

August 22, 2005

John G. DuPlissis
Forestry Outreach Specialist
College of Natural Resources, Room 362A
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Stevens Point, WI 54481-3897

Dear John,

Thank you for taking the initiative to write on behalf of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's Private Forest Assistance Team. The Wisconsin Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recognizes the value of forest land from both an environmental and economic perspective. Conservation planning on forest land is a required part of the training curriculum that is provided to all NRCS and private sector individuals seeking our certification as a conservation planner. Wisconsin NRCS will continue to provide conservation planning technical assistance on forest land when requested by a client. The shift in ownership of Wisconsin's forest land from large industrial holdings to ownership by multiple individuals may actually provide more opportunity for the NRCS to be involved in forestry issues based on our mission and authorizing legislation.

The 2002 farm bill clearly included opportunities for forestry practices to be included in the USDA cost sharing programs including the Environmental Quality Incentive Program. The 1996 farm bill established the local work group process as the mechanism for the identification of cost sharing priorities. The 1996 farm bill defined the membership of the local work group as being limited to the staff of cooperating agencies. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources forester would typically be invited to represent forestry-related resource concerns in a county. Wisconsin NRCS encourages non-agency staff to serve as advisors to the local workgroup. I encourage interested forest land owners to contact their local NRCS District Conservationist and ask to be included on the mailing list for all local work group activities. Please notify me if you become aware of individuals who have requested to participate as an advisor to the NRCS local work group and have not been given access to the information necessary to actively participate.

Representation for forestry issues at the Wisconsin NRCS State Technical Committee level is also an important consideration. Consistent attendance at the State Technical Committee by a representative of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's Private Forest Assistance Team or other recognized forestry interest groups is critical to keeping forestry issues in the mix. Your assistance identifying potential forestry representatives to the Wisconsin NRCS State Technical Committee would be greatly appreciated. Rachel Jordan is a current Wisconsin State Technical

Committee member with knowledge of forestry issues but has not been able to attend recent meetings. With the 2007 farm bill debate now underway, consistent representation for forestry issues will be more important than ever.

Wisconsin NRCS recognizes the importance of having access to a professional forester for development of technical guidance, training of staff, and the maintenance of professional relationships. The Wisconsin NRCS State Forester position was vacated earlier this year when John Pingry accepted a promotion. We have continued to discuss the status of this position at each of our management team meetings since the change occurred. In November, Wisconsin NRCS will re-evaluate our entire staffing plan as we attempt to prepare for implementation of the 2007 farm bill. Consistent representation by forestry interests at the Wisconsin State Technical Committee and local work group meetings prior to this November meeting will ensure that forestry related resource issues are appropriately represented in our workload projections that will be utilized to revise our staffing plan.

If you have more specific concerns related to the Wisconsin NRCS State Technical Committee or the local work group process that you would like addressed please feel free to contact Don Baloun, Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, at don.baloun@wi.usda.gov or 608-662-4422, extension 252.

I will ask Pat Murphy, State Resource Conservationist, to continue to represent NRCS at the Wisconsin Council on Forestry's Private Forest Assistance Team and any other technical work groups where Wisconsin NRCS should be represented during this transition period.

If you would like to talk more specifically about any of these issues please feel free to contact my administrative assistant Pam Hubacher to arrange an appointment. Pam can be reached at 608-662-4422, extension 241.

Sincerely,



Acting for
PATRICIA S. LEAVENWORTH
State Conservationist

cc:

Don Baloun, Assistant State Conservationist - Programs, NRCS, Madison, Wisconsin
Patrick Murphy, State Resource Conservationist, NRCS, Madison, Wisconsin