

Minnesota Forest Resources Council

Meeting Minutes — November 19 & 20, 1998

Historic Afton House Inn — Afton, MN

Council Members Present: Wayne Brandt, Joe Day, Paul Ellefson, Jan Green, Judy Hewes, Alan Knaeble, Dick Knoll, Marcie McLaughlin (Nov. 19, 1998), Norm Moody, Bob Oswald, Jerry Rose, Jim Sanders, Joe Wood

Council Members Absent: Bob Dunn (alternate Tom Duffus present Nov. 19, 1998)

Staff Present: Mike Kilgore, Sara Eliason, Dave Miller, Chris Edgar, Mike Phillips (Nov. 19, 1998), Chad Skally

Call to Order

Paul Ellefson called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and welcomed the guests in attendance.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

One correction to the minutes was suggested by Wayne Brandt: a sentence under the executive director's comments about the SAF convention should read: "Mike spoke at a plenary session about Minnesota's experience in addressing forest resource issues through the Sustainable Forest Resources Act."

Motion: Pending this correction, Jerry Rose moved to approve the October 15, 1998 meeting minutes. Judy Hewes seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Approval of Agenda

Some council discussion on the agenda focused on the question of procedure. The need for some action items was considered in order to move through guideline items. It was decided that action items would be held until the December meeting so that the council can work with the whole guideline package rather than individual components.

Motion: Jerry Rose moved to approve the November 19-20, 1998 agenda. The motion was seconded by Judy Hewes. The motion passed.

Chair's Remarks

Paul Ellefson reported on the following activities regarding the MFRC and other forest related activities:

- The review of the executive director typically has occurred in December. However, according to the regular state cycle, employee reviews follow the fiscal year calendar. Paul suggested the council hold on its review of the executive director until spring 1999.
- Future council meetings: in calendar year 1999 the council will likely meet quarterly or every other month as needed. MFRC committees will subsequently conduct the bulk of the council's work, reporting at the council meetings.

Executive Director's Report

Mike Kilgore updated Council members on the following items:

Budget. Budget and policy development is on hold for now due to the change in the governor's office and the house.

SFRA Workshop. The first meeting with MEI to discuss a workshop to review SFRA progress and other forest initiatives was cancelled; no new meeting has been set. Still the MFRC is interested in some type of session to evaluate SFRA initiatives the council's work. Mike will plan this independently of MEI. This one-day session will occur in late January. The purpose will be to look at the SFRA, progress on its various programs and suggested changes to increase the effectiveness of the SFRA.

Communications. Mike will write a letter to Governor-elect Jesse Ventura to welcome him and introduce the council to him and his staff.

Communications

General

Public comments were the primary communication to the council since the October meeting.

Judy Johnson wrote expressing concern about the length of the comment period and publicity for it. Paul Ellefson provided a response outlining the array of announcements released at the beginning of the public comment period.

Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership

Terry Weber reiterated the MFRP's decision not to comment on the integrated guidelines as an organization. Rather, each partner commented independently. The partnership is also continuing work on guideline education and participating on the task force with other educators and stakeholder representatives to develop education and training plans.

MFRC Committee Reports

Landscape Committee Marcie McLaughlin reported on the Landscape Committee's meeting of late October, and acknowledged Dick Knoll's hospitality in hosting this and other meetings of the committee at his home. The committee addressed two charges: the report on the Northeast Regional Landscape pilot and recommendations for moving forward in other regions. A survey has been sent out to all participants in the northeast and these responses will be compiled for review in December. Dave Miller, landscape program coordinator, noted that many lessons were learned during this first year in the northeast. However, differences (e.g. political, natural resource) among the regions may preclude using the Northeast Regional Landscape as an absolute template as the program expands into other MFRC landscape regions.

Forest Resources Information Management Committee Norm Moody reported on the first meeting of the Forest Resources Information Management committee, held in late October. One key focus of the committee's work will be the conditions and trends report. Norm also presented a recommendation to form the Resource Assessment and Monitoring Advisory Team (RAMAT). This will be an advisory body to staff member Chris Edgar in resolving some of the underlying technical issues that limit understanding of ecological, economic and social processes. The group's work will help meet the information needs of the regional landscape committees, and benefit other MFRC programs. Given no objections from the council, the committee will move ahead with forming RAMAT.

Review of Public Comments: Proposed Integrated Guidelines

Mike Phillips presented an overview of the 59 sets of public review comments received on the integrated timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. Many responses pointed out technical/editorial errors, which will help the council produce a clean guideline document. Mike also outlined the substantive topics most often highlighted, for example the recommended riparian guidelines, economic issues associated with applying the guidelines, and concerns about flexibility in guideline implementation. Council members subsequently discussed the public comments, and duly recognized them and the council's commitment to responding to public input.

Discussion: Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guidelines

(Guideline Implementation Goals, Guideline Implementation Cost Mitigation Strategies & Guideline Content)

Paul Ellefson and Mike Kilgore overviewed the process the council would use in proceeding through their discussion of the guidelines. The council decided to alter the agenda slightly and deal with the guideline content piece first, and delay the other two components of the guideline package.

Guideline Content (Discussion bridged from Thursday afternoon, November 19 to Friday morning, November 20.)

A handout of suggested editorial changes to the guidelines was distributed. Council members took these to review and revisit on day two of the meeting. Policy changes to the guidelines, brought by council members Dick Knoll, Alan Knaeble, Wayne Brandt and Bob Oswald were then discussed. Recommended policy alterations fell into categories of seasonal ponds, riparian

management zones, and leave trees and snags. Changes were presented and council members voiced their level of support for each change.

Adjustments to the seasonal pond guidelines, brought by both Knoll and Brandt, were deletion of recommendations for buffers of 50 ft with 25 ft² basal area around these. While some council members fully supported this, many did not support the change exactly as proposed. It was decided that the main objective is to respond to seasonal ponds and that no reference to specific width and basal area numbers be made. This will be accomplished by leaving in clear language that management activities should avoid seasonal ponds, but that specifics of residual vegetation must be dealt with regionally and on a site-by-site basis.

Alterations to the proposed riparian management zone (RMZ) guidelines, as suggested by Al Knaeble and Dick Knoll, were discussed next. Proposed changes included reducing the current 150 foot RMZ and revising the currently suggested residual basal area in the RMZ. Many council members again could not agree fully with this proposal, yet most expressed concern over the exact numbers currently recommended. Thoughts on ways to alter the current guidelines were, among others: to provide ranges of RMZ widths and residual basal areas, use a matrix for site-specific decision making on RMZ characteristics that is based on the MFRP landowner objective matrix, create a key to lead land managers to site-specific RMZ. In short, the general council sentiment was to avoid the current RMZ basal areas and widths, yet still retain the integrity of the riparian technical team agreement.

Next, Dick Knoll presented the Minnesota Forestry Association's suggested deletion of the guideline recommending that five percent of harvest areas left in clumps, islands or strips of leave trees and snags. Again, council sentiment on this proposed change was split. Following some discussion, council members agreed that the primary complication with this guideline is the potential misunderstanding that these are in addition to recommendations for leaving residual trees in riparian areas. Staff was again directed to work with the council task force to reword and reorganize the section on snags and leave trees to more clearly reflect the intention and strategy for using these.

In order to best handle the suggested changes to the proposed guidelines, the council recommended that a task force—made up of three to four council members and advised by technical expertise of various individuals—work with staff to develop an effective alternative to the currently proposed guidelines. The task force's proposal for changes to the guidelines will be distributed with the December council mailing for review.

Finally, the council discussed MFA's request to begin monitoring for guideline implementation on sites sold after publication of the guidelines. The council agreed this should be the strategy followed in the monitoring program.

Guideline Implementation Goals (Friday, November 20)

Mike Kilgore walked the council through a four-tiered package of implementation goals. These were revised according to council member suggestions from the October 15, 1998 council

meeting. Additional recommendations for adjustments to the language were provided. Staff will utilize these in polishing the draft of implementation goals.

Guideline Implementation Cost Mitigation Strategies (Friday, November 20)

This third component of the guideline package was revisited. Council members agreed that mitigation is an important part of guideline implementation and that it must be addressed. However, the council stated its interest in gathering more baseline information about the costs associated with different harvesting systems and which practices are occurring. Paul Ellefson summarized the council's approach to addressing costs mitigation: gather more background information, sponsor research to obtain information on costs of using the guidelines, and look to stumpage availability.

Presentation: MN SAF Forester Certification Program

(Friday, November 20, following completion of guideline agenda items)

Rick Dahlman, current president of the Minnesota chapter of the Society of American Foresters, talked with the council about forester certification as being coordinated by Minnesota chapter. The greatest challenge to the certification program is finding incentives for foresters to gain and maintain a certified status. Council members posed questions to clarify SAF's certification program and learn more about its links to programs of the Sustainable Forest Resources Act.

Presentation: Guideline Education/Outreach Task Force Report

(Friday, November 20, following completion of guideline agenda items)

Sara Eliason presented the work of the guideline education task force, in particular highlighting the task force recommendation for distributing available funds for guideline education. She also reviewed drafts of proposed programs for joint training for loggers and natural resource managers, and information for nonindustrial private landowners. Several brief questions were asked to clarify progress on guideline education plans.

Council Member Comments

Rose—Passed out an issues/opportunities list prepared by the DNR Division of Forestry for the governor-elect.

Wood—The Canadian lynx is a candidate for the endangered species list. The council should respond to this and other future wildlife issues.

Green—Responded to Joe Woods' comment on the Canadian lynx and raised a caveat that the lynx may be used inappropriately by some groups to influence forest management.

Public Comments

Pat Emerson—As a member of the integration team, Pat recognized the challenging format and language of the draft integrated guidelines. She noted that this was due to the attempt to integrate all sets of guidelines and bring their language into the document.

Larry Jones—Larry discussed the LogSafe program and offered to provide information about this education program. He also requested that the council publicly notice the council task force's meetings, since they are open to the public. Lastly, Larry mentioned the guideline implementation cost mitigation, and requested that the council keep this item on their agenda.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the council will be on December 17 and 19 in Duluth, MN at the BestWestern Edgewater. Currently the meeting is scheduled for two days. However, the council may conclude its business in one day. The council will also meet in late January to handle the biennial report as one agenda item. The other main objective of this meeting will be to review and evaluate progress on the Sustainable Forest Resources Act.

Motion: Joe Wood moved that the meeting be adjourned. Norm Moody seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 p.m on Friday November 20.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Eliason