

Opening Plenary-Tues, November 9th
Fred Souba, Chair, Wisconsin Council on Forestry

Good morning. I am Fred Souba, the Chair of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry. On behalf of the Council, I welcome you to the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry. This conference is a capstone event for the Year of Wisconsin Forestry, in which we celebrate 100 years of professional forestry in Wisconsin.

I invite you to spend some time looking at the wonderful timeline for the 100 years, which was developed as part of our centennial celebration and which is on the wall here in the ballroom.

We hope that this conference will also be an important point on a continuum into the future that is characterized by productive partnerships and success in embracing the opportunities and meeting the challenges of sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.

The video we just viewed was intended to help us begin the work before us with a sense of the big picture: the many ways that our forests hold value for our state, and the opportunities and challenges that are inherent in the future of sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.

This opening session will set the stage for the work of the next two days by providing perspectives from a number of key leaders on why we are here and what we have to build upon.

The Wisconsin Council on Forestry is honored to host this gathering. For those of you not familiar with the Council, it is composed of 19 members representing institutions of higher learning; state and county government; the logging, lumber and paper industries; conservation organizations; and the public. Our charge is to advise the Governor, Legislature, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Commerce and other agencies on a wide range of forestry issues such as sustainable forestry, forestry industry, research, and legislation which affect the State of Wisconsin.

At the first meeting of the Council on Forestry convened by Governor Doyle, the Governor stated, "The challenges facing our forests are significant and include increasing forest fragmentation, a forest industry competing in an increasingly global economy, exotic species invading our forests, increasing development in fire prone areas, and increasing competition among different recreational users."

You can see the correspondence between the issues named by the Governor then and the themes we will address in the next two days. The Council has already begun work on some of these themes, and that work has been included in preparations for the broader discussions here. The outcomes of this conference will provide an important base for the work of the Council as we partner with you to carry action forward.

The support of the Governor has been clear and essential for making this event possible. However, it is not just the Governor and the Council that have made this event possible. An impressive number of organizations and individuals have given generously of time and funding in support of this meeting. Our sponsors are listed in your Conference program and on signs in the common areas. We sincerely thank them for their participation and support.

I know I speak for Wisconsin citizens, businesses and organizations in saying that sustainability is the backbone of the work we do and the deep taproot of forestry in Wisconsin. How can we ensure a sustainable future for those that will follow us? I believe the answer to this question has three components:

1. Better understanding of the issues affecting forests and their ecological, economic, and social implications.
2. Better discussion among interested and affected partners, in which we articulate our common ground and work from there, not ignoring our disagreements, but embracing the possibility that we'll get more done together if those disagreements don't distract us from our common goals.
3. A much needed road map, developed through our discussions and our collective commitment, for where we're going in managing our forest resources. A blue print for sustainable forestry, with action as the bottom line.

We have already gotten a good start on identifying and describing the most important trends and issues, as well as establishing goals and objectives, through the Statewide Forest Plan, which many of you have helped to craft over the last three years.

The plan provides the foundation for our work now and in the future. The next step is an action plan. By coming together as leaders who can make things happen, who can bring our organizations into alignment to address our common goals, we begin building that action plan today.

This Conference is not expected to produce instant results. Nor is it an end unto itself. This conference is an event on a continuum of commitment and accomplishment. We are already doing some great things for the forests of Wisconsin. This conference is meant to

1. focus existing efforts in a broader context
2. identify where additional effort is needed
3. create links between forestry issues and forestry leaders
4. create opportunity to work together in a way that accomplishes more than is possible working alone.

As you can see on the forest history timeline, 76 years ago the first state forestry conference was held in Milwaukee, and brought together all forestry interests at the time to review past accomplishments and to develop policies for the ensuing 25 years.

Undoubtedly, the definition of the term "forestry interests" has broadened considerably since that time. And with this broader constituency, I believe we enhance our opportunity for supporting all aspects of sustainability in an inclusive and more effective way.

I anticipate that this Governor's Conference on Forestry, held in the Year of Wisconsin Forestry, will be seen as a key point in continuing Wisconsin's history of ensuring a healthy and sustainable future for Wisconsin's forests and for Wisconsin's communities. 100 years from now, during the Bicentennial Wisconsin Year of Forestry, those who follow us will be able to look

back and say that the one thing that hasn't changed in the last 200 years is Wisconsin's continued commitment to sustainable forestry.

Introduction of Secretary Hassett

Now, it is a pleasure to introduce the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resource, Scott Hassett. Secretary Hassett was appointed by Governor Jim Doyle in January, 2003, and has since shown a strong interest and commitment in supporting forestry in Wisconsin. Please help me welcome Secretary Hassett.

HASSETT SPEECH

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being with us today and for your support for forestry.

Introduce Governor

It is my great pleasure to introduce Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle.

Governor Doyle is no stranger to the forestry community. He has provided consistent leadership for sustainable forestry in Wisconsin, not the least of which is his sponsorship of this conference.

Since Governor Doyle took office he has fulfilled his campaign promises, many of them directly affecting Wisconsin forestry.

In his earliest days in office, the Governor focused on the problem of forest fragmentation and the challenges to our forest-based economy. His Grow Wisconsin initiative lays a strategic foundation for maintaining a viable forest land base and healthy forest products industry.

A component of the Governor's Grow Wisconsin Plan is Forest Certification. Governor Doyle made forest certification a high priority soon after election. As a result of his support, Wisconsin's State Forests were certified this year by both the Sustainable Forest Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council. Twenty-seven of the 29 county forests are currently undergoing an audit process to become certified. Finally, our Managed Forest Law is currently being evaluated for certification, with field audits scheduled for early spring. These two third-party group certifications will be innovative models internationally. These certifications may play an important role in Wisconsin's continued support of healthy rural and urban economies.

Governor Doyle has also made his Council on Forestry a priority. As I mentioned earlier, he has charged the Council to tackle some long-standing, complex issues including forest fragmentation, global competition, invasive species, development in fire prone areas, and competing recreational uses.

Governor, thank you for being with us today and for your ongoing support for sustainable forestry in Wisconsin. Please help me welcome Governor Jim Doyle.

GOVERNOR JIM DOYLE'S SPEECH

Thank you, Governor, for joining us today and for your ongoing support for forestry in Wisconsin.

Introduce Paul DeLong

Now, it is a pleasure to introduce Wisconsin's Chief State Forester, Paul DeLong. Many of you know Paul, and know his talent for understanding and communicating the complex issues forests and forestry face. Perhaps more importantly, he understands the implications and relationships among the issues. Two of Paul's greatest strengths are his passion for forestry and his ability to build collaborative partnerships for the good of Wisconsin's forests and communities. Please help me welcome Paul DeLong.

PAUL DELONG SPEECH

CLOSING

The theme of this Conference is "Building Collaborative Action". We are here today and tomorrow to roll up our sleeves and work together to move toward actions that will ensure a sustainable future. This meeting is in alignment with the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's charge and focus and it is building upon the work of the Statewide Forest Plan.

Here today, we are more than 200 people who care about sustainable forestry and who are in a position to influence the future. The outcome of this conference depends on you, and I challenge you in two key ways

- First, I challenge each of you, as individuals and as organizations, to use this meeting to begin to build new partnerships and enhance existing ones.
- Second, I challenge you to actively support what we do here, by staying involved beyond this event, by staying committed to collective action to reach our common goals, by thinking of yourselves as key players, and by leveraging whatever resources you bring to the table to help us bring more resources to the table.

The Council sees the work coming out of this conference as a key way that we can address our priority issues. On December 16th of this year, the Council will meet to formally receive the recommendations from this conference.

I urge you, as you wrap up your working sessions, to strive for the clearest possible concrete recommendations for our consideration. Tell us how you collectively believe we can best lead and assist. We are particularly interested in how the proposed actions from different themes can be combined and integrated.

We will have the proceedings of this meeting posted on the new forestry website: wisconsinforestry.org, which you can view, along with the Statewide Forest Plan, on a computer set up outside this room.

As actions are developed and accomplished over time, this website will provide a great communications tool for all of you to stay current on progress and to continue to communicate within and among your groups.

I welcome your ideas for other ways that the outcomes of this meeting can be sustained over time. I am proud to be a part of history in the making and I want to thank all of you, on behalf of

the Council, for your hard work and dedication. I will look forward to working with you during the next two days and as we carry the results of our efforts here into the future.

Please join us for lunch in the Grand Terrace before the first set of sessions begin at 1:00.