



Wisconsin County Forests Association

PRESS RELEASE

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WCFA REACTS TO VERSO MILLS SHUTDOWN

The Wisconsin County Forests Association (WCFA), collectively with other forest industry partners in the State, voice immense disappointment over the recent news of the Verso paper mill shutdowns in Wisconsin Rapids and Duluth. Beyond the direct impacts this will sadly have on over 1,000 mill workers, the economic and environmental ripple effects from permanent mill shutdowns will be substantial for the majority of Wisconsin counties with forested lands.

Forest products is the 2nd largest industry in the State, supporting more than 64,000 jobs and contributing over \$24 billion annually to the economy. The two Verso mills consume roughly 25% of the total raw material harvested in Wisconsin, much of which comes off of county forest lands, including the majority of low-grade hardwood pulp. Losing this market also puts sustainable forest management, including the viability of our healthy forests, in jeopardy.

Wisconsin county forests programs bring revenue into county coffers to not only fund their programs but to also supplement county wide budgets. Other county departments and services, and possibly tax levies, could be significantly impacted if revenues of harvested timber fall considerably.

In addition to economic setbacks, counties, and the citizens of Wisconsin, will likely see additional negative environmental and socio-economic impacts as well. 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.

“The implications of the Verso mills shutting down goes much further than the mill workers and cities of Wisconsin Rapids and Duluth. This has the potential to negatively alter the course of forest management in Wisconsin and all the abundant benefits our healthy forests provide,” says Norman Bickford, WCFA Board President. “WCFA stands ready to assist and support emerging efforts to keep timber markets intact, operational and viable in the State of Wisconsin.”

WCFA represents the forestry interests of its 29 member counties with lands enrolled under Wisconsin's County Forest Law (§28.10 & 28.11). Collectively, these counties manage over 2.4 million acres of forest lands, the largest public ownership in Wisconsin. The focus of the Wisconsin County Forests is to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of forest ecosystems while providing benefits to the public

Rhineland, WI

The Wisconsin County Forests Association provides leadership uniting the interests of the world's largest county forest program while ensuring long-term forest health and sustainability.

Information on the Wisconsin County Forests Association can be found at www.wisconsincountyforests.com.

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