



## Top Three Reasons to Protect our Investment in Forests

May 31<sup>st</sup>, 2017

Since 1930, dedicated funding from Wisconsin's Forestry Mill Tax has assured the continued health and productivity of our 17 million acres of federal, state, county, and private forests, and support for our \$24.7 billion dollar forestry sector. As legislators consider the proposal to eliminate the Forestry Mill Tax we urge consideration of three key facts:

**1). Forestry Mill Tax revenue supports one the America's strongest forest sectors with 64,000 jobs statewide. Over ½ of those jobs are in southeast Wisconsin.**

Wisconsin property tax payers support programs to keep our forests productive and those revenues return to communities throughout Wisconsin in the form of wood products going to mills, cabinet shops and construction companies. *Over 32,000 jobs in 23 southeastern Wisconsin counties are directly tied to our forest products sector.*

**2). Wildfires are catastrophic for property owners and \$27 is a small price for fire control. Just ask the thousands of property owners in Kansas who saved on taxes and lost their ranches.**

On March 5<sup>th</sup> 2017 Kansas experienced the largest wildfires in state history that burned 711,000 acres in 4 days. The number of farms, ranches, homes, and property destroyed over more than 1000 square miles was much worse because Kansas invests almost nothing in wildfire control.

<http://www.kansas.com/news/local/article140612018.html>

In 2013 the Germann Road fire in Wisconsin burned 7500 acres in Douglas and Bayfield Counties over 30 hours, destroying 40 structures. Thanks however to the rapid response of over 167 WI-DNR fire control personnel and 100 pieces of firefighting equipment from throughout the state this fire was quickly and effectively contained – preventing a potentially much larger catastrophe.

Wildfires throughout the United States continue to grow larger and more destructive each year. Our investment in wildfire control protects people and property values throughout rural Wisconsin.

**3). Protecting jobs and property requires stable investment.**

General Fund appropriations already exceed revenues in the current state budget by more than \$211 million. Eliminating the Forestry Mill Tax contributes \$180 million to that deficit. How likely is it that essential funding to protect jobs and property can be sustained with GPR in future years?

The 18 individuals appointed by Governor Walker to the Wisconsin Council on Forestry formally oppose eliminating the Forestry Mill Tax and instead request an audit of the Forestry Account.

*We urge legislators to retain stable, dedicated funding for forestry sector jobs and the protection of people and property throughout Wisconsin.*

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