

# MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

## ***RESPONSE TO REPORT OF THE WHITE PINE REGENERATION STRATEGIES WORK GROUP***

January 1997<sup>1</sup>

Established by the Sustainable Forest Resources Act of 1995 (SFRA), the Minnesota Forest Resources Council is a governor-appointed body of 13 persons representing a broad range of interests in the forests of Minnesota. Among the tasks assigned the Council by the Act is the development of recommendations to the governor and to federal, state, county and local governments with respect to forest resource policies and practices that result in the sustainable use, management, and protection of the state's forest resources. The Act requires that these policies acknowledge the complexity of forest resources; give consideration to ecological, economic, social demands on forests resources; foster a diversity of sustainable forest benefits, now and in the future; promote no-net loss of forest land and the diversity of forests thereon; and encourage collaboration among multiple constituencies engaged in planning and managing the state's forest. It is within the context of these principles that the Forest Resources Council considers and makes recommendations on major issues and reports that are brought forward for its consideration.

### **WHITE PINE REGENERATION STRATEGIES WORK GROUP**

A 14-person White Pine Regeneration Strategies Work Group was appointed in early 1996 and charged with reporting to the Forest Resources Council on the occurrence of the white pine resource in Minnesota, current efforts to increase the extent and distribution of the resource, information gaps needing additional research, and recommended strategies for future regeneration and management of white pine. The Council wishes to acknowledge the commitment of 14 of the state's top experts in white pine ecology and management who served on the Work Group. The Council also wishes to express its appreciation to those who provided input to the Work Group through the Review and Advisory Group. The information and recommendations contained in the Work Group's report represent one of the most significant efforts to carefully examine the current status of Minnesota's white pine resource and identify strategic directions regarding its management.

The Work Group presented its report to the Council on December 19, 1996.<sup>2</sup> *The Council has reviewed the report and concludes that the Work Group has accomplished the various tasks set forth in its mission statement.* Furthermore, the Council recommends the following with regard to goals and recommended actions contained in the report.

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<sup>1</sup> Minnesota Forest Resources Council. 2003 Upper Buford Circle. St. Paul, MN. Adopted January 16, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Minnesota's White Pine: Now and for the Future. Report of the White Pine Regeneration Strategies Work Group. December 19, 1996.

## WHITE PINE MANAGEMENT AND PROTECTION GOALS

*The Forest Resources Council believes that the presence of white pine in Minnesota should be increased significantly and that such a condition can occur by accomplishing the goals recommended in the Work Group's report.* Paraphrased, these goals are to regenerate white pine on all suitable sites; double the number and acres of young white pine in seven years; double the area of white pine cover type in 50 years; increase the spacial dispersion of older white pine stands; conduct harvesting to increase growth and regeneration of white pine; carry-out research on critical problems concerning white pine; promote white pine management through various educational efforts; complete site-level ecological classification systems for white pine; monitor the success of white pine regeneration programs; and provide appropriate budget and funding conditions to accomplish white pine management and protection goals.

### REQUIRED IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS

The Work Group's report presents program recommendations for accomplishing white pine management and protection goals. The Council acknowledges that these recommendations are consensus-based; only if all members of the Work Group agreed to a recommendation was it included. *The Forest Resources Council finds the Work Group's recommendations to be consistent with the policy and program criteria set forth in the SFRA and considers the recommendations to be fundamentally capable of accomplishing the goals recommended for the management and protection of white pine.*

#### **Forest Resource Council Initiatives**

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council is responsible for coordinating or carrying-out a number of site and landscape level programs that can further the state's interest in white pine. *The Council believes that opportunities to further the recommendations of the Work Group within existing Council-initiated programs should be utilized to the fullest extent possible.* Examples of these opportunities are as follows:

- \$ *Comprehensive timber harvesting and forest management guidelines.* The Council is responsible for developing comprehensive timber harvesting and forest management guidelines for the state. Site-based guidelines that promote white pine management and restoration can be developed through or incorporated into future guideline development activities.
  
- C *Landscape-based forest resources planning and coordination.* The Council is responsible for establishing a long-range strategic planning program that will encourage coordination of forest uses and practices across large landscapes. The future extent and distribution of white pine can be addressed in the context of this landscape-level initiative. Furthermore, the Council's landscape-based forest resources planning and coordination process can serve as a form where forest resource interests in a particular forested landscape can collectively identify various white pine goals as well as specific implementation strategies to perpetuate this resource. For example, the desired abundance of white pine in a particular forested landscape.

- \$ *Forest resource and practice monitoring.* The Council is responsible for oversight and program direction for various resource monitoring programs, most implemented by the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. These programs are to monitor broad trends and conditions in the state's forest resources, as well as the application and effectiveness of forest practice guidelines. Such programs can address information needs regarding the extent, condition, and trends in the state's white pine resource, and the type and extent of practices being applied to further its health. Additionally, the Interagency Information Cooperative established through the SFRA can address many of the data access and integration issues associated with white pine management.
  
- \$ *Forest resources research.* The Council is responsible for guiding statewide strategic directions in forest resources research. Through the Council's Research Advisory Committee, opportunities exist to address many important research needs concerning the state's white pine resource, such as effective strategies for white pine regeneration.
  
- \$ *Continuing education.* The Council is responsible for promoting continuing education opportunities for timber harvesters and natural resource professionals throughout the state. Through the newly established Minnesota Logger Education Program and the Center for Continuing Education for Natural Resource Professionals, opportunities exist to address the special educational needs required to effectively protect, manage, harvest, and regenerate the state's white pine resource. For example, the Center could develop training programs and workshops to educate natural resource professionals on appropriate white pine management and regeneration issues and techniques.

Many of the Work Group's recommendations can be advanced through existing Council programs or coordinating activities. However, the Work Group's management and regeneration recommendations are not specifically addressed by existing Council programs. In this respect, the Council urges the state's forestry community to place a special emphasis on:

- \$ *Accelerated white pine reforestation.*
- \$ *Accelerated use of silvicultural practices to regenerate and perpetuate white pine.*
- \$ *Accelerated production and availability of white pine nursery stock.*

The Council also believes that the goals and program recommendations of the Work Group can only be effectively implemented through the cooperative and coordinated efforts of all persons and organizations that have an interest in the future of the state's white pine resource. The Forest Resources Council has a special role to play in fostering this necessary cooperation.

## White Pine Management and Regeneration Initiatives

The Council strongly endorses the five program categories recommended by the Work Group as a comprehensive strategy to increase the role and presence of white pine in Minnesota. These major program categories are planning and budgeting, management and regeneration, education and training, research, and inventory and monitoring. Further, the Council fully supports the Work Group's belief that all five program categories are needed in order to have a positive impact on the white pine resource. The programs are complementary, not competitive.

The Council strongly recommends to the Governor and the Legislature the adoption of a white pine funding initiative that will enable the Work Group's recommended program categories to be fully implemented. The Council believes a long-term, sustained biennial appropriation of up to \$1.5 million is needed to effectively implement the recommendations of the Work Group. This level of funding has been determined by the Department of Natural Resources.

The Council urges that a funding initiative to implement programs recommended by the Work Group be sustained and carried-out in an efficient and effective manner. To such ends, the Council recommends that any white pine funding initiative incorporate the following principles:

- C **Sustained funding.** Because of the often special management requirements of white pine, long-term financial commitments will be necessary for its establishment and management. The Council urges that funding to implement the recommendations of the Work Group be long-term and sustained.
- C **Flexible funding.** Opportunities for effectively managing and regenerating white pine do not always coincide with state budget cycles. The Council urges flexibility in the availability of funding (e.g., grants) so that various silvicultural and regeneration activities can be undertaken at the appropriate time.
- C **Targeted funding.** Funding initiatives for white pine should make the most effective use of existing and new resources, both in terms of the types of management activities carried out as well as which forest ownerships and landscapes provide the greatest potential for white pine management. The Council urges forest land managers and silviculturalists to immediately begin collaboratively discussing ways of implementing the report's recommendations.
- C **Accountability.** Mechanisms should be established to provide periodic updates on progress toward implementing the recommendations of the Work Group, including the expenditure of financial resources provided through a white pine funding initiative. The Council stands ready to assist in coordinating this activity.

## COMMITMENT TO WHITE PINE INITIATIVE

Minnesota's white pine resource is an exciting reminder of the history associated with the state's forests; it is also an indicator of the richly diverse contribution that forests of the future can play in sustaining the state's environment, communities and economies. The Minnesota Forest Resources Council acknowledges the importance of white pine and urges the Governor and Legislature to provide the resources needed to implement the recommendations of the White Pine Regeneration Strategies Work Group. The latter offers great promise for the future of the state's white pine resource, a promise the Council is committed to advancing.