

# Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition

## *Moving Forestry Forward*



Gov. Tony Evers and WEDC Secretary Missy Hughes announced the \$8 million grant to the Wisconsin Forestry Center in June 2022.

# Progress Report

**Issued February 2023**

for the period covering July-December 2022



Wisconsin Forestry Center  
College of Natural Resources  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

# Grant Summary

The Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC) at UW-Stevens Point (UWSP) has launched the **Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition** to address the urgent need for skilled workers in the forestry industry. With support from an \$8 million state Workforce Innovation Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. (WEDC) and in collaboration with partners, the WFC is developing a forestry education and career pathway program. The program has three focus areas: educating high schoolers through applied curriculum, training entry-level employees through immersion programs, and raising public awareness of the forest industry and its careers.

## Coalition Goals

The Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition will:

- Develop and implement public outreach that increases awareness of the forestry sector and its careers.
- Expand high school forestry education with a certified skill development curriculum for workforce entry.
- Provide affordable, short-duration, post-high school immersive training programs that lead to stable, well-paying jobs.
- Build career development pathways via credit-eligible certificate programs.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to acknowledge and thank all of you, our partners, who are making this Wisconsin forestry workforce recruitment and development program a reality. The progress we have made so far and our goal for a sustainable forestry workforce would not be possible without your support. **Thank you!**

### Coalition Partners

- UW-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources
- Northcentral Technical College
- Nicolet College
- University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension
- LEAF – Wisconsin’s K-12 Forestry Education Program
- Menominee Indian High School
- Tomahawk High School
- Antigo High School
- Merrill High School
- Rhinelander High School
- Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) 8 and 9
- Milwaukee Tool
- Ponsse North America
- Case Construction – Tomahawk Customer Center
- Cleereman Industries
- Tigerton Lumber Co.
- Kretz Lumber Co., Inc.
- Menominee Tribal Enterprises
- Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources-Division of Forestry
- Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands
- Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
- Wisconsin Chapter—Society of American Foresters
- Grow North
- New North

# Overall Program Accomplishments

## Partner Kickoff Meeting

In September, partners gathered for a grant kickoff meeting at the UWSP Treehaven field station in Tomahawk. Attendees reviewed the purpose and goals of the grant program, discussed timelines and partner roles, defined what a successful forestry workforce development and recruitment program should look like, and agreed on communicating progress through semi-annual partner reports and annual in-person meetings.

## Administrative Assistant Hired

Bethany Slembarski was hired as the WFC's administrative assistant in July. Her duties include tracking grant expenditures, purchasing capital and non-capital goods, assisting with financial reporting, and organizing regular partner communication.



Bethany Slembarski

## Capital Purchases

The WFC has purchased capital equipment that will play an important role in public outreach, the high school curriculum, and immersion trainings. The equipment includes: two portable sawmills, two harvesting simulators, two equipment trailers, a skid steer and grapple, and a log loader. The portable sawmills and equipment trailers have been delivered.



DWD Secretary Amy Pechacek learned how to use a timber harvester simulator from Joe Salzer of Ponsse North America at a grant partners roundtable discussion in October.

## Forestry Advancement Center

The WFC is working with UWSP and UW System to hire an architect/engineer to develop design concepts for the Forestry Advancement Center. The center will be located at Treehaven in Tomahawk and will be used for the Forest Operations training program and one-week Skills Camp for high school students.

## Branding and Marketing

The WFC has worked UWSP Communications and Marketing to discuss grant program marketing strategies including: program title and slogan, branding graphic elements, and a communications plan. The WFC also developed a webpage about the Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition.



The WFC and grant partners hosted DWD Secretary Amy Pechacek and WEDC Secretary Missy Hughes in October for a roundtable discussion about the forestry workforce recruitment and development program.

## WEDC/DWD Roundtable Discussion

The WFC and grant partners participated in a roundtable discussion in October with secretaries from the Department of Workforce Development (DWD) and WEDC. The roundtable discussion focused on the goals and intentions of the grant program, as well as ways DWD and WEDC can support these efforts. The secretaries also got the opportunity to experience a Ponsse North America timber harvesting simulator.

# High School Program Accomplishments

Jared Schroeder and partners working on high school curriculum development developed the following priorities for September through December:

## Curriculum and Assessment Development

- » Jared Schroeder was hired as the WFC's **high school curriculum program manager** in September 2022.
- » The **first two modules** of the high school program, Tree Identification and Biology and Forest Health, have been outlined.
- » Working with CESA 8 and 9 to develop a **career pathway plan** in forestry under the proposed agriculture program slated to be introduced next year.



Jared Schroeder



Partners involved in the high school program gather during the grant kickoff meeting in September 2022.

- » A portfolio-based **assessment** is under consideration and will be presented at Jared's focus group in early January.

## State Certification

- » On hold pending development of the curriculum and next DWD application period, slated for 2024 or 2025.

## Recruitment and Outreach

- » Jared Schroeder, Keith Turnquist, and Les Werner are preparing to exhibit and present at the **Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers (WSST)** and **Wisconsin Technology Education Association (WTEA)** conferences in mid-March.

# Mill Technology Immersion Program Accomplishments

Northcentral Technical College (NTC) and partners supporting the Mill Technology immersion program completed the following objectives from September through December:

## Building Design and Equipment

- » NTC completed the bidding process for the **sawmill equipment** and received two bids. In early November, NTC sent a letter of intent to the vendor, Cleereman Industries. The sawmill is expected to be installed in spring 2025. The bids exceeded the budget by \$244,942 due to inflation and supply chain issues, so NTC and the WFC are working on a strategy to overcome the deficit.
- » NTC along with potential **head saw simulator**

vendors started drafting an request for proposals for the simulator, and applied for grant funds from to purchase of the simulator (requested \$40k and awarded \$80k).

- » Renderings of the **sawmill facility** at NTC, which will be part of the Wood Technology Center of Excellence, are in progress. NTC is now working on the building design with the architect. The design will be finalized after receiving the equipment layout plan from the equipment vendors so the design can incorporate space for electrical, etc.
- » NTC is currently developing documentation seeking **Facility Development Approval** from the Wisconsin Technical College System.



New Saw Mill Building | Northcentral Technical College Antigo

7710 | October 31, 2022  
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Initial concept design for the Northcentral Technical College sawmill facility in Antigo.

## Recruitment and Marketing

- » NTC held **Wood Technology Discovery Days** in mid-October. The event consisted of 150 students from eight high schools attending 2-hour sessions. The students explored career opportunities in the forest products industry, learned about the increased demand for graduates of wood programs, completed hands-on project (wooden brain teaser of different wood species), watched a mechanical testing demonstration, and toured the Wood Technology Center of Excellence.
- » NTC's Logan Wells assisted with an article written by the WFC for the **Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association magazine** highlighting the equipment and impact of the training sawmill.
- » The WFC met with the North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board and UWSP Continuing Education to develop a strategy for **participant recruitment** for the Mill Technology immersion program.



Logan Wells

## Curriculum and Assessment Development

- » NTC has identified a **support team**: Dianne Carroll, curriculum, and Tracy Ravn, K-12.
- » NTC is actively looking to **hire a full-time wood science faculty** so Wells can move into the role of project manager full-time and begin working on curriculum.



By Megan Espe  
Outreach Education & Communications Program Manager  
Wisconsin Forestry Center, UW-Stevens Point

For Wisconsin residents, the logging and forest products sector is big business. In 10 counties, it's the No. 1 employer, and it ranks among the top 10 employers in 31 counties. This natural resource requires sustainable management by trained professionals.

However, an aging workforce and declining population have resulted in significant employee shortages and skill gaps, an issue exacerbated by the pandemic. Based on surveys and industry reports, employers in all forestry sectors have an urgent need for skilled workers, particularly entry-level employees.

The Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC) at UW-Stevens Point has launched the Wisconsin Forestry Career Pathway Program to address the urgent need for skilled workers. With support from a three-year \$8 million state Workforce Innovation Grant and in collaboration with partners such as the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association, the pathway program will educate students and train workers for a forestry career pathway with growth potential.

For years, forestry employers visiting the UW-Stevens campus have said their business growth is hampered by a lack of skilled entry-level employees, according to Les Werner, WFC director and a forestry professor in the College of Natural Resources.



Les Werner

"Today the message is sounding more dire," Werner said. "The future of their businesses and that of the industry rests on the ability to secure trained, productive employees to backfill positions or take over operations."

The pathway program has three focus areas: educating high schoolers through applied curriculum, training entry-level employees through immersion programs, and raising public awareness of the forest industry and its careers.

**Applied Forestry Education for Career Readiness**  
The Forest Career Pathways Program will not only raise awareness of job opportunities but also equip students with the knowledge and skills needed for those careers. To

The Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition was the cover story in the *January 2023 Great Lakes TPA (Timber Professionals Association) Magazine*. Read the article at <https://tinyurl.com/585z7asx>

# Forest Operations Immersion Program Accomplishments

Nicolet College, along with partners supporting the Forest Operations immersion program, developed the following priorities for September through December:

## Curriculum and Assessment Development

- » WFC Director Les Werner met with Nicolet College staff in December to discuss the immersion **training modules**. Nicolet staff have since been working on curriculum development.



Les Werner

## Recruitment and Marketing

- » The WFC has met with UWSP's Continuing Education department to develop a strategy for **participant recruitment** for the Forest Operations immersion program.
- » The WFC has explored the eligibility process for a **Veterans Affairs non-degree program** with UWSP's Continuing Education department. This would allow veterans to be eligible for training funding for non-degree programs such as the Forest Operations immersion program.

## Next Steps: January-June 2023

Looking to the future, we will continue our momentum by achieving goals that result in an impactful, inspiring, and sustainable forestry workforce recruitment and development program. Upcoming priorities include:

## Overall Program Goals

- » A portion of the grant funding will be reallocated to support an outreach specialist position within the WFC and hire Susan Barrett in January. Part of Susan's duties will be to recruit business partners and high schools to participate in the program. This money was reallocated because of the unfilled director position at Grow North and an inability to attract a part-time talent acquisition specialist.
- » Finalize the program name and slogan with partners and develop branding with assistance from the UWSP Communications and Marketing and Milwaukee Tool.
- » Begin advertising the program through the development and use of marketing materials at conferences and other outreach events.
- » Receive approval for the WFC to lease two trucks for two years and then buy them at the end of the lease. The trucks will be used to transport trailers and equipment such as the portable sawmills.



Susan Barrett



Two portable sawmills manufactured by TimberKing were delivered to the UWSP campus in December.

# Next Steps: January-June 2023

## High School Program

- » Two modules (Module 1: Tree Identification and Biology and Module 2: Forest Health) will be reviewed by two of the five pilot schools in January. The review will provide an opportunity for feedback on the lesson plans and generate ideas for new lessons. It also will allow participants to discuss the format for the final curriculum; one possibility is a Google slide deck.
- » The potential for a portfolio-based assessment for the modules will be discussed in early January with the teachers who will review Modules 1 and 2.
- » Assessments for the Skills Camp will be determined.
- » WFC staff will attend the Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers and Wisconsin Technical Education Association conferences in March to raise awareness of the program and solicit feedback for curriculum development. A portable sawmill and a Ponsse timber harvest simulator will be available for participants to experience.
- » High school program manager Jared Schroeder will continue revising Modules 1 & 2 and begin developing Modules 3 (Forest Products) and 4 (Silviculture). Programming is anticipated to be offered beginning in fall 2024.

## High School Applied Curriculum Modules

- Tree Identification and Biology
  - Forest Health
  - Forest Products
  - Silviculture
  - Skills Camp
- » The WFC is exploring development of a video series to prepare students and teachers for using forestry equipment such as portable sawmills. The WFC plans to collaborate with a new UWSP student videography group advised by a media studies professor.

## Mill Technology Training Program

- » NTC's sawmill designs will be completed by March and the NTC Board of Trustees will approve the project and request WTCS Board approval at its May meeting.
- » NTC is preparing for a full construction bid planned to take place in March/April.
- » Construction of the sawmill is planned to begin in June 2023.
- » Sawmill equipment from Cleereman Industries is anticipated to be installed in spring 2025.
- » Keith Turnquist will start in January as the WFC workforce development program manager to oversee the immersion training programs.



Keith Turnquist

College's Forestry Equipment Maintenance module with the Forest Operations program. Other modules in development include basic forestry and silviculture, BMPs for forest road maintenance and construction, hand felling and chainsaw operation, mechanized logging, and log loading and transport.

- » Turnquist will work to integrate commercial driver's license training for interested participants. Eligible participants with Wisconsin residency may have the opportunity to obtain a commercial learner's permit during the program and complete the entry-level driver training requirements needed for CDL applicants.



Ponsse timber harvester simulators will be used as part of the program.

## Forest Operations Training Program

- » Nicolet College and Turnquist will continue curriculum development. Dan Linsmeyer at Nicolet College will meet with Turnquist in January to discuss the alignment of Nicolet
- » The WFC will receive two Ponsse simulators in February and complete training on their use.



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