairman Souba presented a memorial resolution to Marci Schmit, in honor of her late husband Council member Eugene Schmit, recognizing his fourteen years of participation on the Council and his lifelong contributions to forestry in Wisconsin.

Invasive Species Task Group Report - Fred Clark

Fred's group broke the issue into two components: Forest Health/Insect Disease and Invasive Plants. They identified nine main issues needing to be addressed:

- 1 Endorsement of the Forestry Division's current budget request.
- 2 Regulatory authority for invasive plant species. Current laws are outdated.
- 3 Research. Need for a stronger link between land management and the research community.
- 4 Documentation and inventory of invasive species.
- 5 Interagency cooperation.
- 6 Forest Management Practice. Forest managers need to get up to date on invasives.
The task group recommends that:
 - Forestry Division maintain silvicultural handbooks.
 - Managed Forest Law on private lands be studied to make sure harvesting guidance isn't making the invasive species problem worse.
 - The Divisions of Forestry and Land coordinate on an assessment of invasive species management on State lands and identify resources and funding available.
 - Managers have access to segregated funding sources to deal with harvesting.
 - Cost-sharing and technical assistance be available to family forest landowners.
- 7 Development of a set of BMTs for logging practices.
- 8 Availability of resources for forest users and public awareness.
- 9 Involvement and education of private woodland owners.

A discussion followed about how to effectively address the problem. Denny Brown suggested that management of invasive species be incorporated into the Master Logger training program. He will take it up with the Timber Producers Association and the Wisconsin Professional Loggers Association. Jim Heerey stressed the need for a matrix that identifies species and how to control them. Fred Souba emphasized that action is needed now, as prevention is far less expensive than remediation.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Council members will provide their comments to the Invasive Species Task Group by July 15th, 2004. They will send them to all three members - Fred Clark, Jim Heerey, and Ken Ottman.
- Fred Clark will provide the Council members with hardcore recommendations formulated from the comments received from them one month before the next meeting (by August 16th), so that action can be taken on them at the next meeting.
- Fred Clark will prioritize the issues based on comments received for the next Council meeting.
- Kelly Kearns will make a copy of the initial LRB draft rules she coordinated with the interagency invasive species task force available to the Council.
- The four legislators on the Council will give their opinions on draft invasive species legislation at the next meeting, and let the Council know what they feel is doable.

Task Group Reports

Fragmentation and Parcelization

Mary Jean Huston reported that her group had not gotten together since their initial meeting. They do have a meeting planned in about six weeks, and will have a report ready for the September meeting.

Use of Woody Biomass

Bill Horvath reported on the group's first full meeting in Stevens Point. Eleven new members have been recruited from various sources. A technical task force is being formed. The group will present its final report in the form of legislative recommendations in 2006. It will next meet on October 25, 2004, when its focus will be on how the use of woody biomass could impact the state economy and on the Schools for Fuels program.

Woody biomass is a nationwide issue. Wisconsin has one billion wet tons of it currently. The 1936 inventory showed 17 million acres of woodland in the state; there are now about 16 million. We are cutting about 71% annually. The private sector owns about 61%. Most of the live-tree biomass one inch or bigger in diameter is in the oak, hickory, and maple and bass categories. Most is found in the northwestern and northeastern parts of the state. Use of woody biomass could mean environmental benefits for wildlife, ecosystems, water quality, air, and maybe even invasive species. It could eliminate carbon dioxide and mercury emissions from coal. The goal is to find a way to get woody biomass into the energy stream.

A report from the Task Group is attached to the minutes

ACTION ITEMS:

- Bill Horvath will prepare an outline of short-term actions that can be worked on now vs. long-term items for action in 2006 for the September Council meeting.

DECISION ITEMS:

- The focus of the September 16th meeting will be on the Use of Woody Biomass task group.
- The Use of Woody Biomass Task Group will have legislative suggestions ready by the December 2005 Council meeting to allow enough time for legislative action to be taken on them.

Wisconsin's Forest Products Industry Business Climate Status Report 2004

John Koning of the Forest Products Laboratory provided some background on the report. In an effort to start a center for sustainable forestry businesses to help the pulp and paper industry in Wisconsin, a group of people which included Roger Nacker and John surveyed three pulp and paper companies and two sawmills. They asked them what their problems were, and how we are doing on solving them. Five problem areas were identified:

- 1 Permits
- 2 Business Climate (perceived)
- 3 Taxation
- 4 Forest Resources
- 5 Energy

They collaborated with the Center for Technology Transfer, whose goal is to get technology into industry, to produce this report, which covers permits and perceived business climate.

Roger Nacker is President of WEDI, an organization that does research on economic development. He briefed the group on the report, which he referred to as an unbiased study commissioned with WEDI. Wisconsin is behind only Indiana and Michigan in its dependence on manufacturing. One in six manufacturing jobs here is related to wood. The forest products industry has suffered disproportionately high job losses, primarily in pulp and paper production. There is the perception of a negative business climate due in part to taxation and the high cost of environmental compliance, the cost of environmental compliance being 50% of the cost of total compliance. In comparison with the other Lake States, Wisconsin was found to be behind on five key issues:

- 1 Tax Reform
- 2 Environmental Regulatory Reform
- 3 Creating a strong energy policy
- 4 Business Incentives
- 5 Small Business Regulatory Reforms

These are also among the top ten factors considered by employers considering locating in Wisconsin.

Some improvements to the business climate were identified in these areas:

- Business Taxes - single factor apportionment and the sales and use tax energy exemption
- Energy - power plant siting incentives and streamlining location of transmission
- Environmental Regulatory Reform - the Job Creation Act and Green Tier
- Small Business Regulatory Reform - recognition of disproportionate costs and amnesty for noncompliance
- Information, Education, and Advocacy Resources - DNR's Web Permit Primer, the Wisconsin Business Wizard on the Web, and the industry sector expertise of DNR's Bureau of Environmental Assistance

Improvements still need to be made in monitoring taxes, renewable energy sources, information and education and other areas. The next step is to demonstrate whether Green Tier is the legislative solution.

Roundwood Transportation - Denny Brown

The log haulers of Wisconsin are finding that they can't compete in the global market in transporting raw fiber. They feel that the rail system in the state is no longer adequate for this purpose. One rail car can hold three truckloads of fiber. Compounding this problem is the fact that the load limit in Wisconsin for log haulers is only 80,000 pounds, while scrap and garbage hauling vehicles have a 150,000 pound limit. One of the reasons for this inequity is a poor public perception of the industry. People feel the trucks will tear up town roads. Denny would like to see the limit raised to 150,000 for vehicles on State Class A highways to enable hauling to the wood-using facilities.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Jim Heerey will try to arrange to get someone from the DOT to address the Council at the next meeting about the seemingly inequitable treatment of log hauling vehicles.
- Chairman Souba will work with Representative Friske to find a way to encourage the legislature to become fully engaged on the transportation issue.

Governor's Conference on Forestry - Teague Prichard

The conference, subtitled "Building Collaborative Action for Wisconsin's Forests," will be held on November 8, 9, and 10 at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison. Its goal will be to develop a coordinated vision and plan for how public agencies, nongovernmental organizations, stakeholders, and interest groups can work together to achieve the vision of enhancing the value and sustainability of Wisconsin's forest resource. The focus will be on seven interrelated themes:

- Conserving Wisconsin's biological diversity
- Minimizing the threat of invasive species to Wisconsin's forests

- Maintaining Wisconsin's forest-based economy
- Managing the impact of changes of land use and forest ownership
- Enhancing Wisconsin's urban forests
- Minimizing conflicting recreational uses of Wisconsin's forests
- Enhancing assistance to private landowners

Day one will feature a keynote speaker and social. Day two will center around workshops on the seven themes. Day three will be spent wrapping up and planning the next steps necessary to move forward. It is hoped that the conference will help foster collaborative action to help ensure a sustainable forest for future generations.

State Forester's Report

2005 - 2007 Budget Issues

Chief State Forester Paul DeLong spoke briefly about the budget request, which is currently in draft format. He will be able to outline it in September, when it is no longer in draft. No FTEs are being requested, and all requests are constrained by the amount of money in the Forestry Account. Unmet needs exceed the account balance. The Division has been maintaining a vacancy rate that is much higher than required, and is trying to fill some of it. Some themes which have initiatives in place that are related to the request are:

- A safe and effective forest fire prevention program
- Managed Forest Law implementation
- Fragmentation mitigation
- Invasive exotic species
- Trying to address stable forestry on state-owned forest land, including, but not limited to, state-owned forests
- Forestry education and awareness
- Ongoing operations

Other Items

- The Natural Resources Board approved the Council's recommendation to proceed with dual certification on state forests with a five-to-zero vote.
- The Governor accepted certification from both SFI and FSC on June 14th at the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest.
- A full assessment of Wisconsin's county forest system will begin in fall.
- Managed Forest Law - two systems are being evaluated. It will begin in spring.
- Private land certification - the Council will discuss at its September or December meeting.
- The Gypsy Moth suppression effort has been completed for the year. Monitoring is in progress for next fall. The south and southwestern parts of the state will be the worst. We are trying to keep populations down through active suppression. Ken Ottman complimented the DNR staff on the excellent job they did of getting good media coverage.
- Roughly 30,000 acres are being evaluated for State Natural Area status. A draft plan for the Northern Highlands American Legion State Forest is due out at the end of summer. A formal proposal will be out by late summer or early fall.
- The Year of Wisconsin Forestry is well underway. There was an insert in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. The Arbor Day tree was planted at the Capitol. A poster was made with paper donated by Stora Enso. Forests are the theme of the summer reading program at libraries. A picture book was completed in cooperation with Trees for Tomorrow. An Open Woods Day was held. The Department of Tourism is sponsoring a Year of Wisconsin Forests photo contest.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Paul will send the 2005-2007 budget request to the Council members when it becomes available.
- Paul will provide a breakdown of the 2005-2007 budget to the Council in September.
- Paul will send Council members a listing showing which counties were for and which were against proceeding with certification of county forests.

- Paul will send each Council member one of the Year of Wisconsin Forestry posters that were made with paper donated by Stora Enso, as well as copies of books put out by LEAF on Wisconsin history for fourth-graders and by WWOA on the history of Wisconsin forests.

Legislative Report

Representative Friske addressed the Council, noting that the legislature was not in session. In January, it will be taking up the Governor's Task Force on Invasive Species. Input from the Council is encouraged as legislation is developed. The Task Force recommended that the state take an interest in the management of the national forests and the way they relate to the state of Wisconsin and the overall management of the forested areas. Representative Friske sent a letter today to Jim Kelly in President Bush's Office of Inter Governmental Affairs asking that the President and the Congressional and Senate Delegations from the State of Wisconsin initiate a pilot program to allow the DNR's Division of Forestry to take over management of the Nicolet Chequamegon National Forest. He proceeded to read the letter, which was also signed by 24 other legislators.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

The next meeting will take place on Thursday, September 16th at the Forest Products Laboratory from 9:30 until 3:00. Agenda items will include:

- Use of Woody Biomass Task Group report
- DOT representative discussing weight limits
- Fred Clark's recommendations for action on invasive species
- State Forester's Report with an outline of the budget
- Legislative Report
- Private forestland certification

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR

