

Opening Plenary-Tues Nov 9th

Secretary Scott Hassett

Good Morning. I would like to thank Fred and the Wisconsin Council on Forestry for hosting this important conference. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to you today as you embark on developing an action plan that will help us all work together on critical forestry issues. The work we do together, now and in the future, enhances the value and sustainability of Wisconsin's Forests.

Since becoming Secretary, I have come to appreciate even more the importance of Wisconsin's forests to the State's economy, environment, and the quality of life we enjoy here.

The dramatic recovery of Wisconsin's forest from the cutover, abandoned forest land of the 1900's to the high value forest shown in the most recent inventory is the result of many years of hard work and investment. The tireless efforts of many citizens, conservation leaders, foresters and other land managers helped shape the forest we all value and enjoy today.

Our collective challenge is to ensure that our forests continue to provide the full range of benefits to our children and grandchildren. I recognize the need to be proactive in addressing issues facing forestry.

Since I became Secretary of the DNR, the Department has done several things to further the protection and sustainability of the forest land in Wisconsin:

First, as directed by the Governor, the Department sought and successfully obtained third-party certification of its State Forests from the Forest Stewardship Council and the Sustainable Forest Initiative. In addition, we are pursuing group certification for interested county forests and we are continuing to investigate certification for the Managed Forest Law Program.

Second, we developed a major initiative to address the spread of exotic species on land and water, which we hope will be a centerpiece of the forthcoming state budget. This is just a start to address this major problem.

Third, we have pursued and acquired funding to maintain large blocks of working forests using Stewardship funds and Federal Forest Legacy Funds. We have also proposed a State Forest Legacy fund in the budget.

Fourth, the new Green Tier law provides opportunities for forestry businesses to achieve environmental and economic success in a more efficient way, both in terms of land management and production.

Finally, I am proud that during my tenure as Secretary of the DNR, the Division of Forestry, working with hundreds of interested stakeholders, has published the Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan: Ensuring a Sustainable Future.

This Plan, which Chief State Forester Paul DeLong will talk about in more detail later, shows the Department's continued commitment to keeping Wisconsin a leader in sustainable forestry.

The Statewide plan provides a unified vision and framework of common goals and objectives to move toward a desired future condition of sustainable forestry in the state.

The continued involvement of all interested publics and partners will be important as the plan moves into this crucial implementation phase. The Department cannot steward the forest resource alone, and we cannot implement the statewide forest plan alone.

I am confident that the actions you develop during this conference will help us all meet the opportunities and challenges inherent in sustainably managing our forests. We will work together with the same if not higher level of commitment that began 100 years ago with hard work, wise investment and tireless efforts.

I would like to thank you in advance for the time and effort you are going to put into this endeavor, not only in the next two days, but in the years to come as we implement this plan together. I appreciate this opportunity to spend time with you and I want to reiterate my thanks to you for your commitment to work on ensuring the long-term sustainability of Wisconsin's forests.