

Division of Forestry

Draft Strategic Direction FY23-27

Draft for Review and Input
January 2022

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	2
WHAT IS THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY STRATEGIC DIRECTION?	2
<i>How was this draft created?</i>	3
<i>How do I read this document?</i>	4
APPLIED FORESTRY	7
FOREST ECONOMICS AND ECOLOGY	8
FOREST HEALTH	10
FOREST PRODUCT SERVICES.....	12
REFORESTATION.....	13
URBAN FORESTRY.....	15
FORESTRY BUSINESS SERVICES.....	17
AERONAUTICS.....	18
BUDGETS AND GRANTS.....	20
DIVISION EFFECTIVENESS	22
EQUIPMENT RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT	24
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES	26
FORESTRY FIELD OPERATIONS	28
FOREST PROTECTION.....	29
FOREST TAX LAW	32
PRIVATE FORESTRY	34
PUBLIC LANDS	37
DIVISION LEVEL OPERATIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE	40
APPENDIX	
APPENDIX A: STAFF AND PARTNER INPUT SUMMARIES	42
APPENDIX B: IMPLEMENTATION OF PROPOSED STRATEGY	46

What is the Division of Forestry's Strategic Direction?

The Division of Forestry's Strategic Direction is a five-year plan that builds off the Wisconsin forestry community's 10-year Statewide Forest Action Plan (SFAP) to set a vision for our future. Since 2012, the Division of Forestry has used strategic planning to define our niche within the broader statewide and national forestry community and to plan for the future so that we can: (1) maximize the value delivered to the people of Wisconsin, (2) efficiently use available resources and collective capacity and (3) effectively adapt to new and emerging opportunities and challenges.

The Strategic Direction helps fulfill our commitment to aligning the division's work and resource allocation to best meet our core purpose, niche, and values. Through strategic planning, we define the division's programmatic roles within the larger forestry community. We depend on hearing from and working in partnership with those in our forestry community, including tribes, government agencies, woodland owners, paper producers, logging companies, natural resource professionals, arborists, conservation groups, recreationalists, institutes of higher education, advisory boards and councils, and others.

We monitor our success with outcome-based performance measures. These targets are monitored through quarterly and fiscal year reviews to track accomplishments, identify needs, and adapt accordingly. The division regularly adapts our operations based on these reviews and other factors such as budget and resource constraints and emerging issues and opportunities.

Entering our third Strategic Direction, we have a substantial amount of history to build from and insight to bring forward from our newly developed 2020 SFAP. The SFAP is a strategic planning document, created through a collaborative effort among members of Wisconsin's forestry community, that outlines a vision for the work of Wisconsin's forestry community as a whole. The SFAP is designed so that the many forestry partners throughout the state can find their role in working towards our collective goals. As the division looks inward to define our path forward, the goals and strategies identified within the SFAP serve as the foundation.

Division of Forestry's Purpose

The Division of Forestry works in partnership to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin forests and ecosystems to supply a wide range of ecological, economic, and social benefits for present and future generations.

Key results we strive for as we do our work:

- ✓ Owning the work together
- ✓ Being Consistently flexible
- ✓ Finding win-wins with our customers

Our cultural beliefs:

- Serve Wisconsin
- Value
- Build Trust
- Work Together
- No Boundaries
- Take the Shot

How was this draft created?

There were three main components driving this current strategic planning process: staff and partner input, recommendation development, and finally, setting the direction.

Staff and Partner Input

We feel strongly that the people who live and breathe our division's purpose and value - our staff, partners, and stakeholders – are best positioned to understand the challenges, opportunities, and potential solutions to problems we face. Our goal from the beginning was to broadly invite input, ideas, and vision to the strategic planning process. To that end, division staff were invited to take part in small group discussions, what we called Staff Reflections, to provide thoughts and insights. Additionally, both staff and our partners were asked to provide their insights about the role of the division as we look to the future.

The **Staff Reflections** were set up as a series of small group discussions where all staff were invited to share how they feel the division should evolve to meet the challenges and new initiatives ahead. This exercise was not designed to achieve consensus or commit to a course of action, but to provide an opportunity to brainstorm collectively, generate ideas, and share feedback to be used as we think about the next five years for the division.

The **Roles Input** opportunity was created to help us get input from staff, partners, and stakeholders on identifying the roles that the division is uniquely equipped to take on within the forestry sector over the next five years. More specifically, "our role" describes the broad actions that the Division of Forestry will take or support within a given program area to fulfill our organization's purpose. Feedback collected through this input opportunity was shared with leadership and staff who used it to shape recommendations for the draft FY23-27 Strategic Direction. A summary of themes collected through this Roles Input opportunity are included in Appendix A.

Recommendation Development

To develop recommendations for the various programs within the division, the division's Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) chartered a series of teams and project assignments. The charge for this work was to evaluate each program's operations and develop recommendations for consideration by the SLT. All recommendations needed to be within statutory requirements, reflect the information gathered from staff and partners, build on the goals and strategies identified in the SFAP, and align with initiatives led by the Department of Natural Resources (department). Teams and programs were also asked to reaffirm any current program priorities and operations to continue to be a focus moving forward.

During this strategic analysis, there was significant focus on the impacts and contributions each program can make towards major department and division initiatives, including diversity, equity, and inclusion; environmental justice; climate change; and service excellence.

Determining the Direction

This document contains a summary of the proposed directions endorsed by the SLT. These decisions were informed by the recommendations and further shaped by looking at the larger picture of the division, resources, and emerging opportunities and challenges.

These decisions are not final, and the purpose of this review period is to provide the SLT additional feedback that they can consider when making the final decisions.

How do I read this document?

This document is not intended to describe the entire breadth of work the division does, rather it states our program roles and highlights “shifts” in priorities and initiatives over the next five years. This document is also meant to communicate high level strategies, acknowledging that the division has a robust operations planning process that includes staff work planning, performance measures, and continuous improvement systems so that we can remain nimble and adapt to changes in legislation, budgets, emergent issues, and public needs.

The bulk of the document is divided into three sections, which reflect the three bureaus within the division (Applied Forestry, Forestry Business Services, and Forestry Field Operations). Within each section the document highlights major program areas by defining the following:

Our Role

Here we briefly articulate the division’s role administering the program. Many programs share responsibility with partners, but this focus is on our niche within the larger forestry community.

Our Direction

Here we highlight high-level direction for each program area.

***Strategy:** For directions that are new, changed, or reinvigorated, you’ll see a proposed strategy. Strategies are only identified for new or changing directions that involve a more significant shift in resources or focus.*

***Tactic:** Where strategies are identified, so are tactics. Tactics briefly explain how the proposed strategy would be implemented or accomplished.*

Context/description

A bulleted list of context and description statements are included to provide the reader with background on why the direction is important and if there is any change, why the change was made.

Measures of Success

Also called performance measures, this section outlines areas that may be measured and tracked to help the division monitor progress and determine where we are on or off track. At this point in the process, our measures are very general. As we finalize the Strategic Direction, these will become “SMART” (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, time bound) and integrated into our staff performance objectives and annual work planning.

The Road Ahead

During strategic planning we aim to prepare the division for all critical future challenges and opportunities. While it is not possible to perfectly predict the future, this is an opportunity for us to proactively and strategically outline a path forward based on what we do know. This forward-thinking orientation allows us to stay nimble so that we can continue to serve Wisconsin, provide value, build trust, and work together in an ever-changing world.

As we looked internally and evaluated our existing focus and resources, and externally at our role within the broader forestry community, there were four key themes that rose to the top and informed many of changes in the directions or strategies. These changes are about positioning the division to maximize the value we provide to the state and our commitment to sustainable forestry.

The challenges and opportunities that we see as major themes of this Strategic Direction include the need for:

1. Mitigating the effects of and adapting Wisconsin's forests to a changing climate
2. Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion in our workplace, in our relationships with partners, and our engagement with the public
3. Setting our workforce and partners up for success in an ever-changing world
4. Continually evaluating and improving the way we do business

Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most critical challenges that we face both globally and locally in the forests of Wisconsin. Much of the work we do to sustainably manage our forests already complements measures designed to limit human induced climate impacts. We want to support our partners, landowners, communities, industry, and provide them with both the technical and financial resources to make informed management decisions and to implement climate mitigation and resilience efforts. This means increasing our investment in initiatives, research, and communications that build resilience in Wisconsin's forests, define roles, advance carbon markets, address invasive species and diseases, support forest regeneration, and prioritize cross-programmatic and partner efforts. We want to do this in a way that is equitable to all residents and stakeholders, ensuring we do our part to address environmental justice.

One of the key initiatives for the division in this arena will be leading and implementing the State of Wisconsin's Trillion Tree Pledge. This pledge is a commitment by the State to manage our public lands, work with private landowners and engage with organizations across Wisconsin to sustain and grow the benefits that forests offer. We have long recognized the benefits of forests including safeguarding water resources, providing wildlife habitat, and supporting rural economies, but this pledge also recognizes the critical role healthy forests play in mitigating climate change. The pledge commits to conserving 125,000 acres of forest land and planting 75 million trees in Wisconsin by 2030.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

We know that having an inclusive workplace culture, equitable practices and policies, and a vibrant and diverse workforce is essential to the success of our division and leads to lasting employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction, as well as meeting our division purpose. This means investing time and effort into DEI initiatives that touch all aspects of our work.

In the coming years we plan to work alongside our partners to connect underserved and underrepresented communities with opportunities to engage with Wisconsin's forests and career pathways in forest management. We're also going to assess the division's current culture around inclusivity and engagement. Our DEI goals are to increase our capacity within the division for supporting diversity in our workforce, ensuring our practices are equitable to all staff and customers, and creating an inclusive workplace environment that fosters employee retention and belonging.

Supporting our Workforce and Partners

The way we do our work changes as technology advances and as new challenges and opportunities arise. Division leadership strongly supports the professional development of staff so that they can take advantage of emerging tools and technology while maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Many of the directions identified within this document are intended to improve the way we accomplish our work and the customer service we provide by:

- improving and refining ways of doing business;
- enhancing staff training opportunities;
- increasing use of modern communication tools and applications; and
- continuing support of technology.

The division is committed to aligning our work planning and adaptive prioritization efforts with the resources we have in order to maximize the value we provide to the public and our partners. As noted in the section below, the division's commitment to continuous improvement will also play a large role in supporting our workforce and partners.

Continuous Improvement

In the development of this document many great ideas were proposed to improve services and processes. While proposed ideas do not rise to the level of a role or strategy statement, finding ways to continually improve how we do business is crucial to the division's success.

Moving forward, the division is committed to exploring the ideas submitted through our existing continuous improvement program.

As we look to the future, it is impossible to ignore the fact that things are changing at an increasing rate, requiring us to be nimble and adaptive. During the process of developing the Strategic Direction, we identified areas that will be further reviewed and monitored over the next five years. This will involve a series of program reviews that will allow for more fine-tuned strategic planning moving forward.

Applied Forestry

Forest Economics and Ecology

Our Role

The division's role is to provide technical expertise and perform applied research across the field of forestry in collaboration with internal and external partners to inform and support the sustainable management of Wisconsin's urban and rural forest resources.

Our Direction

1. **Forest Science and Research:** We will continue to monitor forest management activities, conduct applied silvicultural and other field trials, and perform applied research to assure that management outcomes match goals. This includes actively exploring existing and emerging forestry issues in ecology, socio-economics, silviculture, and hydrology, and increasing our efforts in genetics and climate change, in collaboration with internal and external partners.

Strategy 1: Balance investments in forest silviculture and genetics programs to provide needed knowledge, technical expertise, and applied research for our internal and external partners to ensure that Wisconsin's forests remain resilient and adaptable to all forms of stressors.

Tactic: Convert a Silviculture position to a new Forest Genetics position.

Context/description:

- The SFAP recognizes that forest management practices benefit from evaluation and revision to ensure that they are adaptive and effective in maintaining, conserving, and enhancing diverse forest ecosystems, including structure, composition, function complexity, and genetics.
 - It was noted in the SFAP that lack of regeneration and inadequate regeneration of many tree species signals the need to assess current management and regeneration tactics to ensure that Wisconsin's forests remain resilient and adaptive to new and existing threats.
 - In the 2017 Strategic Direction, the division reduced its investment in genetics and tree improvement with the expectation that those services could be found elsewhere. The division was unable to generate support and the needed investment in forest genetics to provide that expertise in the Lake States Region.
 - The division has received feedback that its role is to support and invest in the fields of forest genetics, tree improvement and reforestation both to meet customer needs and to position the state to meet emerging challenges and opportunities in reforestation.
2. **Informed Forest Management:** We will continue to provide technical expertise, training, and consultation in the state of the science in ecology, socio-economics, silviculture, hydrology, genetics and climate change, to ensure that forest management practices are meeting management goals. In informing forest management through expertise, training, and consultation, we will modernize delivery methods to increase efficiency and effectiveness.

Context/description:

- The SFAP identifies maintaining forests as forests and the associated long-term values and benefits they provide as a goal and informed landowners and land managers are needed to achieve that goal.
 - The division supports using the best available science and research on forest management strategies to ensure resilient forests, including developing and supporting training and professional development opportunities for landowners and land managers.
3. **Partnerships and Outreach:** We will continue to communicate and disseminate the best available information in ecology, socio-economics, silviculture, hydrology, genetics and climate change to our internal and external partners so that they can better understand the costs and benefits of different management actions, taking advantage of new communication tools and methods of outreach.

Context/description:

- The SFAP promotes working with the forestry community to develop, maintain, and support opportunities for collaboration and partnerships.
- The division received feedback on the need to sustain and strengthen relationships and communicate information between landowners, land managers, foresters, and researchers.

Measures of Success

1. **Program Impact:** BMP correct application rates; use of climate adaptation and/or mitigation strategies where appropriate.
2. **Value Provided:** Number of priority projects completed; effectiveness of communication and information dissemination
3. **Partnerships:** Number of active partnerships; effectiveness of collaborations in producing results

Forest Health

Our Role

The division's role is to provide financial assistance, technical expertise, and information in the prevention, detection, assessment, management and monitoring of insects, diseases, and invasive species to help Wisconsin's forestry community maintain healthy, resilient forests.

Our Direction

1. **Applied Management:** We will continue to support land managers and landowners in improving forest health through the evaluation of new management techniques, development of prevention guidelines, administration of grant funds, and sharing regulatory responsibilities.

Context/description:

- The SFAP identified implementation of effective invasive species regulatory controls and best management practices as an effective way to adaptively manage forest health threats.
- The division has an important role helping landowners identify and manage forest health threats.
- The division will continue to promote forest management plans to landowners and encourage them to use available funding sources to complete forestry work.

2. **Prevent, Detect and Monitor:** We will continue to improve on past successes in forest health prevention and mitigation strategies through the detection and monitoring of the incidence, severity, impact and location of insects, diseases, and invasive plants that damage forests, and increasing utilization of new tools and methods for mapping and tracking.

Context/description:

- To achieve the SFAP goal of maximizing forest land and related ecosystem benefits, the division is well positioned to inform efforts that prevent infestations of invasive species before they arrive and monitor stressors that impact forest functions.
- Utilizing the resources at the modern DNR Forest Health Lab, the division works to detect new invasive species and diseases early and respond rapidly to minimize impacts to forests.

3. **Partnerships and Outreach:** We will continue to work collaboratively with partners to promote the prevention, early detection, regulation, and control of insects, diseases, and invasive plants that damage forests, increasing outreach efforts with K-12 audiences and focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Context/description:

- The division is well suited to act on strategies in the SFAP to expand and promote education and outreach on forest health threats and to encourage and promote multi-sector forest health partnerships and collaboration.
- The division has a long history of successfully working with the USDA APHIS and Forest Service, Wisconsin DATCP, and the UW Division of Extension on a variety of forest health initiatives.

Measures of Success

1. **Grant Impact:** Data collection and reporting of WMA-PFGP.
2. **Grant Administration:** Demonstrate or articulate how we are using grant opportunities and program funds to bring new management tools to the field
3. **Effectiveness of Guidelines:** Consistent use of Prevention Guidelines on public and private lands.
4. **Collaboration:** Implementation of collaborative outreach projects with partners.

Forest Product Services

Our Role

The division's role is to provide technical assistance in wood utilization, market development, and statewide forest inventory and analysis to foster growth of Wisconsin's forest-based industries while enhancing the management of Wisconsin's urban and rural forest resources.

Our Direction

1. **Utilization and Marketing:** We will continue to provide services to retain, diversify, and grow Wisconsin's forest-based industries, increasing efforts in providing analyses on emerging and priority needs, thereby enhancing forest markets and maximizing wood's contribution to the state's economy.

Strategy 1: Expand investigation of new and emerging forest markets in order to advise and support Wisconsin businesses.

Tactic: Focus on services that the Forest Products Team is best suited to provide and reduce duplication of services better provided by other agencies and partners.

Context/description:

- The SFAP goal around establishing Wisconsin as a hub for diversified forest markets and supporting research on existing and emerging forest markets for diverse forest-based industries.
 - Species and size classes of some tree species are underutilized and changes in forest composition may require forest-based industries to adapt to which species and sizes are more available and economical to use.
 - The division received feedback that we should continue to support efforts to aid the industry in adopting new processing technologies and exploring forest product markets.
 - The division will be working with the Council on Forestry to move forward initiatives such as the Forest Industry Roadmap.
2. **Forest Inventory Analysis:** We will continue to administer and report on Wisconsin's statewide forest inventory programs to assess the condition of the state's forests and provide data to inform and monitor high priority issues.

Context/description:

- The division is committed to providing information and tools needed by public and private landowners to inform management decisions regarding carbon and other amenity-based markets, forest health issues, deer, climate change, and other issues.
- The division received feedback that it should maintain its investment in its inventory programs, including Forest Inventory and Analysis, Urban Forest Assessments, Continuous Forest Inventory, and Forest Regeneration Monitoring.

Measures of Success

1. **Market Diversification and Growth:** New market-related projects; number of technical assists.

2. **Use of Data and Analyses:** Number of requests for data and reports; collection of forest regeneration data.

Reforestation

Our Role

The division's role is to encourage afforestation and reforestation in Wisconsin by facilitating the availability of an adequate supply of high quality, genetically diverse and highly adaptable seed and seedlings of appropriate species and stock types at an economical price from public and private sources, and by providing solutions that improve success of afforestation and reforestation efforts.

Our Direction

1. **Nursery and Seed Production:** We will continue to ensure public and private landowners have access to high quality, economically priced seed and seedlings, that are genetically diverse and highly adaptable. We are committed to identifying, conserving, and managing diverse forest genetic resources and supporting current high-priority regeneration and afforestation initiatives.

Context/description:

- The division received feedback that the Reforestation Program should serve as a seed bank for source-identified seed and seedlings and that the Program should continue to be supported in order to provide seed and seedlings for both private and public reforestation efforts.
- State nursery facilities continue to scale production in relation to private sector capacity and changing demand. Wilson State Nursery is the primary nursery for seedling production, capable of producing approximately 7 million seedlings per year, and Griffith State Nursery has the capacity to return to production if demand necessitates. Hayward State Nursery is the center of conifer seed cleaning operations and associated new seed orchards.

2. **Landowner Support:** We continue to encourage and support afforestation and reforestation efforts by providing tools and resources to landowners and by working collaboratively with partners on both urban and rural tree planting initiatives. Our goals are to set landowners up for success in tree planting efforts and to take a lead role in helping coordinate the State's Trillion Tree Pledge Initiative.

Context/description:

- The division can support this goal by investing in tools and resources for landowners, land managers, and others so they can develop and maintain a depth of knowledge on reforestation.
- We received feedback that we need to ensure our investments in reforestation are setting up landowners for success by providing holistic tree planting plans which cover: site preparations; tree planting and species recommendations; and steps for longer term care.
- The department is the lead agency in coordinating and administering the State's Trillion Tree Pledge which includes planting 74 million trees in rural areas and 1 million trees in urban areas by 2030. The division is coordinating outreach and partnerships efforts with other state agencies, corporate partners, non-governmental organizations, and public and private landowners.

3. **Tree Improvement:** The Regeneration program will expand seed collection, seed orchard and seed cleaning efforts to support our continued effort to grow trees and conserve genetic materials that are diverse and well adapted to Wisconsin conditions, and select and breed for increased productivity and tolerance to pests.

Strategy 1: Expand and enhance seed collection, seed orchard and seed cleaning.

Tactic: Convert the Hayward Nursery Foreman position to a new Tree Improvement Specialist position.

Tactic: Establish a state-of-the-art Tree Improvement and Seed Cleaning Facility at Hayward State Nursery and a Forest Regeneration Center at Griffith State Nursery

Context/description:

- The SFAP identified the need for conservation of forest genetic resources in long-term breeding programs in order to maintain a broad genetic base that can provide future ecological benefits and accommodate potential future changes in climate, pest pressures, forest management practices, and demand for products.
- The division received feedback that the Reforestation program should serve as a bank for source-identified seed and seedlings.

4. **Regeneration Monitoring:** We will continue to monitor the success of regeneration, both natural and artificial, to have the best information and data to inform recommended management practices.

Context/description:

- Regeneration monitoring helps to assess current management and regeneration tactics to ensure that Wisconsin's forests remain resilient and adaptive to new and existing threats.
- For Wisconsin's public forests to be planned and managed with the best available science and public input, the division is committed to monitoring and assessing forest conditions and providing predictable and sustainable timber harvest levels.

Measures of Success

1. **Production accessibility:** Seed and seedling costs.
2. **Regeneration Success:** Plantings are fully stocked with seedlings that are free to grow; Public and private lands are adequately stocked and reforested after forest operations.
3. **Program impact on landowners:** Number of tree planting plans.
4. **Tree Planting:** The Trillion Tree Pledge reaches statewide benchmark goals.

Urban Forestry

Our Role

The division's role is to maximize public benefits from urban and community forests by building the capacity of existing and new partners through direct assistance and encouraging and supporting partners in accomplishing their goals.

Our Direction

1. **Financial Assistance:** We will continue to assist urban and community partners through State grant awards and share other funding opportunities to increase urban forestry efforts and to recover from catastrophic storm events.

Context/description:

- Equitable distribution of and access to urban forests is vital to the overall health of Wisconsin communities and their residents.
- To achieve economic, environmental, social, and public health goals, communities need the resources to plant and manage diverse and resilient urban forests.

2. **Technical Assistance:** We will increase support for urban and community partners in building and maintaining robust forestry programs and local capacity through technical assistance and education.

Strategy 1: Create a new position to focus on the growing demand and need from communities for urban forest assessment data and to produce targeted data for urban and community forests relevant to climate change, environmental justice, health impacts and other issues.

Tactic: Pursue federal funding to fund the creation of a new permanent Urban Forest Inventory Analyst position.

Context/description:

- The SFAP shared that Wisconsin's urban forests continue to face threats from invasive plants, pests, diseases, and climate change that may change species composition, forest structure and associated environmental, social, and economic benefits. The urban forestry program works with the Urban Forestry Council to identify and move forward on shared priorities.
- Information is needed on Wisconsin's urban forests to prioritize efforts, develop strategic community plans, and maximize associated benefits.
- The Wisconsin Trillion Tree pledge includes planting one million trees by 2030 in urban areas to help address environmental justice and tree equity issues. In most U.S. cities, the distribution of urban tree canopy often disproportionately benefits high income neighborhoods.
- Research has found that trees offer many positive attributes to urban residents, improving air quality and public health, reducing heat and heat illnesses, lowering utility bills, improving water quality, and reducing flooding and stormwater runoff.
- Urban tree planting combined with enhanced tree maintenance can substantially increase urban forest carbon storage and deliver additional benefits through energy savings, especially if tree planting programs are targeted to urban heat islands.

Measures of Success

1. **Supporting Partners:** Wisconsin's communities are satisfied with the quality and level of assistance, information, and services from the urban forestry team.
2. **Providing Relevant Data:** Meeting the demand for increased data requests and analysis.
3. **Growth of Urban and Community Forestry:** Increasing number of Tree City USA communities.

Forestry Business Services

Aeronautics

Our Role

The division's role is to safely and effectively use aircraft and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS), in concert with leading-edge hardware and software, to support internal and external partners in fire detection and suppression, natural resources management, and public safety.

Our Direction

- 1. Fire Detection and Suppression:** We will continue to provide aerial fire support in collaborative efforts to protect life, property, and natural resources across Wisconsin, while focusing on opportunities for efficiencies and growth in proficiencies.

***Strategy 1:** Decrease turn-around time for airplane maintenance, especially during fire season, by promotion of an on-site maintenance program locally at each regional hanger, working in collaboration with the Department of Administration (DOA).*

***Tactic:** Seek approval from DOA and then create a memorandum of agreement (MOA) with a maintenance facility near each hangar site to conduct routine maintenance.*

***Strategy 2:** Increase proficiency of air attack pilots by providing enhanced training.*

***Tactic:** Work with the Forest Fire Protection Section to develop qualification standards and associated training for division pilots conducting fire detection and suppression support. Move all pilots towards completing the training and qualifications in a timely manner.*

***Strategy 3:** Enhance aircraft consistency by modernizing and standardizing the aeronautics fleet, working in collaboration with DOA.*

***Tactic:** Replace the existing Cessna 172 and 180/185 aircraft with Cessna 182S or newer aircraft at a rate of two per year.*

Context/description:

- Feedback received identified a desire to evaluate the existing pilot quals as related to the most effective Wisconsin fire operations, including the use of UAS, adjust as needed, and move our pilots towards achieving the qualifications.
- Currently significant time is spent with flights to DOA in Madison for general maintenance. Conducting maintenance locally will reduce down time and increase availability during fire season and other mission critical periods, while improving efficiencies overall.
- The current fleet of department assigned aircraft are, on average, over 44 years old and comprised of four different types of aircraft. Fleet standardization will reduce aircraft transition training for pilots and fleet modernization will reduce maintenance costs, down time, and potential for mechanical failure.

- 2. Aviation Program Support:** We will work to increase aerial support in collaborative efforts to help internal and external partners achieve their research, resource conservation, management, and public safety goals.

Strategy 1: Increase value by expanding the services provided and creating a stronger marketing platform to grow the user base of aeronautics resources and services, internally and externally, and increase flight hours during non-fire operational periods.

Tactic: Implement a new marketing platform and process for regularly reaching out to program and team leaders to conduct aeronautics service orientations and demonstrations.

Tactic: Development of training and support for pilots to stay current on emerging tools and technologies.

Tactic: Build capacity for increased demand by ensuring pilots are available and have a mission ready posture at each hanger and establishing a reasonable and understandable rate structure.

Context/description:

- The Aeronautics Team is historically very busy flying during fire season. During non-fire season, there are opportunities and skillsets to shift workload to better meet agency and partner goals.
- Feedback was received regarding the potential to increase marketing of aviation services within and outside the division.
- Increasing services provided to the division and partners will advance efforts in achieving the division's purpose and department's mission.

Measures of Success

1. **Fire Detection and Suppression:**

- Percentage of flight requests fulfilled at a fire staffing level of four or higher.
- Pilots achieve training quals in the prescribed timeframes.

2. **Program Impact:**

- Increase in number of customers and flight hours/year.

Budgets and Grants

Our Role

The division's role is to be the subject matter experts for all forestry financial topics, providing a wide array of technical financial support to internal and external customers of the division and ensure compliance with the state statutes and laws governing our operations.

Our Direction

1. **Grant Management:** We will continue to manage our State and Federal grant programs in support of the division's purpose.

Context/description:

- The division manages a federal grant portfolio of over 30 awards, totaling more than \$7 million.
- The recipients of state and federal grants, local units of government and nonprofits, are valuable external partners when it comes to managing Wisconsin's forests.
- These grants bring in additional fiscal resources to the department and our partners to enhance our ability to protect our forests from wildfire and disease infestation, support our urban and community forests, connect with and assist forest landowners, and strengthen our external partnerships.

2. **Budget Management:** We will continue to manage operational and secondary funding sources to utilize our available fiscal and human resources to the greatest extent possible while ensuring compliance with laws and regulations. This is achieved through coordination of budget initiatives including capital development, allocating and managing budget allotments, conducting fiscal analyses, and auditing programs and processes.

Context/description:

- The division administers over \$65 million in annual funding, across 21 appropriations, from the state's conservation fund as well as federal sources. These funds are subject to various state statutes and laws, federal regulations, and administrative code and handbooks.
- Maintaining compliance with these rules and regulations while maximizing the utilization of these funds is critical to supporting the division's core work.
- The division also ensures our county forest partners are adhering to best practices and maintaining statutory compliance, which benefits the statewide timber program.

3. **Timber Sale Financial Expertise:** The Budgets and Grants program will continue providing centralized statewide expertise and support to foresters for timber sale financials for public lands (state, county, federal GNA), ensuring consistent use of best practices and compliance with laws.

Strategy 1: Continue to invest in and support the WisFIRS timber sale financial system so that field foresters can effectively conduct timber sale financials.

Tactic: Decrease investment by the Budget and Grants program in conducting specialized timber sale financial work for the Flambeau River State Forest by reallocating 0.7 FTE to other division priorities. Transition this work to the field foresters.

Context/description:

- The division administers department lands timber sale programs that generates several million dollars in revenue annually to the conservation fund, which helps support the core work for the Fish, Wildlife and Parks Division (FWP) and the Forestry Division.
- The timely and accurate invoicing for these timber sales and use of consistent practices with our many contractors helps support these important relationships with the timber industry.
- The shift towards centralizing support and localizing process moves the division towards standardization of how timber sale financials are handled – by the field foresters. This workload is already accomplished by many field foresters and is considered in the allocation of field foresters and annual work planning.
- The Budget and Grants section is well positioned to continue to be the subject matter experts and a statewide resource in supporting foresters in doing timber sale financials and contract work.

Measures of Success

1. **Customer Service:** Customer feedback and ongoing dialogue with other parts of the division.
2. **Statutory Compliance:** Meeting all deadlines for aid payments, federal grant application submissions, grant award issuances, invoice payment terms, etc., while adhering to the requirements per state statute, federal regulation, handbook, and administrative code.
3. **Utilization:** Implementing the annual operating budget coupled with federal and state grants to maximize the use of available financial resources to advance the division’s purpose.

Division Effectiveness

Our Role

The division's role is to ensure alignment between our management, operations, strategy, and culture. We achieve this by promoting an inclusive workplace and an engaged, skilled, and accountable workforce. We advance the division's purpose through planning, training, leadership team support, partner outreach, education, and communications.

Our Direction

1. **Planning:** We will continue to facilitate all long-term planning, evaluation, and monitoring efforts directed by Wisconsin's State Forest Action Plan and Strategic Direction, while supporting program-level action planning, adaptive management, and process improvement. We will also guide the division's use of new and emerging tools and technology that support quicker and more user-friendly work planning and performance measure monitoring and evaluation.

Context/description:

- Program staff in the division have communicated their desire for more support at the action-planning level, as they navigate implementation of the division's Strategic Direction.
- Staff identified the need to improve the division's work planning system to better connect the planning tool with the division's priorities, performance measures, and operations.

2. **Communication, Education and Outreach:** We will continue to support existing partnerships, and look to leverage new partnerships, communications tools, and educational techniques that support our staff and partners' work and build awareness of the importance of sustainably managing Wisconsin's forests, while expanding on how we connect with traditionally underserved communities.

Context/description:

- The feedback we have received from both staff and partners identified the need for increased collaboration and partnering to advance critical goals related to DEI.
- Our staff and partners are growing more technologically savvy in the ways they share and learn so we will be looking to expand our use of new web-based, digital tools to share our messages.

3. **Workforce Development:** We will continue to support a diverse, high-performing and engaged forestry workforce from recruitment to offboarding, while increasing division-wide coordination and implementation of critical DEI efforts and action planning.

Strategy 1: Enhance our recruitment, retention, and offboarding efforts, with a focus on DEI opportunities.

Tactic: Increase the amount of time allocated in the Workforce Development Specialist position description that focuses on DEI activities and division-wide coordination.

Context/description:

- As outlined in the SFAP, the forestry sector will need to promote and support all career pathways into the forestry workforce, including a continuum of existing and new education efforts and initiatives for students to learn about forests and forest related careers.
- As we work to advance our division’s purpose and better meet the needs of our customers, we want to expand the way that we connect with traditionally underserved communities.
- In the coming years, we plan to build on current efforts to enhance our recruitment, retention, and offboarding efforts, with an eye on DEI opportunities and program enhancements.
- Getting excited about a career in forestry starts at a young age and we will be working collaboratively with our partners in the forestry sector to connect with youth and expand awareness about a field we all know and love.

4. **Training:** We will increase capacity to better serve a comprehensive suite of professional development experiences for our staff.

Strategy 1: Improve and increase coordination and delivery of fire, law enforcement, IQS and IMT training to better support professional development of all staff.

Tactic: Establish a new Forest Protection Training Officer position through reallocation to be in the Forest Fire Protection Section and increase Division Learning Specialist focus on division-wide professional development.

Context/description:

- The training needs related to fire, law enforcement, and Incident Management Teams (IMTs) are complex and highly impacted by national standards, regional partnerships, and the need for staff to gain critical experiences as part of meeting their qualification standards.
- At the same time, we heard from staff that there are unmet needs for other critical employee development initiatives like a leadership training, non-Forester and Technician training planning and support, new supervisor training, and course evaluation and modernization.
- In the coming years, the division will need to be well positioned to expand upon our use of learning management systems, emerging learning tools and software, and digital platforms to ensure that our staff have an effective and accessible learning experience.

Measures of Success

1. **Adaptive Program Management:** Conduct reviews for programs and leadership teams.
2. **Appreciation and Awareness:** Evaluate efficacy of education and outreach tools in increasing public understanding and support of forestry and adapt as needed.
3. **Employee Satisfaction:** Staff retention and inclusivity.
4. **Professional Development:** Implement and support learning plans for all staff; meet incident qualification standards.

Equipment Research and Development

Our Role

The division's role is to support the safety and effectiveness of department staff and external partners by developing, maintaining, and providing exceptional quality forestry equipment and supplies, and administering the department's statewide radio communication network and user devices.

Our Direction

1. **Radio Communications:** We will continue to administer the department's statewide radio communication network, including equipment acquisition and maintenance, and policy development and implementation, while increasing direct program support and expertise.

Strategy 1: Provide direct program support and expertise for radio communication needs.

Tactic: Enter into a contract with a private vendor to maintain all user devices.

Context/description:

- The Department of Transportation will be reducing user device support to the Department of Natural Resources. To backfill this critical need, division radio specialists will enter into contracts with private vendors to meet the radio hardware needs of division staff and partners.

2. **Equipment Research and Development:** We will continue to design, fabricate, provide, and maintain high quality equipment and supplies including wildland fire engines, tractor plows, low ground units, UTVs and PPE, while working to improve services provided.

Strategy 1: Improve service and delivery times for the fabrication and maintenance of equipment to align with annual work schedules and equipment replacement schedules.

Tactic: Decrease the number of field mechanics and LeMay technician staff with fire management responsibilities from seven to three. Consolidate fire duties in three LeMay fabrication technician staff at 25% - one primary heavy unit operator and two statewide backup heavy unit operators.

Tactic: Utilize Limited Term Employees or contracting to fulfill basic LeMay facility maintenance.

Context/description:

- The division utilizes predictive and preventative maintenance methods and regularly scheduled inspections to minimize field failures, costly repairs, and unplanned down time. This equipment is critical to ensuring the safety of our staff in performing their work.
- Currently seven LeMay field mechanic and technician staff have fire duties in their position descriptions, some at 25% (protective status) and some at 15% (non-protective). Consolidating to three staff with 25% fire (protective status) will help those staff focus on fire and the remaining staff to focus on equipment fabrication and repair.

- Currently many of the LeMay facility maintenance work is done “in house”. By contracting out the basic tasks it will allow the LeMay technicians to maximize their skill sets in equipment fabrication and repair.

Measures of Success

1. **Reliable radio communication system:** Standardized annual radio maintenance and testing. Minimize downtime of equipment and networks.
2. **Equipment Maintenance:** Minimize field failures and unplanned downtime. Minimize accidents related to equipment malfunction.
3. **Equipment Fabrication:** Ensure equipment fabrication and delivery aligns with equipment replacement schedules. Minimize time between new chassis arrival and engine delivery.

Technology Services

In November 2021, the department Secretary's Office announced an initiative to centralize information technology (IT) staff and services across the department under a new IT Executive Program. The goal of consolidating IT services is to focus efforts on creating a single IT vision that reduces the overall cost of IT, increases department-wide data integrity, speeds up decisions and improves the flow of technical information across IT professionals throughout the agency. While all Forestry IT staff will report centrally to the new Executive Program, most, but not all, of the division IT staff will continue to work with and provide primary support for their currently assigned programs to leverage existing relationships and ensure continuity of operations.

Our Role

The division's role is to work in partnership with the department's IT Executive Program to advance the use of technology to provide IT/GIS and web applications, data, tools, and services, along with training and support, to forestry staff and customers to meet the division's purpose. This is accomplished by ensuring technology, including hardware, software, mobile devices, web, and SharePoint sites are functional, understood by customers, and provide value while aligning investments with benefits.

Our Direction

Historically the division has been an advocate for investing in technology to accomplish its purpose, and this will not change under the department's centralized IT model. The division will continue to promote, support, and invest within centralized IT for the applications, assets, and support needed for our staff and partners to be successful. The division will be an active partner in coordinating and communicating business needs, prioritizing, and participating in projects, testing products, and providing support and training of our staff and partners in the use of these tools to manage division programs.

While the centralized IT initiative is in its early stages and there are many unknowns, the division intends to be an active partner in the following areas.

1. **Custom Applications and Support:** We will collaborate across multiple technical and programmatic disciplines in describing business needs, identifying priorities, performing analyses and custom developments, managing projects, and adhering to best practices.

Context/description:

- The division and partners rely on an array of custom IT/GIS web applications, SharePoint sites, websites, desktop & mobile tools, data, and services to meet our complex business needs, including supporting customers in their use. Examples of key systems that will remain supported include:
 - Forest & Habitat Management related applications such as the Wisconsin Field Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS) Public Lands, and Forest Metrix. These applications are used to manage core timber sale, land management, and habitat management business functions on department lands and Wisconsin's County and National Forests by department staff and external partners.
 - Tax Law Management and Administration applications including Wisconsin Forest Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS) Private Lands, Private Forest Lands Open for Public Recreation, and Forestry Assistance Locator. These applications manage core tax law business functions including ensuring private lands are adhering to statutes, lands are

sustainably managed, and by providing the public and landowners tools as well as technical assistance to identify recreational opportunities.

- Fire Management and Prescribed Burn related applications such as the Individual Forest Fire Reporting System (IFFRS), Incident Qualifications System (IQS), WI Burning Permits, WisBURN, and Fire/Rx Burn Dashboards. These applications allow staff to manage wildland fire emergency response and prescribed burn implementation, manage staff technical qualifications, issue landowner burning permits and restrictions, and provide information to the public about real time and historic fire occurrences.
- eCommerce for the State Nursery and LeMay Center. These future applications would provide an eCommerce solution for the department's Forestry Equipment R&D Center, to sell [wildland fire equipment](#), and the State Forest Nursery to sell [tree and shrub seedlings](#) to their customers, while offering modern conveniences such as point of sales, electronic storefronts with an inventory system, and electronic payments functionality.

2. **Hardware / Software Management and Support:** Division staff rely on the procurement and support of computer hardware, mobile tools, and peripherals, as well as data and services to proactively meet business needs. We will partner with central IT in identifying needs, securing resources, and providing needed training.

Context/description:

- For staff to be successful in carrying out the division's purpose, technology assets must be available, functioning and supported. Key resource examples include:
 - Laptop computers with peripherals to maximize the efficiencies of a distributed workforce.
 - Mobile hardware to further advance the efficiencies of access to and collection of data in remote locations in the field.
 - GIS software to illustrate relationships between resources, highlighting efficiencies for management and conservation, and ultimately connecting people to the landscape.
 - Network connectivity to allow updating and maintenance of mobile technologies as well as providing a safe and secure network in field offices.

Measures of Success

1. **Custom Applications and Support:** The division supports the application development lifecycle for custom applications that meet program and partner needs including governance, agile processes, and project approvals and management. Applications are maintained to ensure they are stable and meet changing needs.
2. **Hardware / Software Management and Support:** The division has access to the resources they need to be efficient at their jobs. Resources are secure including a stable mobile environment that grows as technology advances.
3. **Active Participation and Collaboration:** The division is an active participant in the coordination and allocation of centralized IT resources to meet ongoing business needs. This is demonstrated by the completion of division projects that meet our unique staff and partner needs. Department projects are prioritized to help support the needs of the division.

Forestry Field Operations

Forest Protection

Our Role

The division's role is to prevent, detect and rapidly suppress wildland fires and strategically use prescribed fire to enhance and sustain fire-dependent ecosystems managed by the department. The division works with an extensive network of partners to provide wildland fire and emergency management support, public education, and outreach, and promote safe prescribed burning throughout the state.

Our Direction

1. **Fire Suppression:** We will continue to work in partnership to prevent, detect, and rapidly suppress wildland fires in areas of the state that have the greatest potential for significant loss of property and natural resources.

***Strategy 1:** Expand year-round dispatch coverage statewide through radio monitoring*

***Tactic:** Provide forestry dispatch coverage by a department dispatcher during normal business hours, acknowledging that department radio traffic occurs throughout the year.*

***Strategy 2:** Increase capacity and flexibility in staffing heavy units by positioning a second statewide back-up operator at the LeMay Center.*

***Tactic:** Dedicate a LeMay Fabrication Technician as a backup operator with a heavy unit. Move the heavy unit (Black River Falls 3) from Black River Falls to Tomahawk.*

***Strategy 3:** Continue to maintain an effective and efficient fire program.*

***Tactic:** Evaluate fire program operations and resources to ensure they align with the program needs.*

Context/description:

- The SFAP defines goals around ensuring all authorities make and implement safe, effective, and efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions, and maintaining our commitment to safety and ensuring people, property, infrastructure, and forested lands are resilient to wildfire.
- The division supplies a significant commitment of fire suppression equipment and staff for forest fire management in Wisconsin.
- The Fire Department Advisory Committee and local fire departments are vital partners and look to the division for wildfire training and expertise.
- The division has received feedback over the years from County dispatch and fire departments voicing a desire for year-round coverage. Current technology allows statewide dispatch from one dispatch center.
- Shifting an existing heavy unit resource to a central location, to serve as a second statewide backup, will provide additional flexibility to cover fire suppression needs.

2. **Fire Prevention:** We will continue to provide the public and partners with the information and resources they need related to fire prevention, community planning, and wildfire resilience to reasonably prevent as many wildland fire ignitions as possible and reduce damage associated with those ignitions.

Context/description:

- Debris burning is the number one cause of wildfire in Wisconsin. It is important the public understands the risks of wildland fire, are aware of fire prevention methods, and know where they live in relation to high fire risk areas.
- Suppressing wildland urban interface (WUI) fires requires effective coordination between government agency responders and fire departments to limit damage to property and natural resources.
- We will continue to implement the WUI Program Strategy and initiatives in Community Wildfire Protection Plans, Firewise Sites and Wildfire Risk Reduction Grants through prioritization of staff and financial resources.

3. **Prescribed Fire:** We will continue our investment in promoting and utilizing prescribed fire as an efficient, safe, and scientifically based tool to achieve resource management objectives, while implementing program efficiencies and exploring opportunities to support expansion of statewide capacity.

Strategy 1: Adjust implementation of the prescribed burn program while maintaining the division's current investment.

Tactic: Focus the Division of Forestry commitment of 16,780 hours to the prescribed burn program in high priority areas defined by the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (FWP) needs and priority landscapes.

Tactic: While maintaining the current number of qualified staff in FWP, the Division of Forestry will provide administrative support to FWP for their additional priority burns.

Tactic: Work with FWP on developing priority statewide metrics and outcomes that reflect long-term investment needs.

Strategy 2: Explore opportunities to support the expansion of state-wide prescribed burning capacity.

Tactic: Look to engage both private, non-governmental organizations, and other agencies within the prescribe burn community to increase burn acreage across all ownerships.

Context/description:

- The SFAP cites the significance of prescribed burning to the ecological integrity of fire-dependent ecosystems.
- As part of the 2016 Department Alignment, the Division of Forestry became the central administrator for the entire agency's prescribed burning program. The division has learned much about the program over the past five years. Based on this experience and feedback from

staff and partners, the division is aligning the program administration and implementation to maintain successfulness and increase effectiveness.

- As identified in the SFAP, and to address feedback from staff and partners, the division will work towards the goal of removing barriers to increase prescribed burning among stakeholders and look to expand capacity on all ownerships.

4. **Law Enforcement:** We will continue to protect Wisconsin's forests, both public and private, from damage and destruction from forest fires and illegal timber harvesting.

Context/Description:

- As part of the 2016 Department Alignment, the Bureau of Law Enforcement, now the Division of Public Safety and Resource protection, became the central administrator for the entire agency's credentialed law enforcement programs and activities.
- The division works collaboratively with the Division of Public Safety and Resource Protection to set out objectives and expectations for specific law enforcement activities that involve timber theft, arson and other forestry specific matters while meeting our statutory requirements outlined in Chapter 26 Wis. Stats.

5. **Emergency Management:** We will continue to provide Wisconsin with three Type 3 Incident Management Teams (IMT), one located in each division district, for the duration of a Type 3 wildfire, all-hazard natural disaster, or Governor declared emergency to ensure safe, effective, and efficient operations.

Context/Description:

- The division has been and will continue to be a leader in the management of wildland fire and all-risk incidents in Wisconsin
- The division will support other Emergency Management agencies and partners
- The division's Type 3 IMT is designed to support extended (e.g. 24-72+ hours) complex incidents requiring a significant number of local, state, and other resources.
- We will continue our commitment to IMT staff training and qualifications, which will be further supported through the creation of the Protection Training Officer.

Measures of Success

1. **Community Engagement:** Increase in Firewise Sites and in Wildfire Risk Reduction projects.
2. **Citizen Education:** Effectiveness and creation of local and state-wide communication strategies.
3. **Prescribed Fire Capacity:** Time invested in prescribed burning activities, and acres burned statewide.
4. **Staff Proficiency:** Required firefighter trainings and target qualifications are met.

Forest Tax Law

Our Role

The division's role is to administer Wisconsin's Forest Tax Laws (Managed Forest Law, Forest Crop Law), certify and manage Certified Plan Writer (CPW) credentials, and facilitate technical assistance to landowners through referrals to ensure sustainable forest management benefits Wisconsin's economy, hunting, fishing, wildlife, recreation, soils, waters, and air quality.

Our Direction

1. **Program Management:** We will continue to provide direction and oversight for statewide administration of the Tax Law programs by developing policy, standard operating procedures, and guidance for implementation by staff and partners; and ensuring enrolled landowners meet program requirements, as established and defined in Wis. Stats. Ch. 77 and NR 46.

Context/description:

- Forest Tax Law continues to remain a significant tool to incentivize sustainable forestry on private lands with an average of 1,600 new enrollments annually.
- Lands enrolled in tax law programs provide an array of benefits to the public for hunting, fishing, and other recreational activities with around 1 million acres open to the public across the state.
- Lands enrolled in tax law programs support the forest products industry by supplying a steady predictable wood resource, with an average of 1,400 harvests occurring every year.

2. **Administration:** We will align resources to provide effective and efficient administration of the Forest Tax Law programs throughout the state to meet customer needs and ensure program compliance and eligibility.

***Strategy 1:** Adjust the section's positions to meet growing administrative needs.*

***Tactic:** Convert four Tax Law Forestry Specialist (TLFS) positions to Tax Law Administrative Specialists (TLAS). Each Forest Tax Law Team will have two TLASs.*

***Strategy 2:** Integrated forestry staff will provide technical assistance to the Tax Law Section by completing reconnaissance updates upon completion of a practice.*

***Tactic:** Tax Law Section will receive assistance from division integrated forestry staff to perform technical field forestry services. This request will be incorporated into annual work planning.*

Context/description:

- Over 2,500 administrative Tax Law transactions occur every year and they continue to increase.
- Further specialization of staff within the section will increase efficiency and improve customer service by providing better coordination with Department of Revenue and towns/counties for payments, while allowing Forestry Specialists to focus on the execution of sound forestry within MFL plans and implementation of mandatory practices.

- Ensuring management plans are up to date are a key component of the program and provides the most up to date information for landowners.
 - The reconnaissance work that will be completed by integrated forestry staff for the tax law programs aligns with existing priority work for private and public lands.
3. **Certified Plan Writer Program:** We will continue to certify and train CPWs on program procedures and policies and connect them with landowners.

Context/description:

- There are currently 210 certified plan writers who are integral to the administration and execution of the MFL program.
- CPWs increase the capacity to provide service to landowners.

Measures of Success

1. **Administrative Efficiency:**
 - a. Increased efficiency in processing administrative changes such as land designation change requests, including transfers, withdrawals, and corrections.
 - b. Improved competence in processing MFL management plans and Cutting Notices and Reports.
2. **CPW Proficiency:** Enhanced proficiency of Certified Plan Writers
3. **Sustainable Forestry:** Increased verification of cutting reports following completion of practices

Private Forestry

Our Role

The division's role is to encourage private landowners to sustainably manage their forests by providing technical assistance, financial assistance, and information on a wide variety of issues affecting land management decisions; and through connecting landowners to consulting foresters, other natural resource professionals and forest industry.

Our Direction

1. **Technical Forestry Assistance:** We will, in accordance with administrative code NR 1.212, focus on providing technical forestry assistance in the following areas in order to provide capacity to work with landowners as they move towards active sustainable management activities: guidance to first time requests from landowners, timber sale guidance, administration of the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program (WFLGP) and federal financial assistance programs, landowner education, school forest assistance, and coordination of state tree nursery orders.

Strategy 1: Focus technical forestry assistance on sustainable management activities as prioritized in administrative code.

Tactic: Align the division's work planning process with these activities as being the highest priority to complete for the private forestry program.

Strategy 2: Support landowners as they move beyond a first walk-through and towards active sustainable management on their properties.

Tactic: Re-engage with landowners with whom we have done a walk-through to further cultivate our relationship and to identify and remove landowner's barriers to action.

Context/description:

- The SFAP identified the importance of increasing the number of landowners who are actively engaged in making informed decisions about the management of their woodland to ensure forest ownership remains a viable investment for family and institutional forest owners.
- There are a growing number of private forest landowners and corresponding increased need for technical forestry assistance, landowner education and outreach, and tools that encourage these new landowners to engage in sustainable forest management.
- The division will overtly communicate activities that will not be completed unless time becomes available.
- Over the past five years, we have increased our investment in reaching woodland owners, targeting the engagement of 20,000 landowners as a collaborative initiative with partners.
- As we have evaluated our niche and the progress made towards engaging landowners, we will now refocus our efforts to increase relationships and assist landowners in taking action.

2. **Partnerships:** We will prioritize support and growth of partnerships with other natural resource agencies, organizations and professionals who offer services to woodland owners, improving private forest landowner access to forestry assistance by well-qualified, highly skilled professionals.

Strategy 1: Prioritize focus of Private Forestry program staff towards building partnerships with forestry professionals who offer services to private landowners.

Tactic: Pursue new partnerships and build upon existing partnerships; identify the strengths and niche of each partner so as to form a forestry community that is strategically engaging landowners.

Tactic: Explore joint-funding opportunities with other agencies and organizations to hire specialists to assist forest landowners.

Strategy 2: Invest time and resources to continue developing the Cooperating Forester Program.

Tactic: Investigate developing a mentorship program, onboard training, and increasing awareness of the complaint policy and process.

Context/description:

- There is a wide array of natural resource organizations and professional working to increase engagement of woodland owners statewide.
- The SFAP encourages collaboration and cooperation among organizations and agencies with the goal of engaging woodland owners and creating greater community, encouraging more on-the-ground management, and strengthening Wisconsin's forestry economy.
- Landowners are at different stages of implementing their management plan. Expanding the capacity of professionals and honing the niche of service providers will provide increased customer service, and ultimately increased sustainable forest management.

3. **Financial Assistance:** We will continue to administer and provide technical assistance to State, Federal, and partner financial incentive programs that encourage landowners to implement forest management activities on their properties.

Context/description:

- Private woodland owners own over half of Wisconsin's forested land. Properly managed forests provide important social and economic benefits like clean water, wildlife habitat, aesthetics, and recreation.
- WFLGP assists nearly 450 woodland owners annually in protecting and enhancing their woodlands.
- WFLGP provides landowner with financial support to help incentivize implementation of practices that promote sustainable forestry.

4. **Conservation Easements:** We will continue to use the Federal Forest Legacy and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship programs as tools for strategically increasing conserved acres on large block forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

Context/description:

- Large contiguous acreages owned by private landowners, companies, and investment groups continue to be fragmented into smaller parcels.
- Conservation easements increase the acreage of large block (continuous) lands open to public recreation and managed sustainably for forest products, while maintaining unique landscapes and rare species.
- Government agencies and non-profit land trusts provide a significant amount of conserved land through easement acquisition and other conservation programs.
- The division oversees over 300,000 acres of land under conservation easements, contributing to the state's complement of outdoor recreation and providing raw material to our forest products industry.

Measures of Success

1. **Assistance to Landowners:** Landowners receive service and move along the Landowner Engagement Continuum
2. **Partnerships:** Landowners access resource professionals
3. **Sustainable Forestry:** Increase in landowners completing management activities with professional forestry assistance; increase in acres protected by conservation easements.
4. **Conservation Easements:** Increase number of acres under conservation easements

Public Lands

Our Role

The division's role is to manage and work in partnership on public lands to ensure that forested lands are sustainably managed, balancing the economic, ecological, and social benefits derived from forests.

Our Direction

1. **County Forests:** We will continue to support Wisconsin's County Forest Program through upholding the time standard hour commitment, ensuring the division is providing a strategic suite of services, and supporting expansion of the County Forest Program where opportunities exist.

***Strategy 1:** Increase efforts to promote and support additional counties enrolled in the County Forest Program.*

***Tactic:** Allocate staff time to engage with counties where there may be a benefit to enroll in the County Forest Program.*

Context/description:

- The division supports the County Forest Program and provides resources to help meet the ever-changing needs and challenges that are in front of the County Forests.
 - Our partnership with the County Forests provides outcomes that all Wisconsin citizens value and benefit from. County forests are significant contributors to the local and statewide forest products industry, recreation economy, and contributing towards sustaining, large blocks of forest land across the landscape.
 - Growing enrollment in the County Forest Program will promote large block sustainable management and support critical initiatives such as those around climate change, tree planting, and forest carbon, just to name a few.
2. **State Lands:** We will continue to provide sustainable forest management services on all department lands, adhering and adapting to property objectives and master plans, while increasing and expanding efforts in regeneration, afforestation, and timber stand improvement.

***Strategy 1:** Increase regeneration, afforestation, and cultural practices on state lands.*

***Tactic:** Increase training and support for timber sale contracting to increase department forester availability to implement regeneration, afforestation, and cultural work.*

***Tactic:** Improve scheduling in WisFIRS of non-commercial practices from the current "as needed" basis to better reflect the priorities on-the-ground.*

***Tactic:** The Public Lands Specialist Team will evaluate the division's return frequency for reconnaissance.*

***Tactic:** Improve and increase regeneration project implementation by Area Forestry Staff Specialist time in each district to serve as the lead for regeneration project financials including bidding, contracting, purchase order processing and payments.*

Context/description:

- By increasing and expanding efforts in regeneration, afforestation, and timber stand improvement, we will be able to 1) account for the regeneration and improvement work already being accomplished and prioritize this work going forward, 2) empower field staff to increase their efforts in regeneration/cultural practices and do more of these projects, and 3) position the division to meet commitments such as the Trillion Trees Initiative and address climate change adaptation and mitigation.
- Reducing the time foresters spend on the financial aspects of regeneration projects will allow for more time to focus on developing practice prescriptions and administering the contracts, providing the opportunity to increase regeneration accomplishments.

3. **Master Planning:** We will assist with developing and implementing master plans on all forested state lands by providing forest management expertise through inventories and management options and ensuring WisFIRS data is accurate and up to date.

Strategy 1: The division will increase time spent organizing and coordinating forestry efforts related to the development of master plans.

Tactic: The State Forest Specialist will lead the coordination of master planning activities for the division.

Tactic: Staff tasked with master planning will be provided orientation to the process, division priorities within the specific ecological region, tools, and other resources to effectively participate.

Context/description:

- The division plays a vital role in master planning bringing expertise in sustainable forestry, ecological processes in forest communities and how these can positively influence desired outcomes.
- The division's role with master planning changed in the last Strategic Direction due to the department's Alignment efforts in 2016. The division recognizes their vital role in master planning and committed to engaging in this work with the department.

4. **Good Neighbor Authority:** We will continue to invest in implementing the Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) program by working cooperatively with partners and contractors to administer both timber sales and conduct forest restoration projects on the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest (CNNF).

Strategy 1: Formalize the division's implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority agreement to achieve 25 million board feet of timber projects annually and associated revenue projects.

Tactic: Bureau specialists will manage administration of the program. Create a second National Forest Specialist, focusing on restoration projects, to work alongside the existing National Forest Specialist for a total of two bureau specialists.

Tactic: GNA workload (timber and restoration projects) will be a shared work responsibility across organizational boundaries and will be incorporated into forester and technician work planning so that it is adequately planned and accounted for.

Tactic: Each Forest Service district will have a lead with a minimum of 50% GNA workload assigned (five positions). Two AFSS will also serve as leads for field restoration projects. Within the field, the remaining GNA workload will be distributed among as few positions as possible.

Tactic: The division will communicate more with partners regarding program priorities and project implementation.

Context/description:

- Through the authorities of the Farm Bill and implementation of the GNA program in Wisconsin, sustainable forest management on national forest lands in Wisconsin is increasing.
 - GNA in Wisconsin provides 1) forest products to the local economy; 2) collaboration between federal, state, and county forest managers; and 3) improved health and resiliency of forestlands and watersheds within Wisconsin.
 - Partners and stakeholders at both the state and federal level have voiced a strong desire for the division to continue in its role to support the GNA program.
 - The division continues to make improvements to the program resulting in administrative efficiencies.
 - The division will continue to utilize all the tools (counties, contractors, partners, LTEs) to ensure the program's success.
5. **Certification:** We will continue to facilitate the state's commitment to sustainable forest management through independent third-party forest certification which ensures department, County Forest, and Managed Forest Law (MFL) Certified Group lands meet certification standards.

Strategy 1: The division aims to maintain forest certification in the most efficient and feasible way possible.

Tactic: The division will evaluate forest certification in cooperation with forest industry, external partners and the Division of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks.

Context/description:

- Staff and partners have cited a need to evaluate continued investment in third party forest certification as it relates to the value of outcomes it produces.
- A variety of forest-based industries depend on access to Wisconsin's certified wood supply to remain competitive in a global market.
- Challenges exist to manage the certification audit process for all MFL lands as landowners have a choice as to whether they want to be certified or not.

Measures of Success

1. **Sustainable Forestry:** Established timber sale acres; completion of regeneration monitoring; acres of afforestation, reforestation, timber stand improvement/cultural activities.
2. **Partnership:** Meet the annual time standard commitment for county forests; fulfillment of GNA agreement.
3. **Certification:** Audit results.

Division-level Operational and Organizational Structure

The following section describes changes to the division's operational, management, and organizational structure to improve the way that the division functions and facilitates how we accomplish our priority work.

Proposed changes to the operational and organizational structure of the division as part of this Strategic Direction include:

1. **The division will be moving from a two-deputy division administrator (DDA) model to a one-DDA model.** Forestry leadership has different needs than those identified in the last Strategic Direction. The change in organizational structure will help to support those needs and expectations, improve the way we do business, and allow for more consistent and clearer direction throughout the division.
2. **Two new teams will be created in the field** to address imbalances in supervisor to staff ratios. One of the new teams will be in the Park Falls Area (Mercer Team) and one will be in the Dodgeville area (Dodgeville Team). These new structures will alleviate workload for team leaders who previously had larger teams, allowing them to more effectively supervise and lead.
3. **Changes in the integrated program work areas.** Work resulting from the division's integrated programs, including Private Forestry (including tax law reconnaissance), County Forests, Fire Protection, State Lands, and GNA is distributed to the field districts, areas, and teams. Foresters and Forestry Technicians play a key role in implementing work objectives for these programs. The shifts in integrated program workload and priorities described in this document will impact the geographic distribution of work for integrated field positions, including the reallocation of one field position to other division priorities. The division is committed to ensuring the highest priority work is clearly identified during the work planning process, and annual work planning will reflect the refinements in priority work.
4. **Create consistency and clarity among property manager positions to better match the specialized nature of this work.** As part of the 2016 department Alignment, Northern State Forest Superintendents became property managers supervised by Area Forestry Leaders or Team leaders, with a mix of property management and integrated field forestry assignments. Property managers play a critical role on our northern state forests and the Willow Flowage Scenic Waters Area to effectively integrate Division of Forestry priorities and strategies with other department functions including forest management, infrastructure, public relations, and master plan implementation. To increase consistency and clarity we will be standardizing staffing classifications and the supervisory reporting structure, with all property manager positions supervised at the district level.

These changes do not include property management work on the Peshtigo State Forest or the Governor Knowles State Forest, which will be incorporated into the AFSS workload (see below). Additionally, property management for the Coulee Experimental State Forest will be assigned to the Black River State Forest Property Manager.

5. **Role and services of Area Forestry Staff Specialists (AFSS) will be further defined** to create clearer expectations and consistency across the state. Specifically:
- primary and back-up dispatch roles will be established;
 - lead property management roles will be established for Peshtigo State Forest and Governor Knowles State Forest for two AFSS positions (one in Spooner Area and one in Peshtigo Area);
 - lead GNA roles for restoration projects will be established for two AFSS (one in Park Falls Area and one in Woodruff Area); and
 - roles and responsibilities will be defined around learning and training, public lands, and other area support.

Appendix A: Summary of Staff and Partner Input on Roles

The purpose of the Division Roles Input Opportunity was to give partners and staff the opportunity to help refine the role that the division is uniquely positioned to take on within the forestry sector over the next five years. The survey was open from June 15th to June 30th, 2021.

These “roles” describe the broad responsibilities that the Division of Forestry has within a given program area to fulfill the division’s purpose. Two broad topics of Climate Change and Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion, were also included. Overall, the division received 556 responses from the Division Roles Input Survey. The table below breaks down the number of responses each program received.

Program	Number of Responses	Program	Number of Responses
Aeronautics	33	Private	17
Budget & Grants	28	Public	51
Division Effectiveness	48	GNA	14
Equipment	17	Certification	28
Forest Ecology & Economics	70	Reforestation	34
Forest Health	53	Tax Law	28
Forest Product Services	35	Technology Services	29
Forest Protection	53	Urban Forestry	18
		Climate Change	63
		Diversity, Equity & Inclusion	39

Strategic planning teams and the division’s Strategic Leadership Team used this input to critically think about possible changes to each program’s role that better clarifies each program’s niche within the broader forestry community. What follows is a summary of the major themes of comment that were submitted through the Division Roles Input Opportunity. Summary statements were developed based on the comments received for each program. In many cases, multiple comments were combined into one summary statement. A complete list of all comments will be recorded and on file with the division.

Program	Major Themes of Comments on Program Role
Aeronautics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support in the use of drones, new technology and imagery. • Increase communication on services that the aeronautics program provides. • Create emphasis on incorporating partners, while keeping in mind increasing workloads.
Budgets and Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue support for state and federal grants. • Provide more education on how the budget works for Forestry. • Maintain grant support to counties as they are critical for success. • Explore ways to increase grants in step with inflation and other cost increases. • Ensure accountability of grant funding projects. • Explore new funding opportunities.
Division Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight the importance of creating effective communication between Forestry programs. • Increase access to trainings for new hires as well as a continuation of trainings for staff beyond new hire training. • Put more emphasis on DEI related training. • Focus on field position employee retention and desire to have vacancies filled more quickly. • Promote the collaborative approach with partners that the Division takes to education and outreach and a desire to increase communication. • Increase investment in education outreach with k-12 partnerships.
Equipment R&D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit fire equipment to serve needs of customers. • Emphasize the importance of the Radio Communications Program. • Maintain access to the stockroom.
Forest Economics and Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address forest economics topics. • Provide tangible benefits for field assistance. • Increase communication of the work currently being done.
Forest Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase financial assistance for private landowners to combat invasive species. • Provide more technical assistance for invasive plant control on public and private lands. • Increase use of new technologies for detecting and monitoring invasive species. • Continue to build capacity with partnerships. • Increase outreach and education on all things forest health.
Forest Product Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support for market development. • Expand inventory data usage and visibility. • Reinforce the value that the program provides.
Forest Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to continue to communicate risks associated with wildland fires. • Recognize the importance of WUI/Prevention role for the Division of Forestry. • Ensure safety of citizens, visitors, and LE officers. • Continue to serve as technical experts with regards to forestry laws and wildland fire investigation in collaboration with other LE Partners. • Fire suppression in the highest risk areas of the state is a critical role of the Division. • Affirming the importance of the Prescribed Burn program while also re-evaluating its administration.

Private Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affirm support for the Cooperating Foresters program. • Provide more outreach and education to non-traditional landowners and partners. • Get the word out about the easements program and increasing procurement. • Seek new financial incentives and grants for landowners. • Increase technical assistance to landowners with more emphasis on customer service and diverse offerings.
Public Lands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for the Division of Forestry to continue or expand the successful partnerships with County Forests. Several comments suggested increasing grant funding to assist with program expansion and operations. • Increase focus on invasive species control, climate change, and reforestation/afforestation. • Create more consistency across the Property Manager classification. • Support the Division’s role in planning on forested lands. • Evaluate DNR involvement in GNA, use of contracting, and distribution of funds. • Evaluate the value of certification; continue to invest in certification; increase outreach and training.
Reforestation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue nursery stock production, focusing on adaptability, better quality seed, more consistent supply of seedlings, especially hardwoods, expand selection of species available and produce containerized conifer seedlings. • Expand reforestation monitoring into natural regeneration. • Increase work in education and outreach both internally and externally. • Increase public awareness to promote tree planting. • Provide more tools and resources for success. Find solutions to regeneration challenges. • Increase tree improvement work, including resistance breeding, better job tracking seed, better genetics for bottomland hardwoods, more adaptability.
Forest Tax Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure work in this program matches the resources. • Clarify role distinction between TLFS and Integrated Foresters. • Increase communication from the tax law program. • Focus on increasing interaction with landowners and time in the field.
Technology Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest in applications and tools. • Improve on data, access to data and applications providing data. • Provide training and support. • Increase the staff capacity for IT (we don't have enough people to meet demands). • Embrace IT and keep up with changing technologies. • Continue to work on improvements and prioritize projects
Urban Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to partner with municipalities. • Look for Opportunities to engage with new partners. • Increase support for more funding opportunities.

<p>Climate Change (not program specific)</p>	<p>Role in Climate Change Adaption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate climate risk assessments in stand management planning and tree species for reforestation • Lead research, implementation, and promotion of best forest management practices. • Awareness of and preparation for new invasive species that may occur due to climate change. • Prioritize outreach and education efforts on climate change, changes outside of historic patterns, and new threats to state forests. • Assess and test the best climate change adaption strategies. • Plan for the future and how a changing climate will affect forestry. • Promote diversity and connectivity in climate change practices <p>Role in Climate Change Mitigation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess Carbon sequestration potentials on state lands and develop carbon systems statewide. • Continue greenhouse gas reduction strategies. • Continue emphasis on diversity of species and age classes. • Create an aggressive plan for forest regeneration, recognizing the importance of forests as carbon sinks. • Devote resources to market-based approaches to climate mitigation. • Further incentivize landowners to convert land to trees. • Promote climate mitigation work that the Division is doing. • Promote sustainable practices internally and externally. • Lead the way in mitigation strategies for the state.
<p>Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (not program specific)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate indigenous values and perspectives into forest-management of state-owned lands. • Diversify outreach and education efforts to underserved communities. • Recruit diverse candidates by encouraging forestry careers to diverse communities. • Raise awareness, internally and externally, of DEI principles and the benefits of those principles.

Appendix B: Implementation of Proposed Strategic Direction

The process to align our workforce and our management systems with this Strategic Direction will not be completed all at once. Implementation will occur over time, with some portions implemented immediately and others as opportunities arise, primarily over the next couple of years, but in some cases longer-term.

One aspect of the Strategic Direction that will be implemented on a certain date is the organizational structure. We intend to shift to the new structure at the beginning of the next fiscal year, July 1, 2022. Other changes, such as administrative efficiencies and shifts in focus, will gradually be phased in over the next three years so that we will be able to meet the intent of the Strategic Direction within five years.

The implementation of changes that impact staff will depend on the particular circumstances of each position. Both Full-Time and Limited Term Employee (LTE) position descriptions will be updated as needed. The contributions by our LTE workforce are critical to the division's success and achieving our Strategic Direction. By its nature, LTE work is highly variable across the division and changes as division priorities shift. Our goal is to implement the Strategic Direction as quickly as possible while minimizing employee disruption, to the extent possible. We are committed to open communications throughout this process. We want employees to understand what is happening and to be able to make well-informed decisions.

Updating our Management Systems

Along with aligning our workforce and equipment, we will also work on aligning our management systems to support the implementation of the Strategic Direction. Management systems include the ways we set priorities, plan our work, define our positions, hire and develop our workforce, measure our accomplishments, hold ourselves accountable, lead the program forward, and stay focused on achieving mission. Our management systems can be better integrated and coordinated, and implementing the Strategic Direction is a perfect time to make those improvements. For example:

- Budgets will be aligned with refocused program investments.
- Work planning, accomplishment reporting, and activity codes will be refocused and better integrated into one system.
- Program and fiscal year reviews will be integrated into the way the division operates and prepares for our next Strategic Direction.
- We will continue to work to improve products and communication related to all management systems.