

Gov. Doyle: To Sign Great Lakes Forest Accord

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Governor Jim Doyle announced today that he will add his signature to the Great Lakes Forest Accord, an agreement among the upper Great Lakes states and a Canadian province intended to maintain and advance the region's forest-based economy in both domestic and foreign markets.

Wisconsin joins Minnesota, Michigan, and the Canadian Province of Ontario in a regional effort to address issues of common concern in three areas - forest certification, bio-energy production, and transportation. These issues are of mutual interest and importance to the signatories and to demonstrate the Great Lakes region's commitment to sustainable forest management.

"By working with our Great Lakes partner governments to address issues as a region, we will strengthen our collective ability to meet global competition head on," Governor Doyle said. "Wisconsin and the Great Lakes region have a long standing-commitment to sustainable forest management that provides economic, ecological, and social benefits to the region. The demand for materials coming from certified forests is growing in the marketplace. Major buyers of paper and other forest products want to be able to tell their customers that the products they buy come from a sustainably managed forest."

This summer, Governor Doyle received documents certifying that Wisconsin's state-owned forests are sustainably managed from the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forest Initiative. Additionally, DNR's Division of Forestry currently is exploring certification of County Forests and private non-industrial forestlands.

"This accord sends a signal to the global forest products markets that the Great Lakes region is ready to do business," Governor Doyle said. "Forest certification is a first step, but there is work to do if we are to maintain and expand the market share we have. Utilization of biomass and existing forest industry byproducts as a renewable energy source is another important step we will explore, as is improvement of our regional transportation system on which all three states and the province depend."

The Governor announced his intent to sign the Great Lakes Forest Accord at the Governor's Conference on Forestry in Madison. The objective of the two-day conference is to draft an implementation plan for the updated Statewide Forest Management Plan that was presented to the state Natural Resources Board in September. More than 200 representatives of public, non-profit, and private organizations, government agencies, universities, and private citizens whose activities or interests are affected by forest management in Wisconsin are expected to participate.

"The basis of the Accord is to jointly bolster our competitive position in the marketplace," said

Paul DeLong, Wisconsin State Forester. "But a strong forest economy has many side benefits, too. Strong markets for forest products reduce incentives to fragment forestland for other purposes. Large blocks of forestland provide important ecological and social benefits, including wildlife habitat, soil and water protection, air quality, and recreation."

Forestry is nearly a \$20 billion industry in Wisconsin. Over 1,800 wood-using companies support over 99,000 jobs and a \$3.6 billion payroll. Wisconsin ranks first in the nation in paper production.