

FYI - For those who are concerned about conservation, not just of our beautiful lake, but for the local area, following is a request from Charlie Carlin, Gathering Waters – Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts.

Please join us at the Oneida County Board Meeting next Tuesday, May 16th at 9:30 AM to speak up for the Pelican River Forest and protecting Wisconsin's land, water, wildlife, and our outdoor ways of life. This is a crucial moment to make a strong public showing for conservation, recreation, and forestry.

Invite your friends and family. Let's make this meeting a celebration of our commitment to conservation!

The Oneida County Board will be considering a resolution opposing the Pelican River Forest and calling on the state to *only* secure easements on ATV / UTV trails and roads on the property. Doing so would leave the forest, wetlands, and waterways unprotected.

The board meeting is likely to attract a lot of public attention, so this is an important opportunity to demonstrate to decision makers that Wisconsin residents value land and water conservation. No matter which way the board votes, we want to communicate loud and clear that the public values clean water, abundant wildlife, outdoor recreation, and a thriving forest products industry.

When and where is the board meeting?

Tuesday, May 16th at 9:30 AM
Oneida County Courthouse
1 S Oneida Ave, Rhinelander, WI 54501

County board meeting room
Second Floor

[Send Charlie](#) a quick note if you're planning to go so we have an idea of how many people may attend.

How do I speak up?

We expect the meeting to have a public comment period. Please encourage your friends and neighbors to attend and speak up in favor of the Pelican River Forest. Each person will have three minutes to speak. There may be a sign up sheet at the entrance to the meeting to register to public comment, so keep an eye out.

Do I have to be an Oneida County resident?

While it is possible that the board will limit comments to county residents, we anticipate that public comment will be open to everyone. On a project like the Pelican River Forest, the conservation benefits extend far beyond the political boundaries of Oneida County.

Everyone who lives downstream benefits from protecting the wetlands. We all benefit from the trees that clean the air and sequester carbon. Many of us travel to the Northwoods to recreate.

The state's economy depends on a robust forest products industry. And the wildlife that traverse the forests do not care about town or county boundaries.

What do I say?

State that you support conserving the Pelican River Forest and caring for the places that make Wisconsin special.

From there, share a personal anecdote about why projects like this matter to you. There are many great reasons to support Pelican River, including:

- Protection of the Wolf River for drinking water, fishing, and boating
- Public access for hunting, ATV's, and snowmobiles
- Protection of a large block of wildlife habitat that connects National Forest and County Forest lands
- Support for the region's largest economic drivers: forestry and outdoor recreation
- Carbon sequestration that helps to mitigate the effects of climate change
- Protecting the Northwoods way of life

You do not have to be an expert on Pelican River or land conservation. Just be honest and enthusiastic in your support for one of the largest land conservation projects in Wisconsin history.

The [Friends of Pelican River Forest website](#) has lots of great information about the project, about the benefits of land conservation, and how working forest conservation efforts like this contribute to local economies. Pull one or two talking points from those resources and you'll be all set.

Still need more inspiration? Some wonderful letters to the editor have been published in support of Pelican River Forest. Here are a few to check out:

- [The Tomahawk Leader](#)
- [The Lakeland Times](#)
- [The Tri-County Press](#)

How does this new resolution compare to the resolution considered by the Oneida County board in February?

For those of you who have been closely following the Pelican River Forest story, you may recall that the Oneida County Board initially considered a [deeply flawed resolution](#) at their February meeting.

Thanks to an [outpouring of support](#) for the project and a [detailed analysis of the errors](#) and mischaracterizations in that resolution, it was sent to committee for further study.

The [resolution that we expect](#) to come before the board next week contains fewer errors. However, it seeks to limit the project to little more than trails and roads for motorized use. **In other words, it essentially calls for the gutting of the largest forest conservation project in state history.**

The updated resolution also calls for directing road endowment funds to county coffers. The current terms of the Pelican River Forest agreement between the landowner and the DNR call for the landowner to donate road maintenance funds to an endowment in a community foundation. Those funds would then be available to future landowners to pay for road maintenance. We can not support directing these funds directly to the county.

The resolution also calls for the DNR to give local governments 90 days to consider whether or not to support projects like Pelican River Forest instead of the 30 days notice currently required by law. This is a reasonable request and we would like to see state legislators and the DNR determine how to implement an improved, lengthier process for local government consultation for future Knowles Nelson projects.

Thanks to everyone who has voiced their support, written letters and made phone calls to decision makers, written letters to the editor, and spent countless hours talking to friends, neighbors, and town boards across the Northwoods. This is a grassroots effort in the best sense of the word.

Please join us on Tuesday for another important moment to speak up on behalf of the places that make Wisconsin special.

- Charlie and all your advocates at Gathering Waters

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Charles Carlin

Director of Strategic Initiatives

Gathering Waters: Wisconsin's Alliance for Land Trusts

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