

Wisconsin's Forests first: Launches effort to strengthen state's forest products industry

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Madison, WI — A new statewide initiative, Wisconsin Forests FIRST (Forest Industry Roadmap and Strategies for Tomorrow), has officially launched to develop a strategic plan and long-term roadmap to ensure Wisconsin's forests remain healthy while supporting a resilient, sustainable, and competitive forest products industry.

Wisconsin Forests FIRST is funded through a \$1 million State of Wisconsin grant awarded to the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association and the Wisconsin Paper Council, in close collaboration with the Wisconsin Council on Forestry. The two-year initiative brings together industry leaders and subject matter experts to identify challenges and align priorities to position Wisconsin's forest and wood products sector for long-term success.

The Wisconsin Forests FIRST Executive Committee will oversee the initiative and includes:

- Henry Schienebeck, Executive Director, Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
- Scott Suder, President, Wisconsin Paper Council
- Shawn Brantmeier, Director of Operations, Wisconsin Paper Council
- Tom Hittle, Chair, Wisconsin Council on Forestry
- Matt Dallman, Vice Chair, Wisconsin Council on Forestry
- Heather Berklund, Division Administrator, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

Over the course of the two-year effort, Wisconsin Forests FIRST will conduct

comprehensive industry research, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement to assess market conditions, identify growth opportunities, and address challenges facing the sector. The initiative will culminate in a statewide strategic roadmap, along with supporting research products to inform policy decisions, investment strategies, and workforce development efforts.

“This first-of-its-kind collaborative project will bring together industry experts from across the state to help create a strategic roadmap to ensure Wisconsin’s forests and forest products industry remains strong into the future”, said Scott Suder, President of the Wisconsin Paper Council”.

Following a competitive selection process, Camoin Associates was selected to serve as Project Manager for Wisconsin Forests FIRST effort. Camoin Associates brings extensive experience managing multi-partner strategic planning initiatives and has a national track record of advancing forest and wood products industries through data-driven industry analysis and market intelligence.

“Wisconsin Forests FIRST represents an important opportunity to align forest health, industry competitiveness, and long-term economic vitality in Wisconsin,” Henry Schienebeck, Executive Director of the Great Lakes Timber Professional Association. “With our project manager selected, we are ready to advance with focused research and meaningful engagement that will establish an actionable path forward for Wisconsin’s forest-based economy.”

Project updates, meeting announcements, and draft materials, will be shared throughout the process. For more information about Wisconsin Forests FIRST, visit the Wisconsin Council on Forestry webpage.