



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

P.O. Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882

For Immediate Release
Contact: Rep. Mary Czaja
Rep. Rob Swearingen

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608-266-7694
608-266-7141

Assembly Republicans Focus on Forestry

Legislative tour highlights economic benefits of Northern forests

Antigo – Thirteen Assembly Republicans representing districts that cover all corners of the state met in Antigo on Thursday for a behind-the-scenes tour of northern Wisconsin’s logging and forestry industry. The tour was organized by Rep. Mary Czaja (R-Irma) and Rep. Rob Swearingen (R-Rhineland). They were joined by eleven colleagues, including Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R-Rochester), Assistant Majority Leader Dan Knodl (R-Germantown), Joint Finance Co-Chair John Nygren (R-Marinette), and Forestry Chair Jeff Mursau (R-Crivitz).

The group began the day in Tomahawk, with a visit to a cut site operated by logger Paul Roberts. Legislators had the opportunity to observe Roberts and his team harvesting timber and to hear the history of Roberts Logging that stretches back to the late 1800s. Industry professionals Henry Schienebeck of Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association and Jane Severt of Wisconsin County Forests Association also participated in the tour and shared their expertise with the group.

The tour continued on to Antigo where Kretz Lumber company president Troy Brown hosted a working-lunch question and answer session followed by a full plant tour for the group. The representatives had a firsthand look at the unique lumber handling process that sets apart Kretz maple woods as the finest in the industry and also focused on the critical need for a consistent timber supply to produce high-quality wood products for cabinetmakers, furniture, flooring, window and door manufacturers.

A visit to the Packaging Corporation of America mill in Tomahawk was the third and final stop of the day. Mill manager Adam Webster opened with a brief presentation of PCA’s leading role in the corrugated cardboards market and took the group on a step-by-step tour of each phase in the production process. Webster echoed the comments of Brown from earlier in the day, that one of the single biggest challenges facing Wisconsin mills today is a dependable and adequate wood supply.

Representatives Czaja and Swearingen expressed gratitude to those legislators from other parts of the state that took the time to learn more about Wisconsin’s northern forestry industry. **“Here in the northwoods we understand forests are not only for recreation but are also a vital part of the economy,”** said Czaja. **“I sincerely appreciate my colleagues from other regions of the state, especially those from more urban areas, recognizing that we need to support our timber producers and ensure the local economy here in the north can compete and remain viable.”**

Swearingen reflected on the day and said, **“Today really was what being a representative is all about. We had the opportunity to showcase the tremendous potential of Wisconsin’s forests and I think the group really recognized how important the northern region is to making our state thrive.”**

According to the DNR, forestry is the number one employer in seven northern Wisconsin counties and is the state’s second-largest manufacturing employer. The combined job total for all aspects of the forestry industry including forestry and logging, pulp and paper, sawmills and wood products is over 62,200 employees at 1,462 establishments. The average wage is \$49,583 and total wages contribute \$3.1 billion per year to Wisconsin’s economy.

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<http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/forestbusinesses/documents/wisconsinforestproductsindustry.pdf>