Minnesota Forest Resources Council
DRAFT Minutes
Cloquet Forestry Center, Cloquet, MN
July 20, 2016

Members Present: Kathleen Preece (Chair), Greg Bernu, Wayne Brandt, Alan Ek, John Fryc, Darla Lenz, Tom McCabe, Bob Owens, Dave Parent, Deb Theisen

Members Absent: Forrest Boe, Janet Erdman, Bob Lintelmann, Gene Merriam, Shawn Perich, Susan Solterman Audette

Alternates Present: Amber Ellering (alternate for Forrest Boe), Jan Green (alternate for Gene Merriam), Rick Horton (alternate for Shawn Perich)

Staff Present: Calder Hibbard, Lindberg Ekola, Rachael Nicoll, Taylor Pitel, Rob Slesak

Guests: Adam Murkowski (MN DNR), Mariann Johnson (facilitator), Ben Bagdon (MFI)

Chair's Remarks
Kathleen Preece opened the meeting with a round of introductions. She noted that there were not yet enough Council members present at the beginning of the meeting to form a quorum, but more were expected to arrive. Kathleen announced later in the meeting when a quorum was met.

Approval of Meeting Minutes*
John Fryc approved, and Dave Parent seconded, the meeting minutes. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Approval of Agenda*
Wayne Brandt approved, and Dave Parent seconded, the draft meeting agenda. The agenda was unanimously approved.

Executive Director Remarks
Calder Hibbard thanked members for the interviews they completed with him as part of the strategic planning process. Calder yielded his time to Rachael Nicoll, who discussed plans for the September 21-22, 2016 meeting in Grand Rapids.

Committee Reports
Personnel and Finance
Kathleen Preece reported that the committee has not met. It will meet on August 31.

Site-Level
Dave Parent reported that the committee met on May 31. The committee discussed site-level monitoring, the watershed approach, and the MFRC strategic planning effort.

Landscape Planning/Coordination
Lindberg Ekola reported that the committee has not met. He noted that the regional committees are developing recommendation letters to the council as part of the strategic planning process. The committee will also meet on August 31 following the P&F Committee Meeting.

Information Management Committee
Kathleen Preece reported that the committee met on June 13. At the meeting, Alan Ek announced his retirement and the selection of Mike Kilgore as Interim Head of the Forest Resources Department. The committee also heard an update on a potential Endangered Species Act listing of moose and discussed the strategic planning process. The next meeting is scheduled for August 8.

Staff Updates
Rob Slesak spoke about progress in the monitoring program. Portions of 10 watersheds are currently being monitored, and half the state has been monitored. He also spoke about on-going and new research studying EAB and ash, erosion control risk, leave tree effectiveness, wildlife response to leave tree retention, and on-going historic disturbance mapping. In response to a question, Rob noted that the historic disturbance mapping project will look at patterns of disturbance going back to 1975 on all forest lands across the entire state. The postdoc on the project has developed new methods for identifying different types of disturbance (e.g., land conversion).

Rachael Nicoll spoke about continued work to improve MFRC communications, including promotion of the Public Concerns Registration Program and the positive reception to the new MFRC newsletter. She requested input from Council members on the newest, unpublished edition of the newsletter. She also noted that she and other staff have been working to finalize the new fiscal year budget and close out last fiscal year's budget. Finally, Rachael mentioned the administrative and communications support student worker, Taylor Pitel, has provided. Taylor has also assisted Rob Slesak on data entry and analysis as well as Lindberg Ekola with incorporation of historical Forest Inventory and Analysis data into the North Central plan and other outreach materials.

Lindberg Ekola spoke about the activities of the regional landscape committees and highlighted two aspects of their work that support private forest management. First, he mentioned that the Forest Service awarded the East Central Committee with a $195,000 grant to develop a landscape stewardship plan for the Snake River Watershed and implement the Kettle River stewardship plan. Second, he noted that the committees are providing input on the update of the DNR Forest Legacy Plan.

Written Communication to the MFRC
None.

Committee of the Whole: Strategic Planning/Direction

Identification of Planning Process and Overall Project Design

Kathleen Preece introduced the strategic planning facilitator, Mariann Johnson, organization development consultant, President of M. T. Johnson & Associates, and trained mediator. Mariann explained her role as the facilitator and expressed her interest in learning from council members.

Marianne explained a triangular framework for planning and the cyclical steps of the planning process (Appendix A, Section 1). She discussed the council's mission statement included in the MFRC annual report and noted that there are no explicitly documented organizational values/principals. Dave Parent noted that the council is not an implementing body; it provides recommendations. This will affect the strategies the MFRC uses to evaluate the success of the plan. Mariann provided information on the monthly planning session objectives and timeline. The target end date of November 18, 2016 (Appendix A, Section 2).

Mariann described criteria for selecting key planning criteria (Appendix A, Section 5). She asked if the MFRC's work requires collaboration. It was agreed that by our very nature, we are collaborative, we are partnering. Jan Green emphasized the council's origins. The MFRC arose from controversy, but highly charged forestry issues have disappeared. She suggested that the council should seek to do work that makes a difference, even if the impact is limited. The council cannot solve every issue. Rick Horton agreed, but keeping communication lines open is important to prevent regression into the era that prompted the creation of the MFRC. Wayne Brandt noted that the MFRC is different from many boards and commissions. Its representations are tied to interests, not individuals. Members bring organizational perspectives, and there is power in this.

Mariann asked Council members to list desired outcomes of the strategic plan (Appendix A, Section 6).

Assessment Findings

Calder spoke about recent strategic planning process activities, including a June 24 strategic planning committee review of SFRA duties and responsibilities, his interviews of Council members, staff input, and plans for a stakeholder assessment.

Calder shared MFRC strengths identified by Council members and staff. The most commonly identified strengths were a strong reputation and collective voice, diverse membership, its role as a good forum to work through issues, relationships, and its function as a think tank. Darla noted that one of the strengths identified, relevancy, conflicted with recent conversations that have centered on the need to improve the MFRC's relevancy. Calder replied that there is a diversity of opinions surrounding the MFRC's relevancy. Mariann added that strengths and weaknesses are two sides of the same coin. Discussion ensued about the scale of the MFRC's relevancy, the support of Governor Dayton, and the focus of Commissioner Landwehr on prairie and wetland ecosystems that are facing larger threats. Marianne noted interest in leveraging the MFRC's history.

Calder covered perceived MFRC weaknesses, including reactivity; a lack of cohesiveness; members not representing the larger community; a lack of coordination and awareness; underrepresentation of some interests; and others. After some discussion, Amber Ellering noted that the weakness, 'underrepresentation of some interests,' may reflect a perception that some members may better represent the organizations they work for, not their represented interests. Bob Owens noted that the secondary forest products industry is largely unaware of the council. Darla added that MFRC members may need a clarification of their roles and responsibilities. Discussion ensued about larger societal factors: a lack of a broad interest in forestry, low public engagement in the political process, shrinking meeting attendance, and consolidation of local newspapers. Deb Theisen noted the difficulty in networking with others in the tourism industry. Rob Slesak added that this is just one more piece of the communications initiative and is about getting feedback from stakeholders.

Calder provided information on potential next steps. Mariann noted that these are very similar to the desired outcomes of the plan identified today. Bob noted an inconsistency between the next step of getting focused and encouraging diversity and identifying big issues.

Calder also covered top forest resource issues, by rank (Appendix A, Section 7). First tier: climate change/carbon issues, health of forest products industry, and water quality. Second tier: invasive species, tax issues, and fragmentation. Third tier: logger capacity, timber harvest, private forest management, and others. Wayne suggested adding wildlife to this list of priority issues. A brief discussion occurred regarding the council's potential role in addressing climate change. A majority of climate change research occurs on a federal level, but the council may play a role in more local/regional research in addition to a learning and training role.

Lindberg spoke about on-going regional landscape committee input. The committees are developing recommendation letters and are interested in forming better connections with the council. Calder noted that the Information Management, Site-level, and Landscape Committees have also provided input. In response to a question, Calder said that he has had informal conversations with the staff and has received written input from half of the staff.

Key Planning Issues
Mariann spoke about the MFRC's top organizational issues (Appendix A, Section 8). Alan Ek commented that the council should strengthen its research, but Dave Parent responded that this initiative could be expensive. Alan also noted that the MFRC is stepping up its communication efforts, but the world also needs to start looking to the MFRC.

Priority Issues
Next the conversation changed over to which environmental, societal, and economic issues should the MFRC focus on and address. Mariann presented a list of priority issues identified by Council members during their interviews with Calder. Mariann commented that this is just the first version of the list, and the council will refine the list during the strategic planning process.

The council decided to defer ranking the list of issues as only 10 of 17 members were present at the meeting. Alan suggested that there should be further discussion of what each issue specifically entails. Darla added that the council should set a vision prior to ranking issues. Rick suggested sending a survey to Council members prior to the September MFRC meeting. Alan added that members should have a finite number of issues to address to better seek funding opportunities and obtain results.

Mariann proposed working in small groups to identify five to seven ideas for the MFRC vision that could be accomplished in the next five years (Appendix B). Council members then regrouped and discussed and categorized each idea. Topics such as external communication, research and data, structure and performance, private forest management, stakeholders, and topical priority policies were discussed. Wayne suggested that Council members connect with others in their represented interests.

DNR Deer Management Evaluation: Upcoming Process and Plan

Kathleen Preece introduced Adam Murkowski, Big Game Program Leader, DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife. Adam noted that he would speak about the Office of the Legislative Auditor's (OLA) evaluation of DNR deer management, the upcoming process for creating a state-wide deer management plan, and pre-scoping efforts. The DNR will seek collaboration with the public and other entities during this process.

Adam explained that over the last two years, there have been a lot of questions about the DNR's motivation behind its deer management decisions. To address this issue, the OLA conducted an audit to evaluate the DNR's deer management practices. The audit reported that deer management is extremely complex, and overall, the DNR's deer management was found to be fairly sound. However, the audit also provided a number of recommendations and emphasized the need to create a new deer management plan. The DNR is generally is agreement with what was found.

There are 128 deer management plans throughout the state, but the state needs a cohesive plan. Hunting interests suggested improvement to deer monitoring systems, and the DNR has committed to continuing goal-setting work and improving deer-related information. The OLA's evaluation was completed in late May, and the deer plan is predicted to be completed in 2018. The planning process will begin as soon as September and is anticipated to end in early 2018.

The audit suggested that it would be beneficial to look at the big picture view of deer management. Therefore, the plan will be inclusive of non-hunting interests. The planning process will provide an opportunity to bring in the opinions and ideas of the larger public. The plan is in the pre-scoping process, involving gathering opinions and desired components of the plan. The pre-scoping will help ensure that the plan content and process is relevant. A common theme heard from the public is that they want increased communication and engagement from the DNR. A second common theme the DNR heard from the public related to improvement, access, and monitoring of deer habitat. Wayne Brandt asked how the DNR will address habitat

issues. Adam replied that often Midwesterners assume that the responsibility of habitat management does not involve them because the region has an abundance of deer. The DNR needs to work to determine how to educate and the public regarding habitat.

The DNR will create a state-wide advisory committee with designated seats representing stakeholder groups. Adam noted the DNR's desire to engage forestry to a greater degree. Also, the DNR is considering holding stakeholder meetings separately, but will plan to meet with any stakeholder groups that request meetings. Public meetings will also occur in addition to online input, statistically valid surveys, focus groups, social media, and more. Adam mentioned a Deer Notes email list that allows subscribers to receive information about the deer plan and plan process. He then handed out a pre-scoping survey to Council members and noted that he would type up their responses and send a summary to the MFRC.

Alan Ek inquired about the deer population model. Adam replied that the current model is called an accounting model. It uses past harvest mortality and population trends to estimate current population levels. Unfortunately, the model tends to create confusion among stakeholders; therefore, the DNR is considering using a different model. Alan also asked about information used to examine deer populations, such as Forest Inventory and Analysis data. Adam responded that Minnesota's model focuses on where the deer population is located in relation to carrying capacity. Wayne then asked how is it that habitat has not been considered in the process for estimating deer population based on past conversations with the DNR. Adam spoke about the need to continually reach out to and educate hunters on the importance of habitat.

In response to a question, Adam replied that the DNR is not currently committed to any specific engagement plan and is open to suggestions. He added that in terms of forestry representation on the advisory committee, Adam noted that the DNR is reaching out to forestry groups and is focusing on bringing together the diverse interests in forestry together. Kathleen suggested that Adam email the handout out to Council members due to a lack of time remaining in the Council meeting. Amber Ellering added that the council and forestry community could also consider representation on the advisory committee and their collective goals.

Public Communications to the MFRC

Ben Bagdon, Minnesota Forest Industries, announced that the North Star Expo will take place September 16-17 in Grand Rapids. Jan Green mentioned that the Hawk Weekend Festival will occur in Duluth that same weekend. The event marks the largest hawk migration in the country. Wayne Brandt also mentioned an upcoming event on August 18, an in-woods demonstration of John Deere's JDLink (Telematics Solution) and TimberNavi (GPS Solution). The demonstration will provide an opportunity for the industry to showcase their work and new technology, and bring industry professionals together

MFRC Member Comments
Kathleen reminded Council members of upcoming meeting dates.

Wayne Brandt moved, and John Fryc seconded, adjourning the meeting. The meeting was adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

APPENDIX A

July 20th, 2016 MFRC Meeting: Facilitator Presentation

1. Planning Framework

2. Mission

MN Statute 89A.03 Subd. 3

"The MN Forest Resources Council (MFRC) is a forum where forest stakeholders discuss and resolve issues regarding Minnesota's forests. We have helped depolarize forestry issues in MN by facilitating collaboration and fostering the use of scientific information."

Areas of Focus:

- Forest Policy
- Voluntary/Site-level Forest Management Guidelines
- Landscape-level Forest Resource Management
- Research

3. How the MFRC Delivers/Executes its Mission

- **Council**
- **Staff**
- **Committees:**
    1. Research Advisory
    2. Interagency Information Cooperative
    3. Information Management Committee
    4. Public Concerns Registration Process

4. Timeline

July 2016	September 2016	November 2016
• Learn initial assessment data- meaning? ID next steps • ID initial planning issues- key issues & priorities • Begin vision process & next steps	• Update assessment data & refine key issues, as needed • Vision, strategies, & Goals- alignment with issues • Next steps	• Review all work completed • Refinement of the plan • Approvals • Next steps- execution & monitoring & reporting • Staff begins work on annual plan

5. Criteria for Selecting Key Planning Issues

→Leverage strengths/history → Fulfill mission

- Would MFRC have direct impact on addressing issues?
- Could MFRC elevate understanding?
- Would Governor agree to top issues?
- Does it fit intent of SFRA?

6. Vision Plan

- Relevancy of staff/ staffing and roles/ priority work
- Direction/ confirmation
- Key focus area- require a vision
- Actionable- shared understanding
- Build on what has been done and organized to date
    - Focus- next steps/ strengths based
- Dynamic needs of users. Impact? Communication function enhanced
- Committees –GAP—what is actionable—is it getting traction? Track?
- Right committees

- Focus on mission-optimize-vs-focus on common good
- Ability to lead/collaboratively. More broadly
- Esp. ↑tourism (tools, materials, education provided, chamber, communication, collaboration)
- From legislature and governor→ input on desired path forward. Key issues? Anything we need to hear?
- Change to annual reports? Visibility to legislature and governor
- Present plan to leg. – history and relevance – help with budget
- Good relation with forest management—communication
- Proactive research plan for steering research
- "what if" – hot forestry issues?

7. Top Policy Issues

1. Climate/Carbon Issues
2. Health of Forest Products Industry
3. Water Quality
4. Invasive Species
5. Tax Issues
6. Fragmentation
7. Logger Capacity/Small loggers
8. Timber Harvest
9. Private Forest Management
10. Wild Rice
11. Tourism Issues
12. Biomass Utilization
13. Competition/Resources
14. Certification
15. ATVs
16. Peatland Forest

8. Org. Issues

- Combine IMC with RAC? Streamlining
- Site-level- expand research and related frameworks?
- Others? Clarification of council members liaison role→ own organization, other organizations, agencies
    - External reporting and communications (efficiently and effectively)
- Landscape planning and coordination

Things to Consider:

- Ensure wise use of MFRC resources?
- Position organization well to address its plan/priorities?
- Promote effective collaboration and partnering?