



# BI-ANNUAL REPORT

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2023 - 2024

WISCONSIN COUNTY FORESTS ASSOCIATION



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# 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 the interests of those 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 nation's largest county forest program while ensuring long-term forest health and sustainability.

## **VALUES - OUR "WHY"**

We stand together for thriving forests, thriving counties and communities, and work we can be proud of.

## **BOARD MEMBERS**

Joe Waichulis, Clark County (President)

Phil Schneider, Rusk County (Vice President)

Bill Bialecki, Lincoln County (Treasurer)

Lolita Olson, Washburn County

Rick Seefeldt, Marathon County

Hank Novak, Marinette County

Chris Sybers, Burnett County

Henry Sullivan Florence County

Bill Schradle, Barron County

Joe Muehlbach, Vilas County

Mike Beyer, Oconto County

Jeff Olsen, Bayfield County

Jeff Barkley, Director-at-Large

Michael Luedeke, Director-at-Large

Henry Schienebeck, Director-at-Large





# MESSAGE FROM WCFA BOARD PRESIDENT

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2024 started out a little bumpy but led to some significant changes and maintenance that was really needed. First, reducing the WCFA areas from 5 to 3 and the number of board members from 18 to 15 will really help getting people to fill these slots. This will also help getting a quorum for meetings. We also filled all the vacancies on the board with people who have really been involved at the meetings.

Second, reviewing and making changes to our by-laws where needed was also a great help. As time goes on, things tend to get more complicated therefore re-evaluating the purpose of all the committees on a regular basis helps us stay on track with current requirements.

Third, recognizing Shawn Pfaff for all that he provides to us as a lobbyist, and for compensating him for the service he provides us. We've never been more reliant on a lobbyist. All of the above will make us more productive and function as one body.

For 2025, I would like to see our new Federal Administration work on bringing industry back to America. It would be great to see more "Made in USA" on furniture and other products from higher grade logs. Lastly, I am ready to take on 2025 with whatever challenges it has to offer. Let's do this together. I would also like to take time to thank all the County Forest Administrators for all your great work. The years of recognition alone, shows the dedication you have contributed to this organization.

Thank you everyone,

*Joe Waichulis, JR.*





# MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

I am pleased to present our bi-annual report, reflecting on the accomplishments and challenges faced by the Wisconsin County Forests Association over the last two years. It has been a time of growth, resilience, challenges and adaptability, and I am proud of the collective efforts of our entire group.

The Association continues to make significant strides and continues to be actively engaged in advocating for the forest industry in Wisconsin, addressing key issues that affect our members and forestry matters statewide. We continue to forge strong partnerships with stakeholders and legislators, enabling us to amplify our voice and influence positive change. Collaboration has been instrumental in advancing our shared objectives and promoting the interests of the county forests.

I'm happy to report our Association remains financially stable, having implemented a few new strategies to diversify and increase revenue, while executing cost saving measures without compromising the quality of our programs and services.

I want to extend my gratitude to each member, the Board of Directors and our knowledgeable staff for their amazing work, dedication and unwavering support. Together, we have navigated challenges and celebrated triumphs, reinforcing our commitment to the success of WCFA. Despite some significant personal challenges in 2024 which I wouldn't wish on anyone, I'm very proud of all the great things we have accomplished. Together, we are steering the course for a future where Wisconsin's county forests remain the gold standard, and a source of pride and inspiration.

I look forward to more years of collaboration, innovation and excellence. I encourage each of you to actively participate in WCFA, to contribute your insights, and be a part of the positive change we aim to foster.

In conclusion, it's important to remember there is no finish line. There's more work to be done. What continues to be our challenges? Have we made progress over the last year? Are we better now than we were years ago? I hope you all agree that the answer to the last question is yes!

It is a pleasure serving you. May the next year bring you health and prosperity.

*Rebekah Luedtke*



*Rebekah and her sister, Jessica (Alaska 2023)*



# MESSAGE FROM ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reflecting back is dangerous. Aspen stands that I set up for harvest in Langlade and Marathon County Forests in the 1980's are again mature; the first red pines that I planted along the Hunting River in Langlade Co. grew to the time for a second thinning before a windstorm took out the entire plantation; wood markets were full, then empty, then disappearing. Forest certification is loved, or not. Just a lot to ponder after 40+ years in this forestry business.

Overall, 2023 was a good year. We transitioned from Covid focused living back to a new normal of living with this disease and its ongoing mutations. We and our contractors survived the year despite soft wood markets. Northern counties lived through record snow, cold and damage to infrastructure from multiple blizzard snowstorms, while discussions about Climate Smart Forestry and Greenhouse Gas Emissions reduction heated up. We discussed the impact of a new listing for endangered bats and continued to discuss management for deer and wolves.

Our responses to the 2022 SFI Forest Management Standards were effective and helped us have a nearly clean audit. Burnett, Washburn, Sawyer, and Barron county forests hosted a great 2023 certification audit that was corrective action request (CAR) free! One observation (OBS) and one opportunity for improvement (OFI) were issued regarding BMP's. Specifically, these revolved around the consideration for a thorough pre-sale walk-through addressing the condition of BMP's before the pending harvest. This was a helpful finding in the spirit of continuous improvement.

Rebekah Luedtke led us well as WCFA continued to search for and find ways to add value for our members. WCFA facilitated training for assessing climate risk; a BMPs for Water Quality refresher; and planned timely presentations at our spring, summer and fall association meetings. The board of directors and staff implemented WCFA's strategic plan including new educational programs like the public service announcements in partnership with GLTPA and the development of a WCFA license plate. Dave Kafura and I swapped roles to better serve WCFA members. And I continued to be blessed with opportunities to help as the Assistant Executive Director. Some say that "everything that goes around, comes around" and while the issues that we work with aren't necessarily new, we can bring a new perspective to our discussions about how to improve our operations and the forests we manage.

Finally, I caught a new personal best northern pike fishing on Raven lake in western Ontario, Canada...a 43" pig of a fish that fell to a homemade spoon and was landed by a good friend.

Friends, family, faith and service to you through WCFA made 2023 memorable and holds hope for the future.

*Mark Heyde*



# MESSAGE FROM ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

## Challenges in 2024 -

WCFA continued its work to look ahead to successfully meet challenges for all of us. We came together to support Rebekah in her time of loss and made important contributions for endangered species management, forest certification, and strengthening partnerships. I worked with Heather Karaakka, DNR's bat HCP coordinator, on the implementation of the Landowner Inclusion provisions that enable county forests to enroll for coverage under the HCP and also annual reporting requirements.

I led a deeper look into the new SFI Fire Resiliency standard as well as additional requirements for Climate Smart Forestry. These issues were discussed at the Wisconsin State Implementation Committee (SIC). Conformance to the new European Union Deforestation Regulations (EUDR) was a important topic for both FSC and SFI and I attended numerous webinars and meetings to provide WCFA's input and track potential implications for the county forests. I also reviewed numerous FSC consultations including EUDR definitions, core labor requirements, advice notes, and chain of custody policy.

WCFA hosted a certification summit with our neighbors in Minnesota, all of the certified county forests in Minnesota, to share concerns, experiences and wisdom learned from 20 years of certification. The summit was successful and was the beginning of closer collaboration and information sharing between our programs.

Oneida, Price, Rusk, and Vilas County forests hosted the 2024 full recertification of the county forest FSC and SFI certification. These county programs showcased county forest management and conformity with FSC and SFI standards that resulted in a clean audit with no findings. This is the second full recertification, that happens every 5 years, where the county forests showed full conformance; a really historic achievement.



WCFA also successfully became an FSC member and supported and encouraged the Wisconsin DNR to also pursue membership and offer up the DNR certification coordinator to fill an FSC board vacancy. I represented WCFA at the GLTPA Logging Expo, the Wisconsin SAF annual meeting on Ecological Forestry, the Wisconsin Young Forest Program steering committee and numerous online meetings.

Finally, I improved on my personal best northern pike with this 43.5" fish caught on a cute little pink square-bill crank bait on a new lake in Ontario.



# MESSAGE FROM TECHNICAL RESOURCE ADVISOR

2023 started with the continuing saga of DNR enforcement action against Washburn County for a minor forest road maintenance project. USACOE became involved and once the snow melted, all parties visited the forest road. Rather than fight over minor differences, Washburn County conducted some minor Bobcat work, documented the work and submitted the results to USACOE, who followed up and were satisfied. WI DNR didn't respond to the corrective measures, and we have no idea whether the enforcement case was closed out, still open or completely forgotten.

Worked with DNR Forest Hydrologist to coordinate and present Water Quality BMP training for county staff; both new and refresher training. Submitted WCFA comments to APHIS (USDA Animal Health) regarding beaver damage management scoping policy. Many of our county forests contract with APHIS where beavers present significant risk to forest infrastructure. Trying to streamline the regulatory roadblocks to recreational trail grants issued to the County Forests. Many grants were languishing due to DNR perceived wetland issues. Dish out/splash outs in the middle of trails were thought to be a regulated wetland until a field visit could be arranged. Some of these grants were sitting for a couple of years waiting for work to be conducted. Attended a DNR sponsored grant training session for county recreational coordinators. Main reason was to ask regulatory questions for consistency/clarification purposes. In the fall, I participated in the DNR BMP monitoring program. Sites monitored were recently closed out sales on state and county forests. Participate on Wild Turkey Advisory Committee, BMP Advisory Committee and Governor's ORV Council.

In 2024, one of the most important projects is the development of a County Forest specific General Permit, which addresses common activities involving navigable waters and minor wetland impacts. The Board passed a resolution seeking the new permit. The resolution and supporting documents were sent to the WI DNR. Subsequently, a video conference was held with the WI DNR to discuss the creation of the new General Permit. WI DNR was not supportive of creation a County Forest specific General Permit but was interested in knowing what issues and concerns we have that would be addressed by creation of a new permit process. The issues were listed during the conference call, and WI DNR agreed to address them. Interestingly, those issues were then vetted internally with the DNR Div. of Forestry with no communication back to WCFA. WCFA sent another email to WI DNR summarizing the conference call issues and requesting a response. WI DNR acknowledged they were working through the issues internally and have recently asked that we prioritize our issues. That prioritization has been provided to WI DNR. The next step is planned for a meeting in mid-February. Stay tuned. Worked on several projects to resolve regulatory issues, including a snowmobile bridge in Burnett Co., a proposed pedestrian bridge in Lincoln County, federal regional permitting in the Lake Superior basin. Also worked on policy clarification/interpretation alignment between USACOE and WI DNR. Participated in the field certification audit in Rusk County. On behalf of WCFA, participated in the Wild Turkey Advisory Committee, Governor's ORV Council and to a lesser extent the Snowmobile Council.

*Dave Kafura*



# MESSAGE FROM WCFA LOBBYIST

## New Legislative Session Begins – Split Government with a Budget Surplus

For the fourth legislative session in a row, the Wisconsin State Capitol will have a “split government” during the upcoming 2025-2026 legislative session. Democratic Governor Tony Evers and Republicans, who control of the both the State Senate and State Assembly, will remain in power and will determine the State’s direction and budget priorities for the next two years.

This session, for the first time in nearly 15 years, will see a much closer divided legislature because of the new State legislative redistricting maps which were used for the first time in last November’s election. As a result of the new, ‘fair’ maps, Democrats were able to pick up 10 seats in the 99-seat state Assembly to reduce the GOP’s majority from the current margin of 64 to 35 to 54 to 45. In the State Senate, Democrats gained four seats to reduce the GOP’s majority from 22 to 11 to 18 to 15 in the 33-seat upper chamber.

Wisconsin State government has a \$4 billion surplus as it enters the 2025-2027 biennial budget debate, according to the State’s Legislative Fiscal Bureau. With the surplus, Democrats, led by Governor Evers, have demonstrated interest in funding K-12 public schools, the Universities of Wisconsin, childcare and targeted tax relief toward the middle class. Republicans, led by State Assembly Speaker Robin Vos and State Senate Majority Leader Devin LaMahieu, have shown a willingness to enact more comprehensive income tax relief and further reductions in state government costs and increases in the accountability of state government.

## WCFA Priorities Moving Forward

During the last four state biennial budgets under “split government,” WCFA has had success on several issues such as increasing funding for county forest road aids, county forest acreage share payments and obtaining a \$150 million in investment in local county roads that agricultural and timber producers use every day.

This session, WCFA will continue advocating for its interests during the upcoming legislative session and biennial budget debate.

### Key Budget Priorities:

- County Forest Administration Grant – Increase funding by \$250,000 annually
- Sustainable Forestry Grant – Increase funding by \$250,000 annually
- Wildlife Habitat Grant – Increase funding by \$130,000 annually
- Department of Natural Resources – Continued and Increased Support for the Division of Forestry

### Other Budget Priorities:

- County Forest Road infrastructure, transportation and aids
- Wisconsin’s Council on Forestry initiatives
- County Forest Acreage Share Payments
- Reauthorization of the Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program

### Legislative Priorities:

- County Forest Administration Grant Eligibility legislation
- Other legislation that may have an impact on county forests

Lastly, WCFA continues to be active in the State Capitol. No matter who’s in office or in charge, WCFA will continue to advocate to lawmakers and Administration officials on issues that impact our state’s local governments and communities.

*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.*





# 2023 SUMMER TOUR - JUNEAU & VERNON COUNTIES

The Summer of 2023 brought the Association and it's members to the very southern end of our footprint for the summer tour hosted by Juneau and Vernon Counties. We got lucky with abundant sunshine but paid for it with some very hot weather! Basing out of Mauston, Brian Loyd, Juneau County Forest Administrator, and his staff kicked us off with a dynamic tour of Juneau County with a visit to the Wisconsin Air Guard Hardwood Range, where a fighter jet gave the group a show, learned about irrigating red pine plantations and what a "seed bomb" was on a jack pine seeding site. The afternoon included a tour of an ethanol plant and travel trailer manufacturer, and ended at the Castle Rock Park discussing a recent Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Project.

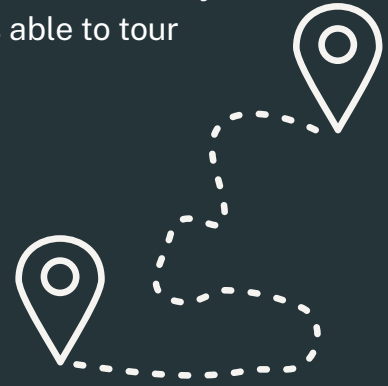
The next day, the group made their way to the Sidie Hollow County Park in Vernon County where Nick Gilman, the Vernon County forester, proved to be an excellent tour guide of the unique landscape of that area of the state, and the interesting and different challenges it brings. Many of the northern foresters were taken aback by the special features of our southern forests as experienced in the Duck Egg County Forest, where a round robin of presenters spoke on the forestry, dam management, waterways and ecology of the region.





# 2024 SUMMER TOUR - LINCOLN COUNTY

Last June, Dean Bowe, Lincoln County Forest Administrator, and his staff welcomed the WCFA group to Merrill for a couple of great days exploring Lincoln County. Just a few sprinkles but overall pleasant weather allowed the group to visit a couple of local companies in the morning, as well as a field visit to the Camp New Wood Park on the Wisconsin River to discuss brand new improvements to the campground. The day also consisted of stops to a waterfowl habitat project, red pine management and a drone demonstration by American Drone, which may be the future of herbicide spraying. The second day the group was able to tour the LP mill and the DNR LeMay Center in Tomahawk.





# 2023 FOREST CERTIFICATION AUDIT

Calm, professional, even enjoyable were some of Greg Peterson's, Sawyer County Forest Administrator, reflections about the audit team and audit process after the Sawyer County Forestry staff hosted the kick-off day for the weeklong audit in August 2023. The audit team of Kyle Meister, FSC lead auditor, and Shannon Wilks, SFI lead auditor, both from SCS Global audited the operations of Sawyer, Barron, Burnett, and Washburn County Forests against select indicators from the FSC US Forest Management Standard (2010) and the full SFI Forest Management Standards (2022). The audit team was supported by Rebekah Luedtke and Mark Heyde and Doug Brown (WDNR), as well as the staffs of the individual counties and other invited DNR specialists.

Sawyer County Forest (dual certified) showcased a variety of forest management and special management sites including elk habitat considerations. The county forest staff were at the top of their game as they reviewed management considerations and visited an active logging site. The day highlighted the excellent partnership between county forest and DNR staff and there were no audit issues or negative findings.

Day 2 split the team between Burnett County Forest (SFI only) and Barron County Forest (dual certified). Burnett County (Jake Nichols and staff) highlighted red and jack pine management in the NW Sands landscape along with fire history and the challenge of managing sharptail grouse across multiple county and state lands. In Barron County John Cisek, forest administrator, and Janette Cain, DNR, showed a mix of sites including aspen regeneration and high-quality oak and hardwood thinning's. Again, no negative audit issues were identified by the audit team.

Washburn County Forest hosted the final day and Mike Peterson, Washburn County Forest Administrator, and staff were also at the top of their game as they led the audit team through a variety of management sites. The county forest staff had proactively identified a BMP issue related to the buffer width around a lake and had taken action to correct a minor inconsistency with recommended standards. Shannon Wilks agreed with the actions taken and noted an Opportunity for Improvement for future timber sale establishment.

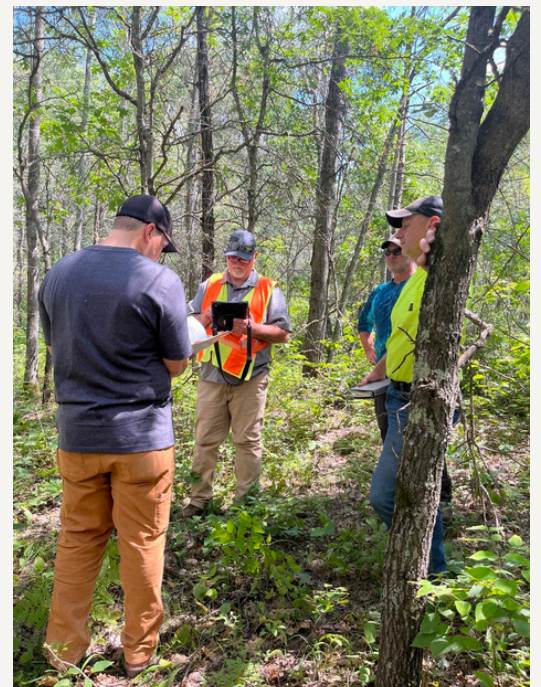




# 2023 FOREST CERTIFICATION AUDIT (CONT'D)

What did we learn about our county forest management systems during this audit cycle?

- Our management systems work as long as we remain committed to continuous improvement and training while paying attention to evolving certification standards.
- We had good discussions about the new SFI Climate Smart Forestry requirements, the related training taken by all county staff, and the individual climate risk analyses done by each county.
- County forests' commitment to implementing BMP's for water quality is essential as an underpinning of sustainable forest management.
- The cooperation between county forest staff and DNR specialists provides a lot of synergy and ideas for evolving forest management to meet future challenges.
- And we continue to search for ways to streamline the audit process and find value in forest certification.





# 2024 FOREST CERTIFICATION AUDIT

For the 20th consecutive year, twenty-seven of Wisconsin's County Forests have met the standards for certified forests as set by the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® (SFI®) and/or the Forest Stewardship Council® (FSC®). Furthermore, this year's audit resulted in zero areas for observation or identified for corrective action. SFI and FSC are two of the most widely recognized forest certification systems in North America and across the globe. The audit team from Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) Global Services conducted a full recertification evaluation of Wisconsin's County Forests in early August 2024. Certification means these forests conform to strict environmental, social and economic standards.

According to Rebekah Luedtke, Executive Director of the Wisconsin County Forests Association, "The charge of the Wisconsin County Forests is to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of forest ecosystems while providing benefits to the public. To receive a clean audit with zero findings on a system as large as the County Forests is unheard of, unprecedented and extremely impressive. We were not surprised the 2024 certification audit showcased the hard work county forest staff put into properly managing these forests."

Collectively, County Forests in Wisconsin represent the largest public landholding in the state covering over 2.41 million acres. Active sustainable forest management provides healthy forest conditions, robust wildlife habitat, clean water resources and numerous outdoor recreation amenities and services. In 2023 alone, forest products from these forests generated over \$36 million in timber sale revenue for the counties and townships encompassing these lands, reducing local tax levies while maintaining healthy and sustainable forests. Wisconsin's County Forest system also provides more than 9,000 miles of snowmobile trails, 1,800 miles of ATV/UTV trails, 1,800 miles of non-motorized trails (biking/hiking/cross-country skiing, snowshoe and horseback) and 3,340 campsites along with a wealth of hunting, fishing and nature viewing opportunities.

A cooperative management framework between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), the Counties and the Wisconsin County Forests Association provides the opportunity for the county forest group certification program. The DNR holds the group certificate for the 27 participating counties and provides technical support to county forest management efforts. Heather Berklund, Chief State Forester of the DNR, states, "DNR personnel work closely with the staff of the County Forests to manage these healthy, productive and sustainable forests. The county forest program is a unique partnership that stretches back over 90 years and is a fine example of local governments and state agencies working together to address statewide resource needs and services."





# LEGISLATIVE TOUR

In the fall of 2023, WCFA, along with the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, Washburn County and State Senator Romaine Quinn (R-Cameron), hosted a legislative forestry field tour for several interested lawmakers from near and far.

Rep. Chanz Green, Rep. Karen Hurd, Rep. Jeff Mursau, Rep. James Edming, Rep. Deb Andraca and Sen. Quinn spent the day in the woods, first, visiting an active timber sale, learning about what foresters and loggers do, and what it takes to take a tree from a seedling to a log.

The group also visited Wascott Wood Products, the largest supplier of wood posts for Menards, and the Larson Road rail yard to discuss the challenges with markets and transportation in the forest products industry.





# LEGISLATIVE CONNECTIONS

The Association continues to contract with Shawn Pfaff, of Pfaff Public Affairs, who has proven to be a great asset in Madison. This arrangement has significantly boosted the profile of WCFA in Madison and has increased contacts with state legislators, the Governor's office and other policy making agencies regarding important issues related to county forests, natural resource management, transportation and tourism. Politics are important in our role as managers of a significant public resource. Shawn also makes sure Rebekah doesn't get lost in the Capitol.

In the 2023 state budget, we were successful in advocating for and getting increases included for the county forest administration grant and the sustainable forestry grant. In the last few budgets, WCFA, through the Legislative & Forest Certification Committee and Board of Directors, has identified priorities and requests very early on in the process so that we can make contacts early and be more proactive. This strategy has proven to be very effective. And as of this report, we are currently working on legislation to expand the county forest administration grant eligibility requirements, which will allow work experience and schooling combined to qualify for the grant.

Lastly, every few years, WCFA holds the Spring County Forest Administrators Meeting in Madison. The objective is to expose county staff and leadership on the workings of budget and policy making in Wisconsin, and gives opportunity to connect with lawmakers. In February 2024, in conjunction with a regular line up of presenters, WCFA hosted a listening session in the Capitol. Several legislative staff stopped in to learn about county forests and the policy priorities and challenges that effect county forests. In addition, we hosted a reception that evening and invited legislators to come over for food and conversation.



With fancy new Association flannels to help identify our group, we significantly increased the exposure of county forests to those that work in the Capitol.



# COMMITTEE WORK

WCFA continues to have 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 and Personnel Committees. Committee membership is made up of County Forest Administrators, Board of Directors and/or WCFA staff. Our Executive Committee provides oversight and input on organizational matters and deals with any immediate or time sensitive issues that may arise. WCFA's Personnel Committee is charged with providing oversight on WCFA's staff.

The Legislative & Forest Certification Committee addresses the bulk of the issues that come before WCFA, including forest certification matters and developing recommendations for legislative action and state budget priorities. Mike Peterson, Washburn County Forest Administrator, continues to lead that committee. Work on the state budget starts well in advance when the Legislative & Forest Certification Committee meets in June of the even years. Last June, the committee discussed several ideas but increasing available funding for the three primary grants the counties receive (county forest administration grant, sustainable forestry grant and wildlife habitat grant) was recommended to the Board to be the top priority. Second priority is to increase DNR time standard hours and third is to support the DNR Forestry budget overall. A lot of work and discussion goes into these priorities, including data collection and strategy, but starting early has been key.

Our Budget Committee, chaired by Monty Brink, Oconto County Forest Administrator, is tasked with dealing with the financial matters of WCFA. Recent examples of the Budget Committee's work include evaluating and recommending WCFA's membership structure and annual dues to the Board, developing WCFA's annual operating budget, developing ideas for diversifying and increasing revenue for the Association, which includes the recently launched special license plate and establishing an investment strategy and portfolio. The Budget Committee also analyzed and recommended WCFA apply to the IRS for a 501(c)(3) designation, which was granted in January 2025.





# OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

Educating the public about Wisconsin's County Forests and the benefits associated with sustainable forest management continues to be a high priority for the Association. WCFA was once again lucky to receive a grant from the University of Wisconsin - Stevens Point to help with our outreach efforts. We also continue to sponsor a few scholarships allowing high school students from both urban and rural areas to attend a Natural Resources Careers session at Trees for Tomorrow in Eagle River, along with being a financial sponsor for Wisconsin Land & Water Conservation Association's annual Envirothon event for high schoolers.

In attempts to further boost our exposure, we also collaborated with the Great Lakes Timber Professional Association on a 30 second two-part outreach and education video in the fall & winter of 2023. In addition, staff continue to address county boards and county forestry committees in our member counties, counties interested in learning more about our work, and a variety of civic organizations regarding the significance of our county forests and WCFA. Presentations were also made to other organizations as requested, such as the Forest Resources Association and the Wisconsin Counties Association.



John Wendorksi, Clark County, and Rebekah Luedtke attend the UWSP CNR Job Fair.



Each fall a county hosts a Log-A-Load event for several hundred elementary students to help educate on natural resources. Left: Iron County in October 2024 Above: Burnett County in October 2023







Left: Mike Peterson and Duran Bjorklund from Washburn County show Sarah Godlewski, Wisconsin Secretary of State, around an active timber sale and discuss county forests.

Right: The FSC US Board of Directors visited Wisconsin in the fall of 2023 to learn about county forests and the challenges forest certification brings to land managers.



Left: Paul Fiene (Retired, Oneida County), Jake Truitt (Oneida County), Pat Smith (Florence County), Rebekah Luedtke at a golf outing where WCFA was a sponsor.

Right: WCFA Annual Meeting, Fall 2023

Every spring and fall, WCFA facilitates a conference for continuing education and networking







Top: 2023 Spring County Forest Administrators Meeting in Rothschild

Middle: Western Federal Caucus in Douglas County discussing forest management.

Bottom: Climate Smart Forestry workshop in Weston.



# FINANCIAL REPORT

## 2024 BUDGET VS ACTUAL

	BUDGET	ACTUAL
INCOME (DUES, INTEREST, GRANT)	\$261,364	\$240,187
OTHER INCOME	-	\$39,538
TOTAL INCOME	\$261,364	\$279,725
OPERATING EXPENSES	\$12,450	\$10,202
MEETING, TRAVEL, PUBLIC RELATIONS EXPENSES	\$74,860	\$69,257
PAYROLL & FRINGE EXPENSES	\$147,054	\$141,186
CONTRACT SERVICES	\$27,000	\$20,754
OTHER	-	\$38,328
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$261,364	\$279,725
NET GAIN / LOSS	-	-

### CURRENT LIST OF ASSETS

(as of 12/31/2024)

Checking	\$14,569
Money Market	\$79,382
Investments	\$296,550
TOTAL NET WORTH	\$390,501



# RECOGNITION

At the Summer Tour in June, we took time to recognize a recent retiree, Paul Fiene. Paul retired as the Oneida County Forest Administrator after 32 years working in the county forest system. We appreciate all of his hard work, dedication and leadership, both at the County Forest level and with WCFA. Don't be a stranger Paul!



We also recognize our recently departed Board members. Thank you for your dedication and service to the county forest system and to the Wisconsin County Forests Association. Your work and passion is greatly appreciated!

- Myron Brooks (Taylor County)
- Norm Bickford (Burnett County)
- Ed Kelley (Florence County)

## CALENDER - 2025

Spring County Forest Administrators Meeting will be at Hotel Marshfield March 27th & 28th.

County Forest Administrators Quarterly Conference Calls

- February 19th
- May 14th
- August 13th
- December 17th

Board of Directors Meetings (will be located where adjacent conference/tour takes place)

- March 26th
- June 18th
- September 24th

Summer Tour will be in Washburn County (but based out of Hayward) June 19th & 20th

Annual Meeting will be September 25<sup>th</sup> & 26<sup>th</sup>. Location to be determined.

# SUPPORT COUNTY FORESTS!

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Remember to purchase your  
special license plate today!



**INVEST IN  
FORESTS  
INVEST IN  
THE FUTURE**





