



**Testimony on Senate Bill 913
Committee on Insurance, Licensing and Forestry**

**Wisconsin Alliance of Forest Owners
February 23, 2022**

Senator Felzkowski and Committee Members:

Our association represents the interests of Wisconsin's private woodland owners, including over 40,000 landowners who have MFL orders. We are tree farmers who manage 59% of Wisconsin's forest land and provide 67% of the raw material needed to support our state's \$20 billion forest industry.

What happens to our woodlands affect two of the state's other biggest economic engines: they provide the beautiful backdrop for the Wisconsin tourism economy and also the wildlife habitat and hunting grounds for Wisconsin's hunting economy and heritage. There is no other rural land that offers more to Wisconsin's economy, legacy and future than private woodlands.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on this bill.

For nearly 30 years, tree farmers have embraced the MFL program as a means to allow them to sustainably grow trees and keep land in forest. In exchange for committing to keep their land as a productive forest for the next 25 years, they received a differential tax rate that recognized that growing a crop of trees requires a long-term commitment. These tree farmers also agreed, in return, to follow a management plan that commits them to providing the raw material needed to sustain our forest products industry. Good steps were made with ACT 358 which revised the MFL in 2015. The cleanup issues associated with this bill are something that I believe we all can agree upon.



WAFO POSITIONS ON THIS BILL

First, WAFO would like to acknowledge the work done to improve the Managed Forest Law by many fine people over the past several years. With this bill we wish to thank Senator Felzkowski for addressing its proposed improvements. We would like to thank the DNR which has worked hard to identify language with this bill that helps clarify the intent of ACT 358. In Senate Bill 469, WAFO supports:

- **Allowing landowners to be able to construct a shelter, shed or garage that is needed for storage of equipment necessary to manage their woodlands.** This bill clarifies language with ACT 358 related to structures and improvements. Current language under s.77.82(1)(bp)g states that “Structures and fixtures that are needed for sound forestry practices” may be allowed. However, the DNR felt that, given other language in the bill that limits construction, they were uncomfortable allowing sheds or garages for equipment storage without more clarification. This bill directly states that structures necessary to store equipment such as saws, tractors or other tools needed to actively manage their woodlands would be allowed.
- **Allow the addition of lands to existing enrollments.** This change is designed to simplify administrative processes and allows lands adjacent to previously enrolled lands to be added to that parcel.
- **Allow landowners to meet the new minimum 20-acre enrollment size by being able to aggregate wooded parcels of 10 acres or larger to meet that requirement.** Many landowners have wooded areas on their property that are separated by non-wooded area such as wetlands or agricultural fields. This bill would allow these smaller areas to be enrolled in the program and then be actively managed similar to the other woods on a landowner’s property.
- **The many other provisions which have been designed to clear up some inconsistencies found with the original law.**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. Please know we very much want to work with you and other stakeholders to make the MFL an improved and sustainable program.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristie Kasbohm

Wisconsin Alliance of Forest Owners