

Wisconsin Council on Forestry Priority Goal #8
From Governor's 2013 Forestry Economic Summit
"Increase Public Understanding of the Benefits of Sustainable Forest Management"

Volunteer Committee Meeting – August 7, 2014
Schmeeckle Reserve, Stevens Point

In attendance:

Bill Euclide – WWOA member, woodland owner, town board member
Roberta Kunzman – Packaging Corporation of America Tomahawk Mill
Keith Lindner – WDNR Division of Forestry
Randall Mell – UW Extension
Patrick Dayton – Southwest Badger RC&D
Jane Severt – Wisconsin County Forests Association, Wisconsin Council on Forestry

Members present introduced themselves and provided background information and reasons for being interested in achieving this goal.

- Concerns with conversion of forestland to agriculture land
 - Environmental regulations and burdensome restrictions in forest management activities
 - Desire to see the general public embrace sustainable forest management and see trees as a renewable resource
 - Desire to improve public perception regarding sustainable forest management
 - Desire to retain and grow Wisconsin's forest industry
 - Desire to retain the ability to practice good forestry
 - Desire to increase engagement of private forestland owners in sustainable forest practices
 - Improve understanding of sustainable forestry practices among private landowners who readily accept clearing forests for ag purposes but are reluctant to manage forestland
- 1) The committee identified their target audiences
 - Urban populations
 - Teachers
 - School children
 - Forest landowners (distinguished between those who make a living on their property and those who do not)
 - 2) The committee discussed current efforts addressing the identified goal
 - DMAP and Conservation Congress – DMAP program will benefit by drawing a direct correlation between forest management activities and wildlife for forest landowners interested in improving wildlife habitat
 - Into the Outdoors episode developed by GLTPA and others
 - WCFA Teacher Workshop scheduled for August 17-19
 - Langlade County Teacher Workshop
 - Discover Wisconsin episode focused on county forests
 - Driftless Forestry Network Project
 - Woodland Advocate program

- 3) Ideas for new initiatives, partnerships, or coordinated efforts that may prove to be effective in achieving the goal
 - Efforts to interest loggers in harvesting smaller parcels through landowner cooperatives
 - Forestry zoning efforts to prevent conversion of woodland to ag use
 - Environmental days at high schools promoting natural resource fields as good occupations
 - Watershed level programs (these are effective in agriculture) providing a “sense of place”

PowerPoint slides presented by Forest Business Network (FBN) at the June 3-5, 2014 Smallwood Conference were reviewed by the committee. Jane spoke with Dave Parcell and Craig Rawlings yesterday regarding FBN’s public relations effort in addressing perception of our nation’s forest products industry. The goal of this effort is to define the role of sustainable forest management and our forest products industry in society instead of letting others define it for us. There was a great deal of discussion among committee members regarding possible methods for us to move forward here in Wisconsin

- The committee stressed simplicity and consistency
 - The committee does not want to see our critics continue to define sustainable forest management
 - The committee values television, radio, and social media as methods for sending our message
 - The committee wants to focus on the “Healthy Forests” aspect; proper forest management sustains healthy and productive forest ecosystems that provide forest products, clean water, clean air, etc.
 - Increasing “public trust” is an important part of this campaign – you can cut a tree and it will grow back – stress the point that forests are managed “with care” and “with help” from professional resource managers
 - The committee identified the importance of distinguishing between “clearcuts” for proper forest management and regeneration versus land conversions; clearing of forests to use the land for other purposes
 - Stressing the consumerism side of natural resources – emphasis on all products derived from trees
 - Stress important facts and numbers relatively unknown to the general population, i.e. we grow more than we harvest
 - Emphasis on “buy local” and knowing where the products you use come from
 - Expand the “healthy forests” concept to include “healthy economy” and “healthy jobs”
 - Capitalize on the emotional side of public perception to our benefit with campaigns focused on forest health, wildlife habitat, and possibly how nature practices forest management without our assistance
- 4) Moving forward with development of an action plan to achieve desired outcomes
 - a) Likely will need to work with a marketing firm to achieve best results
 - Possible to consider some sort of consortium to serve as a “gatekeeper” and work with the marketing firm to ensure consistency
 - b) Primary message must be simple and consistent
 - Focus on simple radio ads and possibly on strategically located billboards to begin (the committee would like to see this effort addressed within 3 months)
 - Develop television advertisements (possible for airing during football season?)
 - Use public radio as a means of communication

- c) The initial target audience is the general public
 - More focused outreach to specific groups, i.e. teachers, students will also be part of the plan
- d) The committee feels a sense of urgency and would like the Council on Forestry to begin efforts as soon as possible – there are some relatively simple and effective tools to move forward with quickly
 - Bring back the large posters depicting/listing all of the products used on a daily/frequent basis that come from trees. Distribute these posters to all schools in Wisconsin
 - Research “old tools that worked” and are effective means of reaching our audience
- e) The committee encourages investigation of the possibility to create a form of electronic media similar to the phenomenon that has developed around a farming game developed for and available on iPod.

Other important aspects of an action plan to achieve this goal include:

- It is important to continue current efforts proving effective in sending our message and reaching out to specific groups
- Outreach to private forestland owners needs to be part of the plan
- The idea of “redefining GREEN” was proposed
- The use of visuals in the campaign will be important – pictures of healthy, managed forests versus those of unmanaged forests