

2004

WISCONSIN'S STATEWIDE FOREST PLAN

ENSURING A **SUSTAINABLE** FUTURE
An Overview of the Planning Process, the Plan, and Next Steps



**WISCONSIN STATEWIDE FOREST PLAN:
ENSURING A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE**

**AN OVERVIEW OF THE
PLANNING PROCESS, THE PLAN, AND NEXT STEPS**

Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle declared 2004 The Year of Wisconsin Forestry, to honor the celebration of 100 years of professional forestry by the State of Wisconsin, as well as many significant anniversaries for important sustainable forestry partners. It is fitting that 2004 should see the publication of the ***Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan: Ensuring a Sustainable Future***, which culminates three years of a comprehensive planning process involving Wisconsin's forestry partners and publics. The plan lays the groundwork for the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Forestry in November 2004, which is designed to foster collective action towards a future of sustainable forestry across forest types, ownerships, and uses throughout the state. This Overview provides a summary of the planning process and the plan itself, and next steps toward the future of sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.



BACKGROUND FOR THE STATEWIDE FOREST PLAN



The *Wisconsin Statewide Forest Plan: Ensuring a Sustainable Future* articulates a common vision for Wisconsin's forest resources and lays out the framework for achieving that vision through the use of goals and objectives. The plan incorporates the range of trends and issues affecting Wisconsin's forests and their ecological, economic, and social implications. Most importantly, the plan is a call to all partners interested in addressing the challenges Wisconsin's forests face today and will likely face in the future.

Previous Plans

This plan updates the two previous Statewide Forest Plans, the first of which was published in 1983 and the second in 1990. Previous plans inaugurated a tradition of leadership and careful management of Wisconsin's forest resources by public, and private forestland owners.

Planning Process

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 of planning.**

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 of planning.**

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 of planning.**

Contents of the Statewide Forest Plan

The plan includes a common vision for Wisconsin's forests based on five goals and ten assumptions 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 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 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 whether 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 association information can be found on the Wisconsin DNR Forestry Web site www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/look/assessment





OVERVIEW OF PLAN COMPONENTS

Vision of the Statewide Forest Plan

To work in partnership to protect and sustainably manage Wisconsin's public and private forest lands and to ensure the ecological, economic, and social benefits of forests for the citizens of Wisconsin now and into the future.



From its inception, the statewide forest planning process has been driven by a strong commitment to sustainable forestry. While individual definitions of sustainability differ slightly in their details, there is generally broad-based support that sustainable forestry focuses on meeting the needs of current generations, while protecting the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This definition, combined with the following principles or goals for sustainable forestry, has guided us in the planning process.

Goals of the Statewide Plan

FORESTS ARE HEALTHY AND PROTECTED.

Wisconsin's forest ecosystems serve a multitude of ecological roles, including habitat for species, water quality protection, carbon sequestration, and moderation of temperature extremes in cities. To ensure the provision of these functions and their many other values, forests are protected from wildfire, insects and disease, including invasive exotic species. Threats to human safety and property near fire-prone forests are minimized through preventative measures and forest fire suppression capabilities.

FORESTS PROVIDE A DIVERSE RANGE OF NATIVE PLANT AND ANIMAL SPECIES AND THEIR HABITATS.

Wisconsin's forests contain healthy, viable populations of forest-dependent species. Forest community types representing a range of successional stages are maintained to ensure the availability of diverse habitats for species.

FORESTS ARE *PRODUCTIVE*, PROVIDING RAW MATERIAL FOR CONSUMERS AND *ECONOMIC STABILITY* FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Wisconsin's forests are kept well stocked with merchantable timber to provide an adequate supply of forest products for Wisconsin consumers. Sustainable forestry practices on both private and public lands maximize residual stand quality and promote abundant regeneration of a range of species. Sound forest management supplies local mills and manufacturers with a range of species for fabrication of diverse wood products. Forest

products provide income to landowners and a reliable, enduring source of employment for local communities.

FORESTS ARE *CONSERVED* AND MANAGED WITH *SOUND STEWARDSHIP PRACTICES*.

Forest management is practiced on both public and private lands to ensure the forestland base and associated ecological, social, and economic benefits are maintained for current and future generations. Forest management practices are guided by the most current science and are applied based on the desire to maintain the full range of forest ecosystem values, including habitat for diverse species, clean water, air and soil, recreational opportunities for all user groups, and scenic beauty. The direct and indirect benefits of forests depend on a stable forest land base.

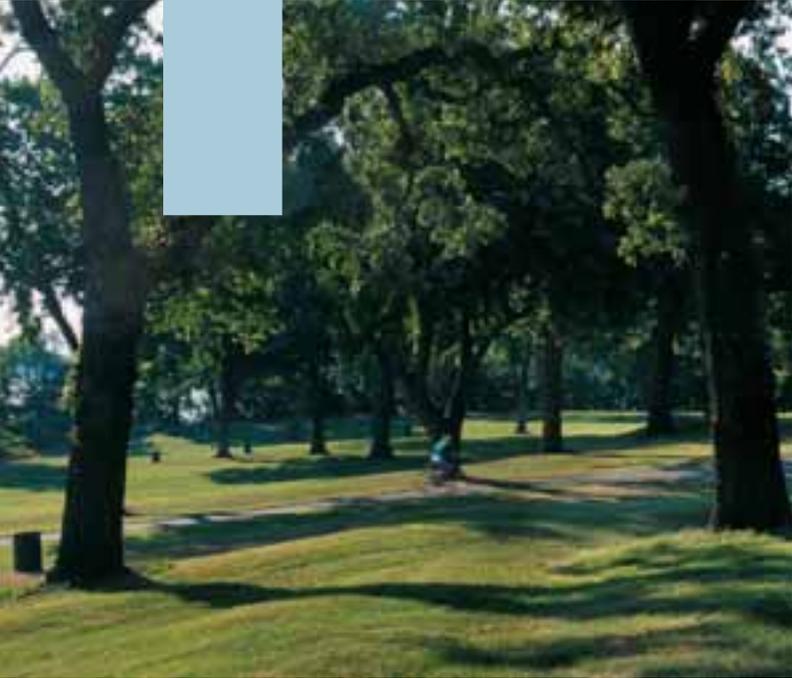
FORESTS PROVIDE MULTIPLE *RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES*.

Wisconsin's forests provide opportunities for diverse forms of recreation. These opportunities are expanded, subject to the limitations imposed by available land and fragile habitats, in response to increasing demand. Conflicts between user groups are managed through community planning.





THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIPS



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 advocacy groups, 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 benefits for current and future generations.

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 next step is to refine and prioritize actions, or strategies, to achieve the objectives and begin implementation of the plan. The continued involvement of the public and partners 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 goal and objective while considering ecological, economic, and social implications.

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 federal agencies, Native American tribes, universities, professional associations, conservation groups, forest-based industries, environmental groups, and forest landowners. Sustainability is a common goal for many public and private interests, and collective efforts such as this conference will be needed to mobilize the skills, capacity, and resources to achieve sustainable forestry.

To bring the fifty-two trends and issues identified in the Statewide Forest Plan into a conceptual framework that would facilitate bringing interested groups of leaders together at the conference, seven themes were described, which collectively include most of the

trends and issues from the plan. Key individuals and organizations will champion the development of actions needed to address the trends and issues associated with each of the seven themes. The seven themes are described below, along with examples of the trends and issues from the Statewide Forest Plan that are associated with these themes.

CONSERVING WISCONSIN'S BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

Increasing demands placed on Wisconsin's forests present a challenge to the conservation of biological diversity in the state. Taking measures to conserve biodiversity can ensure protection of the functions and values of our forests. Therefore, a better understanding of the biodiversity of Wisconsin's forests can aid in effectively managing and addressing issues such as old growth and endangered and threatened species. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Information about biodiversity is scarce.
- The list of threatened and endangered species is growing.
- Stands of old forest are rare.
- Criteria and indicators for sustainable forestry are being developed.

MINIMIZING THE THREAT OF INVASIVE SPECIES TO WISCONSIN'S FORESTS

Invasive exotic species present what may be the greatest threat to the long-term health and sustainability of Wisconsin's forests. Human activities such as trading of goods, travel, gardening, and recreation have resulted in the introduction of many non-native plant and animal species to the state. Once established, populations of some exotic insects and diseases quickly increase because natural control agents are absent or ineffective. As a result, exotic pests have changed, and will continue to change, entire ecosystems by displacing native flora and fauna. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Invasive exotic species are an increasing threat.
- Forest disturbance patterns are changing.
- More people are purchasing forest lands.
- Motorized recreation is becoming more popular.
- More trails are being created and used.

ENHANCING ASSISTANCE TO WISCONSIN'S PRIVATE FOREST LANDOWNERS

Forestland ownership strongly influences the condition of forests in Wisconsin. Non-industrial private landowners own 57% of Wisconsin's forestland, and the number of private forest landowners continues to increase. Between

1984 and 1997 the number of Wisconsin's non-industrial private owners increased by 20% to about 270,000 statewide. As a result, it has become increasingly challenging to provide professional forest management assistance to them. Currently, less than 25% of landowners have a management plan or receive professional assistance when managing their forest. Therefore it is necessary to give more forest landowners the assistance and knowledge they need to sustainably manage their woodlots in conjunction with a sustainable forest management plan. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Rising forestland property taxes are impacting short and long term forest management decisions.
- With the increasing number private woodland owners it is becoming more difficult to provide professional forest management guidance, and therefore more private forestry assistance is needed to ensure the sustainability of Wisconsin's forests.
- Demographics of forest landowners are changing, presenting a challenge to the management of rural contiguous forest.



MAINTAINING WISCONSIN'S FOREST-BASED ECONOMY

Wisconsin's forests are important in local, state, and global economies, supporting employment opportunities, investment in forest improvement practices, and strong revenues for landowners. Forestry also plays a significant role in the ecological and social benefits derived from the existence of a healthy and diverse forest-based economy. More than 1,850 wood using companies support a \$20 billion industry and over 100,000 jobs. In addition, more people than ever before are using Wisconsin's forests for a wide array of recreational and tourism activities. Wisconsin households spend over \$5.5 billion per year on goods and services associated with forest-based recreation. Of this total spending, roughly \$2.5 billion are spent in local areas within close proximity of recreational sites.



This provides a significant portion of the receipts of tourism-sensitive sectors in Wisconsin. Emerging issues, including forest certification, sustainable energy, and environmental standards, need attention to maintain healthy communities. Strategies to maintain Wisconsin's strong forest-based economy will be required as the globalization of the economy increases. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Global demand for forest products require timber companies to make decisions within the context of a worldwide market.
- Sustainable management certification is emerging, and the global market for sustainable forest products may give certified Wisconsin forests a strategic competitive advantage.
- Wood biomass has the potential to serve as an energy source for Wisconsin.

ENHANCING WISCONSIN'S URBAN FORESTS

The majority (81%) of Wisconsin's population lives in urban areas, and forests in these urban settings strongly influence the local environment, quality of life and economy. Pressures placed on these urban forests increase as the state's population increases, highlighting the need to understand the extent of urban forests in the state and, in turn, ensure their long-term health and viability. Invasive and exotic species, the social and economic benefits of forests to communities, and the long-term management of such forests are at the forefront of Wisconsin's urban forestry issues. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Wisconsin is becoming more urbanized, resulting in the need to manage our urban forests to handle the increase in pressures being placed on them.

- Development is increasing, expanding the extent of urban forests.
- Invasive insect species threaten urban forests, while invasive, exotic plant species planted in urban areas are a concern for surrounding rural areas.

MINIMIZING RECREATIONAL USE CONFLICTS IN WISCONSIN'S FORESTS

More people than ever before are using Wisconsin's forests for a wide array of recreational activities, leading to increased conflicts among forest users. With the increase in popularity of motorized forms of recreation, such as off-highway vehicles (ATVs, snowmobiles, etc.), conflict with non-motorized forest uses increases, as concern over safety and environmental impacts. Careful planning will be critical to meet these diverse and often competing needs and to minimize conflicts among forest. Sample trends and issues related to this theme include:

- Increased demand for forest-based recreation and associated services makes more complicated the management of conflict among forest users.
- Today's mix of forest uses demands the coordination of forest management and recreational activities.
- The amount of forestland open for public use is decreasing, impacting the future of public hunting, fishing, and other forms of recreation.
- Conflicting use of forests is a public debate.
- The increased popularity of motorized recreation in forested areas is leading to increased conflict among forest users.

MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF CHANGES IN WISCONSIN'S LAND USE AND FOREST OWNERSHIP

Patterns of land use and forest ownership directly influence the long-term management of Wisconsin's forests and the many economic, social and ecological benefits that those forests provide. Growing suburbs, second homes, and other land uses increasingly convert contiguous forested areas into smaller patches of forest and non-forest. These land use changes in the forest have significant impacts on a broad range of concerns, including: fire control and protection of life, property and resources in the wildland-urban interface; habitat fragmentation and loss of biodiversity; the ability to successfully manage forests for sustainability and productivity; costs of community services and the health of local and state economies. Our ability to preserve the many benefits of our forests depends on how we plan to prevent and manage the impacts of the increasing changes in land use and forest ownership.



Ensuring a Legacy for a Sustainable Future

In Wisconsin, sustainable forestry means ensuring healthy and protected forests, a thriving and diverse forest ecosystem, a productive and stable forest products economy, a strong and broadly-shared conservation and stewardship ethic, and a forest resource that provides a wide variety of recreational opportunities.

People rely on forests for their livelihoods, recreation, spiritual renewal, a vast array of forest products, and essential ecological functions that preserve clean air and water, as well as diversity of life. To ensure that our children and grandchildren are able to experience forests that are as healthy, useful, and abundant as they are today, it is imperative that we work together to ensure our forests are managed sustainably across the landscape.

Consistent with previous Wisconsin forest assessments and plans, the current Statewide Forest Plan plan frames the future of Wisconsin's forests around sustainability. Wisconsin is committed to meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, the underlying definition of sustainability. Ensuring a sustainable future requires



addressing ecological, economic, and social dimensions with respect to our forests and doing so in the context of strong partnerships among the wide array of organizations that can help steward our forests and address the many challenges and opportunities of the present and the future. Wisconsin's Statewide Forest Plan provides a framework for our collective and ongoing commitment to sustainable forestry.





Please visit the following Web sites for the full Statewide Forest Plan, more detail about the planning process, or more information about sustainable forestry in Wisconsin:

DNR Forestry Web site

www.dnr.wi.gov/org/land/forestry/look/assessment/
www.wisconsinforestry.org

For a hard copy of the Statewide Forest Plan, please contact:

Department of Natural Resources

Division of Forestry

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Madison, Wisconsin 53707-7921

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