

Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee (WPFAC)
Meeting Notes: 12/12/23

Discussion Exercise "When you think of Private Forestry in Wisconsin...":

- Forest products, forest health, supply chain significance
- Industry, Forest Certification
- Financial assistance programs
- Information from peer to peer learning can be better way to get them engaged and involved in NRCS programs
- Majority of land in WI is privately owned (approx. 67%), and raw materials that supply sawmills come from those private lands
- More private lands that are not in Managed Forest Law (MFL) or have a management plan- want to provide those landowners with information to guide them on sustainable forestry management of their properties
- Transfer of ownership issue - landowners turnover, how to reach these landowners timely? Knowing when sale occurs is a challenge but could look at county records - Adena Reisman could be good resource with recent research projects
- Survey of new landowners? We haven't done this yet but could be an idea
- Landowners may not be aware of MFL or importance of having a management plan for their property, especially if tax bill isn't large impact on ownership
- Are we still on board with landowner continuum? Yes. Aldo Leopold didn't have a management plan but had a vision, priorities, and goals for land management
- Climate change, education and realities of what is possible - knowledge and resources to provide for landowners and decision making, and foresters who provide this technical assistance to landowners
- Culture and values of private landowners - potential and opportunities to work with landowners and our partners to achieve goals
- Is there a trend we can recognize and collaborate around?
- Group dynamics- vision, problem (overcoming challenges), goal (as we did for 20K goal initiative)
- This is a diverse group, so how do we provide council that is meaningful - information sharing and connection building still valuable but may not be the same
- Federal funding opportunities?
- ALF goals: Energy and opportunity for landowners to recognize a land ethic, more landowners engaged - where do goals intersect with DNR SD?
- Need to continue to be voice for private forest landowner in WI, bring forward to DNR, should we engage more field folks on committee? Sustainability - encourage markets to extent that we can, Carbon markets might be part of the answer
- What motivates landowners?
- Forest Products Laboratory - future markets
- Advise and educate all types of landowners in conservation practices

Is there anything in the DNR Strategic Direction that is not in alignment with your vision?

What are the opportunities for enhanced engagement? Role/Purpose of Committee Review

- Forest Legacy and Forest Stewardship requirement to have this committee
- Review of Forest Legacy applications, revisit who should participate on committee with this context?

- Could educate committee members on conservation easements, welcome opposition to have a conversation
- Cooperative Forestry Act does have a list of core members to meet intent/requirement for receiving federal funding
- Put together strategy/biennial goals for committee? Could we have this committee influence *next* DNR Strategic Direction?
- Desire for groups participating to drive agenda
- 20K initiative provided energy and momentum for WPFAC and need to assess what participation would look like without a major goal to rally around
- Have representation of those who are engaged, interested, and able to participate in core purpose including conservation easements
- Next phase of 20K, outreach to meet landowners where they are at and provide variety of opportunities to re-engage
- Private landowner groups, make sure we include those members who were unable to attend in this conversation
- Explore others to Chair committee moving forward
- Is there too much duplication in other committees members are also participating on?
- WPFAC creates opportunity to collaborate among organizations
- Proposal: core responsibilities, identify challenges in WI Private Forestry, interest in moving landowners along continuum: 3 meetings a year, 1-2 challenges brought forward each meeting or current projects, opportunities, for outreach/technical assistance (core, continuum, and challenges)
- Information from other committees or current projects - information exchange
- Industry: GLTPA, tribal engagement would be important
- Council on Forestry - is there a connection to COF? How could WPFAC inform or support?
 - Private Forestry is segment of COF (markets, MFL equivalent that we could help create/inform)
 - Statewide awareness, this group could identify a challenge or initiative to bring to COF, marketing and outreach, budget committee on COF and WPFAC could propose ideas
 - Timing of meetings could correlate
 - more focus would be helpful
- Developing a work plan for WPFAC is a next step (2-3 meetings a year, provides structure and priorities), review Operating Procedures
- Review Membership of WPFAC, give those members on committee currently the opportunity to continue - want to share work plan and then ask about participation or recruiting new members
- Reinforcement from WPFAC on budget initiatives to Division of Forestry

Forest Legacy

- Pelican River Forest - close to having everything ready, draft form, title work has been completed, necessary documentation to request federal funds is ready to go. No state monies involved, only federal on this one.
- 2 applications for Small Strategic Tract category (must be adjacent to or join existing protected lands), DNR supportive of these projects:
- Border Lakes-1500 acre tract in Vilas Co. USFS willing to fund northern but not southern parcel but landowner willing to donate this one
- Upper Wisconsin River Expansion - 191 acre tract, bridges gap between 2 previous easements, Spruce Grouse SNA one of those existing easements
- National panel meeting first week in February 2024 and will hear back how these projects rank out and whether they are approved or not in early April

- Second round of IRA funding, some landowners interested in pursuing May 10 deadline: 400 acres in Adams Co. , 1000 acre tract in Iron Co. abuts Iron Co. Forest Land
- WPFAC would need to review before May, likely in March 2024
- Importance, Threatened, or Strategic = priorities for application criteria
- Subcommittee of WPFAC reviews initially and then brings to entire committee
- Uptick in landowners interested in the Legacy program with little to no outreach from Division

Project positions:

- State putting together project position proposal for technical assistance and outreach to underserved landowners. Framing out what application looks like currently. Time limited position to provide information and technical assistance to landowners or to connect with consulting foresters. Should be posted for application after Jan 1, 2024.
- Tools and criteria to establish where underserved landowners are geographically in state

WI Stewardship Plan Project

- Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Federal Grant monies available over last two years
- Grant applications were submitted and Funding for both project (WI Stewardship Plan Project) and project position, opportunities for additional funding during the next few years
- The number of landowners in Wisconsin who have a management plan has been stagnant at around 34% for many years. The expected outcome from the proposed project is to increase the number of Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowners who follow a Forest Stewardship Plan for their property.
- This will significantly increase the amount of land eligible for financial assistance programs at the state and federal level to complete sustainable forestry management, as well as increased engagement of landowners in developing goals and objectives pertaining to forest management of their property and implementing management activities.
- Project position: Lead for project, funding to support a position for 2 or more years
- The DNR has a long-standing partnership with UW-Extension through Extension's Natural Resource Educator program. "Pass through" of funding for project position through this partnership.
- This existing partnership provides an excellent opportunity for DNR to utilize the funds to expand our capacity. Additionally, state procurement allows DNR to enter into such contractual relationships without significant barriers because DNR and UW-Extension are both State institutions.
- Could use this model for other Private Forestry initiatives through federal grant opportunities

Federal Funding

- IRA Forest Landowner Support Program (presentation by Dennis McDougall)
- Under 2500 acres = small acreage
- www.fs.usda.gov search for "IRA Forest Landowner Support"
- Funding opportunities for Provision 1 and Provision 4 (timeline TBD)
- IRA NRCS (presentation by Allan Braun)
- Staffing capacity an issue in handling influx of funding
- Forest Stand Improvement, Brush Management, Tree and Shrub Establishment, Prairie Establishment, Agro forestry practices
- CSP deadline in January, EQIP deadline coming up in May - accepting applications year-round just funded on batching deadlines

- Influx of money might impact DNR and partner involvement on EQIP checks, etc. (RGS has 3 positions currently)
- Management plan development writing is not eligible as part of this IRA funding through NRCS
- Is there a role that WPFAC can fill to figure out how WI can take advantage of these federal opportunities
- WFLGP- cost share dollar opportunities (provision 1) and positions for technical checks, grant administration, etc.