

Meeting Minutes

Wisconsin Council on Forestry
Treehaven Education and Conference Center - Tomahawk, WI
June 21, 2005

Members Present:

Jeff Stier, Bill Horvath, Ken Ottman, Fred Clark, Bill Ward, Mary Jean Huston, Robert Rogers, Jim Heerey, Paul DeLong, Fred Souba, Troy Brown

Members Absent:

Sen. Roger Breske, Sen. Russ Decker, Rep. Donald Friske, Rep. Mary Hubler, Leon Church, Dennis Brown, Jon Geenen

Guests Present:

Earl Gustafson, Mary Brown, Colette Matthews, Allison Hellman, Jeff Niese, Bill Klase, Michael Miller, Jane Siebert

Welcome

Chairman Fred Souba called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves. Bob Rogers welcomed all present. He gave an overview of Treehaven, which is the field station for the University of Wisconsin's College of Natural Resources in Stevens Point. It is a gift from a private individual, supplemented by donations from other individuals and grants. It operates with no state funding.

Approval of Council's Biennial Report to the Governor - Paul DeLong and Allison Hellman

Council members discussed and commented on the draft version of the Council on Forestry's Biennial Report to the Governor. The report is required by Chapter 26 of the Wisconsin Statutes. Paul pointed out that the Incentives portion had been inadvertently omitted. Members suggested a number of changes, among them, simplification of the wording in parts, addition of a Definitions section, and separate sections for urban and rural forests.

ACTION ITEMS:

- Members will give their suggestions and editorial comments on the report directly to Allison Hellman.
- A revised version of the report, tracking changes made, will be distributed to Council members via email.
- Members will respond electronically to all Council members within two weeks of receiving the revised report with either their approval or with the comment that more changes are needed.

DECISION ITEM:

- The Council's Biennial Report to the Governor will be approved pending a quorum of Council members' responses received on the revised version within two weeks of its distribution.

Approval of March Meeting Minutes

The minutes from the March 17, 2005 Council on Forestry meeting were distributed. Chairman Souba solicited comments from Council members. None were received.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Jeff Stier) that the Council approve the minutes of the March 17, 2005 Council meeting was passed unanimously.

Invasive Species Leadership Team Recommendations - Fred Clark

As a result of the momentum generated by the Governor's Conference on Forestry, the Council on Forestry's Invasive Species Task Group grew and evolved into the Forest Invasives Leadership Team. It proposes that the best strategy for addressing the threat of invasive species is through the development of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Invasive Species. These BMPs break down into four separate processes, or "tracks", representing different segments of the forest resource and different groups of stakeholders that need to be reached:

Track 1 - Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species

Track 2 - Recreational Forest User BMPs for Invasive Species

Track 3 - Urban Forestry BMPs for Invasive Species

Track 4 - Utility and Transportation Right-of-Way BMPs for Invasive Species

Track 1 is a priority as it is ready for development now, although an estimated \$124,000 is needed in funding.

The Leadership Team's next step is the formation of a steering committee for the BMP development process. If the BMPs are implemented, each track will have its own steering committee. Wisconsin has the distinction of being the first state to consider this process for invasive species. Chairman Souba thanked Fred on behalf of the Council for the excellent work done on this. The Governor's Council on Invasive Species voted unanimously at its last meeting to enforce the process provided the Council on Forestry approved it, and has offered its support in research and development. Fred asked if the Council would be willing to serve as a sponsoring organization.

DECISION ITEM:

- A motion by Bob Rogers (seconded by Mary Jean) that the Council on Forestry agrees to sponsor the development of Best Management Practices for Invasive Species for Forestry in Wisconsin passed unanimously.

Update from the Conference Implementation Steering Committee - Paul DeLong and Fred Souba

The Conference Implementation Steering Committee had a meeting with all of the theme champions in April. The outcome of the meeting was that each champion was asked to identify where their issues overlap issues of other themes, and to identify inventory and information needs to determine where there might be an interest in gathering similar data collectively. The Steering Committee will meet in August. Then, later in August, it will meet with the theme champions once again. It is hoped that eventually all of the theme groups will produce tangible results similar to the recommendations of the Invasive Species Leadership Team.

Paul announced that Mark Heyde had completed the hiring process for Program and Planning Analyst Sarah Attwood's replacement. The new limited term employee will commence work in July. A permanent planning position will be filled as well.

Recommendations from the Woody Biomass Taskforce - Bill Horvath

The Taskforce met on June 21st and had no recommendations. The three grant applications that it had submitted were rejected, but will be resubmitted. Some pilot wood-burning schools need to be put in place before the Schools for Fuels Program grant is reapplied for. The group continues to pursue its original eight goals, as well as its ultimate objective of putting into place a comprehensive piece of woody biomass legislation. There are a couple of elements already in place in the legislature. Once the work gets approved, it will be passed on to one or more other groups for implementation. A key issue is still access to supply. Some private woodland owners don't see any reason to, and thus will not, cut.

Earl Gustafson of the Wisconsin Paper Council has been named to Governor Doyle's recently formed Consortium on Biobased Industry, and has been a liaison to the Woody Biomass Taskforce. We need to identify Wisconsin's niche in this internationally developing arena. It will be important that the Task Force be involved with and influence the Consortium.

The Task Force will meet again on July 28th in Ladysmith. Al Christianson, City Manager of Ladysmith, will discuss attacking the woody biomass issue from a community standpoint. Representatives of the USDA Rural Development Agency will also be attending. Funding available through their agency will be explored. Chairman Souba thanked Bill on behalf of the Council for the work done by the Task Force.

State Forester's Report - Paul DeLong

NHAL State Forest Master Plan

Chief State Forester Paul DeLong reported that the public comment period for the Plan had closed in early June. Of the many comments received, by far the most were on the All-Terrain-Vehicle (ATV) question. The most significant issues to be taken up by the Natural Resources Board later this year are:

- The ATV question.
- Boundary expansion to the Upper Peninsula.
- The Aspen vs. Pine question, between those who advocate more pine and those who advocate more aggressive efforts to prevent the spread of aspen.

Determining how to ensure that we aren't removing the full range of diversity from the state's forests is of primary importance. We are still responding to what happened to the NHAL Forest one hundred years ago, and how we respond will determine its future. The planning process we have advocated so far has not been sustainable. The DNR is currently working on a revised process, targeting two-year planning and featuring a streamlined public input process. It has already been initiated in the Peshtigo River State Forest and will be initiated shortly in the Black River State Forest.

ACTION ITEM:

- Paul will send out a notice when the proposed final NHAL Master Plan is released, letting the Council members know which Natural Resources Board meeting it is scheduled to go before.

Budget Status

The Joint Finance Committee has completed its work, moving the budget on for debate by the State Assembly. It approved most of the items contained in the Governor's budget, adding \$100,000 for roadwork to DNR's certification item. Of the 40.75 positions that were identified for reduction, 34.75 were restored. The remaining six positions, in public awareness, Karner Blue data coordination, and training delivery, will be funded through alternative mechanisms at about \$60,000 per full time equivalent. It removed MFL plan writing responsibility from the DNR, in hopes of seeing more of DNR's effort going toward the backlog on state land management. It passed a single motion that makes funding for the following programs contingent on state timber sale revenue:

- Landowner Grant Program
- Biomass Grant Program
- Forestry Education Grant Program
- School Forest Transportation
- Master Logger Apprenticeship Grant Program
- Forestry Internships

The following are to be paid for with regular Forestry Account funds:

- Payments to local governments who have MFL closed acreage
- Technical College program to train in use of mechanized equipment for timber harvesting
- Scholarship grants for individuals pursuing Master Logger certification
- Development and operation of Paper Discovery Center in Appleton

Stewardship debt service was made ongoing with 19.5 billion dollars every year coming out of the Forestry Account.

DECISION ITEMS:

- A motion by Jim Heerey (seconded by Bill Horvath) that the Council encourage members of the State Legislature to assure that the School Forest Transportation legislation budget item, number 7d, provides transportation funding equitably to all schools whose K-12 forestry coursework incurs student travel cost, was denied, with one member in favor and ten opposed.

- A motion by Bill Horvath (seconded by Bill Ward) that the Council reiterate its disdain for using state forestry funds for debt retirement via a letter addressed to Governor Doyle passed with two abstentions.
- A motion by Ken Ottman (seconded by Fred Clark) that the Council express its opinion that, although it supports the initiatives listed in Section 7 of the budget, funding of these programs should not be directly related to timber sales, passed unanimously.

ACTION ITEM:

- Chairman Souba and Paul DeLong will draft a letter expressing the Council's opinion on the funding of the initiatives in Section 7 of the budget, and send it to the Council members for their feedback before sending it out.

Other Items

The Forestry Division has begun implementation of the Certified Plan Writer Program as required under the MFL. There have been seven training sessions, with additional sessions planned for this fall. So far, 74 consultants have attended the training and will become certified plan writers. The DNR still has to approve plans. All plans need to be in by November 1st. There had been no real consequences for failure to perform in the past. Now, as certified plan writers, those who fail will be kicked out. With this program in place, the DNR should be able to spend less time reviewing the work of others.

Volunteer Fire Assistance and Forest Fire Protection grants are due July 1st.

Legislative Report - Paul DeLong (in Rep. Friske's absence)

Among the bills that have passed the Assembly and are now awaiting action by the Senate are the MFL Disclosure Bill and the Right to Practice Forestry Bill. Other bills awaiting action on the Assembly floor are:

- MFL Parcel Bill
- Tax Freeze Bill - would have frozen all tax, including the mill tax. This passed the Legislature and was vetoed by the Governor. The Joint Finance Committee did pass language that reduces the mill tax. It reduces the debt reduction portion commensurate with the reduction in percentage of growth in the account.
- Budget Bill
- DNR Trespass Authority
- Failure to Pay for Raw Forest Products

The Healthy Forest Bill passed through Committee and is due to go to Joint Finance. Representative Hubler has proposed an amendment addressing the issue of dual authority within the DNR. Representative Friske has agreed to the language. All of the Council's comments would be addressed with the amendment as proposed.

Next Meeting and Adjourn

Chairman Souba extended the Council's thanks to Bob Rogers and the staff of Treehaven for arranging the tour of their facility and allowing the Council to meet there. The next meeting will take place on Thursday, September 15th in Madison. Topics will include:

- Having a national forest representative serve on the Council. Anne Archie of the USDA Forest Service will speak.
- Identifying the Council's role in acting on the information presented on yesterday's tour of fragmented and parcelized forestland.
- Report from Jeff Stier's and Bob Roger's task group on research needs.
- State Forester's Report.
- Legislative Report.

ACTION ITEMS:

- The Council will send a letter of thanks to Lisa MacKinnon of 1000 Friends of Wisconsin for organizing yesterday's tour.
- Jeff Stier and Bob Rogers will put together a group to identify and address the research needs that emerged from the Conference on Forestry and the Forest Plan, and will report back to the Council at the September 15th meeting with its findings.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.40 p.m.

Submitted by:

Mary Brown
WDNR