

# Wisconsin County Forests Association

Norman Bickford  
President  
Burnett County

Joe Waichulis  
Vice President  
Clark County

Greg Sekela  
Treasurer  
Oconto County

Al Mans  
Director  
Marinette County

Myron Brooks  
Director  
Taylor County

Ed Kelley  
Director  
Florence County

Bill Schradle  
Director  
Barron County

Phil Schneider  
Director  
Rusk County

William Bialecki  
Director  
Lincoln County

Arnold Schlei  
Director  
Marathon County

Jim Parrett  
Director  
Juneau County

Hank Graber  
Director  
Washburn County

Alan VanRaalte  
Director  
Oneida County

Michael Luedeke  
Director-at-Large  
Spooner, WI

Henry Schienebeck  
Director-at-Large  
Rhineland, WI

Rebekah Luedtke  
Executive Director

November 1, 2021

Representative Jeff Mursau  
Chair, Committee on Forestry, Parks and Outdoor Recreation  
Room 113 West  
State Capitol  
PO Box 8953  
Madison, WI 53708

RE: Support for AB 682

Dear Representative Mursau,

The Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA) is writing in support of AB 682 and request to be registered as such in order that the paper mills in Wisconsin Rapids and Park Falls might be purchased to be put back into operation as soon as feasible. This will help ensure jobs return to those communities and greater Wisconsin, and that our forests will regain important buyers for pulpwood harvested in the State. Please note, these comments are only in support of the first portion of the bill helping to reopen the mills in Park Falls and Wisconsin Rapids.

WCFA represents the 30 counties in Wisconsin with County Forest lands established under state statutes §28.10 and 28.11. Collectively, these 30 counties manage over 2.4 million acres of forests, the largest public ownership in our State. These counties are a major contributor to public land management and rural economic development, and are also highly valued because they provide a reliable source of raw materials for the forest products industry, as well as a tremendous amount of recreation opportunities.

Sustainable forests, outdoor recreation and public land management are vitally important to our State's economic health. As you know, forest products are the 2nd largest industry in Wisconsin, supporting more than 64,000 jobs and contributing over \$24 billion annually to the State's economy. The two Verso mills which were idled in June 2020 consumed roughly 25% of the total raw material harvested in Wisconsin, including the majority of low-grade hardwood pulp. Losing this market is putting sustainable forest management, including the viability of our healthy forests, in jeopardy.

Active sustainable forest management, including timber harvests, provide healthy forest conditions, robust wildlife habitat, clean water resources and offer numerous outdoor recreation amenities and services afforded primarily from timber sale revenues. In addition to economic setbacks, counties, and the citizens of Wisconsin, will see additional negative environmental and socio-economic impacts as well if markets do not rebound.

801 N. Sales Street, Suite 107  
Merrill, WI 54452  
715-539-1097

[rebekah@wisconsincountyforests.com](mailto:rebekah@wisconsincountyforests.com)  
[www.wisconsincountyforests.com](http://www.wisconsincountyforests.com)

# Wisconsin County Forests Association

Furthermore, the County Forest programs bring revenue into county coffers to not only fund their programs but to also supplement county wide budgets. For example, the Forestry and Parks department in Rusk County is responsible for 25% of their county's annual operating budget. Other county departments and services, and possibly tax levies, could be significantly impacted if revenues of harvested timber, due to lost markets, fall considerably.

In summary, forestry isn't just our job but our passion, our pride and our way of life. We implore you to help keep Wisconsin a national leader in forest products and natural resource management by supporting AB 682. By financially supporting the forest products industry, we can go a long way in ensuring the health and viability of wood markets for generations to come.

Thank you for your time and consideration in these matters.  
Sincerely,



Norman Bickford  
President



Rebekah Luedtke  
Executive Director