

Wisconsin Legislators Encounter the Green Industry



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Over two hundred representatives of Wisconsin's green industry converged in Madison on February 15, 2005 to meet with state legislators for the first ever Wisconsin Green Industry Day on the Hill. The representatives were comprised of business owners, workers, enthusiasts, and educators who wanted to impress upon Wisconsin's lawmakers the impact our industry makes in Wisconsin's economy. They also wanted to impress on them that, while making this large economic impact, they remain true stewards of Wisconsin's environment.

We started by meeting at the Inn on the Park Hotel in downtown Madison. After several presentations, we walked across the street to the State Capitol to meet face-to-face with our state legislators. The 200 plus participants broke into small groups of 5 to 10 people to meet the senators and representatives. But because the senate and assembly were in session on February 15th, many of the groups met with their legislator's staff. We were assured that the staff get the attention of the legislators and will surely pass on our messages. Several of our small groups were able to meet with the legislators who, despite being in session, came out to speak with the industry. A file was given to each legislator or staff that was met which presented our important issues.

Issues discussed with the legislators and presented in the file included statements about pesticide and fertilizer products, land and water use, invasive species, health care, immigration and labor, environmental protection, and more. The main message, though,

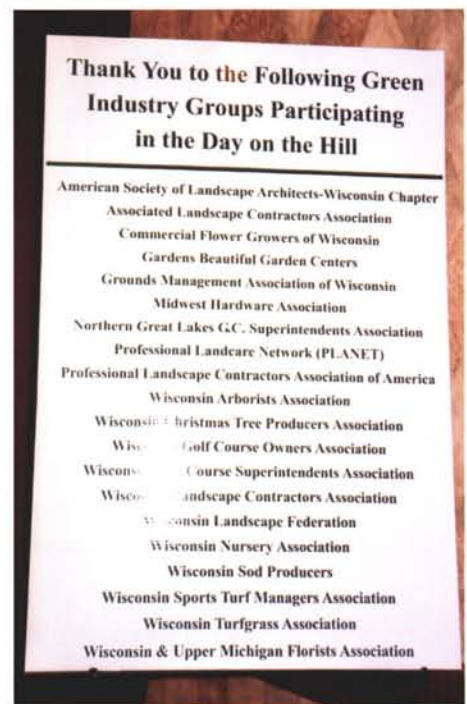


The Green Industry heads for the State Capitol for the first ever Green Industry Day on the Hill.

was the economic information compiled in the recently completed Wisconsin Green Industry Survey.

This independent and unbiased survey, conducted by the Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics Service, found Wisconsin's green industry annually contributes over \$2.7 billion and provides over 43,000 jobs to the state's economy. The survey also found there are over 4,700 businesses doing work in Wisconsin's green industry that have strong ties and commitment to our state's agriculture and its future.

The day was coordinated by Brian Swingle, the executive director of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation. Brian brought together 19 different green industry associations, listed below, to take part in the event. Additionally, he brought in several speakers including politicians,



Wisconsin Green Industry Day on the Hill participating associations and organizations



This group got the chance to meet with Michael Bruhn of State Representative Scott Gunderson's staff. (L to R) Wade Hummer (Treescapes), Mike Schuster and Heather Schuster (Terra-Firma Landscape), Michael Bruhn (Representative Gunderson's staff), and Jeff Millies (Edgewood Golf Course).



Representative Honadel (R-21st District) addresses the group on becoming involved in government through events like the Day on the Hill.



Day on the Hill coordinator, Brian Swingle of the Wisconsin Green Industry Foundation, poured his all into the event.



Over 200 participants gathered for the first ever Wisconsin Green Industry Day on the Hill.

agriculture representatives, and educators who spoke about issues important to agriculture and the green industry.

State Senator Ted Kanavas (R-33rd District) was one of the first to speak to the crowd. Ted serves as the chairman of the Senate Committee on job creation, economic development and consumer affairs. He also has first hand knowledge of the green industry, as his brother George Kanavas owns a landscape company. He acknowledged the exciting growth potential and positive impact to business and the environment that the industry contributes.

State representative Mark Honadel (R-21st District) spoke next. Mark is also familiar with the green industry being a former garden center owner. He was impressed with the large number of people that came together for the Day on the Hill. He said lawmakers will listen to groups that take the time to be involved with their government through events like this.

Dr. Laura Jull from the UW-Madison Department of Horticulture was the driving force behind the Wisconsin Green

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Industry Survey. She made the comment that the green industry ranks #2 for agricultural crop cash receipts in Wisconsin. The only crop which exceeds in receipts is corn — (Green Industry - \$2.7 billion/ Corn \$5.65 billion). But she further clarified that those numbers only include product sales and that if the green industry included services and resales to their value, they would rank as the #1 agricultural crop in the state.

Other distinguished speakers that spoke to the industry included Wisconsin Department of Agriculture and Consumer Protection Secretary Rod Nilsestuen, former Governor of Wisconsin Martin Schreiber, and UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean Elton Aberle. Dean Aberle was given a surprise before he took the podium to speak. Brian Swingle presented him with a “Friends of Wisconsin Green Industry” plaque in appreciation for all he’s done in support of the industry as Dean of the College.

After this, Brian was surprised himself. Bill Vogel, the president of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation, said some nice words about all the work and expertise Brian put into the Day on the Hill. The surprise was the response from the green industry that followed. A long and sustained standing ovation was given Brian for all of his work. He was truly touched but could only thank his staff for all their behind-the-scenes work and additionally thanked the Board of the Wisconsin Green Industry Federation who helped with this vision.

In closing Brian asked the audience if they felt the day made an impact on legislators and will help when important industry issues are being discussed by legislators. Every hand went up in agreement. ♻️



UW-Madison College of Agricultural and Life Sciences Dean Elton Aberle was presented a 'Friend Of Wisconsin Green Industry' plaque by event organizer Brian Swingle.

Green Industry Day on the Hill Participating Associations:

- American Society of Landscape Architects-Wisconsin Chapter
- Associated Landscape Contractors Association
- Commercial Flower Growers of Wisconsin
- Gardens Beautiful Garden Centers
- Grounds Management Association of Wisconsin
- Midwest Hardware Association
- Northern Great Lakes Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Professional Landscape Contractors Association of America
- Wisconsin & Upper Michigan Florist Association
- Wisconsin Arborists Association
- Wisconsin Christmas Tree Producers Association
- Wisconsin Golf Course Owners Association
- Wisconsin Golf Course Superintendents Association
- Wisconsin Green Industry Federation
- Wisconsin Landscape Contractors Association
- Wisconsin Nursery Association
- Wisconsin Sod Producers
- Wisconsin Sports Turf Managers Association
- Wisconsin Turfgrass Association