



MARATHON COUNTY FORESTRY/RECREATION COMMITTEE AGENDA

Date and Time of Meeting: Tuesday, September 29, 2020 at 1:30pm

Meeting Location: Conference Room #5, 212 River Drive, Wausau WI 54403

MEMBERS: Arnold Schlei (Chairman), Rick Seefeldt (Vice-Chairman), Tom Rosenberg

Marathon County Mission Statement: *Marathon County Government serves people by leading, coordinating, and providing county, regional, and statewide initiatives. It directly or in cooperation with other public and private partners provides services and creates opportunities that make Marathon County and the surrounding area a preferred place to live, work, visit, and do business.*

Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department Mission Statement: *Adaptively manage our park and forest lands for natural resource sustainability while providing healthy recreational opportunities and unique experiences making Marathon County the preferred place to live, work, and play.*

The meeting site identified above will be open to the public. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated public health directives, Marathon County encourages Committee members and the public to attend this meeting remotely. To this end, instead of attendance in person, Committee members and the public may attend this meeting by telephone conference. If Committee members or members of the public cannot attend remotely, Marathon County requests that appropriate safety measures, including adequate social distancing, be utilized by all in-person attendees.

Persons wishing to attend the meeting by phone may call into the telephone conference beginning five (5) minutes prior to the start time indicated above using the following number:

Phone Number: 1-408-418-9388

Access Code: 146 966 4447

If Required, the Password is 1234

When you enter the telephone conference, PLEASE PUT YOUR PHONE ON MUTE!

Agenda Items:

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Public Comment (15 minute limit)**
3. **Approval of the Minutes of the Tuesday, September 1, 2020 Committee Meeting**
4. **Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution:**
 - A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee
 1. Consider Timber Bids and Award Contracts
 2. 2021 Budget Update – Jamie Polley
 3. 2021 County Conservation Aids Project – Archery Range Improvements
 - B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None
5. **Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee – None**
6. **Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports**
 - A. DNR/County Forest Partnership Meeting Minutes – Chad Keranen
 - B. Wisconsin Endurance Mountain Bike Race Participation and Revenue
 - C. Wisconsin County Forests Association – 2020 Annual Report
 - D. 2021-2022 Wisconsin State Budget Process and Items that Affect Forestry Programs

- 7. **Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: November 3, 2020, 1:30pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau, WI 54403**
 - A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence
 - B. Future Agenda Items: Marathon County Forest Comprehensive Land Use Plan, Timber Sale Contract Extensions, Consider Timber Bids and Award Contracts
- 8. **Adjournment**

SIGNED /s/ Thomas Lovlien
PRESIDING OFFICER OR DESIGNEE

ANY PERSON PLANNING TO ATTEND THIS MEETING WHO NEEDS SOME TYPE OF SPECIAL ACCOMMODATION IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE SHOULD CALL THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE AT 261-1500 OR E-MAIL INFOMARATHON@MAIL.CO.MARATHON.WI.US ONE BUSINESS DAY BEFORE THE MEETING.

FAXED TO: Daily Herald and other News Media Groups
 FAXED BY: Jodi Luebbe
 FAX DATE/TIME: September 22, 2020 11:00 a.m.

NOTICE POSTED AT COURTHOUSE:
 By: _____
 Date: _____
 Time: _____ a.m/p.m.

Members present: Tom Rosenberg, Arnie Schlei(c), Rick Seefeldt
Also present: Tom Lovlien-Forest Administrator, Jamie Polley-Director, Joe Tucker-County Forester, Chad Keranen-DNR Liaison

1. Call meeting to order – The meeting was called to order by Chairman Schlei at 1:30pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau. Official notice and the agenda for the meeting was posted publicly in accordance with State statutes.

2. Public Comment – none brought forward

3. Approve Minutes – **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Rosenberg to approve the minutes from the August 4, 2020 regular Forestry/Recreation Committee meeting. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

4. Operational Functions Required by Statute, Ordinance or Resolution

A. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee

1. Consider Approving Fall 2020 Timber Sale Package – The fall timber sale package had been distributed to Committee for review. The sale offers 381 acres of timber on five tracts with an estimated volume of 25,260 tons and 277.0 thousand board feet. Joe Tucker, County Forester, discussed all the sales and answered questions. The sales will be advertised and the bid opening is September 28, 2020. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Schlei to approve and advertise the fall 2020 timber sale package. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

2. Review Revised 15-Year Comprehensive Land Use Plan Changes and Send to the Department of Natural Resources for 30-Day Review - Lovlien said no public comments were received during the 30-day review or the public listening session except for one comment he received from the Back Country Hunters and Anglers group. They outlined the balancing and compromises that public land and forestry management should strive for. Lovlien asked members if they had any concerns regarding the plan and none were brought forward. After the DNR's review the plan will be brought back to this Committee, the Environmental Resource Committee and County Board for final approvals. **Motion** / second by Rosenberg / Seefeldt to forward the plan to the Department of Natural Resources for their 30-day review. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

3. Forest Citizen's Advisory Subcommittee Appointment – The mountain biking member whose term was up has recommended another person to represent the mountain biking community. Aaron Ruff is the current president of CWOCC and Lovlien believes he would be a good member. He asked Committee to appoint Ruff to the Subcommittee representing biking interests. **Motion** / second by Schlei / Rosenberg to appoint Aaron Ruff to the County Forest Citizens' Advisory Subcommittee as the representative for mountain biking interests. Motion **carried** by voice vote, no dissent.

B. Discussion and Possible Action by Committee to Forward to the Environmental Resource Committee for its Consideration - None

5. Policy Issues for Discussion and Committee Determination for Consideration by Environmental Resources Committee - None

6. Educational Presentations/Outcome Monitoring Reports

A. Wisconsin County Forests Association Annual Fall Meeting September 23-24, 2020 – This will be a hybrid virtual/in-person meeting at a local venue. Lovlien said Committee members should notify him if they would like to attend.

B. Preliminary Results of the Forest Certification Audit – Lovlien said the physical audit occurred and there were no findings in Marathon County or the other three counties for the second year in a row. The recreational programs on County public forest lands exceeds their standards and is a model program throughout the country.

7. Next Meeting Date, Time, Location: September 29, 2020, 1:30pm, Rm. 5, 212 River Dr., Wausau WI 54403
 - A. Announcements/Requests/Correspondence – none brought forward
 - B. Future Agenda Items: Review Timber Bids and Award Contracts, 2021 Budget Update, DNR/County Forest Partnership Meeting Minutes, McMillan Marsh State Wildlife Area Lease

8. Adjourn – **Motion** / second by Seefeldt / Rosenberg to adjourn the meeting at 2:10pm. Motion **carried** by voice vote, vote reflected as 3-0.



State of Wisconsin \ DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Tony Evers, Governor
Preston D. Cole, Secretary

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
5301 Rib Mountain Drive
Wausau, WI 54401
Telephone 715-571-7139

Date: September 9th, 2020
To: Doug Brown - County Forest Specialist
From: Chad Keranen - Marathon County Forest Liaison
Subject: Annual County Forest - DNR Partnership Meeting

The annual Marathon County Forest - DNR Partnership Meeting was held on August 25th, 2020. The meeting was virtual with Marathon County Forest Administrator Tom Lovlien, Wausau Forestry Team Leader Shelley Wrzochalski, DNR Wildlife Biologist Brandon Stefanski, and DNR Liaison Forester Chad Keranen calling in. Below are the minutes from the meeting and the agenda.

County Forest Time Standards

Fiscal Year 2020

During Fiscal Year 2020 total DNR hours contributed to Marathon County were 696 out of an agreed upon commitment of 644 hours. The liaison forester accounted for 587 of these hours. The breakdown of the liaison forester's hours was split up across the 24 areas of the time standards worksheet as follows.

<u>Core Work Areas</u>	<u>Liaison hours worked</u>	<u>Time standard worksheet goals</u>
Timber Sale Est./Admin./Closeouts	389 hours	391 hours
Administer County Forest Law	82 hours	118 hours
Cultural/Regen/Invasives	46 hours	115 hours
Reconnaissance	<u>70 hours</u>	40 hours
	587 hours	

This worksheet is referenced at the end of each fiscal year to measure actual hours worked against what is planned for in the worksheet to see if the worksheet is an accurate assessment of hours worked in a particular category. The actual hours worked match up favorably to the agreed upon time standard commitment. The majority of the liaison hours were on timber sale establishment in the field and associated office paperwork and planning, which remains fairly consistent each year. During the fiscal year, the county forest 15 year plan was revised however the county forest administrator handled the majority of the revision. Discussion occurred that if specific needs arose, extra hours worked in any one particular area will not be an issue as long as productive work is being accomplished.

Non-liaison assistance for FY'20 totaled 109 hours. These other hours worked were very consistent with last year. The past two fiscal years have seen non-liaison hours in low to mid 100 hour range. This is due to the liaison's workload each year outside of the county forest. The DNR liaison also runs the private forestry program in Marathon County as well as helps with stateland timber sales and fire suppression duties. To fill in some of these hours the Wausau DNR forestry technician assists the county staff with timber sale establishment as well as dozer work that is needed each year on the county forest. Last year we had a large workload of scarification that was needed and two DNR technicians assisted in getting this work completed on time.

Fiscal Year 2021

The time standard commitment to the county forest will remain at 644 hours for this year and the next fiscal year. The liaison forester will be responsible for 600 hours, with the forest technician work planned for 50 hours. A good working relationship exists between both parties so there are no anticipated issues in the upcoming fiscal year with the current workload expectation.

The county forest 15 year plan is completed and has been out for public comments. No adverse comments were received on the plan. It is anticipated that the full county board will approve the new 15 year plan in November and then it will be sent to the DNR for approval.

2020 County Forest Workplan

The 2020 workplan was briefly reviewed as it is each year during the meeting. The purpose of the review was to ensure that all items identified on the workplan are complete or on track to be completed by the end of the year. The administrator went over the workplan and discussed some highlights. Most, if not all the items identified on the annual work plan are complete or will be completed before the end of the year. Both the liaison forester and administrator have copies of the work plan and it's available to view upon request. The county workplan and annual report is also available for the public to view on the county's internet webpage at

<http://www.co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/ParksRecreationForestry/PlanningandDevelopment>

2020 Wildlife Update

Wildlife biologist Brandon Stefanski gave an update of wildlife accomplishments the past year on the county forest and the tasks that will be accomplished by the end of the calendar year. Due to the Covid 19 pandemic, the biologist and technician were unable to get any field work done the last three months of the fiscal year. Although this set back a lot of planned work for the fiscal year, they were able to stay afloat with what they were able to accomplish earlier in the fiscal year.

Routine work accomplished the past year was alder management. Alder management continues to be priority work on the county forest. Each winter areas are selected on the forest to be maintained by shearing the mature alder and letting it resprout back. Trail rehab work and opening maintenance was completed on the county forest in select units.

Some of the wildlife work is paid for by the nickel an acre grant the county receives each year. The wildlife biologist frequently utilizes other sources of funding such as Turkey Stamp dollars and Drummer Fund dollars to do work on the county forest versus using nickel an acre money since the annual allotment is only around \$1400.00 per year.

Last fiscal year was the first in a while where the wildlife biologist and wildlife technician positions were filled at the same time. The wildlife technician is on the forest 1-2 days each work getting the bulk of the workload accomplished. Currently, the technician also has an LTE to help out as well. Ongoing work being completed at this time is opening maintenance by used of mowing, brushing and herbicide spraying.

In December each year the wildlife workplan is attached to the county forest workplan and will list in detail the accomplishments the past year as well as planned work for calendar year 2021.

County Conservation Aids Project Updates

CCA Project #CC-19-37FM – Duane Corbin Shooting Range

This project was completed this past spring. It included the construction of 22 concrete shooting tables at the rifle range for users to sight their rifles in. The Duane Corbin Shooting Range is one of the premier ranges in the state and this project fit very well with the CCA program.

CCA Project #CC-18-37FM - DC Everest Park

This project is on Lake Wausau at DC Everest County Park in the City of Wausau. The project is for new boat landing planks and asphalt repair. This project will replace both and improve the boat launch at the

park. No work has been done on the project yet due to high water levels the past two years. The project has been extended to June 2021.

CCA project proposals for 2020 - 2021

No firm project is on the table for application currently, however discussion occurred on additional shooting range improvements such as replacing some barrier walls and also on potential beaver management issues the county forest is having. The past few years have seen record beavers being trapped from the county forest. This workload is increasing in cost and a discussion was had about possibly using some CCA money for this. Nothing was decided upon but in the next month a viable project proposal will be submitted through channels.

Forest Certification

Early August 2020 the county forest audit took place. Marathon County was one of the counties that was audited this year. Results from the certification audit showed no Corrective Action Requests or Opportunities for Improvement. This was the second year in a row where nothing was found that needed to be addressed. In fact the county received very favorable reviews for its overall program and especially dealing with all of the user groups.

Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI)

Corrective Action Requests

None

Opportunities for Improvement

None

The trend the past couple years seems to be less and less audit findings that go against the certification standard. With not even an OFI for the second year in a row, the certification discussion was brief, but discussion still occurred on some of the findings from previous audits, one being timely recon updates. Marathon County Forest has 5600 acres of recon 16 years or older. Of this 5600 acres, only 220 acres are upland productive acres other than aspen, with 4100 acres typed as aspen. The liaison forester and county forester have never work planned to specifically update young aspen stands. However, if we are working in an area and there is aspen that could use a walk through, then some of these stands are being updated. This winter is looking like there will be time to take a look at some of this aspen acreage, but it was noted that this would be lower priority work as time allows.

Miscellaneous Items

The liaison and county forest administrator have weekly contact and stay on top of all issues concerning the county forest. Mainly for documentation purposes and for others that do not have the daily involvement of the liaison forester, miscellaneous items were discussed such as land use issues, forest health, forest road projects, and invasive species.

Land Use Issues

Acquisitions

This past year was very successful in land acquisitions. Two separate entries were added to the county forest system totaling 480 acres. Last year's minutes went into great detail about each acquisition, but they were officially entered into county forest law.

One acquisition that was being worked on was a 40 acre parcel adjacent to the Kronenwetter Unit. An appraisal on the property was completed but the landowner decided to retain ownership and keep the parcel in the family. If the parcel becomes available in the future the county will most certainly be actively engaged in purchasing as it is bordered on two sides by county forest.

Going forward on additional acquisitions, the county forest administrator has county board approval to actively seek out additional lands to purchase and add to the county forest each year.

It is worth noting that over the past decade, 877.5 acres have been added to the Marathon County Forest under six separate acquisitions. The Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Grant Program funded \$924,600 for these acquisitions.

Forest Road Projects

The county has a very extensive network of interior county roads and money is annually spent to maintain these roads. With such an extensive network of four season roads, the county is able to reap the benefit of higher stumpage prices. Resurfacing and adding material to existing roads is on a cycle. Last year a portion of the access road in the Elderon Unit was built up and resurfaced due to continued flooding the past couple years. Resurfacing using granite was also completed on 2.60 miles of forest trails in the Leather Camp and Kronenwetter forest units.

Forest Health

Cultural

The county received a sustainable forestry grant in the amount of \$31,200 to treat the understory competition in sawtimber red oak stands. The woods are maturing on the county forest and are nearing or already at rotation age where the process to regenerate them is starting. In order to have the best chance of success, the understory competition needs to be controlled first. Sites in Kronenwetter and Leathercamp Units have been treated and additional sites are identified to be treated with this grant money to ensure long term success of oak regeneration on the forest. Follow up treatments will occur on sites currently established for a shelterwood harvest in the Kronenwetter Unit.

Oak Wilt

The county has an extensive history of treating pockets of oak wilt via the girdle and herbicide method. Last year two trees were confirmed with oak wilt by DNR Forest Health Staff. These trees were girdled and treated with herbicide as soon as they were found. Instead of setting up a perimeter of trees to treat, this method of “rapid response” of only treating the wilting tree was done. Currently, as of late August 2020, there was been no spread of oak wilt beyond these two rapid response trees.

Emerald Ash Borer

With EAB confirmed in the county but not on the county forest, discussion occurred what that means for the county forest in regard to marking hardwood stands. The liaison went over the proactive strategy that has been in place since 2013 in reducing the percentage of ash in northern hardwood stands. Now that it is confirmed in the county for three years, an even more aggressive approach will be undertaken to thoroughly evaluate the stocking of ash. Vigorous poletimber ash will be left to maintain stocking in hardwood stands and even smaller diameter saw logs will be left for spacing and density concerns if conditions warrant it, however thorough evaluations are being done in stands to decrease the percentage of ash.

Deer Impacts

Discussion occurred on the impact deer are having on recruiting successful regeneration in oak and hardwood stands. The county forester and liaison forester are now doing browse surveys and documenting the deer browse on the county forest. Impacts of the browse are very evident for forestry professionals, but hopefully the browse surveys will help educate others on the impacts of high deer

populations. If it's determined that browse is inhibiting regeneration in areas, the county may explore the option of applying for public land damage permits to harvest more deer on the county forest. The liaison forester is also on the local CDAC and conducts walkthroughs in the summer with the local wildlife biologist on DMAP entries, so he is well equipped with field level knowledge of deer browse and regeneration issues.

Forest Management

Miscellaneous forest management topics were briefly discussed. Liaison forester shared 2020 harvest establishment summary for the spring and fall timber sales. All fall sales are complete and the bid package will be mailed out for a late September bid opening. It's a decent bid package with nice sales, but it will very interesting to see where the timber sale market is at after the past six months of Covid 19 and the mill closure in Wisconsin Rapids.

One large red pine rotation harvest is active right now. The reforestation plan will be to replant this site back with red pine in the Spring of 2022. This site will need to be disk trenched and sprayed with herbicide prior to planting. A reforestation plan is currently being developed for this site.

County forester and liaison forester are ahead of schedule on establishing spring 2021 timber sales. This will leave some time this winter to go over the older recon on the forest and prioritize areas to look at and update.

2020 Marathon County/DNR Annual Partnership Meeting

When: Tuesday August 25th, 2020 10:00 AM
Location: Virtual Meeting. Call in number is: (866) 715-6499 Conference ID: 9867482935

AGENDA

Wildlife Update – Brandon Stefanski

- Previous year accomplishment reporting
- Current year progress
- Nickel an acre projects – available funds
- CDAC/DMAP update
- Prescribed Fire

County Conservation Aids Projects

- Closed projects in the past year
- Current year open projects
- 2020 - 2021 project proposals

County Forest Time Standards

- Fiscal Year 2020 final hours
 - DNR Liaison hours
 - Other hours
 - Distribution of hours relative to time standards worksheet.
- Fiscal Year 2021 hours
 - High priority workload - fall 2020 through early 2021.
 - Liaison and non-liaison hours
 - Annual adjustment hours
 - 15 year plan
 - Critical needs being met
 - Annual adjustment hours

Forest Certification

- 2020 Sustainable Forestry Initiative Audit Results
 - Corrective Action Requests (CAR's)
 - Opportunities for Improvement (OFI's)

Land Use Issues

- County Forest acquisitions – past year and outlook on future purchases
- Forest road projects
- ATV/UTV trails

Forest Health

- Invasives
- Oak Wilt
- Emerald ash borer

Forest Management

- Timber sale establishment summary
- Annual harvest goals
- TSI and Site Prep
- Recon
- Reforestation

Tom Lovlien

From: Cynthia Hassel
Sent: Tuesday, September 1, 2020 10:41 AM
To: Tom Lovlien
Subject: 2020 WEMS race numbers

49 racers @ \$5.25 participant fees = \$257.25
31 racers @ \$4.00 trail pass = \$124.00
Green Space Fee (did not use the chalet) = \$149.00
Collected 1 annual bike pass from racer = \$25.00

Total \$555.25

Wisconsin County Forests Association



2020 ANNUAL REPORT



WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION

Wisconsin County Forests Association, Inc. (abbreviated WCFA) was established in 1968 to provide a forum for the consideration of issues, programs, and policies of the county forests. WCFA works with and represents interests of Forestry Committees of County Boards responsible for forestry programs in each of its 30 member counties.

Mission

The Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long-term forest health and sustainability.

Board Members

- Norman Bickford, Burnett County (President)
- Joe Waichulis, Clark County (Vice President)
- Greg Sekela, Oconto County (Treasurer)
- Al Mans, Marinette County
- Myron Brooks, Taylor County
- Ed Kelley, Florence County
- Bill Schradle, Barron County
- Phil Schneider, Rusk County
- William Bialecki, Lincoln County
- Arnold Schlei, Marathon County
- Ed Wafle, Juneau County
- Alan VanRaalte, Oneida County
- Michael Luedeke, Spooner, WI (Director-at-Large)
- Henry Schienebeck, Rhinelander, WI (Director-at-Large)



LETTER FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

2020. What does one say about 2020? So much has changed in the world, it's hard to believe it's only been a year since I joined the Wisconsin County Forests Association as Executive Director. For me, 2020 has been the year of adjustment and learning, and in all honesty, a very challenging one. Trying to assimilate oneself into a new organization and structure amidst a global pandemic in a different place where everything is new is an extraordinary task. It's hard to adjust to a new normal when you have no idea what normal even is!

But regardless, despite the challenges, there's also been a lot of good. The Association and its members should be very proud of the work that we do. I have been thoroughly impressed in how this organization operates and the way the administrators lean on each other for assistance, and in turn offer help and advice. There's a wealth of knowledge amongst the 30 counties and each of them is stronger because of the collective.

A few highlights from my short time here include getting out and visiting a few counties (hopefully these will start back up soon), meeting partners and stakeholders, kicking off the WCFA Strategic Plan revision which will lead us into the future, attending the forest certification audit, seeing the 30th county added to the County Forest Law and sitting on the interview panel for the DNR's Chief State Forester position. Throughout the year, I've continually asked myself "What is WCFA?", "Are we doing what we say we'll do?", "Are we following the mission of WCFA?", and "How can we move forward and upward?" Certainly, all important questions as we look to the future while honoring the past.

It was apparent that for some it was very difficult to see Jane retire. I hope that I've been able to pick up where she left off and am successful in bringing WCFA to new heights. I sincerely thank all of you who have been supportive, encouraging and helpful to me over the last year. It's been a pleasure to become one of the team.

Sincerely,

Rebekah Luedtke

"DIG deep.
Get deliberate,
inspired and going."
- Brene Brown -



LETTER FROM ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Transition is the word pretty much summing up the last year for WCFA. Initially it was the transition of the Executive Director position. Adjustments were made by everyone involved as Rebekah joined the organization and took the reins. As the remaining staff person in WCFA, I was asked to help smooth the transition process and believe I was helpful in that aspect. Overall, I've been pleased how things have turned out. Bringing in someone from the outside is always a challenge but with it comes new opportunities and ideas.

The pandemic has also been a major transition, changing just about everything WCFA normally did and handled. I was disappointed with the cancellation of the Spring Meeting, one that took a significant time to put together and should have been one of the best WCFA ever had. We and others have had to adjust on the fly during this period trying to work around county and state restrictions. I also wish we could have had the second Strategic Planning Meeting and discussed at length how WCFA moves forward and does even a better job of serving its member counties.

The final transition for the year will be the movement of the WCFA office. To most of our member counties this won't be a big deal but will result in several organizational changes and a bit of muscle moving furniture. I do hope the move is a positive one for the organization but would have preferred this decision be done more closely in conjunction with the Strategic Planning process.

Finally, I want to thank Rebekah, the Board, staff of our member counties and our partner organizations for making my job easy and enjoyable. My hope is that I have met your expectations and provided you the support you needed. It's been wonderful working with the best people in the best county forest system in the world.

Best to all of you,

Gary Zimmer



RURAL WISCONSIN VOTERS COULD DETERMINE THE OUTCOME OF THE PRESIDENCY AGAIN

In just less than two months, rural Wisconsin voters will play a major role in determining if President Donald Trump wins another term or if former Vice President Biden takes office on January 20, 2021. This fall's election is the first time in 12 years that there will be no state-wide race on the ballot during a presidential year, so only the Presidential race is what will be motivating most voters this fall.

Currently, polls showing former Vice President and Democratic candidate Joe Biden leading Republican President Donald Trump consistently in the Badger State. A mid-August Marquette University Law School had Biden leading Trump by a 49 percent to 44 percent margin. However, this poll was done before either party's convention and Biden's pick of the U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California as his running mate.

Most state and national political pundits believe that Wisconsin remains competitive, however, nearly all of them agree that the President has some work to do here to win the state like he did four years. In 2016, then Republican candidate Donald Trump surprised nearly all political observers by winning the Presidency. One of the main reasons why he became President was because he was the first Republican to win Wisconsin since 1984 winning by a very narrow margin due to the huge vote margins he received in rural Wisconsin.

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* recently provided an excellent analysis of how Trump was able to win Wisconsin in 2016 by focusing on the stark differences between rural and urban voters in their choice for President. The premise of their analysis was that if you divide Wisconsin into "metropolitan" counties and "non-metropolitan" counties, the state's 46 non-metro counties contain around 25 percent of the state's voters.

The "non-metro" voters accounted for 60 percent of the raw vote shift toward the GOP from the 2012 election to the 2016 election, proving that rural voters were the reason for Trump's narrow victory in Wisconsin. Specifically, big voter swings in small towns was what put Trump over the top.

Trump won these non-metro counties collectively by almost 19 points. No GOP nominee since the 1980s had won them by more than five points, according to the *Journal Sentinel's* analysis. Moreover, if you drill down to the local level, the smallest shifts toward the GOP from 2012 to 2016 occurred in larger communities while the biggest shifts (Trump's biggest gains) occurred in the smallest communities.

Trump's margins were about 2 points better, collectively, than Republican Mitt Romney's in communities of more than 10,000 people. But they were 20 points better in communities of under 1,000 people.

Rural Wisconsin is in the position to once again determine who the leader of the Free World will be in the upcoming election. It is important to note that election day is on November 3, however, Wisconsin residents already have begun voting early or by mail.

Shawn Pfaff is the President of Pfaff Public Affairs, LLC a government and public relations firm that represents the Wisconsin County Forests Association in the State Capitol.



HIGHLIGHTS & LOWLIGHTS

➤ New Executive Director

The end of 2019 saw the transition of Executive Director as Jane Severt retired from WCFA after 12 years at the helm. Rebekah Luedtke joined the Association on October 1st, moving to Wisconsin from Minnesota. Rebekah continues to sit on a number of committees and boards on behalf of WCFA such as the Council on Forestry, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA), Trees for Tomorrow, and several others.

➤ Meetings and trainings

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 situation, the majority of WCFA's internal and external meetings have been cancelled or postponed since March. We're hopeful we can get back on track in 2021.

➤ Establishment of 30th County Forest

At the end of June, Adams County became the 30th county in Wisconsin to establish a County Forest by enrolling in §28.11. We're also very excited to have Adams County join as members of WCFA! Welcome!

➤ Market Shifts

2020 was definitely a challenging year for wood markets. While some markets went up, others went down reacting to the pandemic. The beginning of June saw the collapse of two of the largest mills in our region when Verso shut their doors in Wisconsin Rapids and Duluth. WCFA has been actively engaging with stakeholders, legislators and government officials in hopes that a solution will be found sooner rather than later.

➤ Forest Certification

The annual forest certification audit occurred in early August this year, after much discussion on whether or not to have the audit virtually or in person. After a fantastic showcase tour by Wood, Jackson, Marathon and Juneau Counties, the counties again received a clean audit, for the second year in a row! WCFA was present at the meetings, the field days and had one-on-one conversations with the auditors. These interactions have been proven to be beneficial and important to the whole audit, and this year was no exception.



➤ Outreach and Education

WCFA once again received a grant from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point to provide Environmental Education outreach hours. The counties did wonderful work and WCFA received \$50,000 for our collective efforts. In addition, WCFA funded a few other projects, through the GLTPA and the Wood Industry Collaborative, to help spread the message of sustainable forestry in Wisconsin.

WCFA also continues to be active with presentations at meetings and trainings, and staffing conference booths as time allows. In addition, we continue to sponsor and/or financially support education efforts through the North American Forest Partnership, Trees for Tomorrow and the Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Association. Lastly, WCFA is working to boost our online presence, including on social media. Our Facebook "likes" or "followers" have increased 19% over the course of the year. It is a goal to keep increasing our online portfolio over time, including giving the WCFA website a refresh in 2021.



➤ Strategic Direction

The current strategic plan was developed by WCFA's Board of Directors, along with county forest administrators and WCFA staff, and formally adopted in June 2016. Unfortunately, just as WCFA was beginning to update our strategic plan earlier this year, the COVID-19 pandemic was emerging, pausing the revision. We are hopeful we can get a revised plan completed in 2021. We encourage all members to participate in the planning workshops, and to dream big and help mold the future direction of WCFA.

➤ Public Affairs

WCFA Board of Directors continues to contract with public affairs representative, Shawn Pfaff of Pfaff Public Affairs, who resides near Madison. This relationship continues to be a positive one, and services performed by him proved valuable during the development of Wisconsin's FY20-FY21 State Budget. Services provided by Mr. Pfaff are in addition to ongoing efforts by WCFA's Executive Director as a registered lobbyist. This arrangement continues to allow increased contact with state legislators, the office of the Wisconsin Governor and other policy making agencies regarding a variety of important issues related to natural resource management, transportation, tourism, etc. Politics continue to be important in our role as managers of a significant public resource. In the last adopted State budget Wisconsin County Forests received an increase in county forest road aid payments from Wisconsin Department of Transportation and an increase in sustainable forestry grant dollars from Wisconsin's Forestry Account, thanks in part to the efforts of WCFA.

WCFA is gearing up for the next State budget cycle, which is set to kick off this fall. We are discussing priorities and preparing issue briefs to advocate for policy changes and address funding challenges facing the counties. In addition, we will continue to be involved with hosting forestry tours for members of Wisconsin's federal congressional delegation and state legislators as requested.

➤ National Forest Affairs

WCFA remains actively involved with issues surrounding national forest management. We continue to be a member of the Federal Sustainable Forest Committee (FSFC) and WCFA's Board of Directors is on record in support of FSFC's efforts. In addition, Gary Zimmer continues to serve as secretary/treasurer of that committee and WCFA pays

him to fulfill those duties. The FSFC is focused on improving forest health through sound and sustainable forest management as identified in the CNNF plan.

Besides FSFC, WCFA frequently engages with staff and leadership of the CNNF on a variety of topics, providing comments on projects and federal legislation related to national forest management. We anticipate that the Public Forest Resource Group (PFRG) will re-form once a Chief State Forester is named for the WDNR. The PFRG pulls together leadership from the top 3 public land owners in the state (CNNF, WDNR & County Forests) to discuss and collaborate on issues.



➤ Committee Work

WCFA has a few internal standing committees who meet on a regular basis to address issues, develop guidance and work on a variety of tasks. Standing committees include the Executive Committee, Legislative & Forest Certification, Budget, Motorized Recreation and Personnel.

Legislative & Forest Certification Committee addresses the bulk of the issues that come before WCFA, including forest certification matters, audits, and annual findings. Of notable interest, the committee recently took it upon themselves to craft internal guidance in dealing with HCVs on county forest lands. Guidance such as this will help promote consistency amongst counties in how they deal with HCVs, including providing critical information for newer administrators. Mike Peterson, Washburn County Forest Administrator, is the current Chair of WCFA's Legislative & Forest Certification Committee.

Our Budget Committee, chaired by Tom Lovlien, Marathon County Forest Administrator, is tasked with dealing with budget matters both internal to WCFA and external to the State budget. Tasks include evaluating and recommending WCFA's membership structure and annual dues to our Board, WCFA's annual operating budget, discussing options for new revenue and developing priorities for State budget cycles.

Our Executive Committee provides oversight and input on organizational matters and deals with any immediate or time sensitive issues that may arise. WCFA staff, Board officers and County Forest Administrator President Patrick Smith, Florence County Forest Administrator, and Vice President Brian Loyd, Juneau County Forest Administrator make up the Executive Committee.

LOOKING FORWARD: CHALLENGES, GOALS, PRIORITIES

It's imperative to our continued success to keep looking forward and critically think about what WCFA can do and how we accomplish those things. As we evaluate where to take WCFA, the revision of our strategic plan is the place to do that, including exploring new options for generating revenue. So, one of the main goals for WCFA in the next year is to do just that, revise and implement a new strategic plan. We strongly encourage and request all our Board of Directors and members engage in this process, for at the end of the day, we work for you.

Beyond completing a strategic plan revision, the main challenge for WCFA and the Counties in the foreseeable future will be the State budget cycle and how the programs and/or grants our members rely on will fare in the budget. WCFA will be there in every discussion possible, being an advocate for our members.



FINANCIAL REPORT

2020 WCFA BUDGET

INCOME		
Acreage Assessment	\$	119,767.00
Annual Dues	\$	46,400.00
Interest Earned	\$	1,000.00
UWSP Center for EE Grants	\$	50,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$	217,167.00
EXPENSES		
WCFA Board of Directors:		
Board Travel & Meeting Expenses	\$	8,000.00
Board Per Diem	\$	4,000.00
Total Board of Directors	\$	12,000.00
Other Expenses:		
WCFA Committees	\$	5,000.00
WCFA Exec. Dir. Travel	\$	7,500.00
Asst. Executive Director Travel	\$	3,000.00
Public Relations & Education	\$	5,500.00
Bookkeeping	\$	20.00
Historical Records	\$	50.00
Insurance	\$	1,500.00
Association Dues	\$	2,200.00
Miscellaneous	\$	1,000.00
Total Other Expenses	\$	25,770.00
Office Expenses:		
Printing/Copying	\$	400.00
Computer/Printer Supplies	\$	600.00
Office Equipment	\$	500.00
Equipment Reserve Fund	\$	-
Filing Fees	\$	20.00
Telephone	\$	2,700.00
DSL	\$	500.00
Office Rent	\$	1,200.00
Postage	\$	500.00
General Office Supplies	\$	800.00
Total Office Expenses	\$	7,220.00
Payroll Expenses:		
Executive Director Salary	\$	74,789.00
Health Benefits	\$	23,023.00
Executive Director Retirement	\$	7,479.00
Asst. Executive Director Salary	\$	25,200.00
WCFA FICA Tax	\$	7,645.00
Total Payroll Expenses	\$	138,136.00
Contract Services:		
Accounting Fees	\$	500.00
Legal Fees	\$	1,000.00
Webmaster Fees	\$	1,500.00
Clerical Assistance	\$	2,000.00
Lobbyist	\$	12,000.00
Total Contract Services	\$	17,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$	200,126.00
NET GAIN TO WCFA	\$	17,041.00

Summary Of 2019 Financial Report

Total Income	\$ 237,503.62
Total Expenses	\$ 230,065.92
Net Gain to WCFA	\$ 7,437.70

Current List of Assets

(as of September 15, 2020)

Checking	\$ 13,672.51
Savings	\$ 172,586.45
Certificates of Deposit	\$ 127,772.74
Total Net Worth	\$ 314,031.70

WCFA Financial History

	Net Worth at Year Start	Net Gain/Loss at Year End	Dues	Acreage Assessment
2008	\$ 46,118.64	\$ (8,419.63)	\$ 850	\$ 0.0261
2009	\$ 37,699.01	\$ 20,472.66	\$ 1,000	\$ 0.0470
2010	\$ 58,171.67	\$ 45,353.56	\$ 1,375	\$ 0.0425
2011	\$ 103,525.23	\$ 36,994.76	\$ 1,375	\$ 0.0425
2012	\$ 140,519.99	\$ 12,035.23	\$ 1,250	\$ 0.0400
2013	\$ 152,555.22	\$ 29,230.00	\$ 1,250	\$ 0.0400
2014	\$ 181,785.22	\$ (10,072.08)	\$ 1,250	\$ 0.0400
2015	\$ 171,713.14	\$ (23,869.09)	\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0460
2016	\$ 147,844.05	\$ 30,914.58	\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0460
2017	\$ 178,758.63	\$ 13,683.41	\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0500
2018	\$ 192,442.04	\$ 29,601.73	\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0500
2019	\$ 222,043.77	\$ 3,568.81	\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0500
2020	\$ 225,612.58		\$ 1,600	\$ 0.0500

2021 CALENDAR

(subject to change)

- Wednesday, March 17th - WCFA Strategic Plan Workshop (Marshfield)
- Thursday & Friday, March 18th & 19th - Spring Meeting (Marshfield)
- Wednesday - Friday, June 23rd - 25th - Summer Tour, Vilas County (Eagle River)
- Wednesday & Thursday, September 22nd & 23rd - WCFA Annual Meeting (TBD)

WE'RE MOVING

As of October 5th, the WCFA office will be located at the Lincoln County Service Center in Merrill. With the move, almost all of our contact information will be changing. Please share and update your files accordingly.

NEW ADDRESS:

Lincoln County Service Center
801 N. Sales Street, Room 158
Merrill, WI 54452

NEW OFFICE PHONE NUMBER:

To be distributed at a later date.

NEW EMAIL ADDRESSES:

- Rebekah Luedtke: rebekah@wisconsincountyforests.com
- Gary Zimmer: gary@wisconsincountyforests.com
- info@wisconsincountyforests.com

