

Site-level Committee Meeting Summary

MN Interagency Fire Center, Grand Rapids, November 16, 2011, 9:30 am – 3:30 pm

Members present: Dale Erickson, Bob Lintelmann, Dave Parent, John Rajala, Mary Richards

Members absent: Gene Merriam, Shawn Perich

Staff: Rob Slesak

Guests: Tim O'hara (MFI)

The meeting began with evaluation of whether or not to move aspen from the good to the excellent leave tree category based on research conducted by John Erb at DNR. The committee did not see any problem with the request and unanimously voted to make the recommendation. Focus then turned to evaluation of the language Rob developed for the watershed scale guideline approved at the last meeting. Dale was concerned that the inclusion of metrics related to watershed condition (e.g., reference to impairment and harvest area) could have unintended consequences because of forest certification. The Committee decided to keep the guideline language but remove the associated metrics for assessment of watershed condition. Dave suggested that the guideline be placed in the planning section and the Committee agreed. Rob then summarized the discussion from the last meeting on residual basal area (RBA) in RMZ's, and reviewed the additional information/assessment requested by the Committee. Discussion ensued on potential deviations from any RBA recommendation, and if there was a need to make a recommendation that encompassed a range of possible situations. There was still agreement that in general we should be managing for longer-lived coverts in riparian areas, but also clear recognition that this would not apply in every situation. Rob noted that if the general desired condition was to establish and maintain these coverts, then the RBA recommendation should be consistent with that condition for clarity. Discussions with UMN, USFS, and WI DNR all indicated that 60 ft² was the minimum RBA for fully stocked stands of longer-lived species. The issue of RMZ area counting towards leave tree area was then broached. Rob stated that the existing prohibition on counting RMZ area towards leave tree area was part of a strategy to address blowdown in RMZ areas, which was accounted for in the RSTC recommendations. After further discussion and evaluation of the proposed widths, a motion was made to adopt the RSTC width recommendations, keep the existing widths for streams less than 3 feet wide (which were not part of the RSTC recommendation), recommend a 60 ft² RBA in all RMZ's, and allow RMZ area to count towards leave tree area. The motion was unanimously approved.

Rob presented the evaluation information related to seasonal ponds including the RSTC assessment, existing pond guidelines, and peer-reviewed research. There was general agreement of the Committee that the available information did not support a recommendation for buffers around seasonal ponds. Members felt that existing guidelines for seasonal ponds (including the recommendation to locate leave tree clumps around ponds) were sufficient to maintain pond functions and dependent organisms across the State. Rob noted that there were RSTC recommendations to improve the seasonal pond definition which could aid in identification. John suggested a need for additional research on seasonal ponds, and most of the Committee agreed. A motion was made to keep the existing seasonal pond guidelines, and recommend changing the pond definition per the RSTC report. The motion was unanimously approved.

The committee then reviewed the summary of recommendations which would be handed out at the next Council meeting. Rob asked if there were any disagreements with what was written and none were given. Prior to adjourning, Dave asked Rob to summarize recent developments related to the monitoring program and the Councils budget. Rob informed the Committee that staff cuts have been proposed to fund the monitoring program, and there will be further discussion at the November 30th Council meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00 pm