The Wisconsin Private Forestry Advisory Committee (WPFAC)
Recommendations to Wisconsin’s Chief State Forester
for Non-Industrial Private Forest Landowner Engagement
for 2018-2022

Approved:
March 12, 2018
Acknowledgements

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Summary of Recommendations
WPFAC recommendations to the Chief State Forester:

● Support the 5-year goal of connecting 20,000 new non-industrial private forest (NIPF) landowners with a resource professional to move 1,000,000 acres toward sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.
● Encourage Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) Division of Forestry and University of Wisconsin-Extension (UWEXT) to explore opportunities to align their public resources to achieve this goal.
● Encourage all stakeholders in the Wisconsin forestry community to adopt and embrace a landowner engagement model and strive to invest their unique resources and abilities towards this ambitious goal.

Justification for Recommendations
WPFAC is encouraging public and private partners within the forestry community to be ambitious in reaching new NIPF landowners and acres, judged not only by the number of woodland owners reached, but the extent of their engagement. Based on experience, landowners are significantly more likely to perform sustainable forestry actions when a forester is involved. Historically, WDNR Foresters have completed an average of 2,000 new NIPF landowner visits per year. WDNR has increased its investment in private forestry for a 50% increase in new NIPF landowner visits to 3,000 visits per year. Assuming an average ownership size of approximately 50 acres (based on National Woodland Owner Survey data), this equates to 150,000 acres visited by a WDNR Forester per year, or over the next five years, 750,000 acres of the 1 million acre goal.

The remaining 250,000 acres can be achieved by the forestry community. NIPF landowners are connected with resource professionals through many interventions, including NIPF landowner visits with private consulting foresters; attendance at workshops, conferences, and field days; and outreach by various initiatives throughout the state. Based on current accomplishments, the forestry community can connect 1,000 new NIPF landowners with a resource professional annually (5,000 NIPF landowners over the next 5 years), which will move another 250,000 acres toward sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.
The Vision: A comprehensive and systematic NIPF landowner engagement strategy for the forestry community
There are a wide array of organizations working to increase engagement of NIPF landowners locally and statewide. While individual efforts have realized success, results usually lack scale and depth of engagement. This is largely due to the fragmentation of outreach efforts and financial services exposing a lack of a cohesive statewide strategy utilizing cooperation and collaboration among outreach organizations.

Lasting improvements to NIPF landowner engagement need a statewide, integrated forestry community that successfully engages woodland owners to create greater constituency, more on-the-ground management, and strengthens Wisconsin’s forest economy.

The Charge: WPFAC and the ad-hoc team work
WPFAC is composed of representatives from the organizations involved in NIPF landowner outreach who have similar goals for private land management in Wisconsin. During the August 31st meeting of WPFAC, members identified desired outcomes for NIPF landowner engagement. An ad-hoc team was formed to address the broader issue of NIPF landowner engagement and the specific charge given to them, namely:

1. Define a prioritized list of strategies for engaging more private woodland owners.
2. Define what role partners (WPFAC members and non-WPFAC entities) could play in implementing those strategies.
3. Present the prioritized list of strategies to WPFAC for their consideration and recommendations to the Chief State Forester.

After reviewing the outcomes identified by WPFAC (Appendix A), the ad-hoc team organized the outcomes into logical, short- to long-term pathways (Appendix B). This work was the basis from which engagement outcomes and strategies were developed.

The Methods: Moving NIPF landowners toward engagement in sustainable forestry
NIPF landowners engage with their property in many ways, from reading about an insect that adversely affects their trees to conducting a commercial timber harvest. The forestry community conducts outreach activities to coincide with these different levels of engagement and promote the movement of NIPF landowners toward higher levels of engagement.

The ad-hoc team developed a model based on the steps NIPF landowners follow toward greater engagement, example activities, and outreach phases incumbent upon the forestry community to systematically advance landowners (Figure 1).
The outreach phases are:

**Acquisition**: The gaining of new NIPF landowner contacts and providing to them basic information on forests and forestry through mailers, social media, and/or classes.

**Cultivation**: Multiple social and professional interactions between NIPF landowners, professional forestry resources and peers towards greater engagement.

**Implementation**: Providing services for NIPF landowners to complete small and big actions.

**Evaluation and Tracking**: Measuring the progress all efforts are making towards meeting the identified outcomes, and the compiling and sharing of information among all stakeholders.

Many within the forestry community put forth effort in more than one of these phases, with some cooperation and collaboration taking place. However, there exists no set of overarching strategies for guiding these efforts towards shared outcomes. By developing and embracing an overarching strategy, there can be more opportunities for collaboration which will lead to more NIPF landowner engagement.

**The Results: A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners**

The ad-hoc team developed a list of desired outcomes and example strategies within each phase of acquisition, cultivation, implementation, and evaluation and tracking (Table 1). For example, to achieve initial landowner awareness in the acquisition phase the team identified two critical outcomes. First, forestry community members or partnerships should maintain a constant presence and credibility with NIPF landowners, with a potential strategy of creating and maintaining a website. Second, forestry community members or partnerships would actively pursue unengaged NIPF landowners, through marketing of some variety. For each outcome, public agencies and private partners self-identified willingness to participate. Outcomes highlighted in yellow are considered highest priority. Outcomes not highlighted are initially lower priority work; however, demonstrate higher-order outcomes, requiring collaborative landscape planning and implementation. These non-highlighted outcomes are ones the forestry community can grow into with experience and success.

See Appendix C for the assumptions made associated with the model.
Figure 1. Intentional and Cooperative Approach to Private Forest Owner Engagement

Steps:

1. **Awareness**
   - Read a newspaper article
   - Receive a mailing
   - See a post on social media

2. **Learn More**
   - Request Information
   - Sign-up for enewsletter
   - Make a phone call

3. **Take a First Step**
   - Attend a workshop, field day or conference
   - Become a member in an organization
   - Have a forester walk-through

4. **Make a Plan**
   - Develop a plan (e.g. stewardship, MFL)
   - Sign-up for cost-share

5. **Complete a Small Action**
   - Remove invasives
   - Conduct a pre-commercial thinning
   - Plant trees

6. **Complete a Big Action**
   - Conduct a timber harvest
   - Implement MFL/Stewardship plan
   - Conservation easement

**Constituency**

Greater constituency, more on-the-ground management and a stronger forest economy

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**ACQUISITION**

Gaining new contacts interested in forestry that represent constituency and potential for action.

Who is?
- Exciting landowner interest
- Cataloging contacts

Example: 5,000 new NIPF landowners requesting information, based on 20% response rate

**CULTIVATION**

Social and professional interactions that build a landowner’s self-efficacy and commitment to action.

Who is?
- Conducting forester walk-throughs, identifying doable practices, following-up
- Converting new contacts at conference and field day attendees to walk-throughs

Example: 3,000 new NIPF landowner walk throughs totaling 150,000 acres/yr., based on 5% response rate

**IMPLEMENTATION**

Services necessary for landowner to complete action.

Who is?
- Prompting financial assistance sign-ups
- Prompting recommended practices in plans

Example: 360 new NIPF landowners entering cost-share annually; 1,000’s of NIPF landowners conduct a timber sale within 10 years of initial engagement
Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Example Strategies</th>
<th>Public Responsibilities</th>
<th>Public &amp; private partners ready to participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Constant Presence and Credibility:</strong> Increase woodland owner awareness of the benefit of sustainable forest management</td>
<td>Online presence for private woodland owners to raise awareness - passive strategy Landowner property self-assessment</td>
<td>UWEXT/WDNR</td>
<td>WDNR, RGS, WWOA, WCF, TA, TNC, AFF, WYFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Active Pursuit:</strong> We outreach to unengaged woodland owners in WI</td>
<td>We actively market unengaged woodland owners to activate learning.</td>
<td>UWEXT/WDNR</td>
<td>FSA, NRCS, RGS, WWOA, COOP, WCF, DFN, WYFP, FED AGENCY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Many Messages Under One:</strong> Create simple &quot;on-boarding&quot; for curious and new woodland owners with ability to market individual/regional issues and initiatives</td>
<td>Establish statewide presence with nested initiatives and regional issues/opportunities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local Knowledge and Service Area:</strong> Build constituency while addressing negative perceptions of WDNR (statewide regulator/enforcement)</td>
<td>Rebrand WDNR forester as local, county forester</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Activate Learning:</strong> We have activated and served their desire to learn more</td>
<td>Answer their question well and earn their trust sufficient for permission to market</td>
<td>UWEXT</td>
<td>WDNR, COOP, WCF, WWOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>They Raised Their Hand!</strong> We have acquired a contact, we know them by name, self-identified</td>
<td>Get them to self-identify as a target we can pursue with more information</td>
<td>UWEXT</td>
<td>WDNR, RGS, DFN, WWOA, WCF, WYFP, MWW, WYFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrated Value:</strong> Link public agency outreach to private sector / community benefit</td>
<td>Quantified the value of our effort to increased benefits to the private sector / greater community</td>
<td>FSA</td>
<td>TA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Regional Messages/Calls To Action:</strong> Link broad public outreach to more specific and targeted regional initiatives/partnership or landscape issues</td>
<td>We actively market issue-based information along with/instead of general messages with a breadth of values.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Highlighted rows are a higher priority

Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners (continued).

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<tr>
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<th>Example Strategies</th>
<th>Public Responsibilities</th>
<th>Public &amp; private partners ready to participate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivation – First Step</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Reaching Out:</em> Unengaged woodland owner made an intentional step</td>
<td>Get them to self-identify as a target we can pursue with our limited staff capacity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Professional Connection:</em> They made a connection with a natural resource professional e.g. a local, county forester</td>
<td>Interest by landowners is turned into a site visit with a forester (or other resource professional)</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>WCF, RGS, WWOA, WYFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cultivation – Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Taking Stock:</em> Landowner committed time and money</td>
<td>Create reporting structures that are collaborative and mutually beneficial to all major partners</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Informal Plans:</em> Unengaged woodland owners have intention to do something</td>
<td>Professional foresters prepared to write follow-up letters and maintain communications that inspire woodland owner commitment to action</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Formal Plan:</em> Unengaged woodland owner has a plan</td>
<td>Professional foresters prepared to facilitate plan completion</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Financial support:</em> Unengaged woodland owner has a contract/financial assistance to act</td>
<td>Professional foresters prepared to encourage financial assistance programs</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>FSA, NRCS, RGS, WYFP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Referrals:</em> Woodland owner is connected to public to private sector service providers</td>
<td>Professional foresters prepared to make referrals</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>FSA, WWOA, COOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Community of Practice:</em> Broker connection between public and private sector, both NGO and private business</td>
<td>A public-private partnership operating outside state bureau, creating community of practice, validating effort, and possibly securing resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Unengaged MFLers:</em> MFL woodland owners are active on their recommended practices</td>
<td>Outreach regarding MFL recommended practices</td>
<td></td>
<td>WWOA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Highlighted rows are a higher priority

Table 1. A prioritized list of outcomes and strategies for engaging NIPF landowners (continued).

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<th>Public Responsibilities</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action!: Action completed; more acres under management</td>
<td>Survey woodland owners or otherwise understand success on small actions</td>
<td>UWEXT</td>
<td>WWOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management Plan Actions!: Start implementation of plan</td>
<td>Woodland owner follow-up, encouragement and mentoring</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>WWOA, WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referrals for Commercial Practices: Referrals are made from public to private sector</td>
<td>Make referrals of private consultants that can help woodland owners achieve their goals</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>GLTPA, WWOA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodland Owner Self-efficacy: Increase unengaged woodland owners' self-efficacy to harvest trees</td>
<td>Increase self-efficacy of woodland owners to harvest trees to support their values</td>
<td>UWEXT</td>
<td>WWOA, RGS, WCF, COOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Forestry: Big actions completed</td>
<td>Woodland owner follow-up, encouragement and mentoring</td>
<td>WDNR</td>
<td>WCF, WWOA, GLTPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model Woodland Owners: They take a leadership role</td>
<td>Model woodland owners are cultivated, celebrated as models for their peers.</td>
<td>UWEXT</td>
<td>WWOA, ALF, TNC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking the Work: Tracking UWEXT and WDNR contacts</td>
<td>Create a database capable of holding woodland owner records and metrics for tracking and evaluation</td>
<td>UWEXT/WDNR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tracking All Our Work: Tracking partners contacts or contacts in aggregate</td>
<td>Involve/incorporate data from partners and collaborators</td>
<td>UWEXT/WDNR</td>
<td>AFF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Highlighted rows are a higher priority

Appendix A. WPFAC outcomes as a result of NIPF landowner engagement.

NIPF Landowners are educated and engaged

NIPF landowners make informed decisions with professional assistance
NIPF landowners consult with an educated and experienced peer
NIPF landowners have a broadened understanding for natural resource protection
NIPF landowners have a broadened understanding of forestry
NIPF landowners are aware they have a Wisconsin DNR forester available to them
NIPF landowners are aware they have financial assistance available to them
NIPF landowners are educated to provide assistance to their peers
NIPF landowners pass stewardship ethic to the next generation
NIPF landowners stay engaged and move along “continuum of engagement”
NIPF landowners cooperate with other LO towards shared goals
NIPF landowners share their success stories with their peers
There exists a contact pipeline from public agency to private industry and consulting
The foundation for strong local communities is a land ethic
NIPF landowners are accountable
Complete woodland outline for NIPF landowners, like the tree ID book

Sustainable forest management at the landscape level

More forestland being sustainably managed
Collaboration among partners
Quantifiable progress in fighting invasives, disease, etcetera
More action on the ground
Healthier, resilient landscapes
Ecosystem services become a highlight of managed forest (public support)
Improved wildlife habitat
Property tax and land carrying cost are maintained at low levels (land retention)
Managed forest becomes a mainstream land use
Landscape scale impact on privately held lands
Forests are resilient to climate change

Sustainable forest economy
Increased timber supply chain
More forestland being productively managed
Improved economy
Small business growth
Predictable, reliable flows of pulpwood and sawlogs
Appendix A. WPFAC outcomes as a result of NIPF landowner engagement (continued).

**Expanded support for forestry in society**
- Increased investment in forestry
- Coordinated efforts – leverage public/private investments; utilize expertise and capacity in efficient and effective ways
- Enthusiasm for caring for woodlands
- Increase in Conservation Reserve

**Positive perception of forestry**

**Improved forest health**
- Healthier forests
- Less invasives
- Control of invasive species

**Permanent land protection for forestry**
- More voluntary conservation
- Chainsaws are conservation tools
- Proper stewardship leads to more land conservation
Appendix C. Assumptions associated with Figure 1. Intentional and Cooperative Approach to Private Forest Owner Engagement.

To achieve woodland owner action at scale:

1. **Standardization is justified**: We assume landowners are more similar than dissimilar when it comes to the formative stages in their relationship to land.
2. **Behavior change is a science**: We assume our desire to create behavior change among landowners should draw from behavior change social science and theory.
3. **Distinct but related bodies of work**: Each step of the behavior change model is a separate, though inter-related, body of work with their own measurable and valuable outcomes.
4. **It only happened if you can measure it**: Measurable outcomes at each step in the continuum simultaneously acknowledge steps toward behavior change and proof of progress, if not actual action on the ground.
5. **Recognized value gets priority**: If each step has outcomes of value to the professional community it has a better chance of being priority work.
6. **Give me the good leads**: Our best audience targets (most readiness) for any step are the woodland owners from the previous step (e.g., the vast majority of those conducting timber harvests had previous actions on their property).
7. **Theory is not practice**: We assume at the individual woodland owner level:
   a. Stages may be skipped or so quickly completed they appear skipped (e.g., direct mail with forester offer)
   b. Stages may need to be repeated (further demonstrates the importance of the step)
   c. Rates of progression will vary dramatically among woodland owners
   d. We assume this progression could/should recycle by topic landowner

Partner involvement, collaboration, coordination

1. **Business as usual isn’t working**: We assume woodland owner outreach can be greatly improved. Woodland owners are not aware of the products and services offered by agencies and organizations and how they relate.
2. **Service providers are specialized**: We assume that while an individual agencies and organizations are capable of serving woodland owners through all steps, they specialize along the steps continuum.
3. **Shared outcomes should equate to collaboration**: Where outcomes per step or the ultimate outcome is valued and mutually beneficial, aligning these specializations in time and space makes sense.
4. **Most agree on the ultimate outcome**: We assume most agencies and organizations, regardless of where they are positioned, value more action on-the-ground.
5. **Critical to success**: We assume anchor agencies, UW Extension, WDNR, and NRCS, are necessary for success and provide an opportunity for stability, uniformity, longevity, consistency, and familiarity.
6. **Space and role for everyone**: We assume any organization or agency could find ways to benefit and be of benefit to other agencies/organization as well as landowners moving along the continuum.