

## Introduction

Wisconsin's Statewide Forest Strategy ("Strategy") is a statement of intent by those most involved in the protection and sustainable management of Wisconsin's forests regarding how to address the trends and issues that have the potential to significantly impact Wisconsin's forests over the next decade. It will provide a long-term, comprehensive, coordinated approach for investing resources to address the management and landscape priorities identified in the Statewide Forest Assessment ("Assessment"). In their entirety, the strategies represent a very large investment of resources. Recognizing the current economic constraints at all levels of government and in the private sector, it is necessary to determine which strategies and actions are the most important to focus on.

This "Strategy" is not a final product; it is the start of an on-going conversation for the forestry community. The strategies are broad; they function as guides. The major issues and threats affecting the forests of Wisconsin can not be tackled by one group, organization or agency. This is an opportunity to build synergy and focus efforts. Partners and the public who have engaged in this conversation are helping to identify the key issues and have a voice in determining the most important actions to take.

### How were the strategies and actions developed?

The "Assessment" analyzed the current condition of forests (both public and private), looked for trends, and identified issues and threats to our forests for the next 10 years. From the analysis, thirty major conclusions were drawn. Another way to characterize the major conclusions is to think of them as a description of the major issues and threats to forests, opportunities to take, or strengths to build on and continue. Partners and the public were asked to prioritize these conclusions. There was strong support for the top twelve conclusions. The conclusions can be characterized by four themes. (See list below.)

Through this process, the Division of Forestry recognized that the "Assessment" did not fully analyze issues around protecting life and property in forested areas. Issues such as wildfire suppression, enforcing violations of forest based illegal activities and safety for the forest-based workforce and forest users was not covered in the "Assessment", which was focused on forest sustainability. The Division of Forestry has recently conducted reviews of our fire and law enforcement programs. They identified the issues and opportunities and provided the basis for making recommendations for strategies and actions. These are included in Theme E.

- A. Fragmentation & Parcelization
- B. Forest Composition & Structure
- C. Energy & Climate Change
- D. Forests as Economic Contributor
- E. Protection of Life & Property in Forested Areas

The Division of Forestry's leadership team developed goals for each of the themes, following which an ad hoc committee of DNR staff developed draft strategies and actions. They started by first considering the current issues and condition of our forests as described in the major conclusions from the "Assessment". Then, using the goals as desired conditions, they developed strategies that seek to slow or reverse negative trends and continue current programs and activities that are strong and achieving objectives.

The strategies are not all new ideas. Nor do we suggest they all be implemented. The strategies and actions reflect both new ideas and existing actions or programs that are recognized as successful practices. There are not enough resources to implement all of the suggestions and more importantly, different groups will have different perspectives on how the strategies should be implemented.

The strategies do not specify who should be responsible for accomplishing a given strategy. We do not assume which organization or group can best accomplish a particular strategy, or who has the expertise to do so. Most importantly, to implement these strategies additional dialogue is needed within the forestry community.

Forests across the state are not the same. Some strategies should be implemented only in certain locations based on criteria. Recognizing budgetary constraints for all agencies and organizations, strategies should address priority landscapes when appropriate. Prioritized landscapes could be based on political boundaries (e.g., county boundaries), environmental factors (e.g., watersheds or ecological boundaries), social factors (e.g., population), or other considerations. Examples of priority landscapes could be areas with the greatest fire risk, health risks, or potential for producing ecosystem services. (See "Assessment" chapter: Priority Landscapes & Issues.)

#### Next Steps for the Statewide Forest Strategy

The 2008 Farm Bill requires the Division of Forestry submit the "Assessment" and "Strategy" to the USDA Forest Service\*. The Department has revised the "Strategy" based on feedback we have received. Starting in July 2010, we will facilitate conversations amongst partners to discern collectively we can best implement the "Strategy".

As we hope other partners will do, the Division of Forestry will review the "Strategy" and determine what roles we are best positioned to fill with respect to implementing the strategy. We are calling this our Division of Forestry Strategic Direction and through it we will describe what actions the Division will take over the next five years to implement certain strategies. The Division of Forestry will again be seeking input as we make these decisions.

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\* Throughout this document, "we" refers to the Wisconsin DNR, Division of Forestry.