

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
DIVISION OF FORESTRY

STRATEGIC DIRECTION

FY2023-2027





The Brule Portage Trail
at the Brule River State Forest
Credit: Christopher Tall/DNR, 2020

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WHAT IS THE DIVISION OF FORESTRY'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION?

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Division of Forestry's Strategic Direction is a five-year plan that builds off Wisconsin's 10-year Statewide Forest Action Plan (SFAP) to set a vision for our future. Since 2012, the division has used strategic planning to define our niche within the broader statewide and national forestry community to: (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 align 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 and identify where and how to invest our resources. There are many areas of the division we would choose to expand given additional resources; however, the division has finite positions and funding as defined by our state's biennial budget. We will continue to pursue ways to grow our impact through partnerships, grants, and targeted funding.

The Division of Forestry is organized into three field districts and three bureaus. Every part of the division relies on full-time and limited-term employees to accomplish work objectives. Every position in the division serves a critical role in achieving our overarching purpose, in addition to the many partners who work alongside the division to achieve our shared goals. Our success depends on our many working partnerships in the 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.

As the division implements our Strategic Direction, we will monitor our progress with outcome-based performance measures. These measures are collected quarterly and shared through fiscal year reviews, to track accomplishments, identify needs, incorporate new and emerging issues and trends, and adapt accordingly.

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.

OUR CULTURAL BELIEFS

Work Together

No Boundaries

Build Trust

Value

Serve Wisconsin

Take the Shot

KEY RESULTS WE STRIVE FOR AS WE DO OUR WORK

Owning the work together

Being consistently flexible

Finding win-wins with our customers

THE ROAD AHEAD

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

Looking internally and evaluating our existing focus and resources, and externally at our role within the broader forestry community, five major challenges and opportunities rose to the top and influenced many of the shifts or changes in the directions and strategies.

The major challenges and opportunities of the next five years include:

1. Maintaining **healthy and resilient forests, and the local communities and economies** that depend on them
2. Mitigating the effects of and adapting Wisconsin's forests to a **changing climate**
3. Advancing **diversity, equity, and inclusion** in our workplace, our relationships with partners, and our engagement with the public
4. **Setting our workforce and partners up for success** in a workplace with rapidly changing technology, tools, and channels of communication
5. **Continually evaluating and improving** the way we do business

Healthy Forests, Communities, and Economies

Healthy forests support Wisconsin's forest-based industries and the local economies that depend on them. We recognize that many communities and businesses have been challenged over the last several years, dealing with mill closures, pandemic impacts, and increased costs of operation. The division will continue to explore funding and other opportunities and contribute to and support initiatives with a goal of maintaining and strengthening Wisconsin's forestry-based industries and the many benefits they provide to Wisconsin's communities and residents.

Over the last year we've seen many new federal agency and organization grants and projects emerge. These competitive grant opportunities can help Wisconsin manage and maintain healthy forests, develop new markets, and support new and existing business innovations. These are dependent on partnerships to be successful, and no one entity will be able to initiate an effort alone. Within our ability, the division will help facilitate and support these opportunities with willing partners.

Climate Change

Climate change is one of the most critical challenges that we face, both globally and locally, in the forests of Wisconsin. Consistent with the goals described in the SFAP – to ensure that Wisconsin's forests are resilient and adaptable to future conditions and that carbon storage in forests and forest products is increased – the division will continue our focus on both climate

mitigation and adaptation initiatives over the next five years. The department's niche in this area is to support research efforts, translate findings from the science to the application for land managers, and assist in the implementation of activities that will help address the challenge at hand. This could include initiatives like providing technical and financial assistance to communities and landowners to aid in tree planting efforts, providing policy and data analyses, developing strategies, and supporting partnerships in new and emerging topics such as carbon credit programs, carbon storage in wood products, and use of urban wood.

Much of the work in sustainably managing Wisconsin's forests already complements measures designed to limit human induced climate impacts. Supporting our partners, landowners, communities, and industry, and providing them with both the technical and financial resources to make informed management decisions and to implement climate mitigation and resilience efforts is a critical role for the division. To achieve this means increasing our investment in initiatives, research, and communications that build resilience in Wisconsin's forests in a way that is equitable to all residents and stakeholders, ensuring we do our part to address environmental justice. Important future initiatives that we see include defining roles, advancing carbon storage opportunities, addressing invasive species and diseases, supporting forest regeneration, and prioritizing cross-programmatic and partner efforts.

One key initiative for the division 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 organizations across Wisconsin to sustain and grow the benefits that forests offer. The benefits of forests, including safeguarding water resources, providing wildlife habitat, and supporting rural economies, have long been recognized. This pledge also recognizes the critical role healthy forests play in mitigating climate change and commits to conserving 125,000 acres of forest land and planting 75 million trees in Wisconsin by 2030.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Having an inclusive workplace culture, equitable practices and policies, and a vibrant and diverse workforce are essential to the success of the division and lead to lasting employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction. Achieving this vision 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.

As part of the Strategic Direction, we will assess the division's current culture around inclusivity and engagement. Our DEI goals are to increase our capacity 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 how work is accomplished and the customer service we provide by:

- » improving and refining ways of doing business,
- » enhancing staff and partner 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

Continuous improvement, or the ongoing efforts to make improvements to products, services and processes over time, is critical for any organization. With continuous improvement, we see a way to engage and empower staff to take ownership and action on improvements that can be made in the division.

In the development of this document, many great ideas were proposed to improve services and processes. While those ideas did not rise to the level of a role, direction, or strategy statement, finding ways to continually improve how we do business is crucial to our success. Moving forward, the division is committed to exploring the ideas submitted through our existing continuous improvement program.

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, programmatic areas were identified 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.



WISCONSIN'S 2020 STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN

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. Throughout this document, you will find call out boxes that highlight how our directions align with the goals identified in the SFAP. Division programs generally support many aspects of the SFAP. For the purposes of this document, the SFAP goals identified in each section represent goals that align most closely with the focus of the division program for the next five years. This is also true of our Business Services programs, whose primary purpose is to support division and partner work in all of their goals.



Wisconsin River Near Stevens Point
Credit: Kelsey Neveln/DNR; 2019

APPLIED FORESTRY

DNR Forester talks about using Emerald
Ash Borer (EAB) Silvicultural Guidelines
Credit: Bill McNee/DNR; 2019

FOREST ECONOMICS AND ECOLOGY

OUR ROLE

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

OUR DIRECTION

Forest Science and Research

We will 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

Create a new genetics program 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

Pursue federal funding to allow the division to create a new permanent Forest Geneticist position.

Context and Description:

- » The WI 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 diversity of structure, composition, function complexity, and genetics.
- » Inadequate regeneration of many tree species was identified in the WI SFAP as signaling the need to assess current management and regeneration tactics to ensure that Wisconsin's forests remain resilient and adaptive to new and existing threats.
- » The 2017 Strategic Direction reduced our 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 on the need to invest in the fields of forest genetics, tree improvement and reforestation both to meet customer needs and position the state to meet emerging challenges and opportunities in reforestation.

Informed Forest Management

We will 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.

Context and Description:

- » The WI SFAP defines a goal of maintaining forests as forests and the associated long-term values and benefits they provide, and informed landowners and land managers are needed to achieve that goal.
- » Using the best available science and research on forest management strategies helps ensure resilient forests, including developing and supporting training and professional development opportunities for landowners and land managers.

Partnerships and Outreach

We will utilize new outreach tools and methods 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.

Context and Description:

- » The WI 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.

CREDIT: JEFF MARTIN / JIMARFOTOWERKS, 2018



OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- A.** Forests are diverse in structure, composition, function & complexity across all forested landscapes.
- J.** Forests are resilient & adaptable to future conditions.
- O.** Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.
- S.** Wisconsin's public forests are planned & managed using best available science & by an informed & engaged public.

Measuring tree diameter at breast height (DBH) on the property of woodland owners Merlin and Georgie Becker near Weyauwega Tree Farm.

FOREST HEALTH

OUR ROLE

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

BILL MCNEE/DNR, 2018



DNR Forest Health Technician applies herbicide at an oak wilt control project.

OUR DIRECTION

Applied Management

We will 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, while being mindful of the economic impacts.

Context and Description:

- » The WI 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.

Prevent, Detect and Monitor

We will 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 and 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 modernized DNR Forest Health Lab, the division works to detect new invasive species and diseases early and respond rapidly to minimize impacts to forests. The department also works closely with DATCP in detecting, monitoring, and slowing the spread of invasive species.

Partnerships and Outreach

We will 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 underrepresented communities and audiences.

Context and Description:

- » The division is well suited to act on strategies in the WI 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.

BILL MCNEE/DNR, 2020



OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- H.** Forested land & ecosystem functions are maximized, while losses due to forest health threats are minimized.
- I.** Forest health threats are identified & managed in a fashion that is adaptive & responsive to multiple values.
- V.** Urban & community forests are increasingly healthy & resilient to current & emerging stressors.

Chickadee searches freshly peeled ash in Peninsula State Park.

FOREST PRODUCT SERVICES

OUR ROLE

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



SCOTT LYON/DNR, 2015

Bandmill in Keshena WI.

OUR DIRECTION

Utilization and Marketing

We will 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

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 and Description:

- » The WISFAP defines a goal of 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.

Forest Inventory Analysis

We will 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 and Description:

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

DNR



Kiln dried urban wood.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- K.** Carbon storage in forests & forest products is increased.
- L.** Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets & non-market forest benefits.
- M.** The forest products industry remains competitive in both domestic & global/international markets.
- N.** The forestry workforce, including rural & urban sectors, are thriving with high levels of compensation, training, safety, quality of life and diversity.

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

Nursery and Seed Production

We will ensure public and private landowners have access to high quality, economically priced seed and seedlings, that are genetically diverse and highly adaptable by identifying, conserving, and managing diverse forest genetic resources and supporting high-priority regeneration and afforestation initiatives.

Context and Description:

- » The division received feedback that the Reforestation Program should serve as a seed bank for source-identified seed and seedlings and continue 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. The Hayward State Nursery is the center of conifer seed cleaning operations and associated new seed orchards.

Landowner Support

We will 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, including taking a lead role in helping coordinate the State's Trillion Tree Pledge Initiative.

Context and Description:

- » The division will invest 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.

Tree Improvement

We 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

Expand and enhance seed collection, seed orchard and seed cleaning.

Tactic

- Convert the Hayward Nursery Foreman position to a new Tree Improvement Specialist position.
- 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 and Description:

- » The WI 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.

Regeneration Monitoring

We will monitor the success of regeneration, both natural and artificial, to have the best information and data to inform recommended management practices.

Context and 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.

GRACE HERSHBERG/DNR, 2021



Red pine seedlings at Wilson State Nursery

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- C.** Keep forests as forests to maintain the long-term value & benefits they provide.
- J.** Forests are resilient & adaptable to future conditions.
- K.** Carbon storage in forests & forest products is increased.
- T.** Urban & community forests are more diverse, with increased tree canopy.

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.

ERIC TADSEN/DNR, 2018



Tree lined street from the westside of Madison, WI.

OUR DIRECTION

Financial Assistance

We will 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 and 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.

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

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 create a new permanent Urban Forest Inventory Analyst position.

Context and 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.



Planting trees for Arbor Day in Menasha.

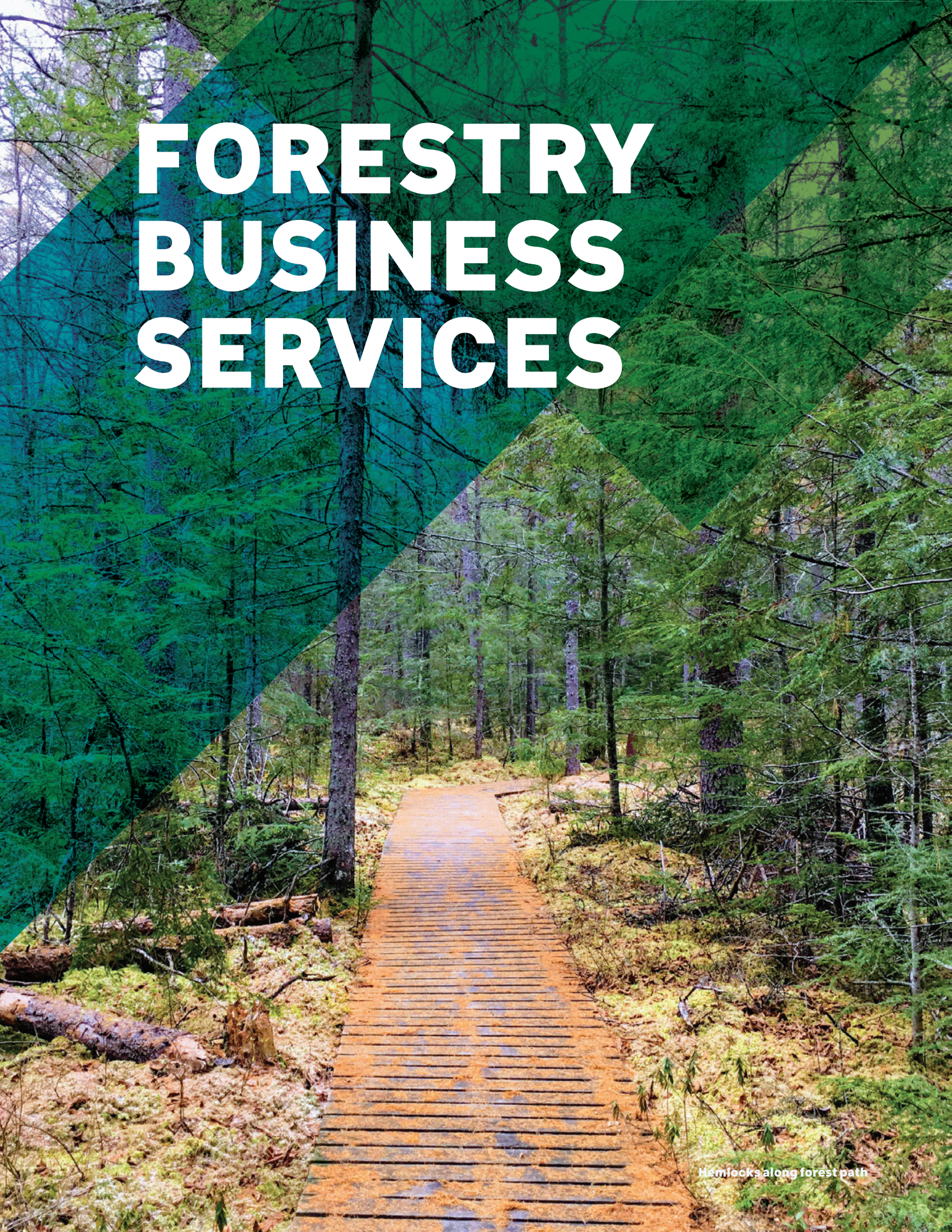
OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- T.** Urban & community forests are more diverse, with increased tree canopy.
- U.** Urban and community forests are increasingly used as essential tools to achieve economic, environmental, social & public health goals.
- V.** Urban & community forests are increasingly healthy & resilient to current & emerging stressors.



Seed beds at Boscobel Nursery,
Rena Johnson / Courtesy National Association of State Foresters; 2016

FORESTRY BUSINESS SERVICES



Hemlocks along forest path

AERONAUTICS

OUR ROLE

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

DNR



CESSNA 337 Super Skymaster aircraft.

OUR DIRECTION

Fire Detection and Suppression

We will 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

Decrease turn-around time for airplane maintenance, especially during fire season.

Tactic

Promote on-site maintenance locally at each regional hanger by working in collaboration with the Department of Administrations (DOA) to use a maintenance facility near each hangar site to conduct routine maintenance.

Strategy

Increase proficiency and consistency 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

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 and Description:

- » Feedback received identified a desire to evaluate the existing pilot qualifications 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.

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

Increase value by expanding the services provided to grow the user base of aeronautics resources, 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 DNR program and team leaders to conduct aeronautics service orientations and demonstrations.
- Development of training and support for pilots to stay current on emerging tools and technologies.
- 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 and 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.
- » We received feedback regarding the potential to increase awareness 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.

MAUREEN KALSCHER, 2019

**OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:**

- D.** All authorities make & implement safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.
- I.** Forest health threats are identified & managed in a fashion that is adaptive & responsive to multiple values.

DNR Pilots working on DNR Aquatic and Wetland Invasive Species Monitoring Survey.

BUDGETS AND GRANTS

OUR ROLE

The division's role is to provide a wide array of technical financial support to internal and external division customers on forestry financial topics and ensure compliance with the state statutes and laws governing our operations.

OUR DIRECTION

Grant Management

We will manage our state and federal grant programs in support of the division's purpose.

Context and 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.

Budget Management

We will 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.

Context and Description:

- » Managing the division's budget is achieved through coordination of budget initiatives including capital development, allocating and managing budget allotments, conducting fiscal analyses, and auditing programs and processes.
- » 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.

Timber Sale Financial Expertise

We will provide centralized statewide expertise and support to foresters for timber sale financials on public lands (state, county, federal GNA), ensuring consistent use of best practices and compliance with laws.

Strategy

Standardize the process across areas for how timber sale financials are handled.

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.
- Continue to invest in and support The Wisconsin Field Inventory and Reporting System (WisFIRS) timber sale financial system so that field foresters can effectively conduct timber sale financials

Context and Description:

- » The division administers the department lands timber sale programs that generate 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 most 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.
- » The division also ensures our county forest partners are adhering to best practices and maintaining statutory compliance, which benefits the statewide timber program

DNR, 2006



Urban tree canopy around Wisconsin's capitol in Madison.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- 0. Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.

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.



Teaching students about tree disease.

OUR DIRECTION

Planning

We will facilitate all long-term planning, evaluation, and monitoring efforts directed by Wisconsin's State Forest Action Plan and the division's Strategic Direction, while supporting program-level action planning, adaptive management, and process improvement.

Context and Description:

- » 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.
- » 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.

Communication, Education and Outreach

We will 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 and Description:

- » The feedback we have received from both staff and partners identified the need for increased collaboration and partnering to advance vital goals related to diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.
- » We will expand our uses of new web-based, digital, and other media tools and platforms to share our messages to align with emerging technology advancements.

Workforce Development

We will support a diverse, high-performing and engaged forestry workforce from recruitment to offboarding. We will increase coordination and implementation of core DEI efforts and action planning within the division, while integrating with other DNR and partner efforts

Strategy

Enhance our recruitment, retention, and offboarding efforts and increase focus on division-wide DEI coordination.

Tactic

Increase the amount of time allocated in the Workforce Development Specialist position that focuses on division-wide coordination of DEI efforts.

Context and Description:

- » The WI SFAP identifies the 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.
- » 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 to connect with youth and expand awareness about forestry.

Training

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

Strategy

Improve and increase coordination and delivery of fire, law enforcement, Incident Qualification System (IQS) and Incident Management Team (IMT) training to better support professional development of all staff.

Tactic

- Create a new Forest Protection Training Officer position through reallocation; located in the Forest Fire Protection Section.
- Increase effort and focus of the Division Learning Specialist on division-wide professional development and instructor support.

Context and Description:

- » The training needs related to fire, law enforcement, and 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.
- » We heard from staff that there are unmet needs for critical employee development initiatives like a leadership training, division-wide training planning and support, new supervisor training, and course evaluation and modernization.
- » The division will need 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.

TAMMY SYKES/DNR



DNR Career Fair booth.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- N.** The forestry workforce, including rural & urban sectors, are thriving with high levels of compensation, training, safety, quality of life and diversity.
- Q.** More landowners are actively engaged in making informed decisions about the management of their woodland.
- S.** Wisconsin's public forests are planned & managed using best available science & by an informed & engaged public.

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

Radio Communications

We will administer the department's statewide radio communication network in partnership with the Department of Transportation (DOT), including equipment acquisition and maintenance, and policy development and implementation, while increasing direct program support and expertise.

Strategy

Provide direct program support and expertise for radio communication needs.

Tactic

Utilize contracting with private vendors to maintain all user devices and infrastructure not managed by DOT or DNR radio program staff.

Strategy

Establish a new MOA with DOT to define the scope of radio network and device management responsibilities between DNR and DOT.

Context and Description:

- » Under the new MOA, DOT will be focusing their work on networked towers. Division radio specialists will assume management of all user devices and will fill that need by contracting with private vendors.

Equipment Research and Development

We will design, fabricate, provide, and maintain high quality equipment and supplies including wildland fire engines, tractor plows, low ground units, utility terrain vehicles (UTVs) and personal protective equipment (PPE), while working to improve services provided.

Strategy

Improve efficiency of equipment fabrication and maintenance to consistently meet replacement schedules, align planned maintenance with field work schedules, and shorten maintenance turnaround.

Tactic

- Consolidate fire management responsibilities in three LeMay fabrication technician staff at 25% - one primary heavy unit operator and two statewide backup heavy unit operators.
- Utilize Limited Term Employees or contracting to fulfill basic LeMay facility maintenance.

Context and 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 much 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.

NICK MOREHOUSE/DNR, 2019



Fire control bulldozer at Grassy Lake prescribed burn.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- D.** All authorities make & implement safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.
- E.** People, property, infrastructure, & forested lands are resilient to wildfire.
- F.** Fire-dependent forested landscapes are efficiently & effectively managed with prescribed fire.

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 DNR IT 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 DNR IT 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 DNR IT 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.

DNR



DNR Forestry staff using iPad.

OUR DIRECTION

The division will promote, support, and invest within DNR 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. Primary areas of investment and collaboration will include:

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 and 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. Key systems that will be supported include:
 - » 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 partners. GIS is integrated throughout the system.
 - » WisFIRS Private Lands. This application manages core business functions for private forest management in Wisconsin, serving hundreds of DNR staff as well as our private consulting forester partners. Core functions are to store and process data collected in the field, plan for and track completed practices, report accomplishments, and calculate the financial aspects of the programs including moneys collected and dispersed to towns.
 - » Tax Law Management and Administration applications including 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 to identify forestry support and recreational opportunities.
 - » Fire Management and Prescribed Burn applications including 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.

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 DNR IT in identifying needs, securing resources, and providing needed training.

Context and Description:

- » For staff to be successful in, 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 and highlight opportunities and efficiencies for management and conservation.
 - » Network connectivity to allow updating and maintenance of mobile technologies as well as providing a safe and secure network in field offices.

DNR

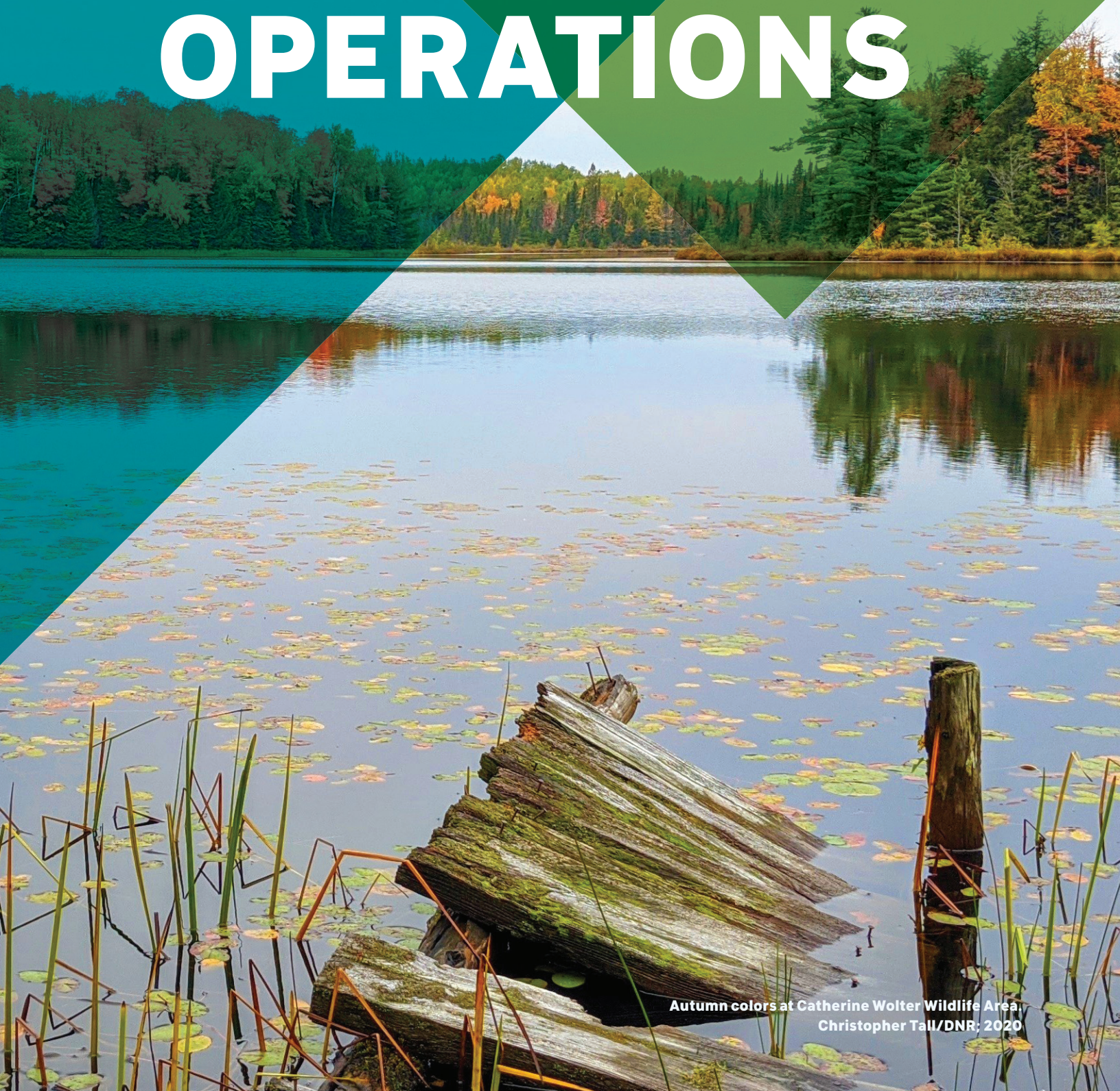


OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- D.** All authorities make & implement safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.
- F.** Fire-dependent forested landscapes are efficiently & effectively managed with prescribed fire.
- Q.** More landowners are actively engaged in making informed decisions about the management of their woodland.
- S.** Wisconsin's public forests are planned & managed using best available science & by an informed & engaged public.

DNR Forestry staff receiving training on WisFIRS (Wisconsin Forest Inventory Reporting System)

FORESTRY FIELD OPERATIONS



Autumn colors at Catherine Wolter Wildlife Area,
Christopher Tall/DNR, 2020

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.

ERIC SIRRINE/DNR, 2014



Prescribed fire at Douglas County Bird Sanctuary.

OUR DIRECTION

Fire Suppression

We will 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

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

Continue to maintain an effective and efficient fire program.

Tactic

Update the 2011 Wildland Fire Program Assessment to ensure fire program operations and resources continue to align with the program needs.

Context and Description:

- » The WI 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.
- » 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.

Fire Prevention and Wildland Urban Interface

We will 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 and 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.

Prescribed Fire

We will promote and utilize 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, cross partnership, capacity.

Strategy

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, on state owned lands, in high priority areas defined by the Division of Fish, Wildlife, and Park's (FWP) needs and priority landscapes. Silviculture burns on state and county forests remain division priorities and are above and beyond this commitment to FWP priority burns.
- 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.
- Work with FWP on developing priority statewide metrics and outcomes that reflect long-term investment needs.

Strategy

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 prescribed burn community to increase burn acreage across all ownerships.
- Continue to explore expansion of prescribed burning into the growing season.

Context and Description:

- » The WI 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 success and increase effectiveness.

Law Enforcement

We will protect Wisconsin's forests, both public and private, from damage and destruction from forest fires and illegal timber harvesting.

Context and 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.

Emergency Management

We will 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 and 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.

MARC SASS/DNR, 2021



Patrolling a line on the Marcy Road Fire.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- D.** All authorities make & implement safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.
- E.** People, property, infrastructure, & forested lands are resilient to wildfire.
- F.** Fire-dependent forested landscapes are efficiently & effectively managed with prescribed fire.
- G.** Wisconsin's fire culture values the use & benefits of prescribed fire & works to remove barriers to increase prescribed burning among stakeholders.

FOREST TAX LAW

OUR ROLE

The division's role is to ensure sound forestry practices and public benefits, including public hunting, fishing and recreation, on lands enrolled in Wisconsin's Forest Tax Law programs (Managed Forest Law, Forest Crop Law) through program administration, certification and management of Certified Plan Writer (CPW) credentials, and facilitation of technical assistance to landowners through referrals.

RENA JOHNSON / COURTESY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS, 2016



DNR Forester works with woodland owner.

OUR DIRECTION

Program Management

We will provide direction and oversight for statewide administration of the Tax Law Program 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.

Strategy

Increase communication with tax law landowners.

Tactic

The Private Forest Landowner Outreach Specialist will address private forestry communications in a more holistic manner, with both non-tax law and tax law landowners in mind, providing support on the informational side of tax law communications.

Context and 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.
- » Increasing our current investment in communications will in turn increase landowner and partner knowledge and understanding of program requirements and responsibilities and allow for a more holistic approach to private forestry communications.

Implementation

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

Adjust the Tax Law program's positions to meet growing administrative needs.

Tactic

Assess options for increasing administrative capacity within the existing program staff allocation. This may include whole FTE conversion, partial FTE conversion, and/or additional administrative workload assigned to existing Forestry Specialists.

Strategy

Integrated forestry staff will provide technical assistance to the Tax Law program by completing reconnaissance updates upon completion of a practice.

Tactic

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

Context and 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 is 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.

Certified Plan Writer Program

We will certify and train Certified Plan Writers (CPWs) on program procedures and policies and connect them with landowners.

Context and Description:

- » There are currently 210 CPWs who are integral to the administration and execution of the MFL program.
- » CPWs increase the capacity to provide service to landowners currently enrolled in or interested in enrolling in the MFL program.



MATT MOLBACK/DNR, 2017

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- L.** Wisconsin is a hub for diversified forest markets & non-market forest benefits.
- M.** The forest products industry remains competitive in both domestic & global/international markets.
- O.** Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.
- Q.** More landowners are actively engaged in making informed decisions about the management of their woodland

Forest on private Tax Law property in Pierce County.

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.

ANDREW TEECE, ANDREW TEECE PHOTOGRAPHY.COM, 2018



Multiple generations of forest landowners in Oneida County.

OUR DIRECTION

Technical Forestry Assistance

We will provide forest management services to private forest landowners, including technical assistance, expertise, advice and information on a wide variety of issues affecting land management decisions, working closely with consulting foresters, and other professionals in the forestry community.

Strategy

Prioritize technical forestry assistance in accordance with NR 1.212 Administrative Code to focus the division's capacity to work with landowners as they move beyond a first walk-through and towards active sustainable management on their properties.

Tactic

- Align the division's work planning process with these activities as being the highest priority to complete for the Private Forestry program. Priority can be modified based on other division or department initiatives.
- 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 and Description:

- » Priority technical forestry assistance activities as defined in NR 1.212 Administrative Code, includes 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. While this list will be used as a guide to assist with focusing program work and prioritization, is not intended to limit work from other program, division, or department priorities.
- » The WI 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 and targeting the engagement of 20,000 landowners as a collaborative initiative with partners. This remains an important goal for the division.
- » As we have evaluated our niche and the progress made towards engaging landowners, we will now increase efforts to grow relationships and assist landowners in taking action.

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

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

Strategy

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 and Description:

- » There is a wide array of natural resource organizations and professionals working to increase engagement of woodland owners statewide.
- » 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.
- » The WI 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.

Financial Assistance

We will 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 and 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 by providing financial support to help incentivize implementation of practices that promote sustainable forestry.
- » Division staff have a critical role providing technical forestry assistance to our federal partners Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and Farm Services Agency (FSA) in implementing federal financial assistance programs.
- » The division is committed to continuing to explore other funding sources and programs that can assist private woodland owners in managing their lands.

Conservation Easements

We will use the Federal Forest Legacy and Knowles-Nelson Stewardship programs as tools for strategically increasing conserved acres on large block (continuous) forest lands threatened by conversion to non-forest uses.

Context and 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 forest 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.

RENA JOHNSON / COURTESY NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS, 2016



DNR Forester works with woodland owners.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- B.** Forested landscapes provide connectivity between patches of forests of all seral stages & types for forest-dependent species & related natural communities.
- C.** Keep forests as forests to maintain the long-term value & benefits they provide.
- O.** Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.
- O.** More landowners are actively engaged in making informed decisions about the management of their woodland.
- R.** Private forest landowners are better connected to each other through peer groups & networking opportunities.

PUBLIC LANDS

OUR ROLE

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

OUR DIRECTION

County Forests

We will support Wisconsin's County Forest program through our time standard hour commitment, grants, aids, and loans, ensuring the division is providing a strategic suite of services and supporting expansion of the County Forest program where opportunities exist.

Strategy

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 and 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 sustain large blocks of forest land across the landscape and are significant contributors to the local and statewide economy, forest products industry and recreation economy.
- » Growing enrollment in the County Forest program will promote large blocks of sustainable management and support critical initiatives such as those around climate change, protection of unique and rare forested habitats, tree planting, forest recreation, and forest carbon.

State Lands

We will 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

Increase regeneration, afforestation, and cultural practices on state lands.

Tactic

- Increase training and support for contracting on state lands management work to increase department capacity for regeneration, afforestation, and cultural work.
- Improve scheduling in WisFIRS of non-commercial practices from the current “as needed” basis to better reflect the priorities on-the-ground.
- The Public Lands Specialist Team will evaluate the division’s return frequency for reconnaissance.
- Improve and increase regeneration project implementation by assigning Area Forestry Staff Specialists in each district to serve as the lead for regeneration project financials including bidding, contracting, purchase order processing and payments.

Context and 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 3) position the division to meet commitments such as the Trillion Trees Initiative as well as 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.

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

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.
- 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 and Description:

- » The division plays a vital role in master planning by 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.

Good Neighbor Authority

We will implement 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

Formalize the division's implementation of the Good Neighbor Authority agreement to achieve 25 million board feet of timber projects annually and associated restoration 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.
- 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.
- Each CNNF National Forest 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.
- The division will improve how we share information and decisions on program priorities and project implementation with interested stakeholders.

Context and 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.

Certification

We will support 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

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 and 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.

CHRISTOPHER TALL/DNR, 2020



The Brule Portage Trail at Brule River State Forest.

OUR DIRECTION SUPPORTS THE FOLLOWING STATE FOREST ACTION PLAN GOALS:

- A.** Forests are diverse in structure, composition, function & complexity across all forested landscapes.
- C.** Keep forests as forests to maintain the long-term value & benefits they provide.
- H.** Forested land & ecosystem functions are maximized, while losses due to forest health threats are minimized.
- J.** Forests are resilient & adaptable to future conditions.
- K.** Carbon storage in forests & forest products is increased.
- O.** Forests provide a balance of social, ecological, economic benefits across all ownerships for current & future generations.
- P.** Wisconsin's public forest lands provide a broad range of forest-based recreation & tourism opportunities to meet growing & changing demands.
- S.** Wisconsin's public forests are planned & managed using best available science & by an informed & engaged public.



**The Brule Portage Trail at Brule River State Forest
Christopher Tall/DNR**

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.

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.

The Forest Economist position will be relocated to the Forest Products Services Team. Currently the division's Forest Economist position is located within the Forest Economics and Ecology Section, however, current business needs and practices lead to this position often working more closely with the staff and supervisor on the Forest Products Services team. Therefore, this position will be relocated to increase efficiency and clarity in roles. This position will still work closely with the Forest Economics and Ecology Section to collaborate and identify priority needs.

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, support, and lead staff.

Changes in the integrated program work areas. Work of 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. The Strategic Direction determines the necessary resource allocation to achieve desired outcomes, but our reality includes vacancies and unforeseen events. Annual work planning is the process by which we evaluate the work that can actually be accomplished in a given year. This is where we look at our priorities, identify any shifts in work, and determine our annual capacity. Other department programs, assignments, duties in position descriptions, Secretary's objectives, statutory requirements, seasonal needs, and scheduling efficiencies are all discretionary considerations that must be taken into account during the work planning process.

Create consistency in position classification and clarity regarding roles and duties of property manager positions. 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. Prop-

erty 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 property manager positions to the specialist classification. Property managers will be supervised by District Leaders (Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest, Flambeau River State Forest, Black River State Forest, Willow Flowage, Brule River State Forest) or Area Leaders for those who also have Area Forestry Staff Specialist duties (Governor Earl Peshtigo River State Forest, Governor Knowles State Forest). Additionally, property management for the Coulee Experimental State Forest will be assigned to the Black River State Forest Property Manager.

Role and services of Area Forestry Staff Specialists (AFSS) will be further defined to provide more consistency in expectations across areas, better define core work responsibilities, and balance area and district needs with statewide priorities. The following work priorities and roles will be clarified through annual performance objectives:

- » Dispatch duties and expectations
- » Learning and training, public lands, and other area support
- » Lead property management duties for one Spooner Area AFSS (Governor Knowles State Forest) and one Peshtigo Area AFSS (Governor Earl Peshtigo River State Forest)
- » Lead GNA duties for restoration projects for one Park Falls Area AFSS and one Woodruff Area AFSS



Big Manitou Falls at Pattison State Park.
Credit: Christopher Tall/DNR



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