



Tony Evers

Office of the Governor | State of Wisconsin

May 20, 2025

The Honorable Brooke Rollins
Secretary
United States Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Rollins:

Wisconsin's forests play a crucial role in our state's environmental, social, and economic success, and I am deeply concerned about the potential for funding cuts and mass staff firings by the Trump Administration that will impact Wisconsin's forests and our state's critical forestry industry. I have heard these same concerns from experts and professionals in our state's forestry industry, including the Wisconsin Council on Forestry, with a diverse membership representing forest products, conservation, workforce, paper and pulp, and private landowners. All Wisconsinites can agree that our forests, from the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest to the millions of acres of private forestland, are valuable resources, and we all must continue our work to protect and foster this resource.

About 60 percent of the nearly 17 million acres of forestland in Wisconsin is private forestland, which makes potential cuts to programs that support private woodland owners, such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), particularly alarming. Cuts to EQIP will reduce the number and availability of tools to assist Wisconsinites in protecting the health of their forestland from threats like invasive species and erosion. Additionally, Wisconsin ranks first in the nation in paper production and exports over \$850 million in paper products annually. Long term, sustainable forest health is crucial to supporting this major industry. Cuts to other wood products research and development, including staffing and funding cuts to the Forest Products Laboratory, will also disproportionately impact Wisconsin and harm the innovative work currently being done in Wisconsin to develop new markets and opportunities for forest products while also protecting the health and sustainability of our forestlands.

Recognizing the value and importance of our state's forests, I have made supporting this industry a top priority across my administration and in my recent state budget proposal, including providing \$775,000 for the development of a forestry industry strategic plan and roadmap, as recommended by my Blue Ribbon Commission on Rural Prosperity. This strategic plan and roadmap will help to identify new markets and help retain existing forestry businesses, as well as increasing state funding for various forestry grant programs, including the: County Forest Administration Grant Program to support salaries for county forest administrators, the Sustainable Forestry Grant Program to support sustainable forest management projects on county forest land, the County Wildlife Habitat Grant Program to support forest wildlife habitat improvement, forest inventories, and wildlife education activities, and the Wisconsin Forest Landowner Grant Program to assist private forestland owners in promoting forest, soil, and water health. I also proposed bolstering the forest industry workforce by providing \$1.3 million over the biennium for the Wisconsin Forestry Careers Pathway

Program and the Learning, Experiences, and Activities in Forestry (LEAF) Program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point.

We must work together to ensure Wisconsin's forests and forestry industry remain healthy and thriving. I have stepped up in this work, and I ask that you do the same and reverse and prevent any funding and staffing cuts that will threaten Wisconsin's forests and critical forestry industry.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Tony Evers", written in a cursive style.

Tony Evers
Governor

Cc:

Tom Schultz, Chief, United States Forest Service
Tom Hittle, Chair, Wisconsin Council on Forestry