High Conservation Value Forests (HCVFs)

Status Update

MFRC NE Landscape Planning Committee

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Introduction to High Conservation Values Forests

- FSC Principle & Definition

Minnesota DNR's HCVF Approach

- Selection Criteria
- Designation Process
- Status = Candidate HCVFs
- HCVF Informational Reports
- Management Guidance (TBD)

Associated HCVF Requirements

- Monitoring Plan
- Landowner Coordination

INTRODUCTION:

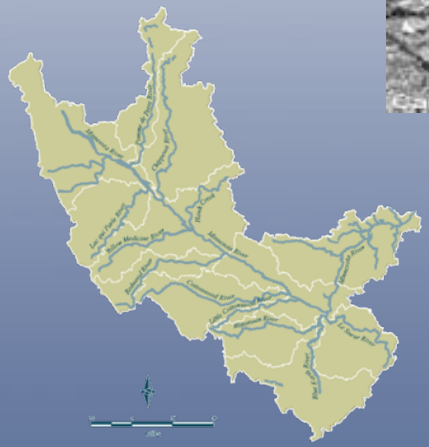
HIGH CONSERVATION VALUE FORESTS (HCVFs)

FSC HCVF Definition - Principle 9:

"Areas of outstanding biological or cultural significance ... that possess the following HCVs..."

Environmental: ***RTE species and communities, old growth, etc.***

Social: ***Critical ecosystem functions (i.e. critical watersheds), cultural/spiritual/ archaeological sites, etc.***



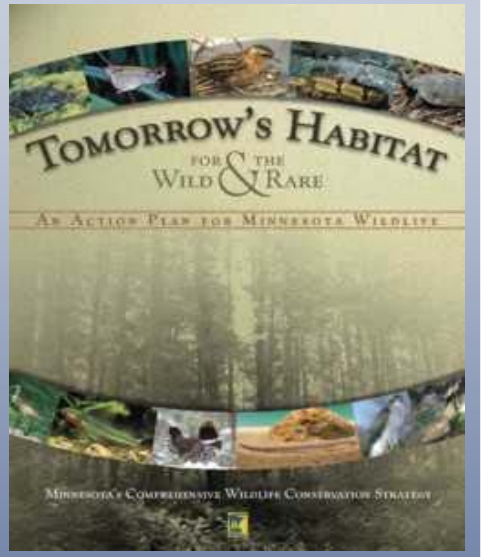
Definition of HCVs

HCV Category 1 – Biodiversity Values:

- *"Forest areas containing globally, nationally, or regionally significant concentrations of biodiversity values."* Always includes:
  - G1 & G2 (globally critically imperiled or imperiled) species
  - S1 & S2 (state endangered or threatened) species
  - Federal endangered or threatened species

May include:

- Federal candidate or proposed State T&E species
- Regionally significant concentrations of rare species
- Significant concentrations of rare species within the same taxonomic group
- Outstanding examples of "Key Habitats for SGCNs"



- *"Regionally significant" = Determined at ECS Section*
- *"Rare Species" = Species designated as special concern or SGCNs.*

Definition of HCVs

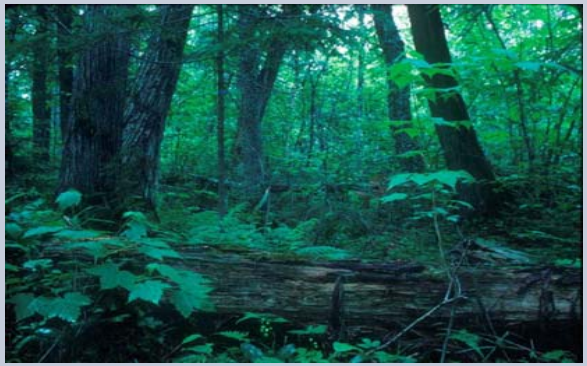
HCV Category 2 – Large Landscape Level Forests:

- *"Forests containing globally, regionally, or nationally significant large landscape level forests … where viable populations of most if not all naturally occurring species exist in natural patterns of distribution and abundance."*
- Factors to help identify large landscape level forests include:
  - Size
  - Lesser levels of human disturbance
  - Connectivity between larger forest/wetland areas
- Acreage and age thresholds provided for 3 ECS Provinces:
  - Laurentian Mixed Forest
  - Tallgrass Aspen Parklands
  - Eastern Broadleaf Forest
- *Threshold for regional significance = generally >1,000 acres*

Definition of HCVs

HCV Category 3 - Ecosystems:

- *"Forest areas that are in or contain rare, threatened, or endangered ecosystems."*
  - Viable examples of G1-G2 NPCs
  - Viable examples of S1-S2 NPCs
  - Viable examples of S3 NPCs where particularly rare within the ECS Section
  - Pine stands of natural origin
  - Old-growth forests
  - Primary forests
  - Un-roaded areas >500 acres with unique attributes



Old-growth forests

Oak savannas

Calcareous fens

HCVFs – Overview

- **FSC's Principle 9:**

  "Management activities in high conservation value forests shall maintain or enhance the attributes which define such forests. Decisions regarding high conservation value forests shall always be considered in the context of a <u>precautionary approach.</u>"

- **The "Precautionary Principle":**

  "Where there are threats of serious or irreversible social or environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent such damage."

  - *Establishes that a lack of information does not justify the absence of management measures. Management measures to maintain the conservation of the resources should be established.*

HCVFs – *Overview*

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS:

- **Maintain and/or enhance the High Conservation Values (HCVs)**
  - Working forests
  - Multiple-use areas
  - Any management objective is appropriate, as long as the HCVs are likely to be maintained, based on the best available information.

MINNESOTA DNR'S HCVF APPROACH

DNR's Early HCVF History

	Action	Response
2005	**Assessment Audit:** Minor CAR 2005.14: DNR required to complete an assessment for HCVs & develop a "HCVF Framework."	DNR established a HCVF workgroup.
2006	**Annual Surveillance Audit:** Minor CAR 2006.10: DNR required to continue implementing its HCVF approach.	Commissioner signed DNR's HCVF Framework.
2007	DNR Framework identified **MCBS Sites as key areas for HCVs.**	
2008	**Annual Surveillance Audit:** Major CAR 2008.1: DNR required to establish an **"interim process"** to ensure the maintenance or enhancement of HCVs within MCBS Sites of *Outstanding* & *High* Biodiversity Significance.	Focusing on HCVs 1-3. MCBS Sites = Interim HCVFs. MCBS Survey info = Interim HCVs.
2009	**Annual Surveillance Audit:** Minor CAR 2009.4: DNR required to clarify site information and interdisciplinary process. Auditors observed a lack of connection of management decisions to MCBS survey info = interim HCVs.	Ecological & Water Resources (EWR) staff assigned to review and compile recommendations for MCBS sites warranting the HCVF approach.

DNR's Recent HCVF History

	Action	Response
2010	**Re-Assessment:** Major CAR 2010.2: DNR required to develop & implement a HCVF Monitoring Plan.	DNR re-formed its HCVF workgroup.
2011	**Annual Surveillance Audit:** Minor CAR 2011.2: DNR required to coordinate with adjacent landowners where HCVs cross ownership boundaries.	DNR submitted several CAR responses, promising to implement monitoring & landowner coordination efforts in the interim, in lieu of final HCVF designations, focusing on areas with greatest need & benefit to HCVs.
	DNR EWR staff identify "Interim HCVFs" from MCBS Sites.	
2012	**Annual Surveillance Audit:** Auditors concerned with slow progress & impacts of TBD policy changes for Trust Lands. No CARs issued but progress expected by 2013 Annual Surveillance Audits.	Statewide Workgroup & Regional HCVF Teams seek field input and identify "Candidate HCVFs" for possible future HCVF designation.
2013		DNR leadership requests alternative acreage proposals to be developed. These were presented to Directors. Pending final designation decision.

HCVF Statewide Workgroup

Membership:

- Interdisciplinary team.
- Co-chairs: Rusterholz & Barnard.

Progress:

- Defined & quantified "DNR's HCVs – Categories 1-3"
- Operationalized the "Precautionary Principle"
- Established "Criteria Necessary for Selection as HCVFs"
- Developed process for identifying "Candidate HCVFs"
- Developed a statewide shapefile & HCVF info report

End Goal of Workgroup's efforts:

- Add value to DNR's resource management by improving the effectiveness of efforts to maintain / enhance HCVs within HCVFs.

Criteria for Selecting HCVFs

1) **Combination/Concentration of HCVs:**

Site contains multiple HCVs *or* Site contains some of the best known examples of an identified HCV or combinations of HCVs in ECS Section.

2) **DNR Ownership:**

DNR ownership (certified lands & SNAs & State Parks) within the Site is adequate to maintain/enhance the identified HCVs …

OR

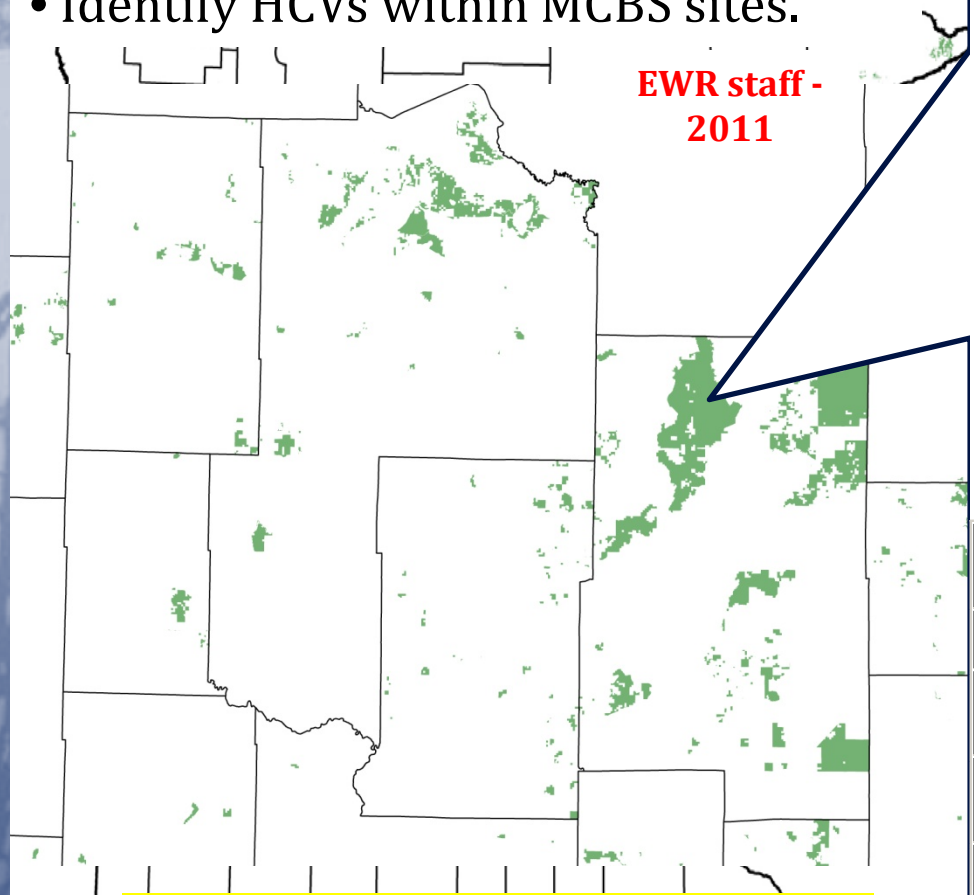
HCVs on other ownership within the Site have a high probability of being maintained or enhanced because either:

- The other landowner(s) are FSC Certified
- The other landowner(s) are governed by policy or statute that required protection of HCVs.

Process for Selecting HCVFs

STEP 1

- Crosswalk MCBS site information to DNR's final list of HCVs.
- Identify HCVs within MCBS sites.



MCBS Sites Intersecting Forestry and Wildlife Lands

HCVF Report for Area of MCBS Site/Subsite of Outstanding or High Biodiversity Significance in Forestry and/or Wildlife Administration
Prepared by Minnesota County Biological Survey
Report Run: March 28, 2011

County: Aitkin
MCBS Site Name: Moose Willow Peatlands
MCBS Site Number: 73
MCBS Subsite Number: 0
MCBS Site Database Entry Date: 2000-11
MCBS Site Database Last Modification Date: 2009-10

MCBS Site/Subsite Biodiversity Significance Rank: High
MCBS Site/Subsite Survey Status: Preliminary
(MCBS Survey Procedures) *(MCBS Sites of Biodiversity Significance Shapefile Metadata)*

Data for Area of Site/Subsite in Forestry and/or Wildlife Administration

Acres: 63872
Description: Large wetland site with extensive, mostly acid peatlands. Numerous ditches along section/twnsp lines, apparent limited to localized affects. A few scattered upland inclusions. Large expanses of spruce, tamarack, and cedar swamps and open wetlands. One OG white pine stand; 184 acres of managed red pine in 24 stands. Good quality NPCs, many rare species

Rare Species *(Shapefile Metadata)*

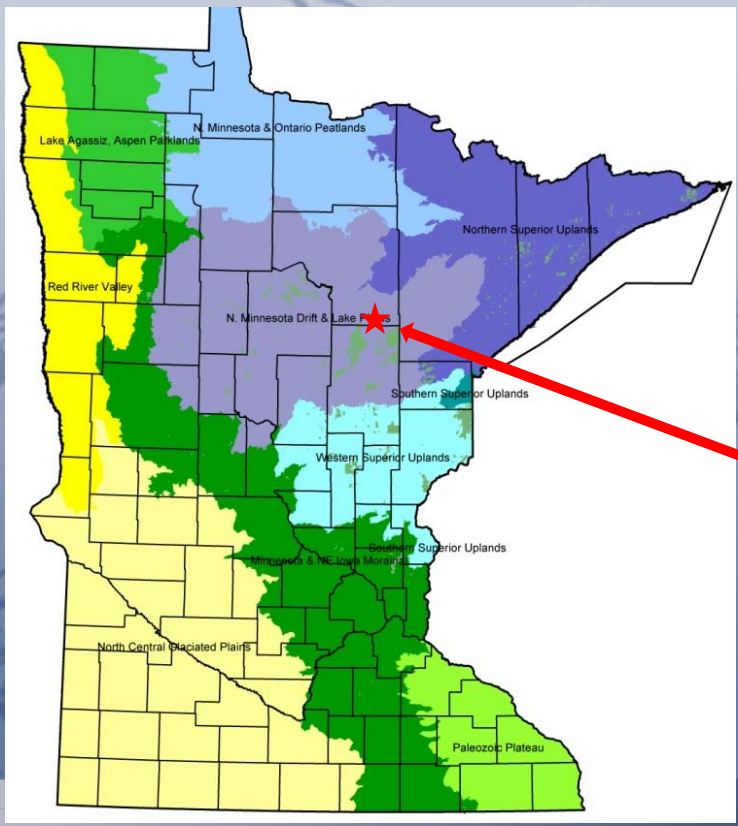
Type	EOR ID	Scientific Name	Common Name	EO Number	MN Stat	EO Rank	Last Obs Date
Botanical	11353	Arethusa bulbosa	Dragon's-mouth	73	NON	Not ranked	1991-06-24
Botanical	26043	Botrychium lanceolatum	Triangle Moonwort	78	THR	E - Verified extant (viability not assessed)	1999-06-15
Botanical	33503	Botrychium lanceolatum	Triangle Moonwort	116	THR	E - Verified extant (viability not assessed)	2000-08-03
Botanical	5915	Botrychium matricariifolium	Matricary Grapefern	81	NON	Not ranked	1992-07-11
Botanical	12161	Botrychium matricariifolium	Matricary Grapefern	101	NON	Not ranked	1996-06-26

Process for Selecting HCVFs

Step 2:

- Review HCVs present within each ECS Section to identify which are regionally significant and which are likely to be negatively impacted by normal mngt.

Regional HCVF Teams



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Process for Selecting HCVFs

Step 3:

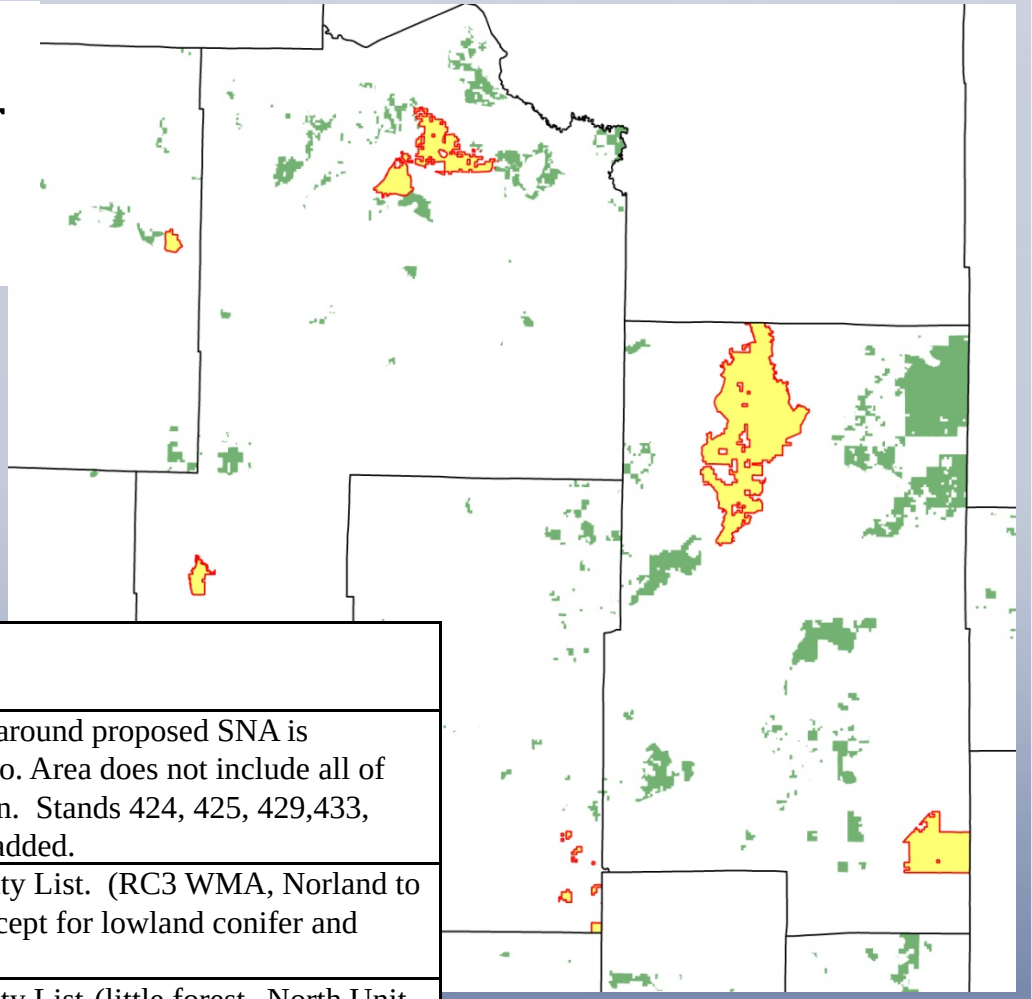
•Identify which MCBS Sites and other areas (OFMCs) may meet HCVF criteria.

Regional HCVF Teams by 6/12

Step 4:

• Distribute to field for comment.

Regional HCVF Teams by 6/12



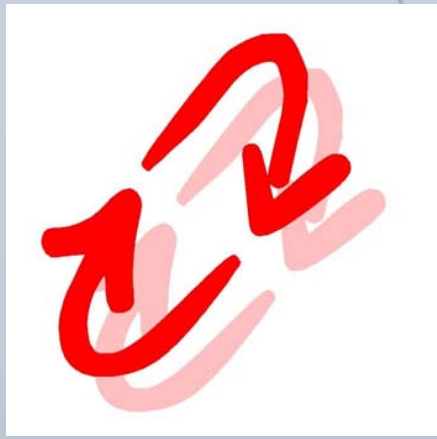
MCBS/HCVF Site name or number	Reason for selection
68170 Bemis Hill	Adding additional area of HCVF around proposed SNA is beneficial, but the Outstanding Bio. Area does not include all of even the smallest SNA designation. Stands 424, 425, 429,433, 443, 423, 448 and 457 should be added.
68148 Lost River Lowland	High Rating on MCBS Biodiversity List. (RC3 WMA, Norland to Marvin Lake. Very little forest except for lowland conifer and some aspen near Marvin Lake).
68162 Cedarbend WMA	High Rating on MCBS Biodiversity List-(little forest--North Unit of Cedarbend WMA and stagnant black spruce Island to the west).
68216 Swartz/Bednar	High Rating on MCBS Biodiversity List-(little or no merchantable timber. Little or no forest-mostly open peatland).
68240 West Shore of LOW	High Rating on MCBS Biodiversity List-(only 15 acres of aspen-the rest is sedge meadow or other treeless wetland).

Process for Selecting HCVFs

Step 5:

• Consider Area feedback & reach consensus within Regional HCVF Team on areas meeting HCVF criteria.

Regional HCVF Teams by 6/12



Step 6:

• Reduce acres & # of sites using gap-analysis principles. & risk-assessment. Remove areas with low risk to HCVs.

Regional HCVF Teams by 12/12

Step 7 & 8:

• Develop several alternative acreage proposals. Document assumptions. Consider risks to HCVs.

•Present results (revised candidate HCVFs) to Division Directors for review & final decision.

Statewide Workgroup by 2/13

HCVF – Designation Progress

Year	Terminology	Acres	# of sites
2009	MCBS High & Outstanding Sites	765,993 acres	539 Sites
2011	Interim HCVFs	616,115 acres	293 sites
2012	Candidate HCVFs	496,344 acres	174 sites
2013	**Revised Candidate HCVFs**	**362,533 acres**	**106 sites**

2011 - INTERIM HCVFs:

A. Updated info & clearly identified HCVs within MCBS H/O Sites.

B. List of Sites "recommended" for further consideration as Interim HCVFs.

2012 - CANDIDATE HCVFs:

A. Applied criteria to identify Candidate HCVFs from pool of Interim HCVFs.

B. Incorporated Area input and reached consensus on Candidate HCVFs.

2013 – Revised CANDIDATE HCVFs

HCVF – Designation Progress

YEAR	5/2009	6/2011	8/2012	1/2013
Status	MCBS Sites	Interim HCVFs		Candidate HCVFs
# Sites	539	293	176	106
# Acres	765,993	616,115	496,000	362,533

Progress since 2009

- 433 fewer HCVF polygons
- 403,460 fewer HCVF acres

HCVF – Designation Progress

Sections	Total	Trust	Commercial	Commercial Trust
Totals	362,533	104,181	185,253	55,125

177,280 Non-Commercial Acres

HCVF – Next Steps

1. ***Commissioner's Office / Division Directors:***
   - ✓ Review alternative designation options.
   - ✓ Final designation will focus on areas with risk to HCVs.
   - ✓ Develop system for reducing conflict and compensating Trust.

2. ***Statewide HCVF Workgroup:***
   - ✓ Develop general management guidance by HCV Category.
   - ✓ Seek stakeholder input / consultation as to management of HCVFs once designation is complete. (Goal = Fall, 2013)
   - ✓ Refine and implement DNR's HCVF monitoring plan, including a process for reviewing data and adapting management to better maintain/enhance HCVs.
   - ✓ Implement efforts to coordinate management activities with landowners adjacent to HCVFs containing HCVs that cross ownership boundaries.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

HCVFs – Management Impact

MANAGEMENT IMPLICATION:

- Maintain or enhance the High Conservation Values (HCVs)
  - Multiple-use areas & working forests
  - Will require balanced landscape-based management decisions.
  - Any management objective is appropriate, as long as the HCVs are likely to be maintained, based on the best available information.

OVERLAP WITH EXISTING POLICIES?:

- HCVF designation is not be needed if current policy / procedure is adequate to maintain/enhance the HCVs.
- Some overlap in mapped polygons exists, but impact on the ground is dictated by the most restrictive designation.
- Protection of Old-Growth, G1-G2 NPCs, T/E Species, & RSAs help DNR meet FSC's HCVF (& Principle 6) requirements.

Opportunities for Collaboration

- **Landowner Coordination Efforts:**

  Using DNR's revised candidate HCVFs as a starting point:

  - Analyze MBS data on private lands within the larger MBS sites. *(MCBS Site Tool & Site Report provides this information)*
  - Look for opportunities to meet broader plan goals by focusing on areas with many unique, high quality values.
  - Consider HCVs used in DNR's designation process and look at surrounding private lands to identify overlapping values.
  - Focus coordination efforts in areas where values appear to be at risk and there is overlap with DNR's designated HCVFs.
  - Educate practitioners on the ground of HCVF concept and available information.

- **Reference Information**
  - HCVF Fact Sheet
  - HCVF shapefile & maps
  - HCVF Informational Reports

Food for Thought …

- **Role of MFRC Landscape Plans / Committees**
  - Existing multi-stakeholder/landowner group
  - Existing forum to discuss and agree to basic landscape goals and management approaches
- **Efficiencies in Collaborating on HCVF Monitoring & Landowner Coordination Efforts**
  - MBS survey covers many ownerships and data is available
  - All FSC certificate holders are required to address HCVFs and coordinate with neighboring landowners
- **Future of FSC?**
  - Regardless of FSC's future, clarity around the purpose and appropriate use of MBS Sites and data was needed.
  - HCVF can be a tool to refine focus / high priority areas from among a much larger pool of MBS Sites.

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

FOREST CERTIFICATION CONTACT

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www.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/certification/index.html