
Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition

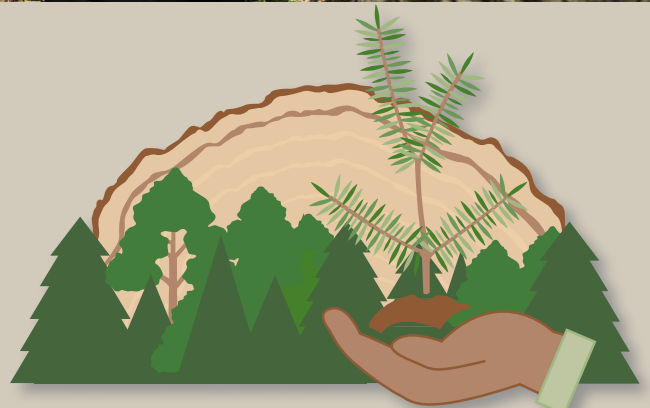
Moving Forestry Forward



Progress Report

Issued February 2024

for the period covering July-December 2023



WISCONSIN FORESTRY CAREERS
COALITION

Front cover: Board of Commissioners of Public Lands forester Kevin Burns and Demi Litke of Ponsse North America participate in a WFCC marketing photo shoot in June 2023 at Treehaven.

Program Overview

The Wisconsin Forestry Center (WFC) at UW-Stevens Point (UWSP) is coordinating the **Wisconsin Forestry Careers Coalition** (WFCC) to address the urgent need for skilled workers in the forestry industry. The WFCC is a forestry education and career pathway program, organized in collaboration with many partners and support from a \$8 million state Workforce Innovation Grant from the Wisconsin Economic Development Corp. (WEDC). 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:

- 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.
- Develop and implement public outreach to increase awareness of the forestry sector and its careers.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to all of the partners who are making this Wisconsin forestry workforce recruitment and development program a reality. The progress we have made 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
- Trees for Tomorrow
- 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
- Stockbridge-Munsee Community
- 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
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.
- Grow North
- New North
- North Central Wisconsin Workforce Development Board

Overall Program Accomplishments

Partners Summit

WFCC partners gathered in September for the second annual **WFCC Partners Summit** at the Treehaven field station near Tomahawk. The meeting included a brief update on the program's progress and revisiting the WFCC's goals. For the remainder of the time, working groups developed needs assessments for program marketing, program sustainability, and content and logistics for the high school and immersion training programs. The needs assessments helped provide a strategic path forward for this collective effort.

Forestry Advancement Center

Planning is progressing for the **Forestry Advancement Center**, a classroom building for the Forest Operations Immersion Training Program at Treehaven. Alliance, a design firm in Minneapolis, has finalized the architectural design. Construction bidding occurred in November, with the bid awarded



Grant partners gathered for a WFCC Annual Summit in September at Treehaven.

to Altmann Construction of Wisconsin Rapids. Construction will begin in the spring, with completion estimated in late summer 2024. Louisiana-Pacific Corp. has offered to donate the siding for the building.

Marketing and Outreach

WFC Director Les Werner presented about the WFCC at the **National Council of Forestry Association Executives** meeting in July. Attendees were excited about the potential to expand the WFCC

into a nationwide forestry training program network.

WFC Director Les Werner presented at the **Midwest State Foresters Meeting** in July

about the need for workers, recruitment strategies, forestry in the Farm Bill, and the need of support for forestry workforce initiatives.



Les Werner

In September, the WFCC exhibited with Ponsse North America at the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA) **Great Lakes Logging & Heavy Equipment Expo** in Escanaba, Mich.

In October, WFC and NTC staff exhibited at the **Wisconsin Economic Summit** in Appleton to showcase the WFCC.

WFC staff made progress toward developing a **marketing strategy**. Staff met with Milwaukee Tool in October and the Rodale Institute in November to gain further guidance on marketing the WFCC program.



The Forestry Advancement Center (FAC) will be built in 2024 at the Treehaven field station near Tomahawk. The FAC will serve as a dedicated classroom space for the Forest Operations Immersion Training Program.

Overall Program Accomplishments

Planning began for a 2024 **social media series** called “A Day in the Life” to bring awareness to career possibilities in the forest industry. The series will be shared on WFC social media channels.

WFC staff attended the **Society of American Foresters National Conference** in October in Sacramento, Calif., to network and increase awareness of the WFCC program. WFC Director Les Werner was part of a panel discussion called “Growing the Restoration Economy: Can Policy Address Rural Workforce Shortages While Advancing Forestry Solutions?” WFC High School Program Manager Jared Schroeder presented a session titled, “Changing the Image of Forestry One Classroom at a Time: An Applied High School Curriculum.” WFC graduate research assistant Zoe Kaminsky won first place in the poster symposium. The poster summarized the findings of their research and was titled “Assessment of Forestry Professional Development and Continuing Education Needs in Wisconsin.”

Program Sustainability

The Park City Cares Foundation in Merrill donated **\$2,500 to support scholarships** for the Forest Operations and Mill Technology training programs.

WFC Director Les Werner met with UWSP’s Vice Chancellor for University Advancement and Chief Executive Officer of the UWSP Foundation to explore the potential for the WFC to be a spotlight in a **UWSP capital campaign**.

The WFC coordinated a **Forestry Workforce Summit** in October in Duluth, Minn. It was co-sponsored by the Forest Resources Association and was attended by 10 forestry training program representatives from six states. The goal of the summit was for organizations to provide an overview of their programs and share information related to recruitment strategies, curriculum, and obstacles associated with development and implementation, funding, and program sustainability. The summit has led to the beginning of a new nationwide forestry training network.



In August 2023 WFC staff, with guidance from Nyle Systems, finished constructing the first of two portable kilns. Built out of modified enclosed trailers and using Nyle Systems controls, the kilns will be used as part of the high school curriculum.

Equipment

The first of two **portable kilns** was completed in August, with construction by Workforce Development Program Manager Keith Turnquist and student employee Cole Hager, with guidance from Nyle Systems. Three loads of lumber have been successfully kiln-dried. The kilns will be used as part of the high school curriculum and for public outreach.

Design and construction of one of two **equipment trailers** has begun and will be completed in January 2024. The equipment trailers will serve as a base of operations for work in school forests, with high-school student crew sizes of 15-20. The equipment trailers also will be used in the immersion training programs to support field training activities.

The WFC worked to develop **usage rates** for WFCC equipment. These rates will help support the cost of equipment maintenance and depreciation.

The WFC has initiated the process of buying out the two **WFCC trucks** at the end of the two-year lease period. Permanently having the trucks will ensure a means to transport WFCC equipment.

High School Program Accomplishments

Curriculum Development

- » **Curriculum** outlines for all four modules were completed and are being reviewed by forestry professionals. Slide decks for each module are in development. The full curriculum will be available to schools in fall 2024.
- » High School Curriculum Manager Jared Schroeder visited Menominee Tribal Enterprises (MTE) and



Jared Schroeder

Menominee High School in November. MTE is assisting with **curriculum review** and including instruction that meets the Wisconsin Act 31 requirement (**American Indian Studies in Wisconsin**).

- » Menominee High School has agreed to **pilot test** all four modules of the curriculum in spring 2024, as part of a class called Forestry and Environmental Issues. This will provide an opportunity for those students to attend the Skills Camp in the summer and then the six-week Immersion Training program in the fall or spring to prepare for employment. Schroeder will be working closely with MIHS teacher Klint Hischke to make any necessary changes to the curriculum.
- » **Articulation agreements** with Nicolet College and NTC were explored.



High school curriculum modules are developed in a slide deck format for teachers.

- » Planning began for **teacher trainings**, scheduled for April 2024 at Treehaven. The trainings will provide education and support to teachers interested in using the WFCC equipment in their schools. Topics will include timber harvester simulators, chainsaw safety and tree felling, and portable sawmill and kiln operation.
- » Planning began for **train-the-teacher externships**, with support from CESA 8. Kretz Lumber, the Wisconsin DNR, Steigerwaldt Land Services, Ponsse, and the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands (BCPL) have expressed interest in helping with the teacher externships. These 1-2 day trainings will give teachers hands-on professional experience with forestry employers.
- » Development of the high school **Skills Camp** began. The camp will be offered this summer at the Central

High School Applied Curriculum Modules

- Tree Identification and Biology
- Forest Health
- Forest Products
- Silviculture
- Skills Camp

Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES), a UWSP field station in Amherst Junction. A UWSP College of Natural Resources leadership class will be assisting with development of the camp.

Recruitment and Outreach

- » Planning began for the high school scholarship application process for the annual offering of the **Science of Tree Felling**, a UWSP weekend forestry course to be held in March 2024 at Treehaven.

Mill Technology Immersion Program Accomplishments

Facilities and Equipment

- » NTC's **sawmill building** bid was opened in August and was awarded to Huotari Construction of Medford. The timeline is on track, as construction began in September 2023 and is estimated to be completed in April or May 2024. The footings, foundations, and service runs for the metal building have been completed. The building has been ordered and was set to ship from the manufacturer in late January.
- » Design of the **sawmill components** will begin in November 2024 with an estimated delivery date in February or March 2025.
- » The NTC Property Foundation has been exploring the development of **student housing** on NTC's Antigo Campus to help accommodate those who will be participating in the six-week immersion training program.

Curriculum Development

- » NTC hired an additional **wood science instructor** in July, which helped to free up staff time to begin outlining and drafting curriculum for the Mill Technology program.
- » The Mill Technology **curriculum** will be comprised of the following new or modified NTC classes for a total of 6 credits in 198 hours:
 - › Sawmill Safety & Maintenance–1 credit (36 lab hours)
 - › Sawmill Operations Overview–1 credit (27 hours: 9 lecture hours, 18 lab hours)
 - › Intro to Hardwood Grading–1 credit (36 lab hours)
 - › Intro to Kiln Drying–1 credit (27 hours: 9 lecture hours, 18 lab hours)
 - › Lumber Manufacturing: Sawing, Edging, and Trimming–2 credits (72 lab hours)



Renderings for the sawmill facility addition at the NTC Wood Technology Center for Excellence in Antigo.

Forest Operations Immersion Program Accomplishments

Curriculum Development

- » **Curriculum development** for the Forest Operations training program curriculum is nearly complete, with work remaining to organize the content for daily training schedules.
- » The **first offering** of the Forest Operations Immersion Training Program will launch in October 2024 at Treehaven. It was rescheduled from March 2024.
- » A proposal has been approved to modify **UWSP course FOR 350: Special Topics in Forestry**. Training program participants will enroll in this course at UWSP to receive up to 5 credits applicable to a bachelor's degree in forest management. They also will receive a UWSP certificate in forest operations.

» Workforce Development

Program Manager Keith Turnquist met with UWSP and Treehaven staff to establish



Keith Turnquist

operational sites on Treehaven grounds. Turnquist also has started developing operational contracts with Treehaven so the training can be conducted on-site in accordance with established management plans.

- » Turnquist met with a **heavy-equipment trainer** who is willing to be a trainer/



Sam Tourtillott of Menominee Tribal Enterprises drives a Case dozer during a WFCC marketing photo shoot in June 2023 at Treehaven. The Forest Operations curriculum will include instruction on forest road construction.

Forest Operations Training Curriculum

- Module 1: Introduction to Forestry (40 hours)
- Module 2: Forestry Equipment Maintenance (40 hours)
- Module 3: Forestry Equipment Operations (160 hours)
 - Hand Felling
 - Mechanical Felling
 - Log Loading and Transport
 - Forest Road Construction and Maintenance

instructor for part of the program.

- » Turnquist and Ponsse have been collaborating to develop and modify existing **curriculum for Ponsse equipment**. The curriculum consists of daily lessons on systems and components of forwarders and harvesters.

Recruitment and Outreach

- » Menominee Tribal Enterprises

(MTE) has agreed to provide the **first cohort of students** for the Forest Operations Immersion Training Program, which will take place in October 2024.

- » In December, WFC staff visited MTE for a discussion on **trainings and other partnership opportunities** that would benefit the tribe and MTE's operations and recruitment.

Next Steps: January-June 2024

Upcoming priorities for the first half of 2024 include:

Overall Program Goals

- » WFC staff will continue to work with UWSP Risk Management to develop the necessary **safety protocols** for schools and other entities using equipment for immersive training.
- » The WFC will meet with the **Forestry Advancement Center construction** company, Altmann Construction, in January to discuss the construction schedule.
- » Construction of a second **portable kiln** will begin in February. Supply purchases for a second **equipment trailer** will begin in February.
- » WFC staff will continue participating in a newly forming national **Forest Operations Training Network**, attending a virtual meeting in January and a gathering in April at Shasta College in California. Attendees will tour Shasta's Heavy Equipment Logging Operations certificate program.

High School Program

- » Menomonie Indian High School, with support from science teacher Klint Hischke, will be **piloting all four modules** this spring. High School Program Manager Jared Schroeder will be working with Hischke and his class during the pilot to make adjustments to the curriculum.

- » Hischke and Schroeder will present a session about the curriculum pilot at the **Wisconsin Society of Science Teachers (WSST) conference** in April in La Crosse. A hands-on portable sawmill lesson covering log scaling, grading, and milling will also be demonstrated as a workshop for attendees.
- » **Teacher Trainings** will be offered over three weekends in April at Treehaven and will cover timber harvester simulators, chainsaw safety and tree felling, and portable sawmill and kiln operation.
- » In partnership with the Northcentral Workforce Development Area and CESA 8, **teacher externships** will be offered in June for timber harvester and sawmill training. The externships are open to all Wisconsin teachers and include a stipend for the teacher's school district.
- » The High School Program Manager will be exploring the option to offer the high school **Skills Camp for college credit**, starting this summer.

Mill Technology Training Program

- » **Articulation agreements** to allow credit transfers between UWSP and NTC will continue to be developed. NTC will award 6 credits for the completion of the Mill Technology Immersion Training Program that align with existing degree and certificate programs.

- » State and professional **certifications** to include in the program will continue to be explored as well as the potential of creating our own certificate of completion that is a preferred qualification for Wisconsin forest industries.
- » NTC will continue to wait on the **U.S. Forest Service for its official award** to support employers sending staff for training. NTC will submit a **Wisconsin Technical College System Career Pathways grant** for the Woods program to support outreach, dual credit, continuing education, etc. The application will be submitted mid-January, award announcements will be made in March, and, if awarded, the project would begin July 1.
- » The NTC Property Foundation will continue to explore development of **student housing** on NTC's Antigo Campus to support participants in the Mill Technology program.

Forest Operations Training Program

- » The WFC is exploring a partnership with Schneider Trucking to provide **trucking training** as part of the Forest Operations program.
- » **Train-the-Trainers curriculum** development and review will continue in the spring.
- » **Articulation agreements** for credit transfers between UWSP and Nicolet College will be in development.



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