

## OVERVIEW OF THE STATEWIDE FOREST PLAN

This statewide forest planning effort began with the November 2000 publication of *Wisconsin Forests at the Millennium: An Assessment*. The assessment represents the most comprehensive review of the state of the forests in Wisconsin's nearly 100-year history of forest planning. The plan aims to extensively involve many publics and partners interested in and affected by the ecological, economic, and social benefits of Wisconsin's forests.

The Statewide Forest Plan before you articulates a **common vision** for Wisconsin's forest resources, presenting an **issue-based framework** for achieving that vision through the use of goals and objectives. The framework will **help to develop a future action plan**. Actions can be used for inventory and monitoring, planning and assessment, research and technology, education and public involvement, and policy and management. When used together, these future actions can be effective methods for helping to meet the objectives.

Most importantly, the plan represents a call to all partners and publics interested in working together to address the current and future challenges facing Wisconsin's forests and to catalyze concerted action. When used in combination with the forest assessment report, the plan can help to alert managers, landowners, policymakers, and citizens about the trends and issues that forests and forestry will face over the years.

The development of the Statewide Forest Plan has been guided by a commitment to the sustainable management of **all of Wisconsin's forests**. This plan can provide a framework for cooperative attempts to achieve sustainability by clarifying shared goals and objectives of all stakeholders, and using these goals and objectives to craft concrete actions. The implementation of the plan is the responsibility of all stakeholders, and active involvement and cooperation will be necessary if its ambitious goals are to be accomplished. Integrating the ecological, social, and economic aspects of Wisconsin's forests is critical to ensure the protection and sustainable management of our forests.

The future of Wisconsin's forests will require a shared responsibility. Sustainable forestry will be achieved through cooperative planning and concerted action by all stakeholders, including private non-industrial landowners, the forest products industry, environmental and conservation groups, tribes, recreation groups, universities, and non-government and government agencies at all levels. Effective, collaborative partnerships will be critical to the development of the actions and tools needed to ensure that Wisconsin's forests provide the ecological, economic, and social amenities for use today, as well as those who follow after us.

## STATEWIDE FOREST PLANNING PROCESS

The Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan updates the two previous Wisconsin statewide forest plans, the first of which was published in 1983 and the second in 1990. Previous plans inaugurated a tradition of leadership and of careful management of Wisconsin's forest resources by public, industrial, and individual forestland owners. The plan process was coordinated during a three-year period by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources' Division of Forestry in collaboration with local, state, and federal agencies, other private and public sector partners, as well as numerous individual citizens. Collaborative work with publics and partners has been based on the belief that those interested in and affected by forests in Wisconsin are important to the development of the plan. Following is an overview of the planning process, beginning with the forest assessment in 2000 and the anticipated future process for implementing the Statewide Forest Plan.

### 1. Forest Assessment

*Wisconsin Forests at the Millennium: An Assessment* provides an assessment of the status of Wisconsin's forest resources from ecological, economic, and social perspectives. The information included in and developed by the report represents the foundation upon which the statewide forest planning process was constructed. Beyond documenting the initial data collection and analysis stage of the forest planning process, *Wisconsin Forests at the Millennium* identified trends and issues that would likely need to be addressed to support sustainable forestry in Wisconsin in the future.

### 2. Identifying and Prioritizing Trends and Issues That Forests and Forestry Will Face

As a second step towards developing the statewide forest plan, input from citizens, businesses, government agencies and non-governmental organizations identified and prioritized the most important trends and issues Wisconsin's forests and forestry will likely face over the next decades. Public review confirmed the importance of the trends and issues described in the assessment report and identified an additional ten trends and issues. The statewide forest plan ultimately describes fifty-two trends and issues. **Over 2000 individuals and organizations participated in this stage.**

### 3. Developing Options to Address Each Trend and Issue

Following the identification of trends and issues, preferred options for addressing the trends and issues were developed through the *Developing Options* survey. In the survey, participants were asked to respond to a series of options designed to address each of the trends and issues. Based on the survey, the ecological, economic and social implications were further developed for each trend and issue. **Over 800 individuals and organizations participated in this stage.**

## 4. Developing Objectives and Actions to Address Each Trend and Issue

An objective was developed for each trend and issue to provide a benchmark for future efforts. The objectives are specific to the trends and issues, yet broad enough to capture the variety of interdisciplinary actions needed to meet the objective. The objectives were drawn from the preferred options identified through the *Developing Options* survey. Respondents provided comment on these objectives and also provided their opinions on possible actions to address the objectives and which kind of organizations (government agencies, NGO's, industry, university, etc.) should address the proposed action. **Over 200 individuals and organizations participated in this stage.**

## 5. Statewide Forest Plan

The plan includes a common vision for Wisconsin's forests based on five goals and ten principles for statewide sustainable forestry, a description of fifty-two trends and issues, and objectives to address each trend and issue. Each trend and issue write-up contains a summary discussion of the relevant ecological, economic, and social implications, explores relationships among them, and provides a strategic objective. The final plan, published electronically, also includes the possible actions submitted during the final stage of comments. While not fully vetted by public review, these possible actions are included in the electronically published version of the plan to provide this information as a springboard for action in the development of the implementation plan. The opinion about who should implement the actions also shows the breadth, depth, diversity, and scale of public and private efforts across the mosaic of forest types and various ownerships, interests, and geographical settings. The plan also describes frameworks to measure forest sustainability using commonly accepted sets of criteria and indicators.

### STATEWIDE FOREST PLAN PUBLISHED ON-LINE

Throughout the three-year planning process, there was a healthy, ongoing tension about how to organize the trends and issues. When they were organized by the common themes of the ecological, social, and economic pillars of sustainability, participants in the planning process often became preoccupied with critiquing whether a given trend or issue was in the right category, or that it should be in more than one category. When asked to link the trends and issues with one or more of the goals of the plan, a core group of forestry leaders provided a wide range of responses. When, for the final phase of review, the trends and issues discussions were simply listed without any organizational framework, feedback was resounding that the write-ups must be grouped in some way to facilitate navigation through the voluminous information. From these experiences, it became evident that different people organize this type of information in different ways, and that to commit to any one organizing principle is to limit the usefulness of the information for those who would organize it in a different way. A promising approach is to publish the plan on-line (electronically) to allow all users to organize information in the way that is most meaningful to them, with each trend and issue (and associated objective) linked to multiple goals of the plan, so that trends and issues can be grouped by goals of interest. The document may also be searched by key word, allowing a user to group all

trends/issues involving, for example, "urban forestry," "fire," "aspen," or "invasive species." Through this approach, the information in the plan becomes more accessible to more users.

Further, electronic publishing allows the plan to be a dynamic and living document. While periodic updates to the assessment, planning, and implementation plans for sustainable forestry are long-standing traditions, using electronic documents creates the potential for a more dynamic approach, in which emerging trends and issues can be incorporated into assessment, planning, and action in a more timely way. The plan and associated information can be found on the Wisconsin DNR Forestry Web site [www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/look/assessment/](http://www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/look/assessment/)

## NEXT STEPS

The Statewide Forest Plan provides a unified vision and framework of common goals and objectives to move toward a desired future condition of sustainable forestry in the state. The plan also includes possible actions, or strategies, suggested by publics and partners, to achieve the objectives and begin implementation of the plan. The continued involvement of the public will be important as we move into this crucial implementation phase. Our success will depend on the ability to bring together those who are in a position to identify and implement actions in order to gather information, share existing strategies, and identify new strategies for pursuing each objective while considering ecological, economic, and social implications.

## Develop and Pursue Actions to Accomplish Each Objective

Actions are current and future initiatives to help meet each of the objectives. Possible actions, which were identified by reviewers during the final phase of plan review, are provided in the electronic version of the plan, as examples to assist in the future development of an action plan. If forest resources are to be sustained, actions must be identified, developed, and implemented. These actions can and should be worked on by those interested and affected by the issues.

## Action Tools

A combination of traditional and innovative tools such as policy and management, research and monitoring, assessment and planning, and education and outreach, will be needed to assist in the implementation of the Statewide Forest Plan. The success of the plan up to this point has been dependent upon the input and investment of individuals and groups from across Wisconsin who have an interest in the future of our forests and forest resources. The implementation of the plan, as well as the development of the tools will provide shared benefits to all current and future Wisconsinites.

## November 2004 Governor's Conference on Forestry

In November of 2004, a Governor's Conference on Forestry will bring together citizens, businesses, interest groups, and agencies to identify actions and action tools that can help meet the fifty-two objectives outlined in the plan. The conference will serve as a forum for jointly developing actions with those who have an interest and can influence the future of forestry in Wisconsin, including local, state and