

Implementation Goals for Timber Harvest and Forest Management Guidelines¹

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The Minnesota Sustainable Forest Resources Act (SFRA) calls for the development of comprehensive timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. These guidelines are intended to address many of the impacts commonly associated with applying site-level forestry practices by providing a range of recommended practices to accommodate a range of landowner objectives and landscape conditions. As directed by the SFRA, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) will periodically review and update the guidelines in response to new information, technology, or resource management issues.

CRITERIA FOR ESTABLISHING IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

The MFRC is required to establish guideline implementation goals for each of the state's major forest land ownership categories. These goals are to be established prior to implementation of the guidelines and should reflect societal aspirations for acceptable rates of guideline use. Among the many possible criteria that should be considered when selecting guideline application goals are the following:

- C Easily to identify and capable of being measured;
- C Attainable with existing or soon-to-be available technologies;
- C Achievable within economically acceptable parameters;
- C Able to accomplish important forest resource protection goals;
- C Accommodating of the voluntary nature and complexity of the guidelines;
- C Respectful of forest landowner rights, responsibilities, and objectives;
- C Consistent with applicable state, federal, and tribal environmental quality laws;
- C Allow for appropriate responses to forest health emergencies or other natural catastrophes; and
- C Recognize the variety of public and private interests that manage forest land in Minnesota.

GUIDELINE IMPLEMENTATION GOALS

Specific goals for guideline implementation can take many forms. For example, goals can be specified for the desired extent of: 1) organizational support for the guidelines; 2) user awareness and understanding of the guidelines; 3) user commitment to applying the guidelines; and 4) actual application of specific practices set forth by the guidelines. The following describes implementation goals for each of these areas.

Organizational Support of Guidelines

Guidelines implementation will not be successful unless major public and private organizations that have an interest in the sustainability of Minnesota's forests are willing to support the guidelines and their application. Many organizations have been involved in developing the MFRC's timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. An even greater number of organizations have an interest in assuring site-based forest management practices are sustainable. Publically acknowledged support of these organizations will, in part, play a major role in determining the degree to which the guidelines are widely implemented.

Measure of Guideline Support

Statement of support for the guidelines by a variety of public and private organizations with an interest in the management, use, and protection of Minnesota's forest resources.

Goal for Guideline Support:

By the end of 2000, statements of support for the guidelines from organizations such as:

MN Forest Resources Partnership	MN Deer Hunters Association
Chippewa National Forest	MN Ruffed Grouse Society
Superior National Forest	Izaak Walton League/MN Chapter
MN Department of Natural Resources	Trout Unlimited/MN Chapter
MN Association of County Land Commissioners	MN Lakes Association
MN Forest Industries	Society of American Foresters/MN Chapter
MN Timber Producers Association	The Wildlife Society/MN Chapter
Associated Contract Loggers	Hospitality MN (MN Resort Association)
The Nature Conservancy/MN Chapter	MN Wood Fiber Council
MN Center for Environmental Advocacy	MN Indian Affairs Council
National Audubon Society/MN Office	MN Association of Consulting Foresters
Sierra Club/North Star Chapter	MN Forestry Association
MN AFL-CIO	

Awareness and Understanding of Guidelines

The application of the MFRC guidelines cannot be expected unless potential users are aware of their existence and subsequently understand the reasoning behind the need for their application. Timber harvesters, forest landowners, and resource managers need to be aware that the guidelines exist and must understand how to apply the specific practices being recommended.

Measure of Guideline Awareness

Percentage of timber harvesters and resource managers who have attended guideline education and training programs, and percentage of forest landowners who have been made aware of the existence of timber harvesting/forest management guidelines.

Goals for Guideline Awareness:

By the end of 2000:

- 1) 75 percent of all wood harvested in Minnesota is done by timber harvesters who have attended both introductory guideline training and field demonstrations.
- 2) 75 percent of the state's natural resource professionals who are involved in administering timber sales or silvicultural operations have attended both introductory guideline training and field demonstrations.
- 3) 75 percent of the state's non-industrial private forest landowners who own greater than 20 acres of forest land are provided written information about the guidelines.

By the beginning of 2002:

- 1) 90 percent of all wood harvested in Minnesota is done by timber harvesters who have attended both introductory guideline training and field demonstrations.
- 2) 100 percent of the state's natural resource professionals who are involved in administering timber sales or silvicultural operations have attended both introductory guideline training and field demonstrations.
- 3) 90 percent of the state's non-industrial private forest landowners who own greater than 10 acres of forestland are provided written information about the guidelines.

Commitment to Apply Guidelines

Awareness and understanding of the guidelines must be accompanied by a willingness to actually apply the guidelines. Evidence of a commitment to apply the guidelines can be the forest landowner (or resource manager) and timber harvester engaging in discussion of guideline application during pre-harvest planning activities. At such time, the parties involved can explicitly acknowledge the existence of the guidelines and subsequently discuss their application prior to commencing harvest operations. The discussion of guideline considerations should be done in conjunction with conducting a pre-harvest review.

Measure of Guideline Commitment

Percentage of harvest sites where the timber harvester and forest landowner (resource manager) explicitly discussed and considered the guidelines prior to commencing harvest operations.

Goals for Guideline Commitment:

By the end of 2000:

- 1) 75 percent of all public (federal, state, county) forest resource agency's timber sales are conducted with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and resource manager.
- 2) 75 percent of all timber sales on private, industrial forests are conducted with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and resource manager.
- 3) 75 percent of all timber sales on private, non-industrial (NIPF) and tribal forests where professional forestry assistance is provided are done so with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and forest landowner or its representative (e.g., resource manager).
- 4) 50 percent of all timber sales on private, non-industrial (NIPF) and tribal forests where professional forestry assistance is not provided are done so with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and forest landowner or its representative (e.g., resource manager).

By the beginning of 2002:

- 1) 100 percent of all public (federal, state, county) forest resource agency's timber sales are conducted with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and resource manager.
- 2) 100 percent of all timber sales on private, industrial forests are conducted with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and resource manager.
- 3) 100 percent of all timber sales on private, non-industrial (NIPF) and tribal forests where professional forestry assistance is provided are done so with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and forest landowner or its representative (e.g., resource manager).
- 4) 75 percent of all timber sales on private, non-industrial (NIPF) and tribal forests where professional forestry assistance is not provided are done so with a pre-harvest review of new sales (sales after guidelines were made available) during which guideline application is discussed jointly by the timber harvester and forest landowner or its representative (e.g., resource manager).

Application of the Guidelines

Actual application of the guidelines is the most direct measure of guideline use. Because Minnesota's forest practice guidelines are voluntary, their application is not compelling, especially on private forestland. Additionally, the application of specific recommended practices (or suites of guidelines) are dependent on the forest landowner's management objectives, the condition of the forest at time of harvest, and major physical attributes of the forested property. Despite these conditions, goals can be established for aggregate levels of guideline implementation (not individual harvest sites) and for acceptable rates of improvement in guideline application. These goals must be linked to appropriate physical attributes of the forest. For example, guideline application goals for defined riparian management zones versus application goals for certain guidelines to be applied on all sites harvested (e.g., disposal of limbs and tops). Goals for guideline application and for rates of improvement could be different for major forest landowner categories, landscape regions, and/or types of practices.

Measures of Guideline Application:

Percentage of harvested sites in which various recommended practices are applied, and improvement in the application of these practices over time.

Goals for Guideline Application:

- 1) **Specified percent application of guidelines by major forest landowner categories, landscape regions and/or specific practices.** Identifying specific goals for the application of the guidelines is premature without an understanding of the extent to which the recommended practices are currently applied. Doing so could lead to goals that are arbitrary or that fail to meet the goal selection criteria specified above. To develop such goals for guideline application by forest landowner category, landscape region, and groups of practices, the following two step process is needed:
 - a) Using field monitoring, develop a comprehensive baseline assessment of how Minnesota's current forest management and timber harvesting practices (i.e., pre-guideline conditions) compare to recommended practices suggested in the forest practice guidelines. An interdisciplinary management team will develop a field monitoring baseline assessment with input from scientists and practitioners. The goal would be to have this baseline assessment complete by July 1999.
 - 2) Using goal selection criteria and results from the base-line assessment (pre-guideline conditions), specify goals for the application of the guidelines by forest landowner category, landscape region, and/or groups of practices. The goal would be to have application goals established by September 1999.
- 2) **Continuous improvement (toward application goals) in the rate at which guidelines are being used.** Over time, successive field monitoring should indicate continuous improvement in use of the practices recommended in the guidelines compared to pre-guideline application rates, and progress toward the application goals specified in #1 above.