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## **Growing Wisconsin's \$24 billion forest products industry**

*Federal, state, local process to develop plans for Wisconsin's forests*

**MADISON, WI. APRIL. 27, 2021** – A process that will help shape the future of Wisconsin's forests and forest products industry begins with your ideas.

In collaboration with the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC), the Wisconsin Council on Forestry will host two virtual listening sessions to gather ideas and input from the forest products industry, conservationists, recreation enthusiasts and residents. The sessions will take place on May 6 from 2 to 4 p.m., and on May 11 from 6 to 8 p.m. Governor Tony Evers is scheduled to participate in the May 6 session, and Lt. Gov. Mandela Barnes is scheduled to join the May 11 session.

The feedback gathered will allow the state to set new goals for diversifying Wisconsin's more than \$24 billion forest products industry and for sustainably managing the state's more than 17 million acres of forests. Creating that plan will allow Wisconsin to seek federal money and assistance for a key industry that provides more than 63,000 full-time and part-time jobs in the state.

"Wisconsin is the number one state in the country for papermaking," said Missy Hughes, secretary and CEO of the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. "But there are new challenges we must prepare for including global competition, changing demands because of electronic communication and more. This process will allow Wisconsin to set clear goals to grow and diversify our forest products industry, to sustainably manage our amazing forests that draw valuable tourism dollars here and to access federal resources when needed."

The listening sessions are part of the Regional Economic Diversification Summit – a process managed by the federal U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) in partnership with state and local agencies. The Wisconsin Council on Forestry will lead this initiative, with WEDC and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) providing administrative, planning, and technical support.

After gathering feedback, the Wisconsin Council on Forestry will work with UW-Extension to take information from the listening sessions to develop project priorities and goals, which will be shared with the EDA. The state could then receive federal money and assistance to carry out the plan.

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More information about the Regional Economic Diversification Summit process, registering for the listening sessions, and providing comments is available at <https://wedc.org/rural-prosperity/forest-products-industry-listening-sessions>.

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### **About the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation**

The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) leads economic development efforts for the state by advancing and maximizing opportunities in Wisconsin for businesses, communities and people to thrive in a globally competitive environment. Working with more than 600 regional and local partners, WEDC develops and delivers solutions representative of a highly responsive and coordinated economic development network. Visit [wedc.org](http://wedc.org) or follow WEDC on Twitter @WEDCNews to learn more.

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