

Council on Forestry Meeting
Grand Lodge Hotel, Rothschild, Wisconsin
September 30, 2015

Council Members Present: Henry Schienebeck (Council Chair), Jane Severt (Council Vice-Chair), Paul DeLong, Rep. Jeff Mursau, Sen. Tom Tiffany, Matt Dallman, Tom Hittle, Richard Wedepohl, Jim Kerkman, Virgil Waugh, Troy Brown, Bruce Allison, Kim Quast, Jim Hoppe, Mark Rickenbach

Council Members Absent: Paul Strong

Guests Present: Terrisa Mulder (WDNR), Jessie Augustyn (GLTPA), Gretchen Marshall (LEAF), Sarah Gilbert (LEAF), Fred Souba, Erin Crain (WDNR), Drew Feldkirchner (WDNR), Nancy Bozek (WWOA), Mike Kilgore (UMN), Carmen Hardin (WDNR), Rebecca Diebel (WDNR), Craig Johnston (UW Madison), Paul Kienitz (WWOA)

Chair Schienebeck called the meeting to order at 9:10am with introductions of Council members and guests present. Paul DeLong announced Carmen Hardin as new Forestry Management Bureau Director for the Division of Forestry.

Meeting Minutes

Property Tax Incentive Program

Professor, Mike Kilgore

The Chair introduced the MFL discussion on property tax incentives and noted Wisconsin is front and center at the national level in regard to property tax incentive discussions. Mark Rickenbach took the lead in exploring this topic with an ad hoc group. Professor Mike Kilgore presented research on tax incentive programs across the country and Kris Tiles facilitated a small group discussion following Mike's presentation. The ultimate goal is to discuss property tax incentives in Wisconsin and what the Council's role should be.

Professor Michael A. Kilgore is Professor, Department of Forest Resources, and Director, Natural Resources Science & Management Program at the University of Minnesota, St. Paul, Minnesota. Michael's presentation was titled: Forest Property Tax Policy in the United States and will be shared with the Council.

Kris Tiles facilitated a process where Council members and guests discussed the following questions:

- What is one fact Mike presented that you noticed?
- How does this influence your thinking about what an incentive program can provide?
- What is the number 1 take-away you have from today's discussion that you think is most important as the Council thinks about forestry management incentive programs in Wisconsin?

This will come back to the Council at the next meeting for further discussion.

Wildlife Action Plan (WAP)

WAP went out for public comment and then received NRB approval on September 23, 2015. The board removed the listed plant species of greatest conservation need (SGCN) from the WAP. There will be a stand-alone document for plants. Significant edits were made to the northern forests, Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA) language and technical changes. It has been sent to the US Fish and Wildlife Service for approval.

The Conservation Opportunity Areas will be refined and actions will be developed with stakeholders in the winter/spring.

The department has decided to remove reference to the WAP from the DNR cutting notice.

Wood Turtle Broad Incidental Take Permit (BITP)

Developed a broad incidental take permit in April 2015. This was completed in coordination with an Advisory Committee primarily composed of external stakeholders.

New avoidance measures in the BITP include:

- Silt fencing verbiage added
- Non-inhabitable snow coverage verbiage added
- Non-inhabitable pine plantation guidance verbiage provided
- Reduced stream “buffer” distances since the purpose is minimizing, rather than avoiding, take
- 3% allowance (landowners / property managers can harvest 3% of wood turtle habitat any given year). This is being used by several county forests.
- Reporting form that is only necessary when using the 3% allowance

Next steps for the wood turtle:

- Additional trainings on the BITP
- Recovery Plan – April 2016 (This plan will address what success looks like for wood turtles and outline a strategy for recovering the population)

Northern Long Eared Bat (NLEB)

The species is now federally listed as a threatened species. White-nose syndrome has spread very quickly and where it has spread, populations are down over 90%. The NLEB is a forest-dwelling species and currently is found in 38 states.

NLEB Interim 4(d) rule is now in place. Take that occurs during the course of forestry activities is not prohibited, as long as the conservation measures in the 4(d) are followed. The final rule is anticipated in January 2016. Wisconsin has provided comments on the 4(d)

WI, MN, and MI are working together to develop a habitat conservation plan (HCP) for forestry activities. The HCP will be needed in the event that the NLEB listing is changed from threatened to endangered.

Next steps:

- DNR is doing project consultations for individual timber harvests, where needed.
- Additional training on the 4(d) rule.

Division of Forestry and Forest Industry Workshops

Jim Hoppe

Jim Hoppe (PCA), FRA, and the WDNR put together a workshop for foresters from industry and the DNR on August 20, 2015. The objective of the workshop was to identify and constructively discuss the factors leading to positive as well as strained communications and business relationships among the two groups. Questions were developed and sent to the group in advance of the workshop. The workshop format used a model developed by the FRA where the two groups met separately to discuss and then came back together as a large group to share the discussions and talk about potential solutions. There were several items that both groups will try to address after the meeting. In 90 days, a survey will be sent out to participants to ask whether they have seen improvement and where issues still exist.

Jim's presentation will be available on the Council website.

Fred Souba provided a handout outlining an update on the 2013 Wisconsin Forest Practices Study.

The update will be posted on the Council's website.

Dispute Resolution Process – Committee Update

Jessie Augustyn

The committee had a brief introductory phone call and a face-to-face meeting last week. At that meeting, the committee came up with a multi-step resolution process and worked on timelines to ensure disputes were handled quickly. The committee's determination is the maximum start to finish time of a DRP will be 45 days if the entire three step process is used.

The committee is working on developing the criteria for who would be considered an expert. The framework will be given to Allison Hellman and then the committee will ask for expert representation.

Decision: The following items are to be addressed by the committee:

- Who will be the Administrator of the calls to accept them when they come in and responsible for routing them to the expert?
- Additional clarification should be given as to what situations the DRP can be used for (MFL vs. non-MFL lands, etc.).
- How/when will success be measured?
- When/should the landowner be involved?

Motion:

Troy made and Jane seconded a motion to keep the name as originally outlined, the "Dispute Resolution Process." Motion passed.

Action(s):

- Jessie will take the motion back to the committee.

- If Council members have a suggestion for someone they would like to see as an expert, provide the name and reasons why you would recommend that individual to Jessie.

LEAF

Sara Gilbert and Gretchen Marshall

Sara and Gretchen gave a presentation on the LEAF program, starting with the historical background. There are now 419 school forests and they can generate income through timber harvests. The presenters asked the Council for ideas on how LEAF can work more closely with the Council. A new area for LEAF is to focus on careers. The Leaflet newsletter will be highlighting forestry careers and they are asking for ideas on jobs that could be presented.

Legislators' Report

Representative Mursau – Would like to get the MFL bill done this fall. He hopes to implement some changes; the draft will be shared with the Council prior to its introduction. Some topics include: cap to closed acreage, money going back to towns, allowing different reasons for no cost withdrawal based on failure to meet the 80/20 rule, making MFL a contract, removal of the yield and severance tax, implementation of allowing individual to remove acreage to add buildings, among other changes.

Also working on off-road vehicle registration, rescue squad, and rural schools project.

State Forester's Report

Paul DeLong

Cutting notice changes – minor modifications made after 21 day review. We are now in phase 2 of the process which is the longer term project. Handout was provided showing current status of cutting notices.

DNR Economic Workshops – providing workshops for DNR Foresters, Technicians and supervisors to increase understanding about the economic aspects of the wood value chain from the forest stand and individual tree level, the perspective of the loggers, and sawmill operations. First two sessions were done at Kretz Lumber. Troy Brown commented favorably about the sessions.

DNR Alignment - Department is going through an alignment process. Interim changes were made to the organizational structure. Forestry has not been affected in the short run. Core work analysis is underway. January is the target for putting something out to stakeholders.

Economics Chapter of the Silviculture Handbook – This chapter is out for 21 day review by the public. The revision of the chapter was done by an ad hoc team beginning in 2014 and approved by the Wisconsin Silviculture Guidance Team in July, 2015. The purpose of the chapter is to provide additional guidance on economic considerations to be used as part of WDNR's silviculture and forest management guidelines to address integrated resource management decisions.

Oak Harvesting Guidelines - Guidelines were out for public review in July and no significant changes were made. The guidelines provide consistency for implementation in the field by articulating flexibilities under the Exceptions and Modification. The harvesting restricted periods were not changed.

Challenging wildfire season - The Division mobilized personnel to assist with fire emergencies in AK, CA, ID, MT, OR, WA and Manitoba to support the National Planning Level 5 requests. This mobilization supported 36 different incidents. A total of 99 personnel were sent to support these incidents in positions that ranged from on the ground firefighters to positions serving on Incident Management Teams. When WI is in need, partners provide assistance to us as well. We get fully reimbursed for resources we provide, the revenues from which are put into the state's wildfire emergency reserve fund, which pays for unexpectedly high costs associated with wildfires

Good Neighbor Authority – Both the Master and Supplemental Project Agreements have been signed. DNR staff were trained on how to write silvicultural prescriptions in the federal format by CNNF staff and are now working on writing prescriptions. Once the prescriptions are written and approved by the CNNF, we will begin establishing timber sales and anticipate a first bid opening early winter and a second in late spring. First sales will likely be for salvage from blow-down last spring. DNR is assessing each project and how best to work with counties and consultants. Because these are federal funds, DNR needs to follow federal grant guidelines in awarding the grants to counties. They will be able to be reimbursed for their actual costs. For consultants, DNR will be developing contracts, such as is done on state lands, to bid out. The DNR is currently evaluating the type of projects and work needed and will send out notifications when sub-awards and contracts are ready. This will be primarily timber sale establishment, marking, and cruising. Washington Forest Service staff are still looking for a way to resolve what type of road work can be conducted on GNA sales. If a change in legislation is not made, it could have an effect on what is available next year to work on.

Next Meeting - **Next meeting date is rescheduled to November 13th in either Stevens Point or Wausau.

Meeting minutes submitted by Rebecca Diebel, Wisconsin DNR