

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Minutes
MN DOT Training and Conference Center – Shoreview
20 January 2010

Members: Al Sullivan, Wayne Brandt, Bruce Cox, Alan Ek, Dave Epperly, Dale Erickson, Shaun Hamilton, Rob Harper, Joel Koemptgen, Bob Lintelmann, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Kathleen Preece, Mary Richards, Mike Trutwin.

Members Absent: Gene Merriam, John Rajala

Guests: Jane Prohaska (private consultant), John Bathke

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

Chair's Remarks

Al Sullivan opened the meeting with a round of introductions. He reported that the carbon sequestration study was submitted by the legislative deadline, January 15, 2010. Al would miss the July 21-22 Council meeting and asked staff to query members on their availability to meet on July 28-29.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

None.

*** Approval of the 2 December 2009 Meeting Minutes**

Kathleen Preece moved to approve the 2 December 2009 minutes. Dave Parent seconded the motion. *The minutes were approved.*

*** Approval of the 20 January 2010 Meeting Agenda**

Shaun Hamilton moved, and Dave Parent seconded, approval of the 20 January 2010 meeting agenda. *The agenda was approved.*

Executive Director Remarks

Dave Zumeta reported that the MFRC annual report will be available for distribution by February 1. In accordance with a motion passed last meeting, copies will be sent to Bob Oswald's wife. Dave handed out and suggested that Council members review a statewide silvicultural practices report developed by the UMN Forest Resources staff that was funded by the Interagency Information Cooperative.

Committee Reports

Personnel and Finance

Al Sullivan reported that the Personnel and Finance Committee has not met since the last Council meeting. The committee will meet sometime during the first half of March.

Site-level

Dave Parent referred to the Site-level Committee update provided in the mailing. He requested

suggestions from Council members regarding potential changes to the format (and other improvements in the utility) of the forest management guidelines.

Landscape Planning/Coordination

Shaun Hamilton distributed draft Landscape Committee minutes and an update of regional committee activities. Ongoing agenda items include development of the draft 25-year LSOHC vision for forests, the Institute on the Environment boreal forest project, the DNR statewide forest resource assessment, and landscape plan monitoring.

Lindberg Ekola distributed an email with minutes from meetings of two of the Northeast region's working groups. He also handed out a Council meeting calendar and asked people to use the calendar to coordinate meeting dates of all forestry-related groups.

Rob Harper reported that the North Central landscape committee was successful in acquiring a \$50,000 Conservation Partners Legacy grant from the Outdoor Heritage Fund for interagency white pine restoration.

Forest Resources Information Management

Rob Harper reported that the Information Management Committee met on December 14th. The committee discussed Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) invasion and the respective roles/actions of involved agencies. A follow-up discussion will be held in Cloquet on January 28th. Dave Parent commented on the City of St. Paul's declaration of EAB as a public nuisance and resulting ability to inspect/remove trees on private land and charge landowners for associated costs. He suggested the Council consider the implications of the State not paying for removal of infected trees. Dave Zumeta added that the Department of Agriculture received \$1.875 million from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to address EAB. Of that, \$1 million was available for incidence response grants to the communities in which EAB has been found and the remaining money was to be granted to communities across the state for EAB planning. Dave served on the grant review committee on behalf of MFRC. Local governments are not well prepared what is coming. Dave agreed that the concern raised by Dave Parent is a crucial issue.

Dave Epperly commented that he and other DNR staff traveled to Wisconsin and Michigan to learn about the different responses to EAB. Both states dealt with EAB differently. Michigan was severely impacted. On those visits DNR staff obtained a clear understanding that interagency cooperation was important as well as good public-to-private communication and coordination. In Michigan, trees were removed on private land, raising property rights concerns, partly because they did not have public education forums in advance. In Minnesota, public education is being done. Minnesota has established a unified command and is treating EAB just like a wildfire. Once a unified command has been established, it is not about who is taking control but rather about what resources can each entity can contribute.

Dave Zumeta commented that, while the level of awareness was impressive, the main concerns for small rural cities are the lack of human and monetary resources. Dave Epperly added that Michigan spent \$40 million on their initial response, quickly realizing that throwing money at the problem is not the only answer. Dave Zumeta will include the EAB issue as a significant agenda item for an upcoming meeting. Further discussion on EAB responses and planning ensued.

*** denotes action item**

Written Communication

None.

Committee of the Whole: Proposed 25-year sectional visions for the Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage Council (L-SOHC) investments in Minnesota Forests

Al introduced discussion on sectional visions developed for the L-SOHC with the Partnership. The MFRC has already approved a statewide vision for L-SOHC investments and will discuss four of the five draft sectional visions (Prairie, Southeast Forest, Forest/Prairie transition, and Metro-Urbanizing sections).

Lindberg distributed the four draft visions, noting that the draft vision for the Northern Forest section will be available for discussion at the March 10 MFRC meeting. He reviewed the relationship between the L-SOHC sections and MFRC regions. He also reviewed the evolution of landscape planning in Minnesota and commented on how new funding has catalyzed implementation efforts and advanced forestry planning and collaboration.

Lindberg described the development of 25-year strategic plans by regional landscapes. The goal is not to “reinvent” the landscape plans but rather to develop an implementation vision based upon the plans. He reviewed the scales of forest management with landscape-level planning and site-level implementation, noting that the identification of project opportunity areas bridges the landscape and site levels.

Dave Parent inquired about the L-SOHC requirement that investments only occur on protected lands. Lindberg responded that the acquisition of easements on private lands can meet the requirement, but there is recognition that we cannot buy everything and need to be comprehensive in our approaches. Shaun Hamilton added that he hopes ultimately we can integrate our policy suggestions (e.g. from the parcelization study) into L-SOHC programs to better coordinate conservation tools and not merely view the L-SOHC as a grant program.

Forest/Prairie Transition Section:

Dave Zumeta opened discussion on the draft Forest-Prairie Transition section recommendations, noting there has already been quite a bit of discussion on this section at previous Council meetings. There were no additional comments on the Forest/Prairie Transition Section.

Metropolitan-Urbanizing Section:

Because the MFRC does not have a regional landscape committee in the metro, suggestions were collected from surrounding MFRC regions (East Central and Southeast landscapes) and DNR Central Region staff for development of Metropolitan area priorities. The metro area has benefitted from a significant amount natural resource mapping and prioritization work. DNR spatial data used in the mapping focused on MCBS biodiversity areas as well as green infrastructure mapping.

Dave Parent inquired whether the Cedar Creek scientific area was included in the Carlos Avery forest complex. Dave Zumeta said that Cedar Creek was included, and also referred to the footnote that indicates the identification of priority areas on this map is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Rob Harper indicated the presentation would benefit from better labeling of priority areas on the map. Shaun suggested rivers also be identified. Al Sullivan stated that the document was concise, information rich and succinct. He also suggested better labeling would help identify locations.

Prairie:

Lindberg stated that we don't have a regional landscape committee in the prairie section and have minimal suggestions for forests in this area. Dave Zumeta added that he represented the MFRC at the L-SOHC Prairie section strategy meeting and noted that there were very few forestry folks in attendance. The main forestry focus was on riparian areas which historically were much more forested. There are some major opportunities with respect to protecting forests for fisheries habitat quality. The suggested vision has been run by the Southeast and West Central MFRC landscape committees. Oak savanna is quite important in this area but, while we support oak savanna protection and restoration, we have indicated that oak savanna is primarily a prairie-species community and not under the purview of MFRC.

Dave Parent inquired on how well the map meshes with Clarence Turner's million acre reforestation mapping. Clarence responded that if landowners decided they wanted to plant trees in the prairie section, it would be mostly in those riparian areas.

Shawn Perich suggested that fisheries habitat should be included as a conservation priority in the Prairie, Metropolitan and Southeast Forest sections. Council members requested the addition of cities and county names on the maps.

Southeast

Lindberg reviewed major issues in the Southeast forest, which included reforestation needs, invasive species removal, and the protection of riparian areas and habitat corridors. He noted that the Lower Mississippi Habitat Partnership received a million dollar grant from the Outdoor Heritage Fund to restore habitat connectivity and protect water quality. Dave Zumeta requested comments from members once they have had an opportunity to review the map in more detail.

Joel Koemptgen commented on the small difference between pre-settlement forest acreage and current acreage. Leslie responded that it could be a result of the difference in the resolution of the pre-settlement vegetation map based on the public survey notes and the satellite data for current forest coverage. Dave Parent added that the problem may well be associated with timing of the public land survey in the southeast, which was done after a good deal of clearing likely had already occurred.

Shawn suggested adding the Upper Mississippi Wildlife Refuge as a priority area and including the SGCN definition as a footnote. Shaun Hamilton suggested staff consider differentiating protected lands versus unprotected areas.

Al asked Bruce Cox about the Partnership's process in reviewing and approving the documents and whether they want to be associated with all sections. Bruce responded that the Partnership is looking at all of the sections and is particularly interested in the Northern Forest Section. Kathleen added that she will continue to bring these drafts to the Partnership.

Revised MFRC parcelization study recommendations

Calder reviewed the evolution of the parcelization study recommendations, which were initially developed by different researchers focused on specific tools and then collaboratively integrated. The recommendations are the product of research, interviews and comparisons of programs and policies within and beyond the State.

The recommendations have been reorganized to address a number of concerns voiced by Council members at the prior meeting. He added that there may need to be different approaches to how the recommendations are packaged, depending upon the various recipients (e.g., those that require legislative support and those that do not). A big concern raised at the last meeting was the need to bring out the “when” and the “where” for the appropriate use of each tool, some of which has been identified through the use of a transect that identifies various types of forest and different tools effective in those areas. Some of the recommendations are rather explicit (e.g. acquisitions), but determination of the “biggest bang for the buck” also depends upon which metric is being considered (e.g., jobs? wildlife?). One of the first recommendations is targeting and setting priorities.

Calder reviewed the principles that staff and contractors relied on to develop recommendations, including a reliance on incremental changes; fostering partnerships; recognition that the tools are complimentary and dependent upon each other; and understanding that parcelization is an abstract concept and we need to think in terms of benefits of maintaining forests.

Dave Parent was concerned that too much focus has been placed on adverse impacts of parcelization versus benefits (e.g. economic development). He suggested reframing the recommendations to better balance the impacts. Joel stressed that the need for increased land use planning must be an up-front recommendation. Shaun suggested rephrasing language to describe the “transect” as a land-use continuum. Dave Parent suggested increased discussion of comprehensive planning rather than focusing on negative aspects of zoning.

Calder commented on a meeting he and Dave Zumeta had with Senator Saxhaug to discuss the proposed recommendations, noting that the Senator was quite supportive of the various recommendations. Senator Saxhaug also suggested the MFRC could spend more time refining the final report and recommendations, as the 2010 legislative session will not likely be the most opportune time to present the material because of legislators’ being focused on the budget shortfall and bonding.

Alan Ek requested the staff condense the suggestions down to 2-5 specific recommendations for actions that will actually make progress on maintaining forestland. Dave Zumeta suggested the report could be presented in three parts: a brief executive summary to hone in on key recommendations, a longer summary document akin to that of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (about 35 pages), and a much longer full report with additional appendices.

Alan stated that he would like more information on what would happen if we do or do not use the various tools, and perhaps some regional recommendations. Calder responded that part of the problem is we do not yet have the trend or correlation data that the University folks are developing.

Wayne reminded meeting participants that the legislature requested this analysis because they need to know where to target funding for programs. The legislators are looking for some type of filter they can use to assess investments. Shawn added that the report needs to better present the context of our analysis. What effect does parcelization have on our sustainable forestry objectives?

Shaun Hamilton asked if the report or recommendations could be divided into regional pieces. Calder responded that rather than looking at regions, we have focused on ownership type. For example, private land in the Southeast will have certain tools that are most effective. Dave Epperly added that the recommendations read as a “one size fits all” and suggested presenting with a landscape approach.

Dave Parent stated that the tools have different applications (e.g., land exchange). Where is each tool most appropriate and what are the obstacles? How does each tool apply in different regions? What about state forests that may become SNAs?

Rob stated that the recommendations seem a bit mismatched; some are rather focused and some more generic. He suggested better identification of what our recommendations to the legislature ought to be. Rob questioned whether the MFRC is even the right group to determine which of these tools should be emphasized, noting there are three quite different categories: land transactions, tax policy and planning. Dave Zumeta responded that a crucial recommendation, which does not involve much if any additional cost, is expansion of the Minnesota Forests for the Future program under the DNR. MFF has been focused mostly on conservation easements. We are recommending they broaden the program to address the whole range of tools. Rob reiterated his concern that we may not have the expertise to determine potential impacts of the more substantial recommendations.

Mary stressed the importance of talking to landowners, referring to the listening sessions hosted by the Clean Water Council to get citizen input. Calder noted that there are education components of the recommendations. Shaun stated that our main audience is the legislature.

Jane Prohaska suggested that it may be effective to list some alternatives that were rejected (e.g. mandating statewide zoning).

Dave Zumeta commented that another alternative is to divide recommendations by those that would require funding and those that would not. Rob asked whether we will be able to inform the legislature about where they should or should not subsidize ownerships.

Shawn was concerned that none of the recommendations will deter parcelization in his area. He noted that it is becoming easier to live “off the grid” and people are moving into places previously less accessible. Shawn is concerned that this type of parcelization cannot be addressed through planning and zoning. Wayne responded that none of the tools are going to end forest parcelization. However, applying appropriate tools in appropriate places over time can help maintain forest cover. The legislature has appropriated large amounts of money for conservation easements, SFIA, cost share, and fee title acquisition, but legislators do not feel like they are well equipped to sort it out.

Shawn suggested the staff bring back a set of more incisive recommendations. Al suggested the staff refocus the recommendations through a more positive approach. Wayne agreed, indicating much could be changed through a revision of the type of language used. Alan suggested some context regarding what can be done with an acre versus 10 versus 100 acres of forestland.

Dave Parent cautioned that to hang our hats on comprehensive planning would be naïve. If communities prioritize development and better paying jobs, we may have a resultant comprehensive plan counter to maintaining working forests.

Shaun stated that there needs to be more information on where to prioritize use of tools. Wayne responded that MFF does have a reasonably well-defined strategy for easements and some geographic sideboards. Calder added that the recommendations try to build on what the MFF program has done.

Wayne asked Calder to send the whole report to the Council before the next meeting.

Bruce Cox used Clearwater County as an example to illustrate the need to develop a clear toolbox of options. Planning and zoning may not be palatable, but parcelization is happening and is not recognized as a problem. By taking the transect approach, Bruce can show the county board options for different situations. After narrowing down to certain tools, they can then look at more specific recommendations. Bruce suggested we make it simple and help narrow down the options.

Review of Riparian Science Technical Committee economic analysis and guideline revision process

Calder provided context for the riparian science economic analysis by reviewing the history of the riparian guidelines and resulting revisions suggested by the work of the Riparian Science Technical Committee in 2007 (including increased Riparian Management Zone (RMZ) width, increased residual basal area and the type of water bodies to be considered).

The Council commissioned a literature review of related nonmarket benefit research, formed an *ad hoc* committee to guide analysis, organized a technical working group to develop the analysis and completed an analysis of timber foregone. Calder reviewed the analysis, which evaluated the benefits of applying the riparian guidelines through a qualitative assessment of nonmarket benefits and a quantitative assessment of the costs (marginal foregone stumpage value) of potential guideline revisions.

With respect to benefits, the literature review identified many studies, but there is no silver bullet for measurement. Most pertinent research addressed certain water quality benefits, but most studies are unable to equate benefits to dollars. Analyses are further confounded by the complexity of interrelationships, the additive nature of benefits, and controversial valuation methods.

Rob Slesak reviewed the two approaches used to estimate costs of potential revisions. A statewide estimate of the annual cost based on GIS mapping of riparian areas was developed. The distribution of costs was also considered based upon the probability of RMZ occurrence at monitoring sites.

Data used included 2003-2007 FIA data on riparian area plots within a 200 foot buffer, 2007 stumpage price reports, RSTC findings from 2007, and DNR monitoring data from 2004-2006. Monitoring data

were used to represent real life data (the GIS evaluation included sites that would likely never be managed). A drawback is that most monitoring sites are selected in northern portions of the state.

Based on a 200 foot buffer, forested riparian areas were estimated to cover 1.63 million acres. Seasonal pond area was estimated to be 6,200 acres (a very rough estimate). On a statewide basis, an annual harvest of about 140,000 acres will result in the harvest of 740 acres of lake/stream riparian forests and 700 acres of seasonal pond riparian areas. Roughly 20% of harvested sites will have some sort of water feature. The marginal costs can range from \$4.84/acre to \$47.46/acre; about 90% of sites have costs that are less than \$15/acre around lakes and streams.

Rob concluded that nonmarket benefits are important and should be an integral consideration in guideline revision. Adverse economic impacts are unlikely at the statewide scale (0.4% of total stumpage value). Approximately 20% of ownerships that harvest will bear the majority of the foregone stumpage cost. Adverse impacts at a few sites are likely (e.g. sites with small harvests, large water feature edges). Opportunities to offset costs will need to be explored if revised practices are adopted.

Mike Trutwin asked if the results are a worst-case scenario based on a predominance of aspen in monitoring data. Rob responded that, instead of a worst-case scenario, the results are as close to reality as possible since we are preferentially harvesting aspen.

Rob thanked the *ad hoc* committee members (Dave Parent, Wayne Brandt, Shaun Hamilton and Joel Koemptgen) for their help with the analysis as well as Rick Dahlman (DNR) and staff at DNR Resource Assessment and the US Forest Service. Completion of this report begins the guideline revision process.

Update on woody biomass harvesting ecological impacts study

Alan Ek introduced a University of Minnesota study, led by Dr. Tony D'Amato, on the ecological impacts of harvesting woody biomass. The study was funded by the legislature through the MFRC as advised by the Forest Resources Research Advisory Committee.

Tony provided background on the project, describing concerns raised when the biomass harvest guidelines were developed. The knowledge of biomass harvest impacts on saproxylic organisms, forest regeneration and productivity, nutrient stores and carbon storage is incomplete. The study aims to increase that knowledge and will provide a formal evaluation of MFRC forest biomass and site-level guidelines. The two main research questions are: 1) what are the long term impacts of harvesting woody biomass for energy on biodiversity and productivity and 2) to what extent do retention of green tree legacies and harvesting residues ameliorate those impacts?

Four levels of woody biomass removal (from no harvest to whole tree harvest) and three levels of leave tree retention (none, scattered, clumped) will be evaluated. Treatments were replicated in four areas, all aspen dominated. The harvests will be completed by the end of February 2010.

In 2009, the project participants secured a \$2.7 million dollar grant from the USDA/BOE Biomass Research Development Initiative to expand the work to additional sites in Wisconsin and Michigan. Tony noted that the broader research effort would not have been possible without the initial MFRC grant.

Tony reviewed next steps, including collection of immediate post-harvest data this summer, submission of a proposal this spring to expand the research to more nutrient-poor sites, and additional data collection in 2011- 2013 with the USDA funding. In 2013, the group will link their findings with other regional studies of biomass impacts.

Dave Parent asked whether leaving too much residual biomass will enrich an otherwise poor site. Tony responded that there is a concern we may lose jack pine communities on sites because they have been enriched, but the data are limited. Alan added that there are additional problems with soil fungi when excess biomass remains on sites. Tony noted that Wisconsin modified the MFRC biomass harvest guidelines for their use on nutrient poor sites.

Tony stated that the researchers have a 15-year agreement with the landowners. In some cases, the project will evaluate multiple rotations. They will also use field data to inform models. The time required to evaluate impacts depends upon the response variable. Tony anticipates at least 5-10 years post-harvest regrowth will be needed before trends will become apparent.

Public Communications to the MFRC

None.

MFRC Member Communications

Shawn reported that he and Dave Zumeta had spoken to a new group called Anglers for Habitat and encouraged them to make a presentation to the MFRC. Dave added that Lance Ness will come to the March 10 meeting to briefly introduce Anglers for Habitat and its relationship with L-SOHC funding.

Dave Epperly provided a brief update on the guideline monitoring report, noting that they have been addressing software snags but will have a report delivered to the Council on time (by February 15).

Mary Richards distributed an announcement regarding water sustainability framework listening sessions that are occurring around the state.

Shawn stated that he would like an update at some point, on that status of forestry in the state as a result of the economic downturn.

Dave Parent moved, and Mary Richards seconded, adjournment. *The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.*