



## Wisconsin SAF – Chapter Configuration

### White Paper

### May 2018

#### Introduction

The WI Society of American Foresters (SAF) State Executive Committee has taken up the task of examining the geographic configuration and number of state chapters to determine if an alternative exists that would enhance SAF's ability to be more robust and better serve its members and Wisconsin's forestry community.

The purpose of this white paper is to provide background information and solicit input from WI SAF members.

#### Background

There are six WI SAF regional chapters and two student chapters (UW-Stevens Point and UW-Madison). As described in the WI SAF Bylaws Article 10 (last amended March 2011), Chapters shall hold at least one meeting each year to retain their authorization and be governed by chapter officers including a chair, chair-elect, secretary, and treasurer. The secretary and treasurer may be the same person. Officer terms can be one or two years. Chapter chairs are part of the State Executive Committee. There are 17 executive committee positions, plus 18 chapter positions (using 3 per chapter), for a total of at least 35 statewide officer positions.

WI SAF is one of 33 state or multi-state units, and for units with similar membership numbers, WI SAF's chapter configuration is viewed as reasonably typical.



Wisconsin SAF Chapter Map

#### Challenge

For some time, recruiting WI SAF members to fill chapter and state executive officer positions has been very difficult. Positions remain vacant or individuals stay in positions long past their initial commitment and desire. An informal survey of the current executive committee members

revealed that, of the 24 individuals that are serving, about two-thirds have put in 8 or more years in a state officer role with the average being a little over 11 years. Additionally, members of the executive committee often serve in multiple roles. On average, the current executive committee members have served in at least three different roles at the chapter and/or state level, often volunteering to accept additional roles rather than see them stay vacant.

Because of open positions and struggling chapters, local WI SAF activities are limited, and member enthusiasm can suffer. This impacts membership numbers and contributes to a downward trend of SAF involvement.

WI SAF membership has typically followed the national trend, with a general decline over the last ten years, and a slight uptick more recently (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

WI SAF membership broken down to the chapter level is provided in Figure 2. The six regional chapters vary in size from roughly 30 to 85 members, with the Northeast being the largest and the Southeast being the smallest. Excluding 2016 (when student member chapter affiliation in the national database was changed to mailing address), the six chapters all show about the same general decline. Based on percent, the Northeast chapter has changed the least while the Southeast, Mid Wisconsin, and Fox River Valley chapters all show about the same 27 percent decline.

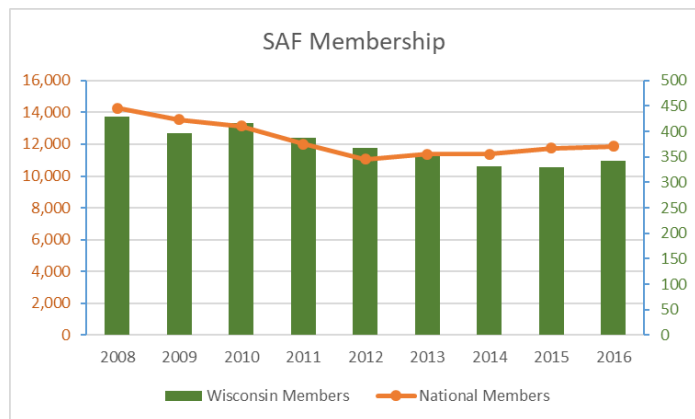


Figure 2

WI SAF Chapter Membership										
Year	Chippewa	Fox River Valley	Mid Wisconsin	Northeast	Southeast	Southwest	UW-Madison	UWSP	WI	Grand Total
2008	60	33	72	95	36	68	19	41	5	429
2009	47	29	73	96	34	60	18	35	4	396
2010	49	27	70	96	33	57	18	62	4	416
2011	48	28	69	94	33	54	14	43	4	387
2012	49	30	60	84	28	46	19	50	2	368
2013	46	28	56	78	30	43	23	49	2	355
2014	46	25	51	76	27	43	20	42	2	332
2015	46	24	52	77	26	52	19	30	3	329
2016	51	30	74	87	29	71	*	*	*	342
<b>Average</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>373</b>

\* Chapter affiliation reported based on mailing address for 2016

Chapters report they typically have from six up to ten members that are active and may be involved in planning or that attend chapter functions. This tends to be the same core group of individuals.

The causes for the challenges faced by WI SAF are likely numerous and not unique to WI SAF. While some of these can be addressed, it is probable that it will remain difficult to consistently

maintain vigorous regional chapters that operate with more than a few members. While a couple of chapters, thanks to a few dedicated individuals, are very active, others struggle. The Northeast chapter, the largest in the state, has been without officers and has not held a regional meeting for at least three years, and per the bylaws, should be deactivated.

Recognizing the problem at hand, this effort seeks to identify alternatives to the current six-chapter configuration.

### Considerations

A few key principles were identified for consideration while evaluating any future options.

- An important SAF value is the connection provided to others in the forestry community.
- SAF officer positions provide valuable leadership experience and chapters offer perhaps more attainable opportunities to a greater number of individuals as opposed to state level positions.
- SAF members value staying abreast of local relevant topics.
- Local events minimize travel time and expenses.
- Relevance and opportunities for young professionals need to be emphasized.
- WI SAF needs to do more; the status quo is not desirable.
- Chapter treasuries need to be considered and availability of funds for local use retained.

To summarize, any new configuration should retain and/or enhance:

- Local relevance for members
- SAF member and forestry community interaction
- Opportunities for members to foster leadership skills
- Increased activity level

The WI Society of American Foresters (SAF) State Executive Committee is asking for your feedback on membership activity, the geographic configuration, and number of state chapters in Wisconsin. The WI SAF State Executive Committee believes that an active and enthused society enhances opportunities for members, helps to grow membership, and provides compounding benefits for our entire forestry community. To provide your feedback, please complete the following online survey no later than Friday, May 18<sup>th</sup>. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WISAF>

Participating in this survey should pose no risks to you. Your participation is voluntary, and you can choose not to participate in the survey without being penalized or disadvantaged in anyway. The survey is expected to take less than 10 minutes to complete, and your responses will help the WI SAF State Executive Committee understand how to geographically configure the state chapters to be more robust and to better serve members and Wisconsin's forestry community.

If you have questions or comments regarding this effort or the WI SAF, feel free to contact a member of the WI SAF executive committee. Contact information is on the WI SAF website at <http://www.wisaf.org/> Thank you for your feedback and for your support of WI SAF.