

**Closing Session-Wednesday November 10th**  
*Fred Souba, Chair, Wisconsin Council on Forestry*

Good Afternoon. Once again on behalf of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry, I commend you on the work that has been accomplished over the last two days. I am glad you could be a part of the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry.

I'd also like to thank the exhibitors who are with us. The exhibits provide a great way for us learn more and to strike up conversations with people we don't know. I saw lots of folks taking in the displays during the breaks and the reception last evening. They have been a big contribution to the quality of our time together.

The Goal of the conference was to bring together citizens, businesses, interest groups and agencies to identify actions and tools that can help address the critical issues forests and forestry face.

It is very important to the Council to have your evaluation of how well this conference achieved that goal. If you would take a few minutes to complete the evaluation form in your packet and leave it in one of the boxes as you leave this room, it will give us very valuable information for future planning.

The guiding principle of this Conference is "partnerships in action." We all know that we cannot effectively practice sustainable forestry in Wisconsin without joining together with the many stakeholders and citizens who are committed to this goal.

Through this conference, we strengthened existing partnerships and grew new partnerships, bringing many organizations into alignment with our common goal of action to support sustainable forestry.

This principle of partnership is best exemplified by the dedication of the Theme Champions and their leadership teams, and you, the participants and key leaders in Wisconsin.

We are also thankful that the Governor, The DNR Secretary, and members of the Wisconsin Legislature were able to join us. These folks have taken considerable time from their very busy schedules to join us in making a truly partnership-based, action-oriented conference a reality. We are very grateful.

Next Steps: Where do we go from here?

First, what the Council will do. The following outcomes are expected. The Council has dedicated its December 16th meeting to review the outcomes of the Conference. The theme champions have graciously offered to present an overview of each session and the Council will identify their role in implementing the proposed actions. Thank you in advance to the champions. Anyone who wishes should feel welcome to attend the meeting, which will be held at the Forest Products Lab here in Madison.

I will form a post-conference implementation team, consisting of members of the council, the theme leadership teams, and the original conference planning team. This team will be keep the momentum from this meeting going, fostering synergy among initiatives that are moving forward, and supporting ongoing and new partnerships.

Second, what the Division of Forestry will do:

The Division of Forestry will update the web page dedicated to the Conference and Statewide Forest Plan ([wisconsinforestry.org](http://wisconsinforestry.org)). You will be able to review the presentations, the outcomes and sign on to continue your involvement in one or all of the themes. This site will be a clearinghouse for past and future conference materials.

Conference proceedings will be published electronically and a CD will be mailed to you by the end of the year. Division staff will continue to provide leadership with partners and continue to facilitate the follow-up process.

Third, and most importantly, what you can do:

The leadership teams continue and grow. New individuals and organizations are engaging in the process and the continued actions. Each of you can provide leadership in this way. I challenge all of you as leaders in your organizations to take the outcomes back to your respective board rooms, and make direct connections between the work of this conference and the work that you already do. Discuss the conference, the issues, the actions and the plan to form collaborative partnerships. Carry forward the work we have started here.

This Conference is not the end, it's just the beginning. Each theme is in a different state and has different needs. As we've heard in Paul's summary, some themes are closer to immediate action than, while some may need more process before we get to a concrete action plan. We as key leaders and champions need to continue our unique position and move action on these themes forward. We have the Governor's support. We are committed to action and the time for action is now.

We are well on our way to address the three challenges that I shared at the beginning of the conference.

- 1.) A 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.
- 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.

And I am going to add a fourth:

Some immediate and long-term actions to move forward. Stay involved and help us make this happen.

Before we conclude the Conference I would like to read a futuristic press release. The press release is dated Nov 9, 2005. We offer this as a way to help you envision what's possible if we really commit to following up on this meeting.

November 9, 2005.

“Today marks the one-year anniversary of the 2004 Governor’s Conference on Forestry, where key leaders gathered in Madison for a two-day working meeting to develop actions to address key issues in support of sustainably managing Wisconsin forests.

In one year, the commitments made by individuals, organizations, and agencies to a plan of action directed at maintaining and developing a healthy and productive forest for future generations are well in place and moving forward at an unprecedented pace.

The Conference was a point along a spectrum in the development of Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan, a blue print for Wisconsin forests developed by government, industrial and non-governmental organizations concerned about the issues facing Wisconsin’s forest products industry, forest communities and the forests themselves.

Also present at the Conference was Governor Jim Doyle and his Council on Forestry, who pledged their support for actions developed during the Conference.

The Governor made a landmark announcement at the Conference: “Today I would like to announce my intent to create a Wisconsin Center for Sustainable Forestry Businesses.” The Center celebrated its grand opening last month.

The Governor also announced at the conference that he would sign a Great Lakes Forest Accord, an agreement between Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Ontario to jointly work toward improvements in wood supply, energy, and transportation to support the forest-based economy of the region. The Accord was signed shortly after the conference and the region has already seen gains from this partnership.

State Forester Paul DeLong said, “The Conference was a catalyst to begin focusing action and developing partnerships to address critical issues facing forests and forestry in Wisconsin. “

The outcomes of the Conference are already earning early praise from the Council on Forestry. Fred Souba, chair of the Council said, “This is precisely the kind of accountability we need from leaders to show how much they value the forests and the forest industry in Wisconsin, and what they will do to address the challenges Wisconsin faces to prosper in a global marketplace for our forest products.”

The leadership teams formed during the Conference continue to collaborate in implementing bold actions. The Governor’s Council is especially pleased to see that organizations typically on opposite sides have come together and found common ground for the good of the forest and the communities that are dependent on them.

Key leaders will meet again in 2006 and focus on accomplishments and next steps. Bold actions require bold steps and the forestry community is a true champion for the forests and forestry in Wisconsin.”

Now if this were a real press release, it would provide detail, on new partnerships that were begun, successful initiatives and new projects, legislation that was passed, funding that was established. As we leave each other today, I charge you to keep the work you’ve done here alive, so that together we can fill in those details and make history on the issues we care so much about.

With that, I thank you again for attending the 2004 Governors Conference on Forestry.

As a closing note, I want to play the short video with which we started our meeting yesterday, so that we can end with a reflection on the big picture and the foundation of our common ground – valuing the forests of Wisconsin. Then we’ll run some random shots from the meeting, just as a backdrop for visiting and heading for home. Safe travels to you all.