

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Minutes
Minnesota DOT Training and Conference Center - Shoreview
20 May 2009

Members Present: Al Sullivan, Wayne Brandt, Bruce Cox, Alan Ek, Dave Epperly, Dale Erickson, Jan Green (alternate for Gene Merriam), Shaun Hamilton, Joel Koemptgen, Bob Lintelmann, Mike Trutwin (alternate for of Bob Oswald), Dave Parent, Kathleen Preece, Shawn Perich, John Rajala, Mary Richards, Jim Sanders (alternate for of Rob Harper)

Members Absent: Gene Merriam, Bob Oswald, Rob Harper

Guests: Erin Baumgart (MFRC student worker), Art Norton (TNC), John Bathke, Mike Kilgore (UMN), Mike Kroenke (new SFEC coordinator)

Staff: Dave Zumeta, Lindberg Ekola, Calder Hibbard, Leslie McInenly, Rob Slesak

Staff Absent: Clarence Turner

Chair's Remarks

Al Sullivan opened the meeting with a round of introductions. He reported that the legislative bill with the Council's budget was approved and signed. The budget held with no cuts. In addition, the Interagency Information Cooperative budget went through at \$197,000 per year. Al noted that unallotments are a potential due to the state budget shortfall. He reminded Council members that the July meeting will be held at the Cloquet Forestry Center in the hope that Bob Oswald will be able to attend.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

None.

*** Approval of 25 March 2009 Meeting Minutes**

Kathleen Preece moved, and Wayne Brandt seconded to approve the 25 March 2009 meeting minutes. *The minutes were approved.*

*** Approval of 20 May 2009 Meeting Agenda**

Dave Zumeta suggested and the Council adopted an amendment to the 1:45 p.m. agenda item regarding the discovery of Emerald Ash Borer to include "...and in St. Paul". Dave Epperly moved to approve the 20 May meeting agenda. Bob Lintelmann seconded. *The agenda was approved as amended.*

Executive Director Remarks

Dave Zumeta provided personnel updates, reporting that student worker Erin Baumgart will be working full time this summer in the St. Paul office. Tom Kirzeder and Ted LeFrance, former landscape program interns, have taken positions elsewhere. Lindberg Ekola is in the process of hiring a new student worker for the summer.

Dave asked Leslie McInenly to provide an update on the MFRC website. Leslie reported that she has contracted with the State of Minnesota Office of Enterprise Technology to update the MFRC website. The site will meet current website design standards for accessibility and will include an improved

document library, Public Concerns Registration Program online form, and calendar. She invited Council member input during the web re-design process in the upcoming month.

Committee Reports

Personnel and Finance

The committee has not met since the last MFRC meeting.

Site-level

Dave Parent reviewed the site-level report that was distributed in the Council mailing. He noted that land commissioners were questioning the need for site-level monitoring, given that their programs are monitored when they undergo certification audits. Bruce Cox responded that the commissioners received a good response from Rick Dahlman and the question has been settled. Rob Slesak will meet with staff from DNR Division of Waters to discuss references to forest management guidelines within the new shoreland rules. Dave stated that there will be discussion later during the meeting about suggested recommendations to forward to the DNR Commissioner about site-level monitoring. Alan asked about opportunities to improve site-selection via sampling differently. Rob replied that sampling via the chain of custody may be a better option and noted that there will be more discussion regarding sampling this afternoon.

Landscape Planning and Coordination

Shaun Hamilton reported that the Landscape Committee met on April 30th with members of the Site-level Committee to discuss coordinating efforts with both the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership and the regional landscape committees. Shaun distributed individual regional landscape committee updates.

Dave Parent clarified that the entire Site-level Committee did not attend the meeting, but he and Rob Slesak were in attendance. The goal was to discuss ideas about how to communicate landscape-level goals at the stand-level for individual landowners.

Information Management

Calder distributed the Information Management Committee (IMC) update. The recent IMC meeting included discussion on responses to the fire funding resolution, an update on the forest parcelization research, follow-up to the joint forest inventory survey, discussion about IIC plans, climate change, and an update on woody biomass from the new DNR Biomass Coordinator, Anna Robertson.

Written Communication to the MFRC

Dave Zumeta reported that the MFRC received one written communication from Kathryn Maloney, USDA Forest Service State and Private Forest Program Regional Director, regarding Al Sullivan's letter concerning the MFRC resolution to support new fire funding legislation, similar to the FLAME act.

Overview of Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council structure, process and recommendations to the legislature, and potential relationship between the LOHC and the MFRC

Al Sullivan introduced Mike Kilgore, University of Minnesota Department of Forest Resources, and Chair, Lessard Outdoor Heritage Council.

Mike commented that Dave Zumeta asked him to discuss both the legislative outcomes related to the LOHC (soon to be the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council, L-SOHC) and strategic planning for the next 24 years.

Dave Zumeta distributed a portion of the bill that would appropriate \$2 million to the Department of Agriculture for state response to invasive species. The legislation states that the MFRC is to be consulted for further development of the Forest Protection Plan, for which \$125,000 was appropriated. The money is only available for use if existing appropriations for Emerald Ash Borer and other invasive species are not available. Mike stated that there is a real question about the ability to use money from the LOHC fund for plan development because the constitutional language specifically identifies the requirement for work that protects, restores, and enhances wildlife habitat.

Mike reported that the LOHC recommended 18 projects for funding this year (all were funded) in addition to an allocation of \$4 million to be used in a small grants program to be administered by the DNR for one year until an alternative administrative program is identified. The language in the bill revises the definitions of “protect”, “enhance”, and “restore”. The EAB appropriation was a late-hour addition. All appropriations are subject to LOHC reporting, transparency, and accountability requirements and work can only occur on permanently protected lands.

Jim Sanders asked what would happen to an allocation if it receives a line-item veto. Mike responded that the allocated money would go back to the LOHC fund. Council members discussed changes made to the allocation for the Upper Mississippi River Legacy easement, with Mike commenting that the shift in the amount provided from the fund during different years was acceptable to UPM.

Mike stated that money for all of the four funds from the Constitutional Amendment (Clean Water, Parks and Trails, Arts, and Outdoor Heritage) will be collected beginning in July 2009. Each fund must develop a 25-year plan. The LOHC will be developing a process for their 25-year plan this summer. Projects funded by the LOHC may only occur on prairies, aquatic systems, forests, and wetlands. Mike encouraged the forestry community to become more engaged in the strategic planning process. He asked the MFRC to think about how to participate and inform the LOHC about what can be done to enhance, restore, and protect forests and recommended that people think big and out-of-the-box (e.g., think creatively about the work done with respect to forestation projects for carbon sequestration).

Shaun stated that the landscape committees have initiated their 25-year plans to accomplish identified 100-year goals, noting the value of the corresponding timeframes with respect to strategic planning for the LOHC. Mike responded by asking the MFRC and its Landscape Program to identify tangible activities that the LOHC could fund. The LOHC will be developing regions for strategic planning within the state. Mike noted that the regions may correspond well, but not exactly, with the MFRC landscape regions.

Dave Parent added that the new DNR Forest Stewardship Plan could be an important link between the landscape goals and non-industrial private lands. Mike reiterated that LOHC-funded work may only occur on permanently protected lands.

Jan Green brought up a concern about the definitions of habitat, particularly with respect to aquatic systems and riparian zones. She suggested that the LOHC be explicit that shorelands are a part of habitat and pressed for greater consideration of landscape corridors and connections. Wayne Brandt responded that one problem with respect to connectivity is that the funds must be spent on permanently protected lands.

Mike asked the Council to help the LOHC better define restoration work within forests. The legislative bill contains definitions that the LOHC doesn't think are correct. For the next year, the LOHC may use

the definitions they developed, but the new definitions are codified and must be used in the future years. Codification also means that any DNR work will also be subject to those definitions, and that is a concern. Jan encouraged the LOHC to also consider the definition of wildlife, noting that there are over 600 vertebrate species in the state and only 25 of those are hunted. Mike responded that the LOHC is interpreting the term as inclusive of all wildlife, including those 600 species.

Mike encouraged the MFRC to consider the role the Council can play in developing the 25-year plan. The LOHC strategic plan must be developed by the end of 2010 but may be developed sooner to better align with FY2011 funding recommendations that are due January 15, 2010.

Dave Zumeta asked Bruce Cox and Kathleen Preece to comment on the MFRP perspective. Bruce responded that Mike attended the MFRP meeting a month ago and made the same request to the MFRP. The MFRP is developing recommendations to bring to the LOHC. Bruce is chairing a sub-committee to develop recommendations and feels there is good agreement on how the MFRP and MFRC can work together. The MFRP can provide on-the-ground projects as a way to ensure that they meet the strategies and advance the goals of the MFRC regional committees and the landscape program. Bruce said that he is currently summarizing the MFRC landscape goals for presentation to the LOHC this fall, and noted that the goals will be presented in a way that addresses the language of the constitutional amendment.

Mike stated that someone will need to come to the LOHC and say, "Here are the projects that will address the landscape goals." He commented that the MFRC is the only sanctioned government entity around these habitats (e.g., we don't have Minnesota Prairie Council) and reiterated that the MFRC, along with the MFRP, are important venues. Shaun noted that the LOHC is looking for very specific recommendations and stated that the MFRC, through the Landscape Program, is coming up with prioritized areas for work. These prioritized areas will be a useful filter through which the LOHC can make decisions about proposed projects.

Bruce stated that the MFRP will provide a venue for projects to be vetted; however, the Partnership will not be an advocate for any specific project.

Jan asked about prioritization of projects. Mike responded that the LOHC will base prioritization upon science and urgency. Jan then reiterated her concern about the definition of wildlife, which may include vertebrates, invertebrates, or even plants.

Al commented that the MFRC has struggled a bit with the balance of advice versus active advocacy. This year the MFRC was asked to endorse projects but unanimously decided that was not an appropriate role for us. He asked Mike for advice regarding how the Council should approach the relationship with the LOHC. Mike encouraged the MFRC to get involved with the strategic planning, noting that the strategic (30,000 foot) level makes a lot of sense for the Council. He said that the opportunity is great for the MFRC to identify priority areas and suggested that the MFRC review the various wetlands plans, which provide concrete identifiers such as acres needed, juxtaposition of habitats, and locations within the state.

Wayne inquired about the LOHC's direction with respect to allocation of funding for projects among the different habitats, noting that forests are in pretty good shape relative to some other habitats in the state. Mike responded that he doesn't envision the LOHC ever allocating a determined amount specifically based upon habitat type without considering other factors.

Jan asked whether the statewide plans (*Tomorrow's Habitat for the Wild and Rare* and the *Statewide Conservation and Preservation Plan*) will provide an overarching vision for the LOHC strategic plan. Mike commented that while it is important to have lofty goals, they need to be translated into projects. Wayne suggested that one goal is land consolidation (e.g., how can we better use land exchanges and other approaches) to improve and enhance management of larger blocks of land.

Dave Epperly suggested the LOHC consider the specific purpose of actions at different scales and noted that from the fiscal perspective, restoration is most expensive. Jan inquired about outreach events throughout the state.

Jim asked about next steps for the MFRC with respect to Mike's questions. Dave Zumeta responded that he envisions a two-tier strategy. In collaboration with the MFRP, State and Private Forestry and DNR, we need to develop a collaborative, broad statewide vision. At the landscape-level, there is enough specificity in our landscape plans (e.g., acres of jack pine restoration) to provide broad direction. However, neither the MFRC nor its regional committees ought to be making project by project recommendations.

Al commented that this may be the biggest opportunity to shape the work around forests that the Council has ever had. He suggested that he establish an *ad hoc* committee to develop a framework. Kathleen suggested that as the Council considers an *ad hoc* committee, we be sensitive to the time invested by Bruce Cox's MFRP committee. Shaun Hamilton added that he would like regional committees to be made aware of project proposals submitted to the LOHC so that they may help improve the projects.

*** Committee of the Whole: Approval of draft letter from MFRC Chair to MFRC regional landscape committees about MFRC and landscape committee relationships with the LOHC**

Al introduced a draft letter from to MFRC regional committee members developed to respond to the questions about the relationships between the MFRC, its landscape committees, and the LOHC. Al made a motion to approve the letter. Shaun seconded the motion. Wayne suggested the following amendments to the letter:

- “autonomy provided to the regional landscape committees” in the last sentence of the first paragraph to be replaced by “self-directed nature of much of the regional committees’ work”, and
- replacement of “the MFRC does not request funding from the LOHC” with “the MFRC does not intend to request funding from the LOHC” in the first sentence of the second paragraph.

Wayne moved, and Alan Ek seconded, to approve the amendment. *The amendment carried unanimously.*

The Council then voted on the motion, which passed unanimously.

Discussion of proposed MFRC recommendation to the DNR Commissioner about site-level forest management guideline monitoring

Rob Slesak reviewed recommendations adopted by the Council regarding the site-level monitoring program based on Clarence Turner's monitoring report and identified the party responsible for implementing each recommendation (e.g., MN DNR, MFRC).

Rob stated that the SFRA requires five different types of monitoring: forest resources, forest practices, guideline implementation, guideline effectiveness, and citizen concerns. The focus of this conversation is on compliance monitoring of guideline implementation.

The first recommendation recently adopted by the Council is to articulate the purpose of the monitoring program. MFRC established monitoring goals for various ownership classes in 1999 (report MP-1099). These goals contrast with the broad monitoring goals as perceived more recently by monitoring program stakeholders (Turner 2008).

Rob noted that the SFRA lists some distinct things we should be doing, such as setting guideline implementation goals and using monitoring results to revise guidelines and do landscape planning. Rob's intent is to have the MFRC and DNR recognize and, to the extent possible, comply with provisions in the SFRA.

Rob stated that the first step in articulating the purpose of the program is to develop implementation goals that, if met, would be sufficient for the voluntary approach to be deemed successful. These goals would be helpful in complying with the SFRA, targeting education and outreach, and focusing research. Rob reviewed a process to develop such goals.

Shaun said that, in his view, monitoring ultimately is about compliance and can help provide an inventory of what is going on in the landscape. Dave Parent responded that unless monitoring is done well, the voluntary nature of the guidelines could be put at risk. The challenge is to determine how to make the voluntary approach work, especially on family forest lands, and to identify where it is not working. Alan said that in terms of goals, right now we are only measuring how well the guidelines are applied. If we carry monitoring further, it could provide the basis for statewide estimates of the area affected by timber harvesting and forest management.

Jan mentioned that DNR has other guidelines that have never been through any kind of monitoring activity. She asked how other guidelines would be integrated with a revised DNR/MFRC monitoring program. Rob responded that integration with other guidelines would be part of the guideline update process. For example, integrating the biomass guidelines may be somewhat problematic because of the way they were written. Rick Dahlman added that, in the current round of site-level monitoring, DNR staff are at least identifying whether or not biomass harvesting is occurring on harvest sites.

Rob recommended a second step be to define the frequency of monitoring. The SFRA provides no guidance on frequency. Early MFRC documents indicate a goal of annual monitoring, but since 2000, annual site-level monitoring has actually occurred only from 2000-2002 and 2004-2006. Monitoring reports were done in 2001, 2002, 2004, and 2008. Alan clarified that in the first few years, annual monitoring was done to establish a pre-guideline implementation baseline, and in following years the idea was to create a trend line without having a lot of samples, as more intensive sampling was too expensive.

Rob has concluded that the annual monitoring goal is unachievable. A full monitoring cycle takes about a year and a half. Rob summarized costs associated with monitoring and explained concerns about the increasing costs of remote sensing for sample selection. He is currently evaluating alternative approaches for site selection.

Rob then presented four options relative to monitoring frequency: annual with 90 sites, annual with 45 sites, biennial with 90+ sites, and periods greater than biennial with 90+ sites. He discussed the pros and cons of each option. The site-level committee recommended the biennial approach with 90+ sites, a firm reporting deadline, and a commitment to request additional funds if needed to maintain the biennial frequency.

Alan recommended using 100+ instead of 90+ sites. Dave Parent stated that monitoring reports are important in helping focus training programs, and also help meet the needs of the various stakeholders (e.g., for certification).

Discussion of timing for monitoring reporting ensued. Rick said that staff and funding limitations have restricted reporting frequency. Shaun indicated that, in his view, an annual report would not work, but that a biennial report would work.

Rob concluded by saying that he would develop a draft letter for Al Sullivan to send to the DNR Commissioner including MFRC recommendations about site-level forest management guideline monitoring. Formal approval of the letter by the MFRC will be sought at the July 15 Council meeting.

Rob then touched on the issue of how to improve family forest owner participation in the monitoring program. When monitoring requests are mailed to family forestland owners, roughly equal percentages allow access, decline access, or do not respond. Rob described two potential problems with the response. First, the sample size may be insufficient. A small sample biases statewide estimates, but an increased sample size increases site selection costs. Second, Rob suggested that it is likely that there is a non-response bias in the family forest landowner estimates.

Dave Parent responded that while permission to allow monitoring is given by the landowner, implementation of the guidelines is determined by the logger's choice of activities. Rob replied to Dave that, ultimately, the decision to apply guidelines is the landowner's.

Rob continued by describing options to increase private owner participation, including: education and outreach, improved language in the letter requesting participation; and working to make participation a condition of acceptance into the 2c tax program.

Dave Epperly mentioned that Minnesota Forestry Association and Tree Farm System could provide help with private landowners. He recommended that the contractors work through these organizations to reach landowners. He also suggested using FIA data to cover some of our data needs.

Wayne suggested that we could change the number of owners we are trying to reach, noting that wood flow has changed a great deal in the past few years. Loggers do not log differently depending upon who owns the land. Rick Dahlman responded that he does make adjustments based upon the estimated harvest each year. Dave Epperly added that loggers' practices do not change unless they instructed to change by the landowner and noted that private logging is going down. Dave suggested that non-response from private landowners may be an indication that they are satisfied with what is going on their land.

John Bathke suggested working with consulting foresters and DNR foresters that are writing forest stewardship plans.

Actions being taken to respond to the discovery of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) in Minnesota

Dave Zumeta introduced Geir Friisoe, Director, Plant Protection Division, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). Geir distributed maps of EAB sites in and near Minnesota. Geir stated that Minnesota is currently about 2-3 weeks away from adult emergence. He reviewed means to address EAB, including: prevention, detection, eradication, and management to slow the spread. Geir described pathways by which EAB moves (firewood, logs, nursery stock, and waste) and summarized relevant laws, federal quarantines, labeling requirements, and DNR restrictions.

Guidelines for dealing with EAB include using local firewood that is well seasoned (2 summers), burning all firewood or bringing it back home, and heat treating or debarking ash that is used for firewood or other uses in ways that are approved. The best way to find EAB is via citizen reports. Other detection tools are fairly poor.

Eradication of EAB is rarely used and it works only for recently-arrived point sources. Preferred responses are non-point quarantines and management strategies. Geir noted that untreated EAB can move about 18 miles per year, but with active management the rate of spread can be decreased below 4 miles per year. The main approach to managing EAB is to reduce the number of beetles by removing affected trees, especially large ones.

In Wisconsin, pockets of EAB have been found up the east side of the Mississippi River both north and south of Victory, across from Houston County, Minnesota. In that region, no EAB has been found yet on the Minnesota side of the river.

In St. Paul (Ramsey County), a tree service recently found EAB at several sites in the Hampden Park neighborhood. MDA may pursue the option of removing ash trees in the neighborhood but, if EAB has spread beyond that, the approach that will be taken is uncertain.

Geir commented that the legislature appropriated up to \$2 million from the LOHC Fund to the MDA for FY 2010 to identify, prevent, and protect Minnesota forests, in consultation with the MFRC. Of this amount, up to \$125,000 can be used to update the existing invasive species plan. MDA is directed to work with the DNR, MFRC, and Forest Protection Task Force to provide quarterly updates to the Governor and legislature. MDA may transfer funds to DNR. MDA is also pursuing funding from USDA APHIS and the USDA Forest Service.

John Rajala asked Geir whether MDA might do a sanitation of all the ash in the St. Anthony area if EAB is found to be concentrated there. Geir indicated that MDA is considering doing a full sanitation. He said that most of the ash belongs to the city. John then asked Geir about the likelihood of a quarantine being imposed on ash lumber products, and whether certified heat treatment would enable continued sales of ash lumber for the foreseeable future. Geir indicated that ash lumber should be fine if treated. He also emphasized that a quarantine would only pertain to ash.

John then asked why EAB had not decimated ash in Asian forests. Geir answered that Asian species of ash are much more tolerant of EAB, likely because of co-evolution. There are also a number of biological control agents in Asia (e.g., three species of wasps are currently being tested in Michigan). Geir anticipates that within the next 4-5 years, there will likely be a release of these agents in the United States, including Minnesota.

Dave Parent mentioned that one of the early vectors for EAB spread was cogeneration plants and he asked Geir how the plants are handling and disposing of ash. Geir responded that MDA is currently in discussions with these plants. EAB-affected wood could be utilized in those plants if it comes from and is used within the quarantined counties. The wood must be chipped to less than 2 inches in diameter to be transported out of the quarantine areas.

Jan asked Geir if all species of ash are susceptible to EAB. He responded that green, white, and black ash are all equally susceptible.

Geir stated that MDA is getting well over a thousand calls per day about EAB and commented that first detectors are absolutely critical.

John indicated that he is planning to harvest almost every ash tree on the land he and his family manages as they visit sites on a normal rotation. He asked Dave Epperly about DNR plans for harvesting ash. Dave responded that DNR has been working closely with MDA. Recently, Laurie Martinson, Olin Phillips, and Dave visited Wisconsin and Michigan to find out what worked and did not work in terms of managing EAB. They were told not to react too quickly to EAB. The use of first detectors and firewood bans are critical. West Virginia has had success using pesticides.

Jim asked why a ban has not been placed on firewood movement within the state. Geir answered that when it comes to moving firewood, there may not be a good answer. People bring firewood into Minnesota from as far away as Texas. Dave Epperly added that the DNR Commissioner has issued an order restricting firewood movement on all state lands.

Dave Zumeta mentioned that the MFRC, in cooperation with DNR, has been charged by the Governor's Forestry Sub-Cabinet with developing a woody biomass strategy for Minnesota. Part of this strategy may include developing a mid- to long-term utilization plan for ash statewide. DNR Forestry leadership has discussed convening a group of interested parties to discuss developing a rational approach to ash utilization. Geir said he would assist and suggested including homeowners in the discussion.

Al asked what the quarantine means for a homeowner living in Ramsey County. Geir responded that resources need to be made available to assist homeowners. Currently, disposal is legal as long as it is within the county. There is, however, a need to set up marshalling yards to store ash.

John recommended that MDA contact the two primary sawmills within the Twin Cities. It was agreed that this was a good idea. Mary Richards suggested that information on EAB also be sent to the resort association and the Office of Tourism.

Dave Parent indicated that we need silvicultural guidance on what to do with EAB-infested ash, what to look for when managing stands, and how to dispose of ash. Dave Epperly said that there is information on these topics on the DNR and MDA web sites.

Public Communications

None.

MFRC Member Comments

Jim Sanders mentioned that MFRC members will be receiving an invitation from Bernadine Joselyn of the Blandin Foundation to meet with the USDA Forest Service Regional Forester at 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, June 3 at the Blandin Foundation office in Grand Rapids.

Shawn Perich said that he is attending the moose citizens' advisory committee meetings on behalf of MFRC. The committee will be coming up with recommendations that incorporate wildlife managers' thoughts about how forests should be managed for moose.

Dave Epperly moved adjournment. John Rajala seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 2:45 p.m.