

A photograph of a forest with a large fallen log in the foreground and several people in the background. The log is covered in moss and has a jagged end. The forest floor is covered in fallen leaves and branches. In the background, several people are standing near a tree trunk, possibly conducting a field study or survey. The overall scene is a natural, wooded area with a focus on forest ecology.

ERF Policy

Lee E. Frelich

University of Minnesota Center for Forest Ecology
Department of Forest Resources

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
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Some concerns I had:

Does this policy change mean in effect that there will be no forests older than rotation age on DNR timberlands, other than those that accidentally get older (i.e. weren't harvested for logistical reasons, or stands got old due to falling total harvest)? In other words, is the DNR moving to a zoned system with intensive harvest in a defined zone (timberlands) and little or no harvest elsewhere (parks, designated old growth)? It seems like the ERF revision document is trying to say this without saying it directly.

Can the inventory system accurately measure small percentages of old forest?

Leave trees and patches within clear cuts—rather absurd to count those as part of old forest. Old forest only makes sense at the stand and landscape scales, including uneven-aged management.

We don't want to get into the situation in parts of Scandinavia, where several short harvest rotations have occurred in many forests and there are few large trees, little coarse woody debris, and unnatural cover types over some landscapes. This has led to hundreds of species being added to the 'Red list'.



In Minnesota we are not close to those conditions in Scandinavia. Timber harvests have fallen substantially in the last decade, which means that the average age of forests has gotten older, even on timberlands.

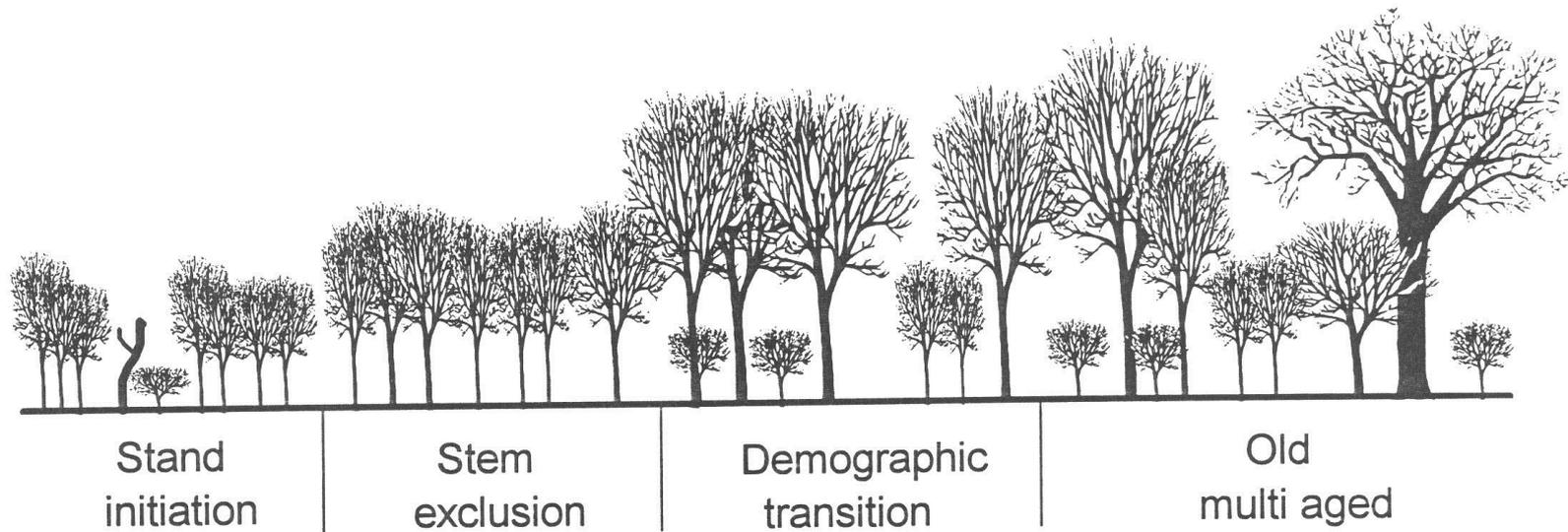


Need to do something with the matrix of the landscape, outside of the 5-10% (or less in some regions of the state) that are under natural conditions.

ERF is an intermediate condition between short rotation forestry and natural areas

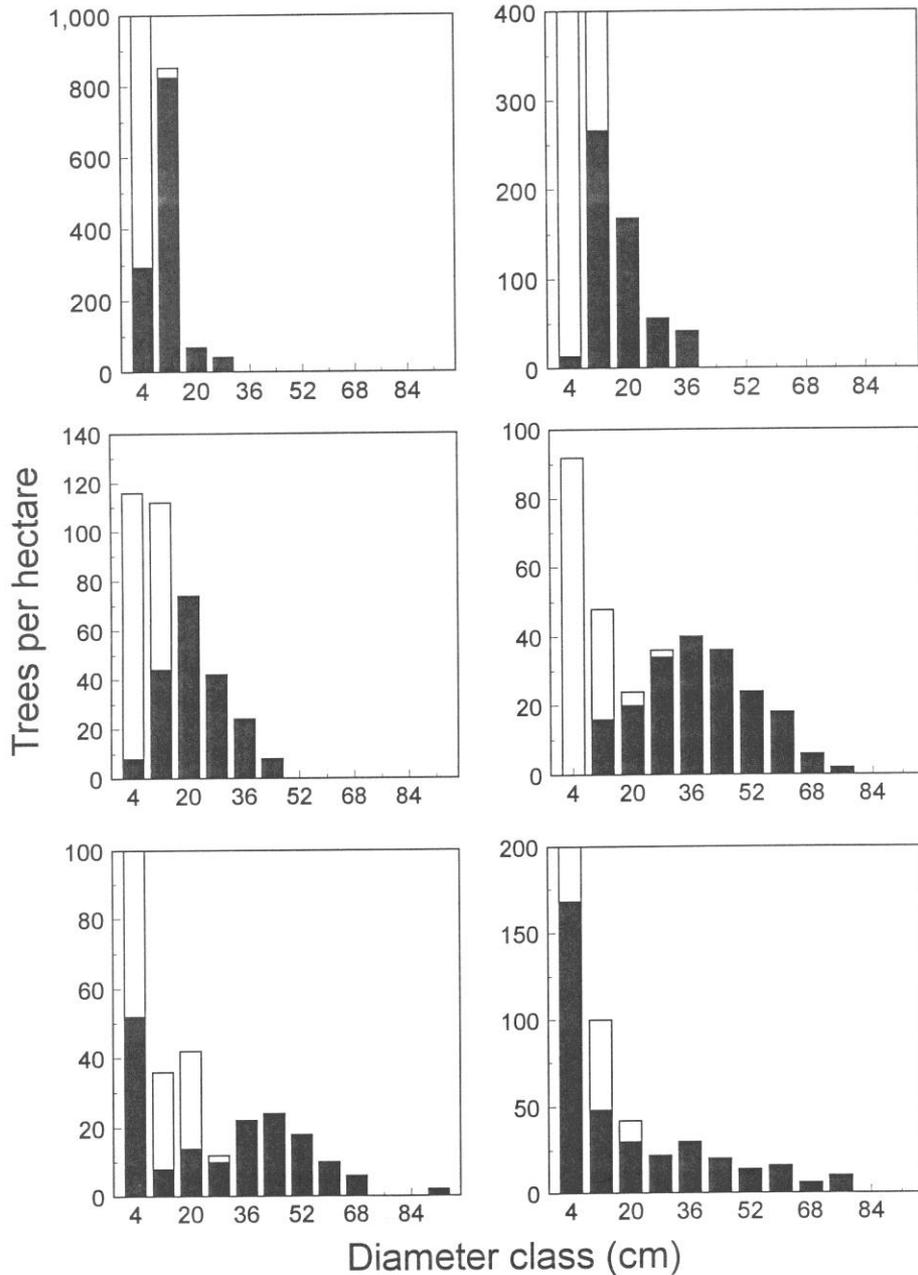


Stand development stages



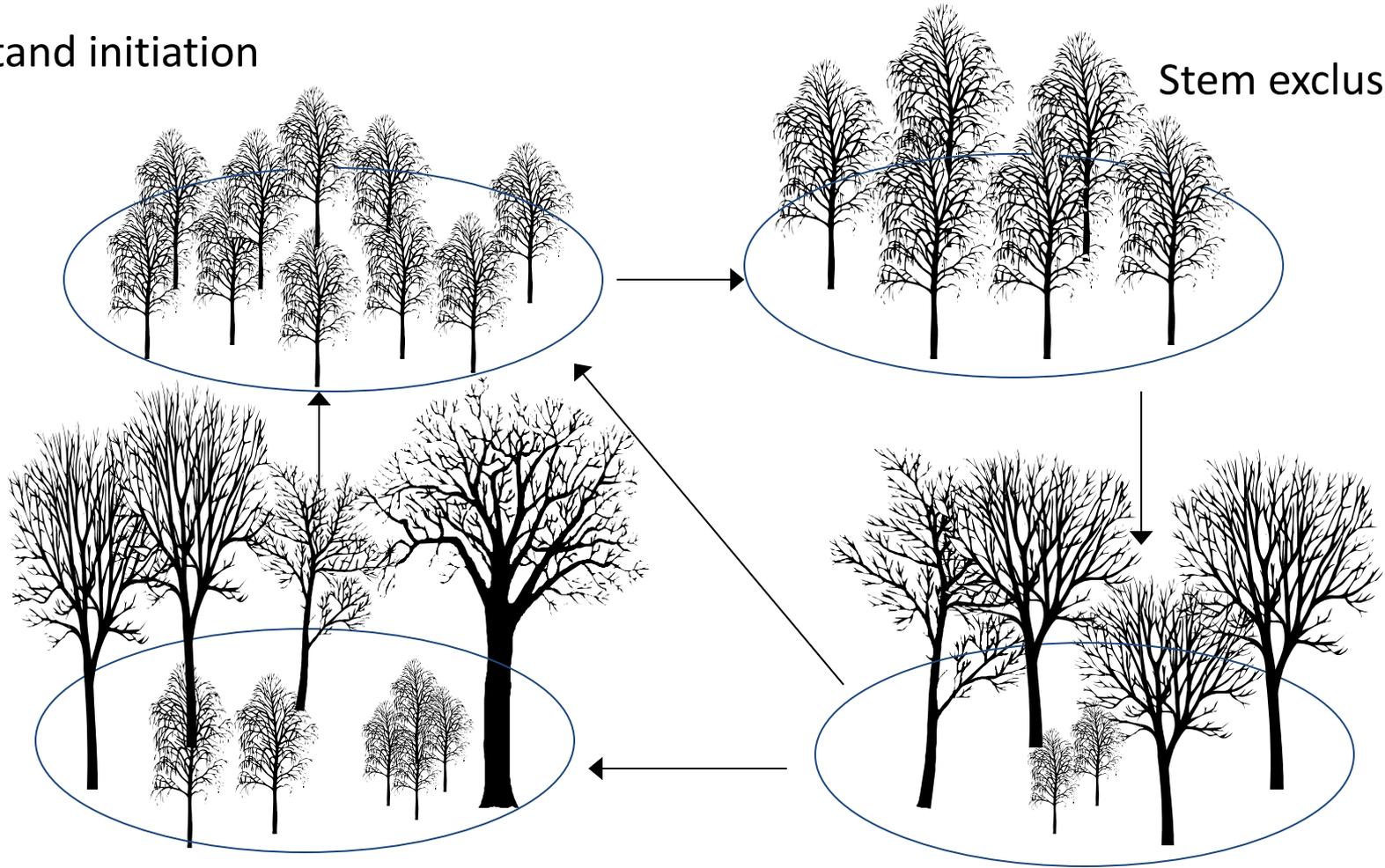
From Frelich 2002, *Forest dynamics and disturbance regimes*
Cambridge University Press

Diameter distribution changes during stand development



Stand initiation

Stem exclusion



Multi-aged

Demographic transition

Stand development (Frelich 2002)





Species that use woody debris and cavities





Species that use bark fissures
of old trees and complex
Microhabitats of stands in
late stages of development





Even in forest ecosystems with frequent fire and early stages of development, there is a lot of woody debris after natural disturbance

Removal pattern forests evolved with over millions of years essentially opposite that of harvesting

Conclusions, Policy change OK, as long as:

- Say what you really mean
- Definition of thresholds for triggering reexamining ERF policy in the policy statement is important. Total harvest of 3.5 million cords may be OK.
- We have inventory data accurate enough to detect change in percentages when we are dealing with age classes that only occupy a few percent of the landscape

