Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Minutes
Detroit Lakes Community and Cultural Center – Detroit Lakes
23 September 2009

Members Present: Al Sullivan, Wayne Brandt, Alan Ek, Dave Epperly, Dale Erickson, Shaun Hamilton, Rob Harper, Joel Koemptgen, Bob Lintelmann, Gene Merriam, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Kathleen Preece, Mary Richards, Mike Trutwin (alternate - labor representative)

Members Absent: Bruce Cox, John Rajala, labor representative (vacant)

Guests: Art Norton (TNC), Bob Sonnenberg (MFRP)

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

Chair's Remarks
Al Sullivan welcomed participants and initiated introductions. He stated that Bob Oswold, the longest continuously serving MFRC member, died in August. Al commented on Bob's involvement with the MFRC and many other organizations throughout the state. He asked members to join in a minute of silence to reflect on Bob's life and contributions.

Al established potential MFRC meeting dates for the calendar year 2010. He proposed meeting on January 20th and March 10th. The January and March meetings will be in the Twin Cities to accommodate some members participating in the legislative session. Al will provide the proposed meeting dates for May, July, September, and November 2010 before the next Council meeting.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC
None.

*** Approval of the 15 July 2009 Meeting Minutes**
Al stated that there were a few minor typos in the July minutes. Kathleen Preece moved to approve the corrected minutes. Dave Parent seconded the motion. *The minutes were approved.*

*** Approval of the 23 September 2009 Meeting Agenda**
Shaun Hamilton moved, and Dave Parent seconded, approval of the September 23, 2009 meeting agenda. *The agenda was approved.*

Executive Director Remarks
Dave Zumeta reported that he is working to expedite the appointment of the labor representative. Labor has had no opportunity to vote for a number of meetings (based upon MFRC operating protocols, alternates may not vote). Dave is hopeful to have a representative appointed by the end of the year.

Committee Reports
Personnel and Finance
Al referred to the committee update provided in the mailing. The Personnel and Finance Committee

met on August 18th and reviewed the FY2009 financial report, draft FY2009 accomplishment report, and draft FY2010 work plan. Al has approved all three of these documents.

Site-level
Dave Parent distributed the Site-level Committee report. The main focus of the September meeting was discussion regarding the effect of unallotment on monitoring. Dave also commented that he was pleased with the regional biomass harvest training program held in Grand Rapids last week.

Wayne Brandt asked about the likelihood that the monitoring report will be written, finalized, and delivered by February 15, 2010. Dave Epperly responded that he recently discussed report development with Rick Dahlman (DNR). Dave anticipates the report will be on schedule, as indicated in the DNR response provided to the MFRC about the Council recommendation for biennial monitoring.

Wayne then inquired about the guideline revision process. Dave Parent reported that the committee is focusing on core drivers and will then broaden analyses to additional suggestions. He commented that the first thing presented to the Council will be a timeline for completion. Dave Zumeta added that he anticipates such a schedule being brought to the Council in December or January. The Riparian Science Technical Committee (RSTC) economic analysis must be completed prior to revisions. There are current budget concerns with respect to the cost of developing revisions.

Landscape Planning/Coordination
Shaun Hamilton reported that the Landscape Committee has not met as a committee since late June, but members have been working on the draft forest vision for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC). Dave Zumeta thanked Shaun for his willingness to give up a scheduled committee meeting to provide the *ad hoc* vision committee an opportunity to meet.

Forest Resources Information Management
Rob Harper noted a necessary correction to the Information Management Committee report (date change from June 16 to August 13-14). He reported on a two-day meeting held in response to some challenging questions posed by Dave Heinzen (DNR) regarding the role and activities of the committee. Rob reviewed the meeting objectives. With minor exceptions, the group felt that the current charter still reflects what they do. The committee still needs to clarify its role in relation to other entities (e.g., Interagency Information Cooperative) and, perhaps, revise the committee name to better reflect the committee's role. Kathleen added that Dave Zumeta's participation in the meeting was appreciated.

Written Communications
Dave Zumeta commented on two communications: a letter from MFRC Chair Sullivan to DNR Commissioner Holsten about the MFRC recommendation to adopt a biennial guideline monitoring frequency, and a DNR response from Dave Epperly on behalf of the Commissioner. Dave Epperly stated in the letter that the Commissioner supports the biennial monitoring recommendation.

Committee of the Whole: Draft 25-year Vision for Minnesota Forests
Al Sullivan introduced discussion on the draft 25-Year Vision for Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC) Investments in Minnesota Forests. Al, Dave Zumeta, Bob Sonnenberg (Chair, Minnesota Forest

Resources Partnership) and Kathleen Preece met in August and decided to merge efforts of the MFRC and the Partnership in response to a request from Mike Kilgore, L-SOHC Chair, to both groups to identify priorities for L-SOHC investments in Minnesota's forests. The L-SOHC will not be able to focus on its 25-year strategy in a meaningful way until they have completed the recommendation process for FY2011 project funding. This timeframe will allow the MFRC and the Partnership to finalize and approve the recommendation for a 25-year forest vision in the coming months. Al stated that the Council will have time to discuss the draft vision today and a final document will be available for MFRC approval at the December 2nd meeting.

The vision document is structured to meet the needs of the L-SOHC for prioritizing investments in wildlife habitat based upon the L-SOHC mandate. It is not the statewide vision of the MFRC or the Partnership. The *ad hoc* committee decided to cast recommendations in the context of the L-SOHC sections and its mission in order to be most helpful to the L-SOHC, and to use terminology as defined by the legislation pertaining to the L-SOHC.

Bob Sonnenberg added that the Partnership has been working to contribute to this effort. Dave Zumeta listed the members of the *ad hoc* committee (Al Sullivan, Bob Sonnenberg, Wayne Brandt, Bruce Cox, Dave Epperly, Joel Koemptgen, Shawn Perich and Kathleen Preece). Bruce and Kathleen represent the MFRC and the Partnership. Kathleen mentioned that Bob Tomlinson (DNR) convened a group of DNR and Partnership representatives to develop more specific silvicultural recommendations to achieve various wildlife objectives for the L-SOHC Northern Forest section. Results of this effort will be helpful to the *ad hoc* committee in developing a draft vision for that section.

Dave Parent stated that he is concerned about the structure of the recommendations (i.e., a vision for Minnesota's forests), noting that a forest not just a collection of trees. The forest is a matrix, with wetland and grassland habitats interspersed. Al responded that the committee shares that view and requested recommendations to sharpen the language in the vision.

Discussion of draft cover letter
Council members discussed the addition of "public access" to "fish, game and wildlife" and whether access is already included based upon the requirement of protection for project lands, or whether it should be added because conservation easements may not necessarily include public access.

Gene Merriam suggested that the paragraph about roles of the two councils needs to be either clarified or deleted. Alan suggested that a reference to §89A (the statute that defines forest resources for the MFRC) could clarify that the MFRC's responsibility is broader than L-SOHC. Shaun Hamilton suggested that the cover letter state the charge to the L-SOHC rather than reference a unique mission.

Discussion of statewide vision – page 2
Dave Epperly suggested discussion on the need to broaden the idea of recreational opportunities, noting that public access is broader than fishing and hunting and dependent upon the forest type. Wayne reminded members that the Outdoor Heritage fund is only a portion of the money generated by the constitutional amendment, adding that there is also a portion of funding dedicated to parks and trails. Alan suggested that the letter indicate we are only focusing on L-SOHC expenditures.

Discussion of statewide vision – page 3
Dave Parent asked whether economic and social sustainability is part of the L-SOHC charter. Dave Zumeta responded that the L-SOHC will be making recommendations to the legislature and a subset of L-SOHC membership includes legislators; economic and social issues are clearly on their minds. Shawn added that we would not want to contemplate the economic and social conditions of Minnesota without fish and wildlife populations.

Dave Parent stated that the recommendation to fund silvicultural practices implies a maximization statement. Shawn responded that, for example, some of the land management practices we use on moose range are not beneficial to moose. Al suggested merging recommendations that discuss forest management activities for wildlife habitat.

Shawn Perich suggested the first recommendation about acquisition, exchange and easements could be separated, adding his concern that the MFRC may be de-emphasizing acquisition. Wayne wanted to have permanent conservation easements in a separate declarative sentence and stated that he believes that limited fee-acquisition is better than fee-title acquisition. Shawn responded that, by limiting ourselves to permanent easements, we may be leaving out large portions of land where there is not industrial land available for easements (e.g., the North Shore). Gene agreed, noting that there could well be reasons for acquisition other than for consolidation.

Shaun Hamilton asked whether the public represented by the MFRC regional committees and the Partnership provides an appropriate venue to vet projects. Joel Koemptgen responded that there is additional need for local input that goes beyond forest-related interests. Shaun added that the Landscape Committee would like an opportunity to direct some initial review of the proposals to our regional committees.

Dave Parent commented that the language used in the recommendations appears to demonize inholdings and stated that the question is not about acquisition and control but rather is about conservation practices. Shaun suggested replacing the reference to “incompatible inholdings” with “high conservation targets that would be better managed by the public”.

Regional Forest Visions – page 4 -7
Al introduced discussion on the sectional forest visions, to which the *ad hoc* committee has not yet devoted much time. Alan suggested the sectional visions follow the structure laid out in the statewide vision, anticipating that such an outline would scale each sectional vision down to a page or two. Shawn Perich noted the absence of discussion pertaining to wilderness.

Rob suggested the content needs to be linked to the cover letter. Dave Zumeta responded that the vision committee indicated a strong preference to present information by L-SOHC section. Dave suggested providing a two-page document for each section that would include recommended revisions to acreage and funding needs and a map of priority areas. Wayne noted that work of the landscape committees should be foundational to the recommendations.

*** Approval of a letter to the Legislative-Citizens Commission on Minnesota Resources (LCCMR) regarding black ash research and support for a black ash symposium**

Rob Harper reported that the Council received a request from the LCCMR to provide a letter of recommendation for a black ash research initiative to be led by Dr. Tony D'Amato (UMN, Department of Forest Resources). Alan added that the LCCMR had been discussing ash research needs with the University and the DNR. The LCCMR subsequently indicated interest in University-led ash research and requested that the Council provide a letter of support. Alan introduced a draft letter of recommendation developed by the IMC.

Alan moved approval of the letter and Kathleen Preece seconded the motion.

Rob Harper commented that researchers with the USDA Forest Service are in contact with Tony D'Amato and stressed the importance of a coordinated effort.

The motion was called and the letter was unanimously approved.

Rob introduced discussion on a black ash symposium he has initiated with the help of USDA Forest Service, DNR, and MFRC staff. The focus on the symposium will be a discussion of the potential ecological impacts of emerald ash borer (EAB) and silvicultural responses. The symposium will be held the last the week of May at Bemidji State University. Rob requested endorsement from the MFRC.

Wayne Brandt made a motion to endorse the upcoming symposium. Alan Ek seconded the motion.

Dave Parent asked whether endorsement fits with the MFRC budget. Dave Zumeta responded that the endorsement would be purely sponsorship support and not financial. Mary Richards asked about consideration of urban forests. Dave responded that the conference will be focused on black ash and concerns regarding rural forests, but there will also be presentations on concerns about EAB impacts on urban and community forests and on quarantines in relation to ash transport and utilization.

The motion was called and the MFRC unanimously approved endorsement of the symposium.

DNR Moose Advisory Committee Final Report

Shawn Perich reported on outcomes of the DNR Moose Advisory Committee meetings and recommendations from the committee's final report. Shawn represented the MFRC on the committee. He distributed a document listing committee members and summary recommendations. Shawn reviewed moose management in Minnesota and the need for a review of management in light of recent, unexplained declines in the northeast population. Research conducted by the state and tribes has been finding high unexplained mortality (similar to a population decline that occurred in the northwestern population during the 1980s). The committee engaged staff and researchers from nearby states and provinces in a symposium held last year. Information gained did not expose clear patterns.

Shawn then reviewed the recommendations, noting the need for increased public awareness of moose and their populations. There was broad agreement about research and monitoring needs. Recommendations regarding hunting met with less agreement. The committee suggested some thresholds on hunter success in certain permit areas, maintenance of a low deer population, and a ban

on recreational feeding within the moose range. The committee also suggested management to improve moose habitat. A close vote resulted in a recommendation to list the moose as a species of special concern instead of a state threatened or endangered species. The full report was delivered to the DNR in August. The DNR will consider committee recommendations in drafting the moose management and research plan for Minnesota.

Council members asked about recommended forest management practices beneficial to moose, feeding bans, and theories about the range of population growth or decline in different areas.

Reinventing the Boreal Forest research project

Alan discussed a project developed by faculty in the Department of Forest Resources and funded by the Institute on the Environment. *Reinventing the Boreal Forest* will be an $800,000 project over four to five years. A main project goal is to partner with multiple organizations to better understand and manage boreal forests in Minnesota in the face of climate, economic and social change. The research will involve developing land use scenarios and then implementing landscape-level management with partners.

The project is in initial stages of development. A steering committee has been convened. The next step is to hire staff and improve connections with stakeholders. Alan requested that interested folks contact Dave Zumeta, Al Sullivan, or Peter Reich (UMN). Dave Zumeta wanted to bring this to the Council at an early stage as it seems like an opportunity to extend with the landscape program in the three northern landscapes, especially the northeast. Alan noted that it is also an opportunity to create additional exposure for issues we face. He anticipates the project will attract further research funding and efforts.

Council members discussed involvement of staff from the Natural Resources Research Institute, potential interface with northern hardwood forests, and opportunities to connect with the L-SOHC.

Minnesota Forests: mitigating and adapting to climate change

Dave Epperly introduced Clarence Turner, who described recent work related to climate change and carbon sequestration that he has done on behalf of the DNR and MFRC.

Clarence summarized highlights from a report funded by the MFRC to discuss the potential for a terrestrial carbon program for Minnesota. Protecting and enhancing carbon stocks are important elements in climate policies and treaties are now being negotiated in Congress and internationally. The report suggested that, as these policies are set, we should prepare for successful terrestrial carbon management. The report focused on alternatives for increasing carbon sequestration via private and public forest and agricultural management and for developing a carbon sequestration advisory body.

The MFRC was charged with evaluating a recommendation made by the Minnesota Climate Change Advisory Group (MCCAG) to plant a million new acres of forest as a primary strategy in climate change policy. Clarence has conducted an initial GIS analysis to identify potential lands to be reforested. The Council has a contract with faculty in the Departments of Forest Resources and Applied Economics to run an economic analysis on available land and determine the actual acreages feasible for reforestation. The report is due to the legislature on January 15th, 2010. The Council was provided no legislative funding for this work, but has received financial support from Minnesota Forest Industries, the

Interagency Information Cooperative, and Minnesota Power. Council members discussed the scale of recommendations, potential conflicts with investments in ethanol, potential impacts to local economies, species to be considered, and the time period required for plantings to be effective.

Clarence described his participation in a bi-national effort to develop and maintain consensus standards for measuring, reporting, and verifying results of forest carbon emission reduction projects. Clarence has been satisfied with the scientific basis of the effort and feels that all voices are being heard. Project types being considered include afforestation/reforestation, forest management, forest protection, and urban forestry. Discussion ensued about who gets credit for offsetting carbon emissions.

The DNR Carbon Metrics Team is currently focused on tracking cap-and-trade legislation in Congress and providing policy-relevant information to DNR managers. The DNR Climate and Energy Team is identifying strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, promote conservation of natural landscapes, and increase energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in DNR operations.

MFRC parcelization study progress report

Calder Hibbard provided an update on the status of the forest parcelization study. He reviewed the study elements, including trends, drivers and effects of parcelization; an assessment of available policy responses; and development of recommendations to decision makers. Calder provided background on the significance of, and impacts from, parcelization and some drivers of parcelization (e.g., increasing forestland values, changes in ownership, changes in population, and effects of current policies).

In quantifying forest parcelization, the research team is evaluating an additional 10 counties beyond Itasca County in order to characterize the extent of parcelization. Initial findings about trends and drivers are anticipated in November, with modeling efforts anticipated in the next calendar year.

Policy tools such as conservation easements, taxation, planning and zoning, land exchange, fee title acquisition, and other approaches are currently being reviewed with respect to effectiveness, efficiency, political palatability, equity, technical/operational feasibility, and administrative ease. Calder anticipated analysis of these tools will be complete by mid-November, with a presentation to the MFRC on December 2nd. The goal is to have Council approval of final recommendations at the January 20, 2010 MFRC meeting. An interim report will be delivered to the legislature shortly thereafter.

Discussion ensued about impacts of parcelization on the forest, positive amenity migration, the time frame of the trends analysis, and background reasons for the study. Shaun commented that tax policy may be an interim tool, but is not likely a permanent solution. Dave Epperly suggested that it may be valuable to consider some of the investment strategies of the REITS and TIMOS and their land disposal criteria.

Kathleen asked whether the study would be able to identify reverse parcelization. Calder responded that Mike Kilgore (UMN) actually found some consolidation in the initial study within Itasca County and he anticipates that would be identified elsewhere if occurring. Mary asked about tax-forfeiture of lands and Dave Zumeta responded that there is a great deal of concern because of counties considering potential land divestiture. Dave Parent added that the desire to retain those lands has declined with the

decline in the timber market. Wayne responded that he feels it is a bit disingenuous for local people who were not responding to the stumpage market to now complain that the market is gone.

In anticipation of an action item at the January MFRC meeting, Dave Zumeta has planned a much more in-depth discussion of the parcelization study for the December 2nd MFRC meeting in Cloquet.

Public Communications to the MFRC
None.

*** MFRC Member Communications**
Al Sullivan asked Council members to consider a resolution recognizing Bob Oswold's service and contributions to the MFRC, noting that Wayne has volunteered to work with Dave Zumeta on appropriate language. Wayne Brandt moved to formally recognize Bob's contributions to the Council, Dave Parent seconded, and the Council unanimously approved the motion.

Bob Lintelmann stated the Mike Swan, White Earth Resource Management Director, will speak to the Council at an evening presentation after the meeting. Mike's presentation will provide some history and a brief overview of current natural resource activities and future plans on the White Earth Reservation.

Shaun Hamilton moved, and Dave Parent seconded, adjournment. *The meeting was adjourned at 2:53 p.m.*