

WPFAC Meeting Notes June 26th, 2026

- Introductions
Kristin Lambert, Ron Gropp, Emily Webster, R.J. Wickham, Nancy Bozek, Ann Calhoun, Allan Braun, Joe Hovel, Buddy Huffacker, Dennis McDougall, Kim Destree, Henry Schienebeck, Jake Walcisak, Keith Phelps, and Jim Warren
- WPFAC Operating Procedure Updates:
 - Major Recommendations:
 - Purpose and Goals (section 2):
 - Consolidating purpose and goals in three subsections instead of nine
 - Remove forest health and private forestry education from state program list
 - Clarifying review of Forest Legacy project applications and the role the Committee has to provide a prioritized list to the state forester for decision.
 - Membership (section 3):
 - Split it up into membership and new role and expectations sections
 - Reference legislative language again to make it clear why the member list is how it is
 - Change membership terms to unlimited 3-year terms that are automatically renewed unless a member tells the Committee that they want to leave or rotate off the committee
 - Action Item: reach out to organizations/agencies for committee representation for vacant positions. USFS affirmed that so long as an 'ask' is made we have fulfilled the expectations as it relates to the federal CFAA membership.
 - Action Item: Committee Co-Chairs determine approval from Heather on changes to Operating Procedures and membership
 - Action Item: DNR to establish mechanism to track terms.
 - Meetings (section 6)

- Adding specific target dates to twice annual meeting goal (end of fiscal year and end of calendar year)
 - Decision making process (section 9)
 - Adding “in an advisory capacity” to line one to emphasis the Committee’s ability to make recommendations to State Forester but not decisions
- Changes to the Operating Procedures approved
- WPFAC Workplan:
 - Program coordination:
 - Adding in recognition award to priority list for private landowners, cooperating foresters, etc.
 - Action Item: identify award(s) and draft selection criteria with small group of committee members. Bring back to the full committee for further discussion.
 - Priority issues/actions; want to expand role in advising the DNR on Private Forestry (PF) issues
 - Strategic direction, handbooks (PF and tax law), and reviewing WPFAC operating procedures
 - Emerging issues:
 - Identify things we could be getting ahead of vs reacting to
 - Committee members suggest thinking more about the logistics of this before officially making it a high priority item on the work plan
 - Interagency Coordination/Communications:
 - Working with NRCS to provide feedback and recommendations on their resource priorities and criteria for conservation activities
 - Team Participation:
 - Attend meetings and engage with teams and work groups appointed by the Committee
- Braun Woodlands FLP:
 - Recognition of Committee’s work supporting recent Forest Legacy acquisitions: Upper WI River, Stateline Forest and Sandy Ridge Forest; Border Lakes is next to close sometime this fall.
 - Forest Legacy program funding
 - Very popular with congress and continues to see broad bipartisan support from both chambers. Program receives funding from the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF); fully funded for another year
 - Anticipated changes to FY28 FLP project funding cycle: proximity to wood product mills, expanding public access to outdoor rec, and

projects that are supported by state and local governments (governor's letter) are now being emphasized on applications and will likely be ranked in the future when official new scoring guidelines are given

- Braun Woodlands is a property in Langlade County (~1,800 acres) that has a ~2-mile segment of the Ice Age Trail going through it. The land has been owned by the family for ~70 years, the landowners have strong ties to the community and now want to protect it from development and non-forest use(s). The landowners have been working with the Ice Age Trail Alliance (IATA) to protect the trail, and approached DNR about possible funding sources to protect the property. .
 - Project application scoring by two committee members referencing the national core criteria: Importance, Threatened & Strategic
 - Importance (25/30), threatened (18/20), strategic (27/30)
 - Final score: 70/80
 - Threat of conversion is very real in this area (from residential and agricultural uses)
 - Water from this property flows into the Wolf River, one of the only "Wild and Scenic" federally designated rivers in Wisconsin, making it very important to protect
 - This river is in the Menominee Reservation
 - Title work came back clean and matching contributions are in hand
 - This project is positioned in such a way that the only thing that would have to happen is for national funding to come through
- Committee member questions:
 - Are the red line designated areas all parts of the project?
 - One block that's non-contiguous has been removed, but all other parcels are still included.
 - Property is 5 miles outside of Antigo.
 - Have you gotten local engagement in this?
 - Ice Age Trail Alliance is in the process of acquiring local support and has gotten two townships to bring forward support resolutions in July meetings. The Alliance is also on the Langlade County Forestry & Rec. committee requesting support.
 - Landowner also got letter of support from WWOA
 - Cost of project?
 - Requesting \$950k from federal FLP

- Are the number of projects awarded by the feds the same every year?
 - Average of 12-14 per year
 - Committee member feedback
 - Committee's role here is straightforward unless there is an egregious reason to not support it (since it is the only project that needs to be scored)
 - One of the biggest assets for this project is the Ice Age Trail going through it.
 - Emphasized continuing to keep FL program strong in Wisconsin
- Strategic Direction:
 - What are the most critical new or existing Private Forestry topics/areas the Division should be focusing on over the next 5 to 10 years?
 - Potential for seed orchards to help get resilient species for the next generation; utilizing drone technology in forestry such as herbicide use and monitoring fires; keep a focus on prescribed burning because of increased landowner interest
 - Continued focus on technical assistance to landowners; DNR forester customer service skills (member has heard complaints from landowners that it can be confusing on who to contact and situations where no response from DNR).
 - Seed sourcing for resilient trees; Integration of prescribed fire into plans; continuing to develop DNR forester's knowledge about fire so that they can talk about it with landowners and add it into plans.
 - Education and outreach to landowners especially about prescribed fire; investing more in promoting tree seed collection program (capacity building); forest carbon markets, increase in amount that private landowners can utilize, better education on this topic needed due to market changes (increase knowledge of this topic and how it can work with other parts of forestry such as MFL)
 - Reduced federal funding is an issue going forward which affects both DNR and partners; competing land use is becoming a bigger issue (ex: solar farms, data centers); disaster response as severe weather events continues to get more common in the Midwest
 - Are there any Private Forestry topics/areas that should no longer be prioritized by the division as you consider the next 5 to 10 years?
 - No responses
 - What is working well in Private Forestry that you would like to see continue?

- Some committee members enjoy split between tax law and integrated foresters, others report landowner confusion about who to contact
 - Partnership with NRCS going well.
- Partner Updates:
 - Border Lakes project is very special to the landowner.
 - Pushing back hard on tariffs on equipment and pulp; working with Forest Service on projects to help states keep contracts with GNA
 - Assessment of Wisconsin Forest First program; looking into compatibility with family forest carbon program in southern WI, decided there isn't enough value there; TNC has committed to having mobile fire teams (one in the north, one in the south), mostly helping partners right now but would like to expand to private landowners in the future.
 - Regional Conservation Partnership program is taking applications right now, deadline in August.
 - Tax Law Section working on Chapter 203 which will be a new chapter to the Forest Tax Law Handbook that will guide Tax Law Forestry Specialist to more consistently review/approve MFL applications and plans. This Chapter will be a companion to Chapter 201 which provides guidance to Certified Plan Writers on submitting approvable MFL applications and management plans.