

January 23, 2019

The Honorable Tony Evers
Governor of the State of Wisconsin
115 East, State Capital
Madison, WI 53702



Re: Statement on Wisconsin's Forestry Mill Tax

Dear Governor Evers:

We are contacting you about restoring segregated funding for the Forestry Account that funds the DNR's forestry program and related administrative activities. Act 59, passed as part of the 2017-2019 biennial budget, eliminated the forestry mill tax beginning with property tax assessments as of January 1, 2017, and shifted DNR forestry funding to general purpose revenues (GPR).

The WI Chapter of the Society of American Foresters has grave concern that loss of the stable funding source that has supported state forestry programs for almost 100 years jeopardizes Wisconsin's forests and the timber and related industries that rely on our state's valuable forest resources.

This funding source, dedicated to acquiring, preserving, and developing our forests, has provided the stability needed to address the long-term aspects of forest management. The forestry mill tax supports DNR services such as the private forestry program, fire protection, assistance to the county forests, forest health, urban forestry, and forest marketing and utilization. It also helps fund Wisconsin's Knowles-Nelson Stewardship Program and many other valuable conservation activities. As a result, Wisconsin's forests, after having been restored from a decimated condition to the 17 million acres of productive and healthy forests we have today, are a uniquely valuable state resource.

The forest industry is second only to agriculture in importance to our state's economy. The forestry mill tax helps to sustain Wisconsin's continued commitment to promote a top economic sector. Not having a stable funding source for forestry activities opens the likelihood that the long-term benefits supported by sound forest stewardship will succumb to short-term and limited-vision budget focused motives.

The Society of American Foresters, since its formation in 1900, has set the standards in forest management, bringing science, best practice, and the best people together to actively shape the future of the profession and advance sustainable management of forest resources. Based on this foundation, and our knowledge of the importance of a stable funding source to support sound forest stewardship, we urge you and the legislature to reinstate the mill tax or a similar segregated funding source for the Forestry Account.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further, along with any other forestry issues where you feel we could be of assistance.

Sincerely,

Jeff Kante

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cc: DNR Secretary Preston Cole
DNR Division of Forestry Administrator Fred Souba