

Committee Name:
Assembly Committee – Rural Affairs and Forestry
(AC–RAF)

Appointments

01hr_AC–RAF_Appt_pt00

Committee Hearings

01hr_AC–RAF_CH_pt00

Committee Reports

01hr_AC–RAF_CR_pt00

Clearinghouse Rules

01hr_AC–RAF_CRule_01–

Executive Sessions

01hr_AC–RAF_ES_pt00

Hearing Records

01hr_ab0114pt01

01hr_sb0000

Misc.

01hr_AC–RAF__Misc__pt00

Record of Committee Proceedings

01hr_AC–RAF_RCP_pt00

04-05-01

P.H. AB47, AB114

Committee Meeting Attendance Sheet

Assembly Committee on Rural Affairs and Forestry

Date: April 5, 2001 Meeting Type: Public Hearing
Location: North Hearing Room - State Capitol

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Excused</u>
Rep. John Ainsworth, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Donald Friske	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Stephen Freese	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Gabe Loeffelholz	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Tom Sykora	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Barbara Gronemus	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Mary Hubler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rep. Marlin Schneider	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Totals:	<u>8</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>



Kristina Boardman, Committee Clerk

**Testimony Before the
Assembly Rural Affairs and Forestry
Committee
March 5, 2001**

In Regards to AB 114

Good morning Chairman Ainsworth and committee members. I am Ken Hujanen, chief of the Forest Tax Section, Bureau of Forestry, in the Department of Natural Resources. First let me thank you for this opportunity to come before you in regard to AB 114.

Wisconsin has two forest tax laws to encourage the management of forest lands for the production of forest crops and compatible uses through the use of property tax incentives. The Managed Forest Law was enacted in 1985 and replaced the older two laws. All three laws have not allowed lands within city limits to be designated under the laws unless incorporated after designation.

This bill if enacted could open lands within city limits to public access and include forest management activities in their woodlots. It would lower taxes on the woodlots to a far greater extent than the law presently does within towns and villages due to normally higher property taxes in the urban setting.

Let me quote the purpose of the Managed Forest Law:

The purpose of this subchapter is to encourage the management of private forest lands for the production of future forest crops for commercial use through sound forestry practices, recognizing the objectives of individual property owners, compatible recreational uses, watershed protection, development of wildlife habitat and accessibility of private property to the public for recreational purposes.

The Managed Forest Law includes the right for a landowner to designate their woodlands as "open" giving the public the right to hunt, fish, hike, sight-see, and cross-country ski on the land. This gives the landowner a low annual acreage share. The landowner may also "close" the land to public access. Presently the rates are \$.74 per acre for "open" lands plus \$1.00 per acre to "close". This totals \$1.74 per acre for lands closed to public access. Most cities restrict hunting within their limits. This may be a conflict for those landowners who would wish to keep their lands "open" and receive the greatest tax relief.

The law requires a management plan be prepared prior to lands being designated as Managed Forest land. There are many aspects of a management plan but an important one is the requirement for the plan to include :

*"A description of the forestry practices, including **harvesting, thinning and reforestation**, that will be undertaken during the term of the order...."*

Five percent of timber sale values are paid by the landowner and shared between the State, Town, and County as a yield tax. The Department of Natural Resources would be remiss to not plan timber harvests within city limits and deny the local governments their rightful revenues.

Management of forest lands within city limits would prove challenging. Forestry practices that may be mandatory include:

- Harvesting mature timber....
- Thinning plantations and natural stands for merchantable products...
- Release of conifers from competing vegetation...
- Reforestation of land...

- Post-harvest treatment...
- Soil conservation practices that may be necessary...

These practices may be upsetting to city residents, especially when they occur in their neighborhood. Traditionally agricultural and forestry practices are more acceptable in rural towns and villages. As an area has increased development, the residents become more disturbed by agricultural and forestry practices. The Managed Forest Law is for 25 or 50 years and has a high degree of mandatory practices. Within a 25 year period, it is conceivable most cities will have a high level of development, with a likelihood the development will take place in the areas not presently developed. We expect the cities to have a higher degree of development and we would anticipate a greater level of irritation by residents to forest management activities. Imagine what it will be like when a logging truck and skidder show up in a 10 acre woodlot in Milwaukee, Madison, Sheboygan, or LaCrosse.

There are definitely some positive aspects to consider about forest land being reserved from development within city limits. I feel another program could be developed for that purpose since there are clear pros and cons to be considered when entering lands within cities under the Managed Forest Law.

I would be willing to answer any questions you may have on the forest tax law program and this issue.