

November 1, 2011

Good Morning Representative Mursau and Members of the Committee.

My name is Richard Wedepohl and I am currently the Chairman of WWOA's Government Affairs Committee.

The Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association (WWOA) wishes to thank the committee members for their interest in improving Wisconsin's Managed Forest Law and for the opportunity to provide testimony on AB 324.

As you may be aware, 59% of Wisconsin's forest land is privately owned. Wood harvested from this land provides 67% of the raw material needed to support 60,000 jobs in Wisconsin's forest industry. .

The Managed Forest Law has served Wisconsin well for 25 years. Our organization has been a strong supporter of this law in the past and we are currently working hard on initiatives to see it improved.

When woodland owners enter the Managed Forest Law they must agree to a 25 or 50 year time period. They must maintain their land in a sustainable managed condition and harvest timber as their management plan requires. However, woodland owners also expect that the agreement they sign when entering this program will be honored for those 25 or 50 years.

Assembly Bill 324 appears to be exempting certain parcels of land that are withdrawn from MFL program from withdrawal fees. In addition, it only requires these landowners to withdraw 1-3 acres rather than the full legal description of land, as is currently required of all others under the Managed Forest Law program. We would encourage the committee to consider possible, unforeseen, implications this bill might have before taking action on this bill.

Questions on intent and implications we believe need further investigation include whether or not this bill would allow

- Free withdrawal at any time within remaining time period of their MFL contract or
- Allow multiple withdrawals for multiple buildings. For example would it allow families with 4 siblings to each build a permanent residence on this parcel, as long as the remaining land still meets MFL program criteria?

WWOA is supportive of seeing Wisconsin's forestry resources being well managed. We also believe that landowners should expect that agreements they make when signing up for a 25 or 50 year period should be honored. None of us want to see the program evolve to where our forests are further fragmented by possible creation of large-sized lot subdivisions.

We look forward to working with you on this, and other related issues, in the future.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.