

**Notes from a Successful Workshop on
“Using the Managed Forest Law as a Conservation Tool”**

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On November 3, 2005, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Gathering Waters Conservancy, UW-Madison Department of Forest Ecology and Management and UW-Extension (represented by Mark Rickenbach and Rebecca Gass) co-sponsored a half-day workshop entitled “Using the Managed Forest Law as a Conservation Tool” at UW-Madison’s Pyle Center.

This workshop was one of the ideas that came out of the Land Use Leadership Team discussions at the Governor’s Forestry Conference in November 2004. It was designed for natural resource professionals who interact with the Managed Forest Law program, such as agency staff, land trust staff, volunteers, consultants and others with an interest in using MFL as a conservation tool. The workshop participants included representatives from the DNR, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited, several different county land and water resource departments, and more than fourteen different land trusts, conservancies and environmental organizations.

Bud Jordahl, UW-Madison Professor Emeritus and Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame inductee, helped craft the 1985 Managed Forest Law Act and he welcomed participants and gave a brief history of the creation of the act, including the major policy considerations at the time.

Kris Tiles, UW-Extension Basin Educator for the Upper Chippewa, gave an introduction to the current MFL program and answered a number of audience questions about eligibility, criteria and enrollment information.

Following Kris’ presentation, Mark Rickenbach, Assistant Professor in the UW-Madison Department of Forest Ecology and Management, discussed the evidence and potential for land protection through the use of the MFL and highlighted both the program’s benefits and limitations for these purposes. He pointed out that a majority of forest landowners cite aesthetic, recreational and ecological motives for forest ownership. He also discussed the importance of knowing the location of MFL properties for purposes of local conservation and land use planning. Finally, Mark presented some useful graphics on property tax versus MFL costs.

Mark’s presentation was followed by a panel discussion offering on-the-ground examples of how the MFL has been used by individual owners and groups who have conservation goals for their forest land. Bill Carlson, DNR Forestry Team Leader for southwest Wisconsin (Iowa, Grant and Richland Counties), discussed an example of the detailed conservation-minded planning that went into the MFL management plan for a 131-acre site near Blue Mounds, in Dane County. Fred Clark, owner of Clark Forestry Consulting, Inc., shared his experience consulting on an MFL management plan for the Madeline Island Wilderness Preserve, which included a number of sensitive areas and species. And Rick Remington, Land Program Director for the West Wisconsin Land Trust, discussed various land management opportunities and experiences with the MFL program on West Wisconsin Land Trust properties in the 18-county area of northwest Wisconsin.

Finally, Carol Nielson, the Tax Law Program Manager for the Forest Tax Section of the DNR, provided many detailed and useful answers to numerous audience questions about the nuts and bolts of the MFL program.

Our goal was to help a non forest professional audience discover how the MFL can be used to preserve forestlands that they might be dealing with in the course of their work, get answers to specific questions regarding the program, and hear some real examples of how the MFL has been used as a conservation tool on land around Wisconsin.

Thanks to all of the presenters for your time and expertise! You did a great job and participants have told us they got a lot of useful information from attending this workshop.

Thanks, also to Mark Rickenbach, Rebecca Gass and Pam Foster-Felt for their efforts in organizing this workshop.