

## **Opening Plenary Session-Tuesday Nov.9th**

*Paul DeLong, Chief State Forester*

Fred mentioned in his opening remarks the historical timeline that we created to celebrate the centennial of professional forestry in Wisconsin. As Chief State Forester, it's really satisfying for me to ponder the amazing gains that have been achieved in 100 years of professional forestry in Wisconsin. As we draw towards the end of the Year of Wisconsin Forestry, it's an appropriate time to reflect back a bit, and to look forward to the future that this conference will support.

We started planning for the future of Wisconsin's forests in 1904 with the appointment of Wisconsin's first chief state forester, EM Griffith. As you know, this was an appointment of great foresight on the part of the State Legislature, which recognized the value of bringing our forests back from the devastation of the cutover period and then ensuring that such devastation would never happen again.

We have come a long way since then, and that way has included some significant meetings like this one.

**1907-** On November 13-14, the First Lake States Forestry Conference was held in Saginaw, Michigan. The states included Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and the Province of Ontario.

**1908-** Second Lake States forestry conference meets in Madison.

**1909-** Third Lake States Conference was held at St. Paul, Minnesota.

**1928-** First state forestry conference, held in Milwaukee, brought together all forestry interests to review past accomplishments and to develop policies for the ensuing 25 years.

**1953-** On November 30 and December 1, the Wisconsin Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with fifty-seven organizations in the state sponsored the Wisconsin Silver Anniversary Forest Conference at Milwaukee.

**May 13-14, 1964,** the Governor's Conference on Forestry and Forest Recreation Land Use was held. There were 61 cooperating agencies with an attendance of over 300 people.

**1967-** On May 6, a Conservation Centennial Symposium was held. It included a proclamation by Governor Warren Knowles marking 100 years since Wisconsin's first Forestry Commission was established. The Symposium was sponsored by the State Historical Society, Wisconsin Conservation Department, and the University of Wisconsin.

**1983-** The report, “A Strategic Plan For Wisconsin’s Forests”, was published in

**1996-** Seventh American Forest Congress was held in Washington, D.C. The Motto was “Many Voices... A Common Vision.”

Now fast forward to the present . . . We now have 16 million acres of forests, almost 50% of our state's land cover. Forests are integral to the state's economy and ecology, and our overall quality of life. And we are here today at the 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry. We are here to set the future course of action for sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.

I would like to restate the quote the Governor used because it is resoundingly true.

“...The credit belongs to those who are actually in the arena; who know great enthusiasms and great devotions; who, at the best, know in the end the triumphs of high achievement; and, who, at the worst, if they fail, at least fail while daring greatly.... “

Forest assessment and planning have always been important guides for sustaining our forest resources, but the people who are willing to step up to the plate, make good on commitments, work hard, take some risks . . . such people are the most important implementation tool.

I am proud that during my time as Chief State Forester we finalized and published the Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan: Ensuring a Sustainable Future. Not only is the forest plan a milestone achievement during the Year of Wisconsin Forestry, but it also shows our collective and continued commitment to sustainable forestry in Wisconsin. An overview of the Plan is in your conference packet, and the Plan itself is on the Web and available to you here at the conference at one of the information tables where we have a computer on line.

The vision of the Statewide Forest Plan is “To work in partnership to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin’s public and private forest lands and to ensure the ecological, economic, and social benefits of forests for the citizens of Wisconsin now and into the future.” The Statewide Forest Plan updates two previous statewide forest plans, thus continuing a tradition of leadership and careful management of Wisconsin’s forest resources by public and private forestland owners and associated partners.

The development of this plan was coordinated over a three-year period by the Division of Forestry in collaboration with a very wide range of partners and interested publics. This collaboration was based on the belief that we all needed this plan to be for all Wisconsin forest stakeholders, not just the DNR. The planning process began in 2000 with the publishing of Wisconsin Forests at the Millennium: An Assessment. It provided an assessment of the status of Wisconsin's forest resources from ecological, economic, and social perspectives and set the stage for public involvement.

Over 2000 citizens, businesses, government agencies and non-governmental organizations then identified the most important trends and issues Wisconsin's forests and forestry will likely face in coming decades. Then, through a survey in which over 800 individuals and organizations participated, preferred options for addressing the trends and issues were developed.

Objectives for each trend and issues were then developed from the preferred options identified in the survey. Over 200 individuals and organizations commented on the objectives, which met with approval through this process, and provided their thoughts on possible actions to address the objective and which kind of organizations should address the proposed action. These potential actions are data that will be of value during the work of this conference and beyond.

This public involvement and collaboration gave us a plan which articulates a vision for Wisconsin's forests based upon 5 goals and 10 assumptions for statewide sustainable forestry, a description of 52 trends and issues, and objectives to address each trend and issue.

The Statewide Forest 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. By design, the next step is to refine and prioritize actions, or strategies, to achieve the objectives and begin implementation of the plan.

However, I think everyone would agree that each of these 52 objectives will require multiple actions, some of them redundant one with actions needed for other objectives. Then, it is unrealistic to expect that so many different actions could be undertaken at once. Finally, since so

many people helped write the plan, we needed a way for all those people, and potentially more, to realistically stay engaged in developing the action plan.

That is how the Council, with advice from key partners, decided to design this conference around seven themes which, together, encompass nearly all of the 52 trends and issues and their associated objectives. This approach gives us a way to come together to focus on the issues we care most about, with a good chance of honing in on actions that, together, we can accomplish. We also wanted to create a broad context for our work here, where the relationship between themes is clear and the future path for collaboration is well described. In this way, the whole of our work together becomes greater than the sum of its parts.

The themes, as you know, are:

1. Conserving Wisconsin's Biological Diversity
2. Enhancing Wisconsin's Urban Forests
3. Enhancing Assistance to Wisconsin's Private Forest Landowners
4. Maintaining Wisconsin's Forest-based Economy
5. Managing the Impacts of Changes in Wisconsin's Land Use and Forest Ownership
6. Minimizing the Threat of Invasive Exotic Species to Wisconsin's Forests
7. Minimizing Recreational Use Conflicts in Wisconsin's Forests

For each of the themes, a "champion" has stepped forward to work with a team of leaders to plan a 4-hour process to get from framing the theme to identifying actions to address the theme during these two days. You will have an opportunity to meet each of these champions in just a few minutes. These champions were approached because they possess qualities that we felt were important for success: they are well-established leaders in their theme area, they are well-networked to bring together other leaders, and they had the capacity to foster a broad-based dialogue that includes both traditional and non-traditional partners on key forestry issues.

You'll note that none of the champions are associated with the Division of Forestry. As you know, many Division folks are strong leaders in their areas of expertise (and I am very proud of them and grateful to them for that fact), and they certainly embody the qualities I just mentioned.

Many of them are serving on the leadership teams for each theme and quite a few others have been working hard to bring this conference together. But the Council made an overt decision early on to approach leaders outside DNR to champion these themes, because it is important for all of us to realize and build on the fact that DNR cannot implement the Statewide Forest Plan alone. We identified and prioritized the issues together, we developed the vision, goals and objectives together. We must develop the action plan, and then TAKE ACTION, together. The Division of Forestry will always be a dedicated partner, we want and need to be at the table, and we will always stand ready to be part of the solution. But the workload for sustainable forestry -- and it is considerable -- must be shared. I also sincerely believe that we make better policies, better legislation, better programs, when we plan and work together. The forest resource belongs to many, and it is of value to everyone. It is in the forest's best interest, and our own, to work together.

So the champions' leadership is much appreciated for many reasons, not the least of which is their commitment to collaborative action. My interactions with the champions have been very gratifying, for several reasons. First, they agreed to take on this challenging role. Each of the champions that I approached with this BIG proposal saw what an opportunity it is to bring together a group of stakeholders to work toward collaborative action, in a setting that would ultimately bring the work on all the themes together again and increase the chances, through a broad base of support and effort, that actions will succeed. Second, each of the champions told me that they didn't want to do this if the conference was an end unto itself, as so many conferences are. They didn't feel that this would be worth their time if it wasn't going to lead to ongoing action. I couldn't agree more. Third, when asked to assemble a team of leaders for their issue, each champion went to work to do just that, and consequently we have a very significant group of key people who have helped plan the break-out sessions and, hopefully, will continue to lead the issue as we bring recommendations forward. Please check out the theme tables just outside this room to see who is on those leadership teams. Their work has been and will be invaluable. I hope that many more of you here today will be inspired to step up and join these leaders in their commitment to action.

An interesting element of this conference is each leadership team has developed a unique process to address their theme, based on their sense of what's possible for addressing the theme effectively. Each theme will continue their work in a truly unique fashion yet maintain a strong relationship with other themes. There are obvious links, for example, between urban forestry, land use, invasive species, and forest products industry. We believe that all of these themes are interrelated with each other and that, while we may focus on a given set of issues because of our professional focus or personal passions, we will be more effective in the long run if we work in the context of those interrelationships.

As Fred mentioned earlier, this conference is intended to strengthen existing partnerships and to foster innovative ones. As an example of non-traditional partnerships, The Nature Conservancy, under the guidance of Mary Jean Huston, partnered with Fred's company, Stora Enso, to provide support for some of the planning that went into this conference. I offer that as an example in hopes that, during the next two days, you will see opportunities for non-traditional or innovative partnerships that may not have occurred to you in a more traditional context.

Before I introduce the theme champions, I'd like to touch upon why you have been encouraged to attend this conference. While this meeting is by no means by invitation, we did actively reach out to a wide range of leaders, in hopes that we could get broader representation of interested parties than might traditionally attend a "forestry meeting." We also wanted this meeting to be for people who have something to leverage, whether it be great ideas, membership of an association, an active local community, the ability to influence others, or staff or funding. This goes along with my remarks earlier about the importance of working together. Everyone here has something to offer. Our best case scenario is that each of you will become a champion in your own right and work with other champions to achieve our common goals.

Now, I would like to introduce each of the theme champions and ask them to provide a very brief overview of their theme focus for the conference and expected outcomes, just to give you a sense of what the next two days will encompass.

1. Mary Jean Huston, Wisconsin Director, The Nature Conservancy, Conserving Wisconsin's Biological Diversity
2. Dave Marcoullier, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, UW-Madison, Minimizing Recreational Use Conflicts in Wisconsin's Forests
3. Lisa MacKinnon, Policy Director, 1000 Friends of Wisconsin, Managing the Impacts of Changes in Wisconsin's Land Use and Forest Ownership
4. Brent English, Director, Commercialization and Grants, Center for Technology Transfer, Inc., Maintaining Wisconsin's Forest-based Economy
5. Fred Clark, President, Clark Forestry, Minimizing the Threat of Invasive Exotic Species to Wisconsin's Forests
6. John DuPlissis, Forestry Outreach Specialist, UW-Stevens Point, Enhancing Assistance to Wisconsin's Private Forest Landowners
7. Joe Wilson, Executive Director, Greening Milwaukee, Enhancing Wisconsin's Urban Forests

### **Closing**

Thanks to all the champions for those thumb-nail sketches. That gives us all a general idea of the breadth and depth of discussion that will be supported during the next two days. Many thanks to the champions and to all the leadership team members for the great work they've put into preparing their sessions.

When we meet for lunch on Wednesday I will provide a brief summary of the break-out sessions so that you can get a sense of the outcomes from the sessions you were unable to attend, and we'll talk more then about next steps.

For now, Fred will wrap things up for this morning and we can move on to lunch and then the first round of sessions

Thank you.