



April 9, 2015

Secretary Cathy Stepp
Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
101 S. Webster St.
Madison, WI 53707

Subject: Loss of support from DNR field foresters

Dear Secretary Stepp:

With Governor Walker's recent budget proposal, Wisconsin's private woodland owners are faced with another possibility that they will lose even more support from their county field foresters.

Field forester positions have been reduced from 100 FTE just a few years ago to only 69 FTE positions today, now making up only 11% of the positions funded by the forestry account. With proposed budget cuts, an additional 4 positions are targeted for elimination.

WAFO supports efforts to streamline government and is not opposed to position cuts when the ends justify the means. While many of the non-field forestry positions provide valuable service to the state, we feel that if positions must be cut, they be balanced against the many benefits county foresters provide in helping landowners grow their long term crop.

County foresters are the first point of contact for most private woodland owners looking for professional advice on how to better manage their timber resources. They understand that landowners have varied management objectives which need to be balanced with the goal of bringing timber to the market. They've shown willingness to work extra hours and attend various educational events and field demonstrations sponsored by woodland organizations. We believe your field foresters are key to helping our private landowners grow and market their timber resources.

Private landowners have seen a dramatic loss of support over the years from DNR field staff. When combined with increased MFL entry costs and increasingly stringent regulatory requirements, it has become much more difficult for landowners to be able to justify keeping their timber land given the options available to parcel it off for development or to divert it to other agricultural uses.

Please know we'd be happy to meet with you to discuss how we can work together and that we understand it is not easy to balance the many demands you face on how resources are best allocated. If you believe such a meeting would be helpful, please contact me at 218-4789 or info@wiafo.org.

Sincerely,

Kristie Kasbohm, Executive Secretary
Wisconsin Alliance of Forest Owners

CC: Paul DeLong, State Forester; Members, Joint Committee on Finance