

Dept. of Natural Resources: Heather Berklund named new Chief State Forester

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MADISON, Wis. – Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Secretary Preston Cole has appointed Heather Berklund as the department's new Chief State Forester. Her appointment became effective Oct. 12.

"I am proud to announce Heather taking on this leadership role," said Preston Cole, Secretary of the DNR. "She brings years of on-the-ground Wisconsin forest management and fire control experience to this position. As the first woman in Wisconsin's history to hold this role, I know she will bring diverse perspectives to the table in her work."

Berklund began her forestry career with the Wisconsin DNR in the year 2000, serving as a field forester in Merrill, Crandon and Mercer for more than a decade before becoming the Ashland-Iron team leader and then the Woodruff area leader in 2016.

In her role as the Deputy Division Administrator of Field Operations for the past three years, Berklund led the public and private lands programs, Good Neighbor Authority partnership coordination, forest certification, tax law and fire protection programs.

In addition to her field experience and leadership skills, Cole said Berklund brings strong communication, collaboration and partnership building skills to her new position along with a broad knowledge of Wisconsin forestry programs and policies.

"This set of skills is crucial because the sustainable management of Wisconsin

forests depends on the collaborative work of forest landowners, natural resource professionals, conservation and industry organizations and many others,” Cole said.

Berklund earned a Bachelor of Science in forestry from University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point and has continued her education through forestry short-courses in Germany and Mexico. She participated in the 2019 Women in Government leadership academy and received the Division of Forestry 2014 Supervisor of the Year award.

Berklund is familiar with forests throughout the state. While the bulk of her career has been in the Northwoods, where she currently resides, she grew up in the Boscobel and Reedsburg areas, exploring the hills and river bottoms in the Driftless Area of southwest Wisconsin. She still enjoys spending time hunting and picking morel mushrooms there on her parents’ 120 acres.

When she’s not working to build relationships with partners and staff, Berklund is engaged and volunteering in her children’s school and extracurricular activities. She and her husband Bryce enjoy biking, cross country skiing and other outdoor activities.

Berklund said she is honored to have been selected to lead the Division of Forestry and is committed to continuing to build relationships and collaborate with partners on the sustainable management of Wisconsin’s forests.

“I look forward to leading the Division of Forestry on a successful path as we adapt to changes in the climate and cultural needs,” Berklund said. “The state forestry program has a long history of innovative, well-respected state foresters. I hope to continue this legacy moving forward by showcasing the value that forestry brings to both our state and nation.”

Berklund’s office will continue to be in Rhinelander and her contact information will remain the same as listed above. A headshot for Berklund [can be found here.](#)