

## PARTNERS IN FORESTRY ANNUAL MEETING

### to Highlight the Benefits of Land Conservation

This year's Partners in Forestry (PIF) Annual Gathering will take place on Saturday, November 3, with the theme "Appreciate Our Common Lands; A Hands-on Celebration of the Benefits of Forest Land Conservation". This topic was chosen to complement ongoing partnerships between PIF and the Northwoods Alliance and the UW Center for Cooperatives. The gathering will be held in Boulder Junction, WI.

The program's morning session will feature a forestry tour on the Northern Highland American Legion State Forest (NHAL), with emphasis on wildlife habitat and a discussion of the benefits of naturally occurring tip-mounds for forest regeneration. Featured leaders include DNR Wildlife Biologist (retired) Ron Eckstein, DNR NHAL ranger-forester Paul Stearns, and PIF VP John Schwarzmann, who is Forest Supervisor for the Wisconsin Board of Commissioners of Public Lands. We will car-pool to the forestry tour from the Big Bear Hideaway, located near downtown Boulder Junction, at 9:15 AM.

Lunch and the afternoon session will be held at the Big Bear Hideaway. Featured speakers are an esteemed panel of notable and deeply rooted conservation land managers. They include Paul DeLong, who was State Forester in Wisconsin from 2003 through 2016 and now represents the American Forest Foundation as Senior Vice President of Conservation. Paul is passionate about engaging the family forest owner with sustainable, conservation-based management. During Paul's career with WDNR he oversaw some of the most notable Forest Legacy projects accomplished in Wisconsin, as well as the expansion of the NHAL boundary in 2005.

The next notable speaker is Mike Dombek, who was the Chief of the USFS from 1997-2001, after serving as acting Director of the Bureau of Land Management from 1994-1997. Dr. Dombek has a background in aquatic ecology, and early in his career he was instrumental in bringing water quality issues to the forefront of forest management while serving in the Upper Peninsula. Today, we recognize these guidelines as Best Management Practices. Mike later served as Professor of Global Conservation at UW Stevens Point and directs the Smith Fellowship, which guides post-doctorate students with innovative ideas in natural resources. Interestingly, it was during Mike's time at the USFS when the Forest Legacy program made roots. The third panel member is PIF board member Dick Steffes. Dick served the people of Wisconsin as real estate specialist with DNR, retiring in 2013. Since then Dick has made several trips to Washington DC to advocate for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, and he guides conservation projects through his company American Acquisitions LLC. During his career with DNR Dick negotiated most of the Forest Legacy projects benefiting Wisconsin, as well as steering the Stewardship Fund to fulfillment in fee-simple purchases. Some of these include projects in the expanded NHAL.