Wisconsin Forestry Center

2024 Annual Report

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT | PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT | APPLIED RESEARCH | PUBLIC OUTREACH

ABOUT THE WFC

The Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC), part of the College of Natural Resources at UW-Stevens Point, serves Wisconsin's forestry community through professional development, workforce development, applied research, and public outreach initiatives that promote vibrant, sustainable forests and forest-based economies.

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT

WISCONSIN FORESTRY CAREERS COALITION (WFCC): Continued to develop the WFCC, a forestry education and career pathway program, in collaboration with 63 partners and support from an $8 million state grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation.

- **FORESTRY ADVANCEMENT CENTER:** Building completed in September with a Grand Opening on October 22 to celebrate the project's completion.
- **HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM:** Exhibited the curriculum at two teacher conferences and five high school events, engaging 752 students and teachers. Menominee High School pilot tested the Forestry Skills curriculum the spring. In April, three teacher trainings - simulator, sawmill and kiln, and chainsaw safety training - equipped 18 teachers to teach lessons from the curriculum. In July, the first Forestry Skills Camp was held at CWES with seven students. By fall, the curriculum was made available to all schools, and nine schools have since used it, reaching 288 students.
- **FOREST OPERATIONS TRAINING PROGRAM:** First offering of the program ran from October 21 to November 22, with six participants completing the training. Stumpage purchased from the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands provided hands-on harvesting practice for students. Proceeds from the harvest will support future offerings of the program.
- **MILL TECHNOLOGY TRAINING PROGRAM:** Crews completed the footings, foundation, and service runs for the building with the building structure shipped January 28. The immersion program features five classes - Sawmill Safety & Maintenance, Sawmill Operations, Intro to Hardwood Grading, Intro to Kiln Drying, and Lumber Manufacturing - totaling six credits and 198 hours.

The first cohort of the Forest Operations training learning harvesting in-field.

FOREST OPERATIONS TRAINING NETWORK: Network spans six states and continues to build a national coalition of training providers. The first in-person summit at Shasta College in April highlighted Shasta's program and provided space for participants to collaborate, plan, and address shared challenges.

TREE FELLING COURSE: In March, a three-day Science of Tree Felling course was hosted at Treehaven with five high school students and 24 UWSP students. Support from the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, DNR, Milwaukee Tool, and Husqvarna enabled the high school students to attend at no cost.

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

WORKSHOPS/TRAININGS: Offered eight in-person, virtual, and online workshops, engaging a total of 319 participants. The Prescribed Fire webinar series continued, reaching 2,502 participants from North America, Asia, Africa, South America, Australia, and Europe.

ONLINE COURSES: Offered six on-demand online courses, with a total of 161 participants.

CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS: Offered the Foundations of Utility Vegetation Management (UVM), with 20 graduates, and the UVM Professional certificate with 28 graduates, and the Certified UVM Professional® credential with 15 graduates.

SILVICAST PODCAST: **Released** 12 episodes in Season 5 with more than 17,126 downloads worldwide. By the end of 2024, total episode downloads surpassed 60,000.

The WFC hosted 47 attendees at an Agroforestry for Foresters field tour in June 2024 at the Savanna Institute.

APPLIED RESEARCH

SFI DEFECT GUIDES: Following the 2023 publication of A Photographic Guide to Stem Defects in Hard Maple, we completed a project on red oak defects. The red oak defect guide is expected to publish in Fall 2025.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS RESEARCH: Results from the needs assessment were compiled into an executive summary and full thesis. The assessment identified current skill gaps and training preferences of forestry-related professionals in Wisconsin, barriers preventing training participation, and training outcomes that motivate training engagement. The paper is expected to publish in Spring 2025.

DNR NEW-FORESTER TRAINING: Offered one Silviculture Orientation course with 20 participants and one Introduction to WisFIRS course with 21 participants.

DNR LOCAL USE LUMBER CERTIFICATE: Facilitated marketing and registration for seven Wisconsin Local Use Dimension Lumber Grading trainings, reaching 56 participants.

NRCS NATIONAL FORESTRY HANDBOOK: Continued our contract with the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to assist in revising the National Forestry Handbook, a training resource for conservation planners.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

CONFERENCES AND MEETINGS: The WFC staff was represented at several conferences and meetings, including: Wisconsin Arborist Association (WAA) Conference, GLTPA Spring Celebration, WSST Teacher Conference, FRA National Meeting, FRA Regional Meeting, Forestry Workforce Summit, Wisconsin Council on Forestry Meetings, WAAE Teacher Conference, Great Lakes Logging & Heavy Equipment Expo, Trees & Utilities Conference, and the WI SAF Meeting.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS: In partnership with the UW-Stevens Point LIFE program, offered three in-person and one virtual workshop, engaging 76 participants. In partnership with the UW-Stevens Point Continuing Education program, highlighted forestry careers as a keynote at UWSP STEAM Day, reaching 292 students.