

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
-- Criteria and Procedures for Addressing Forest Resource Policy Issues --
July 1996

A major responsibility of the Minnesota Forest Resources Council is to “develop recommendations to the governor and to federal, state, county, and local governments with respect to forest resource policies and practices which result in the sustainable management, use, and protection of the state’s forest resources.” In order to exercise this responsibility in an effective and efficient manner, the Council has established criteria for selecting issues and a process for addressing the issues selected.

Issue Selection Criteria

Requests for specific issues to be addressed by the Forest Resources Council will come from many sources -- Council members, Council staff, stakeholder groups, and the public. Once identified, the Council will address an issue only if most of the following questions can be answered in the affirmative. Such a determination will be made by the Council consistent with its Operating Protocols.

1. Does the issue relate principally to forest resources or a closely related natural resource?
2. Is the issue fundamental in nature and not symptomatic of a more basic underlying issue?
3. Is the issue within the Council’s scope of responsibility and authority?
4. Is there reasonably good likelihood that the issue is resolvable?
5. Will resolution of the issue have broad significance?
6. Can the issue outcome realistically be influenced by the Council given its available resources and time requirements (if any) imposed on the Council for reaching resolution?
7. Is the Council broadly viewed as an appropriate organization to formally address this issue?
8. Will resolution of the issue further the policies, programs, and general intent of the MN Sustainable Forest Resources Act?
9. Is there a need for timely resolution of the issue?

Issue Study and Analysis Process

The Council will address issues in a manner that is consistent with the Protocols established for guiding its activities. The Council is interested in implementing an issue analysis process that is efficient (not wasteful of Council resources) and will allow for timely response (issue addressed in reasonable time period). Furthermore, the Council seeks to develop issue responses that are thorough, factual, represent state-of-the art knowledge about an issue, understandable by various external audiences, and acknowledge its role as “advisory” and not “authoritative”. The Council seeks to favor the development of clear policy or program recommendations by avoiding ridged “against” or “in favor” statements.

The Council will engage the following general procedure when addressing forest resource issues:

1. The Council identifies (consistent with its issue selection criteria and Operating Protocols) an issue to be addressed.
2. The Council directs a study of the issue be undertaken and may appoint a subcommittee to oversee the development of this study. If used, the role of the subcommittee is to identify the scope of the issue, provide assistance and review (as necessary) in assembling relevant background information, and draft recommendations for the Council’s consideration. The level of investigation required of a study will vary considerably depending on the scope of each issue.
3. The Council reviews the subcommittee’s report and adopts a recommended policy or program response to the issue.
4. The Council communicates its policy or program recommendations to various audiences and, as appropriate, works with the affected interests to ensure its recommendations are duly considered.
5. The Council periodically reviews the extent to which its recommendations have impacted resolution of the issue it was intended to address.