Minnesota Forest Resources Council

Meeting Minutes — January 25, 2000

Champion International Employee Training and Development Center — Sartell, MN

Council Members Present: Wayne Brandt, Betsy Daub, Rich Holm, Marcie McLaughlin, Gene Merriam (chair), Norm Moody, Ron Nargang (p.m.), Bob Oswold, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Jerry Rose, Jim Sanders

Council Members Absent: Joe Day, Jan Green, Judy Hewes, Steven Daley Laursen, Roger Scherer

Alternates Present: Mike Scherer for Roger Scherer

Staff Present: Mike Kilgore, Chris Edgar, Sara Eliason, Mike Phillips, Chad Skally

Welcome and Chair's Remarks

Gene Merriam called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. and welcomed guests Allison Rajala, Jack Rajala, Charlie Blinn, Al Mitton, Rick Horton, Larry Jones and several members of the Wood Fiber Employees Joint Legislative Council.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

Jack Rajala updated the council on the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership's activities. The MFRP Advisory Board continues meeting monthly; the full MFRP is meeting every other month. Throughout the past year the MFRP has supported guideline training programs and many organizations that are MFRP members have showed strong support for the guidelines. Currently the MFRP is working to get a memorandum of understanding signed by all partners, is working to protect the voluntary nature of the guidelines, and is looking at forest productivity issues. Jack noted that some MFRP members' hesitance to sign the guideline MOU simply means there are still some questions about the guidelines, particularly concerning economic issues associated with guideline implementation.

Jack thanked the MFRC for its ongoing support and for devoting staff time to updating the MFRP. Jerry Rose expressed his appreciation that the MFRP moved forward throughout last year when the SFRA was under consideration by the legislature. Several council members noted that the questions about costs and benefits of applying the guidelines should be one of the MFRC's priority issues.

Approval of December 14, 1999 Meeting Minutes

Motion: Betsy Daub moved *to approve the* December 14, 1999 *meeting minutes with her suggested changes.* Norm Moody *seconded the motion. The motion carried.*

Betsy Daub's changes to the December 14, 1999 draft minutes, page 3, are in **bold**.

MFRC members engaged in a lengthy discussion regarding the list of potential reviewers proposed by staff and wrestled with questions of: (1) whether additional reviewer names should be considered; (2) whether the review should be a blind review, adhering to traditional practice for scientific reviews; **and (3) whether it is the responsibility of MFRC staff or MFRC members to make the peer review selections.** Betsy Daub expressed an interest in adding names to the list of potential reviewers; others concurred that MFRC members should still be able to add to the list. Several members pointed out that staff had requested MFRC members to provide names of potential peer reviewers and that several had done so prior to the December MFRC meeting mailing. Regarding the question of keeping the review completely blind, council members noted that while this may be desirable for maintaining a truly scientific process, state law requires this information to be available to the public should anyone ask for it. **Betsy Daub argued strongly against having staff select the peer reviewers. It was her belief that this responsibility lay with the council members. She also felt the council should have background information on each of the proposed reviewers, something that was lacking.**

Council members discussed the problem that no Council minutes or other documents reflected a defined process for submitting peer reviewer names to staff. While Council members recalled Mike Kilgore asking for names, there was not agreement about what if any deadline had been given for those submissions. There was discussion and agreement that this problem could have been avoided with a defined process. Council members requested that in the future such process issues be well documented and communicated with the Council.

During the discussion of the minutes, council members noted that it is very important to carefully document all problems encountered in process so that future confusion can be avoided.

Approval of Agenda

Changes to the agenda Gene suggested: (1) move the landscape committee report until after lunch when Ron Nargang arrives; and (2) discuss the peer review of the riparian management zone and seasonal pond guidelines at some point during the day.

Motion: Bob Oswold moved *to approve the* January 25, 2000 *agenda* with the changes suggested. *The motion was seconded by* Norm Moody. *The motion passed.*

Executive Director Report

Mike Kilgore discussed the following items:

- **TMDL Letter**—In January Mike sent a letter to Governor Ventura stating the MFRC's position on the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed changes to Total Maximum

Daily Load and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System rules. Mike also reported that, at the request of the governor's staff, he has been working with the MN Pollution Control Agency and the MN Department of Natural Resources to develop a joint letter to the EPA on the proposed rules.

- **Annual Report**—Mike passed out photo-copies of the 1999 annual report. The document will be printed by early February.
- **Expenditure Report**—Mike distributed a Sustainable Forest Resources Act FY 2000 Implementation Budget Expenditure summary for July 1999 through December 1999.
- **GEIS article**—Mike distributed an article by Dennis Lien reporting the Environmental Quality Board's decision about the adequacy of the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on Timber Harvesting and Forest Management. In the article he corrected a statement from a previous article, which had erroneously indicated that the MFRC had taken a position on the EQB's deliberations.
- **Next Meetings**—The next MFRC meeting is March 28 in St. Paul. The April MFRC meeting will be on April 24 and 25 somewhere on the Gunflint Trail and will include a field tour on Monday afternoon.

MFRC Committee Reports

Guideline Implementation Monitoring

Committee chair Dave Parent reported that the request for proposals was going out soon to solicit bids for the guideline implementation field monitoring that will start in April 2000. The deadline for bids is March 3, 2000. He also noted that TechPro will program the hand-held field computers for the monitoring team. Mike Phillips explained that the monitoring forms are still being tweaked so that the computer program will work. Mike said that so far 86 sites had been identified from aerial photographs; the sites still need to be field verified. Because the site-selection methodology (developed by Ek et al.) calls for 120 sites, work is being done to find an additional 34 sites. Wayne Brandt asked whether thinning operations are picked up on the aerial photographs and noted that an absence of thinning operations could be detriment to guideline implementation monitoring.

Dave further noted that progress had been made on a proposal to study guideline effectiveness. Sara Eliason and Charlie Blinn described the proposal, which will be submitted to the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources on behalf of the MFRC. The MFRC asked the Research Advisory Committee to convene a five-member proposal development group to write the three-page proposal to the LCMR for a guideline effectiveness research study. The proposal development group based the proposal on ideas from a number of scientists with various expertise and from various organizations. MFRC members noted that the proposal covered their priority areas of research on guideline effectiveness and asked Charlie and Sara to work with Mike Kilgore and Dave Parent to reduce the study's scope and budget.

Motion: Norm Moody *moved that staff should move LCMR proposal forward and submit it. The motion was seconded by* Marcie McLaughlin*. The motion passed.*

Written Communication to the MFRC

none

Report of the Forest Resource Information Committee: Information Needs for Minnesota's Forests*

Chris Edgar presented the report *Review of the Availability and Accuracy of Information about Forests: Phase I Report* prepared by the Forest Resource Information Management Committee in partnership with the Environmental Indicators Initiative. This report describes how baseline questions and indicators were developed for each goal that must be met to accomplish the MFRC's vision for Minnesota's forests. Council members suggested some changes and additions to the report. They also clarified that the document is a fluid, dynamic document that can change to remain current.

Chris clarified that the second phase of the IMC's work is to investigate whether the information to answer each baseline question exists and whether the information is adequate and recommend how to improve Minnesota's information on forest resources. Jerry Rose commended the IMC for how it framed the information issue. Jim Sanders recognized Chris for his work on the report.

Motion: Norm Moody *moved that the MFRC adopt the Information Management Committee's report* Review of the Availability and Accuracy of Information about Forests: Phase I Report with the MFRC's suggestions. *and that the IMC move forward with the second phase of the review.* Jim Sanders *seconded the motion. The motion passed.*

MFRC Committee Reports

Landscape Committee (Moved from earlier in the agenda.)

Ron Nargang asked Chris Edgar to review a plan for a large landscape spatial modeling project involving many partners. Chris explained that the project originated when the MFRC Landscape Committee and the DNR recognized they had very similar interests in landscape modeling and rather than doing so separately, should combine resources for a broad landscape modeling project. The project also will involve any other organizations that are interested in this type of spatial landscape modeling. This joint spatial modeling project will be guided by the MFRC Landscape Committee, which will establish a Project Strategy Team and a Project Technical Team. Chris has accepted the role of project manager, linking these three groups; his first step will be to write a project prospectus and organize the Project Strategy Team. Brad Moore, Assistant Commissioner of the DNR, said that Jim Manolis also will dedicate half his time to this project.

Ron Nargang noted that by working together, the various interests can make sure the landscape modeling is grounded in what's really needed, stretch resources and avoid duplicating efforts. He mentioned that along with the MFRC and the DNR, The Nature Conservancy, the University of Minnesota College of Natural Resources, and others might be able to contribute funds or technical support to this project. Noting that all interested parties need to be comfortable with the

project, Ron suggested that the MFRC Landscape Committee either increase its membership or the Project Strategy Team be a forum where interests could be represented.

Other council members agreed that all interested parties need to be involved, but that this should be accomplished through the Project Strategy Team. Gene Merriam noted that council members seemed pleased with the project and the Landscape Committee should move forward with it.

Peer Review

As Gene Merriam requested, Mike Kilgore briefed the council on the peer review meeting in Chicago on February 11, 2000. He outlined the three objectives of the meeting: cover background information on the guidelines; provide the two reviewers in each science discipline time to talk and plan their review; and have the eight reviewers talk together about the guidelines. Written reviews from each review team will be submitted by March 13, 2000 and will be discussed at the March MFRC meeting. At that point the MFRC will have to decide what response is needed based on the outcome of the reviews. Ron Nargang requested that at the next MFRC meeting staff provide ideas for how the MFRC could respond to the reviews.

DNR Fisheries and Wildlife Presentation: Implications of Proposed Fee Increases on Forestry-Wildlife Programs and Initiatives

Lee Pfannmuller and Jeff Lightfoot, both from the DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife, talked with the MFRC about the proposed hunting and fishing license fee increase to help fund DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife and Enforcement programs.

MFRC members asked several questions of Lee Pfannmuller and Jeff Lightfoot and expressed their support for the hunting and fishing license fee increase.

Motion: Shawn Perich *moved that the MFRC write a letter to the governor and key legislators in support of a fishing and hunting license fee increase to help fund DNR Division of Fish and Wildlife and Enforcement programs, emphasizing the need for field-based forest-wildlife coordination; the MFRC also should support efforts to find a long-term funding solution, because this will help in building collaboration between these programs and the DNR Division of Forestry.* Dave Parent *seconded the motion. The motion passed.*

MFRC Plans for Addressing Priority Forest Resource Issues*

Mike Kilgore reviewed five possible forest resources issues for the MFRC to address. As listed in the three-page briefing paper sent in the meeting mailing packet, these issues include (1) ensuring the sustainability of Minnesota's northern hardwood resource; (2) looking at the use and management of private forests; (3) developing a state forest/wildlife resource management policy; (4) evaluating the extent and effects of land ownership fragmentation on Minnesota's forest; and (5) assessing the importance of nonmarket forest resource outputs. Over the 2000-2001 biennium, the MFRC has $30,000 to spend on special studies or issues.

In response to this list, council members commented on their top issues. In a letter to the MFRC, Jan Green stated her strong interest in the first issue, ensuring the sustainability of Minnesota's northern hardwood resource. Dave Parent suggested an additional issue: exploring the status and potential of southeastern Minnesota's oak/hardwood forest. Rich Holm proposed that the MFRC look more closely at the economic issue associated with applying the guidelines. Several council members concurred, others expressed concern that the economic questions are too complex to answer with the resources the MFRC has available. Ron Nargang suggested that those most passionate about the economic questions bring to the next MFRC meeting some ideas for how to address those questions.

Norm Moody proposed putting $5,000 more towards the forest resource information review phase II and $25,000 to enhance Charlie Blinn and Steve Taff's study of economic effects associated with implementing the guidelines. Jerry Rose agreed the $30,000 should be put towards existing programs. He also suggested the MFRC create an annual issue forum to gather priority issues from MFRC constituents.

Because time ran out, Gene Merriam deferred discussion and decisions on priority forest resource issues until the March or April meeting.

Future MFRC Agenda Items

- Continue discussion of the MFRC's plans for addressing priority forest resource issues.
- Discuss and address results from the peer review.
- Get updates from the research projects funded in part through the MFRC, with the economics project being a priority

Public Input/Comments to the MFRC

None

Council Member Comments

none

Adjourn

Gene Merriam adjourned the meeting at 4:30 *p.m.*.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Eliason