



July 12, 2021

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Attn: Secretary Preston Cole
101 S. Webster St.
Madison, WI 53707

Subject: Forestry Strategic Plan and Support for DNR Field Foresters

Dear Secretary Cole,

When developing the new Forestry Strategic Plan, we would like to suggest that a priority be placed on the important work of your field foresters.

Field forester positions have been reduced from 100 FTE just a few years ago to only 65 FTE positions today, now making up only 11% of the positions funded by the forestry account.

Private landowners have seen a dramatic loss of support over the years from DNR field staff. When combined with increased MFL entry costs and the expense of contracting costly private consultants, it has become much more difficult for landowners to be able to justify keeping their timber land. Landowners value the opinions field staff can offer whether it be to review their MFL plan or to offer recommendations on the availability of cost sharing.

County foresters are the first point of contact for most private woodland owners looking for knowledgeable advice on how to better manage their timber resources. They understand that landowners have varied management objectives that need to be balanced with the goal of bringing timber to the market. Historically, these individuals have shown dedication through their willingness to work extra hours and attend various educational events and field demonstrations sponsored by woodland organizations. Although consultants play a big role in the process, we believe your field foresters are key to helping our private landowners grow and market their timber resources.

Past realignments have contributed to confusion and inconsistency with tax law foresters and integrated foresters regarding their roles and workload. For example, when site inspections are needed to determine viability of a harvest, some MFL landowners are given direct support from DNR staff while others have been told to work with consultants.

Also there seems to be some inherent inefficiencies that have been caused by a breakdown in communication between tax law foresters and landowners. Our current experience has been that



there are often long waiting times when landowners request a DNR field forester's assistance, something that is especially important for midterm noncommercial management assistance. Perhaps a less structured and more flexible approach that would allow regional team and field foresters to define how best to deliver assistance to private landowners.

We trust that you will also be seeking and valuing the input front line foresters can provide on how services can be best delivered to private landowners.

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.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kristie Kasbohm', is positioned below the word 'Sincerely,'.

Kristie Kasbohm
Executive Director
Wisconsin Alliance of Forest Owners

CC: Heather Berklund, State Forester