



Policy & Legislative Committee
SAF Executive Committee
January 11, 2012

Wisconsin Legislative Updates

The Wisconsin Legislature will be in session with a normal floor period from January 17, 2012 through March 15, 2012. Both houses will also hold a limited floor period from April 24, 2012 through May 3, 2012 for special unfinished items. Those will be the last floor periods of the legislative session, the next session will begin after the fall elections in January, 2013. The Legislature will continue to work on several forestry related bills.

SB 126: This bill allows the owner of managed forest land (MFL) to extend the due date for payment of yield taxes by an additional ten years from the date on which those taxes would ordinarily be due if certain circumstances are met. The bill also allows the owner of managed forest land who qualifies for the extension of the yield tax due date to also pay the same tax rates for the first 10 years of a new MFL order if they re-enroll their expiring MFL lands back into the MFL program. It was referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry & Higher Education on 6/10/11. No public hearing has been scheduled for this bill.

SB 161 & AB 402: This bill was prepared for the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on Review of the Managed Forest Land (MFL) Program. The companion bills were referred to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Forestry & Higher Education on 8/5/11 and the Assembly Committee on Forestry on 12/1/11. No public hearings have been scheduled for these bills but we expect them in late January or early February. A substitute amendment has been introduced in both houses correcting several technical issues. The study of the MFL was authorized in late June 2010. The bill contains seven proposed legislative changes relating to the Managed Forest Law.

AB 99 & SB 75 (WI Act 50): Two deer hunting bills were introduced and hearings held on 4/27 and 5/5 respectively in each chamber's Natural Resources committee. SB 75 passed the full Senate and was referred to the Assembly Natural Resources Committee on 5/17/11. Both bills were passed out of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee on 8/2/11 and referred to the Assembly Committee on Rules on 8/2/11. Passed and became law on 11/18/11.

AB 163: This bill creates a vacant land disclosure report, similar to the real estate condition report, on which the owner of the property must disclose certain conditions of the property

of which the owner is aware. For example, the owner must disclose whether he or she is aware of underground storage tanks on the property; of any planned public improvements that may result in special assessments; of any significant odor, noise, water intrusion, or other irritants coming from neighboring property; of any burial sites or archeological artifacts on the property; of whether the property is connected to electricity, cable, municipal water and sewer, telephone service, or natural gas; or of whether the land is in a certified farmland preservation zoning district or subject to a farmland preservation agreement. The property to which the vacant land disclosure report applies is property that does not include any buildings. This bill was referred to the Committee on Energy, Biotechnology, and Consumer Protection on 8/2/11. No hearing has been held in this committee.

AB 342: This bill introduced by Representative Mursau provides exemptions for certain parcels of MFL lands to be withdrawn from the law without the assessment of withdrawal taxes and fees. The bill was referred to the Assembly Committee on Forestry and a hearing was held on 11/1/11.

AB 388: Under current law, DOT may issue annual or consecutive month permits for the transportation of raw forest products in vehicle combinations having a gross weight not exceeding 98,000 pounds if the vehicle combination has six or more axles and meets other criteria (RS permit). "Raw forest products" includes logs, poles, cordwood, wood chips, sawdust, and pulpwood.

Under this bill, an RS permit issued by DOT may not contain any condition or limitation imposed by DOT in connection with the thawing of frozen highways that are not state trunk highways or connecting highways, except that the operation of the vehicle combination under the RS permit is subject to posted weight limits on these local highways. It was referred to the Assembly Committee on Transportation and a hearing was held on 12/13/11.

DNR Division of Forestry Strategic Direction Update

Following the completion of Wisconsin Statewide Forestry Assessment & Strategy (June 2010), the DNR developed a Division Strategic Plan. This plan was approved by the Natural Resources Board in May 2011. Department has released a final version of Division of Forestry Operations Plan for the Strategic Direction on December 22, 2011. The next step in this effort is to begin to align staff and fiscal resources to meet the Strategic direction. Organizational structure changes will be targeted to be in place by July 1, 2012.

Submitted by Bob Mather
Policy & Legislation Chair
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