

# Minnesota Forest Resources Council

## LANDSCAPE-BASED FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING AND COORDINATION:

### DEVELOPMENT PROCEDURES AND TIME SCHEDULE<sup>1</sup>

March 1997

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council is responsible for establishing a process that will facilitate strategic planning of large forested landscapes, as well as the development of comprehensive timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. These landscape- and site-level initiatives will eventually be integrated such that forest resource goals at the site and across large landscapes will be achieved. The process described here to establish a landscape-based forest resources planning process is intended to address spatially-broad forest resource issues and concerns. As proposed, the landscapes within which landscape-based planning will occur will be identified by November 1996, with a general planning framework established by May 1997. Once the process framework is established, the Council will decide whether to pilot the planning process in one landscape before implementing the process statewide. The exact dates these events actually occur will depend on the Council's ability to manage unexpected technical and administrative obstacles.

The process described here will require considerable attention by the Forest Resources Council before a landscape-based forest resource planning process can become operational. Substantial technical information, practical experience, and understanding of existing landscape-based planning initiatives will be required to support the Council's actions to delineate forest landscapes; articulate goals and principles of landscape-based planning; identify a general process by which landscape-based planning can occur; and establish and staff regional forest resource committees. Consequently, the Council will seek an individual to provide the staff leadership needed to assist it in developing the landscape-based planning framework. Additionally, this individual will coordinate the implementation of the landscape-based forest resources planning program once it becomes operational.

*The procedures for establishing a landscape-based forest resource planning process are described in moderate detail, recognizing the need to maintain the flexibility necessary to accommodate unforeseen conditions.* The Council acknowledges that landscape-based forest resource planning is quite new and largely untested. Consequently, its development and implementation will be a continually evolving activity -- one that responds to available information, technology, and science, as well as dynamic needs for conducting large (landscape-based) forest resource assessments.

## MANDATE FOR DEVELOPING A LANDSCAPE PLANNING PROCESS

The Minnesota Forest Resources Council is charged with the responsibility for establishing a framework for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning and coordination, namely (MS § 89A.06, subd. 1):

*“The council shall establish a framework that will enable long-range strategic planning and landscape coordination to occur, to the extent possible, across all forested regions of the state and across all ownerships.”*

This framework will consist of the following four major components.

**Defined Forested Landscapes.** The Council is required to delineate the landscapes within which long-range strategic planning of the state’s forest resources will occur. These landscapes must be based on broadly defined ecological units and existing classification systems, yet recognize existing political and administrative boundaries and planning processes.

**Planning Principles and Goals.** A statement of principles and goals to guide landscape-based forest resource planning must be articulated by the Council.

**General Planning Process.** A general process for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning will be identified by the Council. This process must give considerable latitude to allow the design of planning processes that fit the unique needs, resources, and conditions of each landscape. These planning processes must also reflect a balanced consideration of the economic, social and environmental factors influencing the condition of each landscape. Further, this planning process must be able to interface and establish formats compatible with other existing landscape-based forest resource plans and planning processes.

**Regional Forest Resource Committees.** Regional forest resource committees will be used as the mechanism by which landscape-based forest resource planning will occur, with a committee established in each landscape defined by the Council. These regional committees must include representative interests in a particular region that are committed to and involved in landscape planning and coordination. In addition to serving as a forum for landowners, forest land managers, and representative interests to discuss landscape-level forest resource issues, these committees will identify and implement an open and public landscape-based forest resource planning process based on the general planning framework established by the Council. The major outcomes of such a process will be the identification of important trends and conditions in the region’s forest resources; sustainable forest resource goals for that landscape; and strategies to achieve those goals. Regional forest resource committees will also serve as an important interface with the Council -- providing a regional perspective to the Council on matters before it.

Developing and implementing landscape-based forest resources planning will require substantial collaboration among a wide variety of interests. As such, the Council will actively seek to engage the

<sup>1</sup> approved by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council on May 16, 1996, revised March 20, 1997 .

Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, as well as other organizations with responsibility for landscape-based planning, in the development of the planning framework and implementation of the planning process. Doing so will help ensure maximum compatibility of the Council's framework with other existing landscape efforts, as well as help generate broad support for implementation.

## **ORGANIZATION AND STAFF REQUIREMENTS**

Successful implementation of a landscape-based forest resource planning process will require an organizational structure and staff support. A landscape planning coordinator, regional forest resource committees, and committee support staff are the principal elements needed to develop the landscape-based planning framework and make the process operational. They are described as follows:

**Landscape-Based Forest Resource Planning Coordinator.** This individual will be responsible for providing leadership and overall coordination of the landscape-based forest resource planning effort. As such, he/she will serve as the principal liaison with the Council and its staff with respect to this activity. This individual will work closely with the Council in establishing the landscape-based planning framework. Once operational, the coordinator will work with the regional forest resource committees and their staff to ensure landscape-based planning is effectively carried out. The landscape-based forest resource planning coordinator will likely require a full-time commitment. This individual will be provided to the Council from those interests represented on the Council.

**Regional Forest Resource Committees.** A regional forest resource committee will be established in each forest landscape identified by the Council. The Council will appoint these committees, each of which will include a broad cross-section of forest resource interests in that region. Each regional committee will elect a chair from among its members.

**Regional Forest Resource Committee Support.** Administrative and technical support will be needed to effectively operate the regional forest resource committees. The former requires assigning a staff person to work with each committee in all of its planning and related activities. The latter includes making available the forest resources and related data required by the regional committees to successfully undertake their planning processes. It is anticipated that landscape-based planning processes will be heavily dependent on the availability of landscape-oriented forest resource data and related information.

## **DEVELOPING A LANDSCAPE-BASED FOREST RESOURCE PLANNING PROCESS.**

The following describes a general process by which the Council will establish a landscape-based forest resource planning process.

**1. Identify Landscape-Based Planning Coordinator.** Council will identify an individual to provide lead staff support to the Council's development of the landscape-based planning framework as well as coordinate implementation of landscape-based planning once the process becomes operational. Although work direction will come from the Council, this individual will be employed by one of the organizations represented on the Council.

<sup>1</sup> approved by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council on May 16, 1996, revised March 20, 1997 .

**2. Understand/Assess Existing Landscape-Based Classification and Planning Activities.**

Background information on existing ecological land classification systems (e.g., Ecological Classification System) and landscape-based forest planning processes will be presented to the Council. Such information will be assessed in the context of identifying the forested landscapes within which landscape-based planning will occur.

**3. Delineate Regional Forest Landscapes.** The Council will delineate a limited number of forest landscapes. It will do so based on broadly defined ecological units and existing classification systems, while acknowledging political and administrative boundaries. The landscapes defined will become the units within which landscape-based forest resource planning will take place.

**4. Identify Principles and Goals.** The Council will identify a number of overarching principles to guide landscape-based forest resource planning in Minnesota. The Council will also identify short- and long-term goals of implementing a landscape-based forest resource planning process. Landscape-based goals identified in the GEIS Implementation Strategy Roundtable Report will be important input in to this discussion.

**5. Develop General Landscape-Based Planning Process.** Guided by the principles of and goals for landscape-based planning, the Council will develop a general process by which landscape-based planning will occur within its defined landscape regions. This process will serve as a general blueprint for conducting landscape-based planning in each landscape and identifying the major elements and outcomes of such a process. The process will also be flexible to ensure individual planning processes can be tailored to meet the unique circumstances and needs of each landscape.

**6. Solicit Outside Review of Draft Planning Framework.** Prior to being finalized, the Council will seek outside input on its framework for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning. Focus of the review will be on assessing the framework's implementability, practicality and utility for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning, as well as its compatibility with other landscape-based planning initiatives.

**7. Finalize the Framework for Conducting Landscape-Based Planning.** Considering the outside input received, the Council will finalize its landscape-based forest resources planning framework.

**8. Define Plans for Implementation.** Once the framework for conducting landscape-based planning is developed by the Council (i.e., delineation of forest landscapes, identification of goals and objectives and a general process for conducting landscape-based planning), the Council will assess the most effective means of securing implementation. Given the largely untested nature of landscape-based planning, the Council will evaluate the usefulness of piloting the process in one forested landscape before making it operational statewide. Doing so would provide the Council an opportunity to carefully monitor and assess the workability of the planning framework established, as well as make necessary adjustments before expanding the process to other landscape regions.

**9. Identify Regional Committee Support Staff.** The Council will help secure the staff support needed to implement the landscape-based planning in each region. It is anticipated this staffing will include both process/facilitation skills as well as access to technical information to support the planning process

<sup>1</sup> approved by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council on May 16, 1996, revised March 20, 1997 .

for in each landscape.

**10. Establish Regional Forest Resource Committees.** The Council will solicit nominations to serve on regional forest resource committees. Based on the nominations received, the Council will appoint a regional forest resource committee in each landscape. These committees will include a balance of representative interests in a particular region, and will be charged with undertaking landscape-based forest resource planning as well as serving as a forum for discussing and resolving regionally-oriented forest resource issues.

#### LANDSCAPE-BASED PLANNING DEVELOPMENT TIMETABLE

<u>Activity</u>	<u>Estimated Completion Date</u>
Council finalizes its procedures document for developing the landscape-based forest resources planning process.	May 1996
Council identifies landscape program coordinator	February 1997
Council informed of existing ecologically-based landscape classification activities and planning processes.	March-May 1997
Council develops preliminary statement of principles and goals for conducting landscape-based planning.	April-May 1997
Stakeholder workshop on principles and goals and landscape delineation.	April-May 1997
Council delineates regional forest landscapes within which landscape-based forest resource planning will occur and modifies preliminary statement of principles and goals as necessary based on workshop input.	May-June 1997
Council identifies preliminary general process for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning and field tests on current on-going efforts in the state.	June-September 1997

<sup>1</sup> approved by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council on May 16, 1996, revised March 20, 1997 .

Council reviews learning from field tests, solicits outside review by key stakeholders of the proposed framework for conducting landscape-based forest resource planning.	October-November 1997
Council approves principles and goals and framework for conducting landscape-based forest resources planning and assesses the need to pilot the framework before implementing statewide.	December 1997
Council solicits nominations to serve on regional forest resource committees and identifies any support staff needs.	Depends on Pilot or not*
Council establishes regional forest resource committees.	Depends on Pilot or not*
Landscape-based forest resource planning commences.	Depends on Pilot or not*

\* If a pilot is decided upon it is estimated that it would last a maximum of one year; then the Council would assess the learning from the pilot, revise framework as necessary and implement statewide in early 1998.

<sup>1</sup> approved by the Minnesota Forest Resources Council on May 16, 1996, revised March 20, 1997 .