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Rep. Shankland: Celebrates $8 million grant for locally-led forest industry Workforce Recruitment and Development Initiative

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STEVENS POINT- Today *(pictured above)*, Governor Tony Evers, Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) Secretary Missy Hughes, University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point (UWSP) Chancellor Thomas Gibson, UWSP College of Natural Resources Dean Brian Sloss, Rep. Katrina Shankland (D-Stevens Point), and other key stakeholders came together on the UW-Stevens Point campus to celebrate the announcement of approximately $8 million in Workforce Innovation Grant funding for the Wisconsin Forestry Center at UWSP for their Forest Industry Workforce Recruitment and Development Initiative.

Working with area partners from technical colleges, K-12 schools, and the Menominee Nation to industry and equipment partners, regional economic development groups, universities, and state agencies, the Wisconsin Forestry Center at UW-Stevens Point will leverage this funding to address the need for skilled employees within the forestry industry. Modeled after a successful initiative in Montana, the project will help introduce forestry early in the education process, providing the opportunity for Wisconsin students to learn more about careers in forestry through programs at our public K-12 schools and the Menominee Nation. It will also expand existing high school forestry education and training programs and work to promote entry into the workforce, building career development pathways.

Rep. Shankland shared, “As a member of the Wisconsin Council on Forestry, I know that the forestry industry is foundational to Wisconsin’s economy and substantially contributes to our state’s economic prosperity. This $8 million grant will be transformational for the forestry industry in Wisconsin as it develops the workforce, strengthens educational partnerships, and creates new career pathways. This program will help ensure Wisconsin’s youth learn about forestry early and encourage and support them in participating in the industry through skill development curricula and pathways to stable, well-paying jobs.

“I’m thrilled to see that Central Wisconsin has received a second round of Workforce Innovation Grants! On the heels of a recent $9 million investment to Mid-State Technical College to develop our manufacturing and engineering workforce, I am grateful that the governor has invested an additional $8 million in the UWSP Forestry Center and its partners. The governor’s attention to Central Wisconsin’s issues and needs is truly appreciated as he continues to visit and support our efforts to strengthen our workforce and local economy.

“I am committed to tackling the issues affecting Wisconsin’s paper, pulp, and forestry industries as a legislator and as the Vice Chair of the Legislative Paper Caucus. I appreciate that this investment in the Forest Industry Workforce Recruitment and Development Initiative will make a significant and long-lasting impact, uplifting not only our local stakeholders and community members at UWSP, but also promoting workforce development and participation in the forestry industry statewide. The collaboration from this partnership will expand and grow the forestry industry, ensuring our region’s continued economic success in Wisconsin.”