

LEGISLATIVE AND BUDGET SUPPORT FOR WISCONSIN FORESTRY PROGRAMS

The Wisconsin County Forests Association respectfully requests:

- **Continued Legislative and Budget Support for Forestry Programs**

Wisconsin counties hold significant acreage of lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (State Statutes 28.10 & 28.11). Citizens of Wisconsin value these County Forests because they provide reliable raw materials for the forest products industry, as well as public access and recreation opportunities on more than 2.4 million acres of forested lands. These county forests are a large part of what makes northern Wisconsin unique and collectively make up the largest public forested land holdings in the State.

Sustainable forestry and public land management are critically important to our state's economic health. County Forest lands are managed by individual counties for the benefit of all citizens of Wisconsin. County Forests produced over 753,000 cord equivalents of wood products, valued at \$34,907,659 during fiscal year 2020, helping to fuel the \$24 billion forest products industry in Wisconsin. In addition, the abundant recreational opportunities provided by our programs are an important part of the State's vital tourism industry.

Wisconsin's Forestry Mill Tax was established in 1937 for the purpose of acquiring, preserving and developing the forests of the state. This account has supported forest management operations, including partial support for county forest programs, since its inception. The 2017 State Budget eliminated this funding source, forcing the DNR, specifically the Division of Forestry, to be funded from General Purpose Revenue funds.

In addition to sustainable funding, it is vital for the DNR, Division of Forestry to maintain their core budget. Through their funding, several entities receive critical assistance throughout the year. Specifically, for the county programs, the DNR supports staff funding and positions, such as time standard hours and administrator grants, which allow the counties to accomplish their annual goals and priorities.

WCFA continues to be concerned about the loss of a dedicated funding source for Wisconsin's productive forestry programs and respectfully requests Legislature provide and maintain long term adequate financial support at the level of the Forestry Mill Tax, for all forestry programs in Wisconsin, including the County Forest program.

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