

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Strategic Plan

2017-2020 STRATEGIC PLAN

Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) Mission

“The Minnesota Forest Resources Council is a forum where diverse representatives from Minnesota’s forest stakeholders discuss and resolve issues regarding Minnesota’s forests. The council promotes sustainable forestry in Minnesota by facilitating collaboration and fostering the use of scientific information.”

Please see [MN Statute 89A.03](#) for the MFRC’s complete and detailed legislative mandate.

More information about the MFRC can be found at mn.gov/frc/.

"Forest resources means those natural assets of forest lands, including timber and other forest crops; biological diversity; recreation; fish and wildlife habitat; wilderness; rare and distinctive flora and fauna; air; water; soil; climate; and educational, aesthetic, and historic values (89.001, Subd. 8)."

MFRC Purpose

(89A.03, Subd. 2)

The purpose of the MFRC is to develop recommendations to the governor and to federal, state, county, and local governments with respect to forest resource policies and practices that result in the sustainable management, use, and protection of the state's forest resources. The principles listed below are outlined in statute and form the basis for the work conducted by the MFRC and its staff. The MFRC embraces these principles while acknowledging that the relevance of each, in addition to other important considerations not listed here, varies over time and in relation to the unique challenges associated with each forestry issue.

- 1) Acknowledge the interactions of complex, sustainable forest resources, multiple ownership patterns, and local to international economic forces
- 2) Give equal consideration to the long-term economic, ecological, and social needs and limits of the state's forest resources
- 3) Foster the productivity of the state's forests to provide a diversity of sustainable benefits at site levels and landscape levels
- 4) Enhance the ability of the state's forest resources to provide future benefits and services
- 5) Foster no net loss of forestland in Minnesota
- 6) Encourage appropriate mixes of forest cover types and age classes within landscapes to promote biological diversity and viable forest-dependent fish and wildlife habitats
- 7) Encourage collaboration and coordination with multiple constituencies in planning and managing the state's forest resources
- 8) Address the environmental impacts and implement mitigations as recommended in the generic environmental impact statement on timber harvesting

Overview of the Planning Process & Identification of MFRC's Key Planning Issues

Why Now

The MFRC undertook a strategic planning process in 2016 that focused on identifying key policy issues. With recent changes in leadership, and after observing the 20th anniversary of the MFRC, the MFRC believed it an opportune time to re-examine the MFRC while being mindful of current and changing forest resource management needs. Not only did the MFRC identify key policy issues as in past years, but it also took a hard look at the MFRC's internal organizational capacity and infrastructure with the intent of increasing efficiency and overall effectiveness.

Planning Process

The assessment phase of the planning process started in early 2016. The MFRC first reviewed its enabling statutes and corresponding duties and responsibilities as well as the structure and function of the MFRC. Previous planning efforts were also reviewed. To gain more information, the executive director interviewed most of the MFRC members and staff regarding priority issues, as well as strengths and weaknesses of the MFRC. Staff solicited further input from the MFRC's regional planning committees (see Appendix). In addition, the MFRC also surveyed its key stakeholders identified by MFRC members and staff to assist in the development of priorities for the MFRC's new strategic plan. The stakeholder survey was sent to 155 people, and 57 responses were received (37 percent response rate). For a full list of stakeholder groups included in the survey, please see the Appendix.

The assessment data was reviewed by the MFRC in July and September 2016, and the data was used by MFRC members and staff to develop its 2020 planning and policy priorities, vision, goals, and strategies.

Planning and Policy Priorities

The key long-range planning priorities identified by all stakeholder groups are detailed below. They are not listed in any particular order; please see the Appendix for more information.

Long-range policy priorities:

- 1) Water quality and forests
- 2) Health of the forest products industry
- 3) Private forest management
- 4) Terrestrial invasive species

Long-range engagement and internal operations priorities:

- 1) Enhance organizational capacity to align with new organizational priorities
- 2) Expand external communications and increase stakeholder engagement
- 3) Improve forest resources research and utilization of data

MFRC Vision 2020

- 1) Establish and advance clear and sustainable forest resources policy solutions for Minnesota
- 2) Maintain, enhance, and promote core activities and programs that serve as the foundation of MFRC work
- 3) Engage and share information with stakeholders to sustain Minnesota's forest resources
- 4) Provide leadership in the coordination and development of research to achieve optimal forest resource management
- 5) Align MFRC's resources to effectively address Minnesota's changing forest management needs

Vision #1:

Establish and advance clear and sustainable forest resources policy solutions for Minnesota

GOAL 1) Implement a process to evaluate and address the four long-range policy priorities

Strategy 1: Utilize existing MFRC committees or establish subcommittees to address the four primary priorities (March 2017). The primary priorities are:

- *Water quality and forests*
- *Health of the forest products industry*
- *Private forest management*
- *Terrestrial invasive species*

With relation to the above policy priorities, it is important to manage and sustain forest habitat quality and quantity to support fish and wildlife population goals and objectives.

Strategy 2: Refine and adopt framework for evaluation of each priority (May 2017)

Strategy 3: Develop and formalize policy recommendations for each priority issue (December 2018)

GOAL 2) Develop a process to periodically assess and respond to important and timely emerging forest resources policy issues relevant to MFRC's legislative charges and the needs of stakeholders

Strategy 1: Biennial assessment and reporting of core SFRA metrics (end of calendar year, even years)

Strategy 2: Periodic survey of MFRC, regional committees, and stakeholders to identify important and timely emerging forest resources policy issues (biennially or as needed)

Strategy 3: MFRC discussion and assessment of key policy issues at annual two-day meeting (evaluate progress on existing, addition of new, etc.). Primary question: Is the short-term plan meeting the needs in a longer-term context? (annually during two-day meeting)

GOAL 3) Effectively engage the Minnesota legislature and relevant audiences to enact policy recommendations associated with key priorities and issues

Strategy 1: Develop engagement plan that maximizes interaction with legislature (December 2017, re-evaluate annually thereafter)

Strategy 2: Structure MFRC biennial report to clearly emphasize formal policy positions and recommendations (January, odd years)

GOAL 4) Communicate the MFRC's policy positions to a broad audience of resource professionals and the public

Strategy 1: Coordinate with staff and external consultants to develop digital content related to MFRC's policy positions and recommendations (September 2017-December 2020)

Strategy 2: Maintain a policy outreach calendar to strategically coordinate with key legislative and seasonal schedules (June 2017 and then annually)

Vision #2:

Maintain, enhance, and promote core activities and programs that serve as the foundation of MFRC work

GOAL 1) Maintain and enhance the Landscape-level Management Program to conduct landscape-level forest management planning and coordination of activities across diverse forest interests within particular landscapes

Strategy 1: Provide leadership and support to the six regional landscape committees (ongoing)

Strategy 2: Develop and approve second generation plans for each regional landscape (2020)

Strategy 3: Develop frameworks and provide resources to coordinate implementation of specific on-the-ground forest management projects among land managers and forest landowners (ongoing)

Strategy 4: Promote continued collaboration among governmental agencies, managers, and other stakeholders to develop and implement projects designed to meet landscape plan goals and objectives (ongoing)

Strategy 5: Support landscape-level monitoring and accomplishment reporting (ongoing)

GOAL 2) Maintain and enhance the Site-level Management Program to ensure that Minnesota's Voluntary Forest Management Guidelines (FMGs) continue to be broadly accepted and used to minimize impacts to Minnesota's forest resources during forest management activities

Strategy 1: Periodically review and revise the FMGs in response to new information, advances in technology, and changing social perspectives (as needed)

Strategy 2: Identify and conduct needed research to evaluate the effectiveness of current FMGs to increase guideline support or revision (ongoing)

Strategy 3: Provide guidance and support to the DNR's Guideline Monitoring Program (GMP) to ensure that the program continues to provide regular, high-quality information on guideline implementation and is sufficiently funded to meet its objectives (ongoing)

Strategy 4: Work with the DNR-GMP to develop a readily accessible database of monitoring results for landowners, managers, and stakeholders (June 2018)

Strategy 5: Promote and disseminate the FMGs with a variety of approaches including presentations, workshops, and web content (ongoing)

GOAL 3) Provide a vehicle for Minnesota citizens, landowners, and forest managers to communicate their concerns and observations about questionable forest management practices through the Public Concerns Registration Process (PCRP)

Strategy 1: Increase awareness and access to the PCRP phone line and online submission form (2017)

Strategy 2: Evaluate all registered concerns and share findings with all interested parties (ongoing)

Strategy 3: Periodically summarize and report information generated from the PCRP (annually)

Vision #3:

Engage and share information with stakeholders to sustain Minnesota's forest resources

GOAL 1) Increase awareness of the MFRC and forest resources issues among the governor, legislature, natural resources community, and the public

Strategy 1: Produce a biennial report on the accomplishments and activities of the MFRC and an off-year supplemental report (January, odd and even years)

Strategy 2: Continue to produce and enhance MFRC newsletter to inform and engage readers about current MFRC activities and other forest resources-related topics (quarterly)

Strategy 3: Make improvements to MFRC website, publications, and other content to improve ease of use, discoverability, and visual presentation of ideas and concepts (ongoing, review website annually)

Strategy 4: Establish social media presence to engage key audiences about current MFRC activities and other forest resources-related topics (March 2017, then ongoing)

Strategy 5: Establish and promote MFRC brand (ongoing)

GOAL 2) Improve engagement efforts with key audiences

Strategy 1: Track and monitor communications efforts, content, and channels to ensure key audiences are informed of MFRC activities (March 2017, review annually)

Strategy 2: Evaluate and use communication tools that foster discussions between the MFRC and regional landscape committees and external stakeholders (July 2017)

Strategy 3: Build relationships with the media, public relations and other communications professionals to expand visibility with key audiences and the public (August 2017, then ongoing)

Vision #4:

Provide leadership in the coordination and development of research to achieve optimal forest resource management

GOAL 1) Revitalize and enhance the Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

Strategy 1: Convene the RAC's membership (July 2017)

Strategy 2: Charge the RAC with developing and implementing a process to conduct the research assessment biennially (July 2017, first complete assessment completed by December 2018, interim assessments provided to potential sponsors as needed)

Strategy 3: Provide staff with additional resources to support activities of the RAC (immediately following approval of the Strategic Plan)

GOAL 2) Improve collaboration among research entities in Minnesota, and secure funding to support multi-disciplinary and multi-institutional efforts

Strategy 1: RAC identifies one key topic annually and works collaboratively to evaluate it with existing information (e.g., literature review with publication) (December 2018, annually thereafter)

Strategy 2: Secure funds to initiate and advance research priorities (July - October 2017)

Strategy 3: Conduct meetings with potential sponsor organizations (LCCMR, CWC, LSOHC, SFI, Blandin, and other foundation sponsors) to communicate priority research needs (variable depending on RFP release dates)

GOAL 3) Disseminate research findings for effective application in operational settings

Strategy 1: Ensure RAC investigators design research studies with application as a key objective (ongoing)

Strategy 2: Sponsor conference(s) to disseminate key research findings from RAC members (TBD)

Strategy 3: Continue to work with Sustainable Forests Education Cooperative (SFEC), UMN Extension, and the Minnesota Logger Education Program (MLEP) to conduct webinars and field workshops to transfer research findings into operational practice (ongoing)

Strategy 4: Coordinate with the Interagency Information Cooperative to improve access and linkages of relevant research findings and data to the broad forestry community (ongoing)

Strategy 5: Coordinate frequent presentations by RAC members to the MFRC, Regional Landscape Committees, Information Management Committee, and the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership (ongoing)

Strategy 6: Encourage RAC members to publish findings in formats accessible and useful to field practitioners when appropriate (e.g., forest health management guide, Great Lakes Silviculture Prescription Library)

Vision #5:

Align MFRC's resources to effectively address Minnesota's changing forest management needs

GOAL 1) Reconfigure and improve MFRC's committees and leadership structures to better align with the strategic plan and identified priorities

Strategy 1: The executive director and chair will develop a proposed committee plan and structure for review by the full MFRC (March 2017)

Strategy 2: Improve communication and coordination between MFRC regional landscape committees by improving working relationships and increased coordination of efforts (ongoing)

Strategy 3: Promote better structure and populate MFRC committees to achieve more efficiency in tackling top policy and forest management issues (6 to 12 months)

GOAL 2) Configure staff roles and functions to ensure organizational needs and evolving priorities are met

Strategy 1: Enhance organizational effectiveness by reconfiguring MFRC's staffing pattern (1 to 2 years)

GOAL 3) Improve communication between MFRC members and their constituencies and professional networks regarding MFRC activities to increase visibility and broaden reach

Strategy 1: Create content and materials for MFRC members and their organizations to distribute (3 months)

Strategy 2: Leverage the work of MFRC's core programs as a primary vehicle to enhance communications and increase awareness of the work by the MFRC (increase over time)

Strategy 3: Foster connections and collaborations between MFRC members and regional landscape committees (ongoing)

GOAL 4) Ensure that MFRC staff has the opportunity to attend training sessions, conferences, and other continuing education opportunities

Appendix

Long-Range Priority Policy Topics

MFRC Members and Staff	External Stakeholders	Regional Committees
1) <i>Water Quality and Forests</i> 2) <i>Health of the Forest Products Industry</i> 3a) Forest Fragmentation 3b) <i>Terrestrial Invasive Species</i> 3c) <i>Private Forest Management</i>	1) <i>Private Forest Management</i> 2a) <i>Water Quality and Forests</i> 2b) <i>Health of the Forest Products Industry</i> 3) Climate Change and Carbon Sequestration 4) <i>Terrestrial Invasive Species</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Water Quality and Forests</i> • <i>Health of the Forest Products Industry</i> • <i>Forest Ecosystem Health and Productivity</i>

MFRC Stakeholder Survey

The MFRC released an online survey to understand external perspectives of the MFRC. The survey was sent to 155 people. MFRC members were asked to provide five to ten contacts in their represented stakeholder community. In total, members provided 127 contacts. Staff also developed a list of 28 contacts from external stakeholder groups not represented on the MFRC. Please visit <http://mn.gov/frc/meetings-presentations.html> for more information.

Represented Interests	Invitations	Responses	Percentage of Responses
Environmental Organizations*	20	9	16%
Research and Higher Education	10	7	12%
Forest Products Industry	10	7	12%
Nonindustrial Private Forest Landowners**	9	6	11%
County Land Departments	12	4	7%
USDA Forest Service	7	4	7%
Labor Organizations	5	2	4%
Conservation Organizations	8	2	4%
Nonindustrial Private Forest Landowners	10	2	4%
Department of Natural Resources	6	2	4%
Game Species Management Organizations	4	1	2%
Commercial Logging Contractors	6	1	2%
Minnesota Indian Affairs Council	8	0	0%
Secondary Forest Products Industry	5	0	0%
Resort and Tourism Industry	7	0	0%
External Stakeholders	28	10	18%
TOTAL	155	57	100%

*Contacts provided by two environmental organizations representatives

** Owners of >40 acres; family forest association membership

Regional Landscape Committee Recommendation Letters

As established in the SFRA, the MFRC’s regional landscape committees are to provide regional perspectives to the MFRC on broad range of sustainable forestry matters. The regional committees fulfill this role, in part, by providing strategic planning recommendations to the MFRC, including priority policy topics to address in the next four years and strategies to address forest resources issues. The input from the regional committees will inform the development and evaluation of the MFRC’s formal policy recommendations for each of the four priority issues identified during the strategic planning process. Please visit <http://mn.gov/frc/meetings-presentations.html> for more information.

Summary of Recommendations

Below are the major forest policy topics that each regional committee identified for the MFRC’s consideration.

Northern Committee	East Central Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Healthy and stable forest products industry • Forest ecosystem health and water quality • Collaborative private forest management • Coordinated outreach and integrated education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and improve water resources • Forest ecosystem health and productivity • Parcelization and forest fragmentation • Forest products industry
Northeast Committee	Southeast Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wood as a resource • Moose habitat research • Diversify Minnesota’s forests • Nonindustrial private forest landowner outreach and education • Water resources and watershed health • Increase support for collaboration • Monitoring and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting forests with water quality and habitat • Parcelization and forest fragmentation • Invasive species • Sustainable forest industry • Landscape monitoring and evaluation
North Central Committee	West Central Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water resource and private forest management • Forest ecosystem health and productivity • Collaborative land administration • Coordinated outreach and education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forest health and water quality • Forest-based economic development • Private forest management • Parcelization and fragmentation