



April 3, 2015

Joint Finance Committee:

Wisconsin Consulting Foresters (WCF) is a 501.c.6 non-profit trade association whose members provide professional forestry services to clients throughout Wisconsin. WCF provides a voice for forestry professionals that serve woodland owners of Wisconsin. Our members contribute greatly to the application of forest management on privately owned lands and enrollment of lands into the Managed Forest Law program. All of our members are Cooperating Foresters with the State of Wisconsin.

Wisconsin Consulting Foresters (WCF), following review of forestry related items in the FY "15 – 17" State Budget, wish to express our opinion over the following budget items:

One provision outlined in the Governors' budget would remove the Department of Natural Resources from the approval of cutting notices filed by Cooperating Foresters, as long as the proposed practice is consistent with the landowner's MFL plan. WCF opposes parts of this proposal as written for the following reasons:

- As written, this proposal is unclear as far as both the review and approval process. The statement "the department would no longer be responsible for approving cutting notices filed by Cooperating Foresters, as long as the proposed practice is consistent with the landowner's MFL plan", is ambiguous at best. How would the DNR forester know if the cutting notice is consistent with the MFL plan without reviewing it? WCF is all for streamlining, but not at the expense of gutting a program that has been valuable to forest landowners and the forest industry.
- With the proposed increased responsibility, we feel that the Cooperating Forester Program needs to be more stringent with higher standards and with a resolution process that is efficient, fair, and timely.
- The Department is currently undergoing a streamlining process through the MFL Task Efficiencies that would put in a place a process of risk assessment to determine whether a field review of a cutting notice is necessary. WCF supports this Department effort and feels that if administered properly, this process will focus DNR review of cutting notices where most appropriate.

WCF fully supports the last line of this specific budget item allowing Cooperators to conduct NHI reviews for timber sales with the emphasis being at no cost to the Cooperator in that they are working on behalf of the state when doing this work. This is a much needed step to increase efficiency.

WCF is not supportive of elimination of all the capacity grants, specifically we are supportive of those grants that focus on statewide forestry education efforts. Lack of understanding of forest management by students, landowners, and the general public is a constant complaint that comes from all sectors of the forestry community. It is critical that effective forestry education efforts continue across the state. WCF is fully supportive of any entity receiving these capacity grants for forestry education to be held accountable in regards to their performance.

The budget proposes a reduction in the number of DNR researchers, communications specialists and educators. WCF does not support reduction of research efforts aimed at forest management practices, including silvicultural techniques, harvesting practices, and forest management techniques that work with forest health and endangered resource issues to provide for resource protection and allow for forest management to be practiced.

WCF does not support reduction of communication specialists and educators that would reduce forestry education efforts. However, WCF supports efforts to make forestry education more effective and efficient.

Lastly, we understand 66 Department FTEs are proposed for elimination. WCF would strongly oppose any reductions that would reduce the quality of and/or level of forest management that is currently occurring on all forest ownerships in Wisconsin. Again we are not opposed to streamlining, but we are concerned that any reduction decisions are justified and all consequences of those reductions are considered.

Our members strongly support action that will increase efficiencies within the Department and save taxpayer dollars while promoting a strong, vibrant and sustainable forest management program on all forest ownerships in Wisconsin; however we do not support action that may do so at the detriment to our forests and forest industry in Wisconsin.

WCF commends the Joint Finance Committee for your efforts to improve the management of Wisconsin's natural resources. WCF would like to offer our assistance in providing information and input into this budget process to help assure that all consequences and efforts of your decisions are realized.

Thank you for your consideration,



Don Peterson, Chair

Wisconsin Consulting Foresters (WCF)