

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes – September 24, 2002

Cloquet Forestry Center - Cloquet, MN

Council Members Present: Gene Merriam (chair), Ron Nargang, Wayne Brandt, Jim Sanders, Dave Sterr, Bob Stine, Greg Damlo, Rich Holm, Wayne Hammer, Bob Oswald, Jan Green, Norm Moody, Dave Parent, Betsy Daub, Shawn Perich, Brad Moore

Council Members Absent: Roger Scherer

Guests: John Bathke (Council Alternate), Matt Norton (Council alternate), Kathleen Preece (Council alternate), Jan Hacker – Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, John Vogel - Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, Keith Wendt - DNR, Jim Skurla - University of Minnesota Duluth, Don Janes - Sierra Club, Clyde Hanson - Sierra Club, Alaina Berger - DNR

Staff: Dave Zumeta, Mike Phillips, Dave Miller, Chad Skally, Jim Manolis, Jenna Fletcher

Chair's Remarks

- Bob Stine was formally appointed to the Research and Higher Education position on the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC).

Approval of June 25, 2002 Meeting Minutes*

Motion: Ron Nargang moved, Bob Oswald seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Agenda approval*

Wayne Brandt moved to approve the agenda for this meeting, Norm seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

None.

Executive Director Report

Budget Contingency reduction

We responded to a request from the Department of Finance to all state agencies to submit a 10% spending reduction scenario. Based on direction given by the MFRC's Personnel and Finance Committee at an August 1 committee meeting, an e-mail and attachment was sent to DNR Deputy Commissioner Steve Morse with the following response: *"If the Council's budget is reduced below \$700,000, the MFRC recommends the Council be eliminated. If the legislature decides not to eliminate the MFRC but reduces its budget by 10%, the reduction should be allocated to elimination of riparian monitoring."* The

* Action Item

response then listed three reasons why the MFRC does not believe that any cut should occur.

Deferral of SE Dry Wash (#49) Guideline issue. The June 25 meeting minutes indicate that “Wayne Brandt proposed a motion to defer action on [the southeast dry wash] issue[issue #49] until the September Council meeting in order to get input from landowners and his members in southeastern Minnesota to increase their comfort level regarding the guideline language on dry washes. Ron Nargang seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Rachel Benishek of Wayne’s staff met with several loggers on September 17, and is preparing comments related to their concerns. Because of the short time between September 17 and today’s meeting, and the likelihood of an additional meeting between Rachel and southeastern Minnesota loggers later this fall, action on this issue was deferred until the November 19 MFRC meeting.

Video Development At the end of the 2000-01 biennium, the DNR Bureau of Information, Education and Licensing encumbered \$21,350 in MFRC funds for development of a video on sustainable forest management and protection. Because the funds were encumbered, they rolled over into the current biennium. Jenna Fletcher is developing a draft project description that will include key messages and target audience. She is receiving guidance on this project from Shawn Perich, relevant MFRC staff and a Landscape Program outreach committee convened by Dave Miller. The video will focus on SFRA implementation and partnerships, and prominently feature MFRC members. A proposal related to this video will be presented for action by the MFRC at the November 19th Council meeting.

Research study The MFRC provided supplemental funds for a research study funded by the LCMR to monitor guideline effectiveness in riparian areas. University staff and contractors have located four watersheds that meet project criteria. A proposal was submitted to LCMR to continue funding the project beyond the initial biennium. Funding would have been used to collect post-harvest data so that we can gain a better understanding of the initial response to treatments. LCMR did not recommend funding of this proposal. Dave Zumeta will be working with Charlie Blinn of the University of Minnesota to seek other sources of funding for this project in the coming biennium.

Research study The MFRC also provided funds for another research study entitled Empirical Analysis of Timber Harvesting and Forest Management Guideline Financial Impacts. MFRC members received an update on this study as one of the attachments mailed out prior to today’s meeting. The study is progressing on schedule, with a final report to the MFRC anticipated by May, 2003.

Trout Unlimited Proposal – Seeking Council Support

We received a copy of a proposal being submitted by Trout Unlimited entitled “Strengthening the Aquatic Component of Private-State Forestland Certification in The Great Lakes Ecosystem.” Trout Unlimited is seeking funding from the Great Lakes Protection Fund. We are being asked for our input on any experts that could be involved, and whether MFRC is willing to write a letter of support. Council member views on

whether to support the proposal will be solicited later in the meeting under the Council Member Comments agenda item.

MFRC Committee Reports

Personnel & Finance Committee

Gene Merriam (committee chair) reported that Jenna Fletcher has been hired as a permanent, 80% time employee. He also emphasized that the 10% spending reduction scenario for FY04 that we submitted (described earlier in the Executive Director Report) includes an assertion that a 10% cut is untenable. This budget contingency scenario will be considered by the new administration in early 2003.

Guideline Implementation Monitoring Committee (GIMC)

Dave Parent (committee chair) mentioned that copies are available of the 2001 Guideline Monitoring report, Monitoring Statewide Change Requirements, Sept 11 GIMC meeting minutes, and an update of the committee's activities. A joint meeting with the Information Management Committee was held on Sept. 11 to discuss the current monitoring methodology and possible areas for improvement.

Landscape Planning and Coordination Committee

Ron Nargang (committee chair) reported that the Landscape Planning and Coordination committee met on Sept. 10. Two additional landscapes are in the beginning stages of the planning and coordination process. The Northern Landscape process is being initiated with a meeting in October. The process for the SE Landscape will be different from prior Landscape Planning processes - the focus will be on compiling current management plans instead of creating a new plan. The recently formed West Central Landscape Committee is using a similar approach.

Forest Resources Information Management Committee

Norm Moody (committee chair) reported that Joint IMC/GIMC meeting was held on September 11. The committee is moving forward on a harvest survey being developed for public landowners in Minnesota. The survey will gather the acres sold for harvest in 2001, by cover type, with location information that will allow spatial mapping.

Written Communication to the MFRC

Dave Zumeta mentioned that in the mailing Council members received a letter Brad Moore had sent to Gene Merriam recommending that DNR defer guideline implementation monitoring fieldwork for 2003. During the year of deferral, staff will be focused on developing a three-year baseline monitoring report and on improving process efficiency. Riparian monitoring will still be conducted.

NE/NC Landscape Goals and Strategies/Economic Analysis – Dave Miller/Jim Skurla

Dave Miller presented a briefing on the landscape program. He described the process used in the Northeast and the Northern landscapes. For each landscape, Desired Future Forest Conditions and the Range of Natural Variation were developed. With this and additional data, the landscape committees developed regional landscape recommendations.

Jim Skurla then presented an economic analysis conducted by University of Minnesota – Duluth for the MFRC. This analysis utilizes IMPLAN to identify “bottlenecks” in supply of wood fiber. Five scenarios were developed and agreed to by both the Northeast and Northern landscape committees. The "bottleneck" analysis examines only short-term impacts of these harvest levels (10-20 yrs). Long-term impacts (50- 100 yrs) are not analyzed. Also, non-monetary benefits are excluded from the analysis. The presenter made clear that the analysis is meant to be directional, not specific.

As Council members asked questions, Ron Nargang suggested that they identify the list of mitigative activities to address the general impacts, rather than focusing on the details of the model. For example, to increase the wood supply, programs could focus on afforestation of marginal agricultural lands. Additional “what if” scenarios suggested by the Landscape committee or by Council can be conducted, if requested.

MN Forest Resources Partnership Landscape Program White Paper – Jan Hacker/John Vogel

Jan Hacker handed out a draft copy of a document entitled “Landscape Level Issues and Planning.” This document provides general input to the MFRC from the Partnership on landscape planning processes, since landscape-level planning is still a fairly new approach. Concerns were raised that those organizations with member representation on both the Partnership and the Northeastern and North Central Landscape Committees should have communicated any concerns through the Landscape Committees. Brad Moore and Jim Sanders both expressed discomfort with the white paper in its current form. Jan clarified that this is an information paper, not a Memorandum of Understanding, and therefore it will not be signed by Partnership members.

There was discussion of the efficacy of using the concept of Desired Future Condition (DFC) in landscape planning. Jim Sanders expressed the understanding that DFC involves describing a future goal that may never be reached, but which gives direction for planning.

The question was also raised on how specific the landscape goals should be. Some feel goals need to be specific in order to be monitored.

Gene concluded the discussion by saying that when the Partnership has finalized and approved the white paper, it should be forwarded to the MFRC’s Landscape Committee for review.

Bear River Demonstration Forest Report – Jan Hacker

Jan handed out the agenda for the recently held Mini Forest Summit. About 60 people attended, visiting 12 sites that demonstrated various silvicultural and management techniques. Jan differentiated this demonstration forest from an experimental forest. Work is underway to create a non-profit organization that will help ensure support for the Bear River Demonstration Forest despite the pending change in state government administration.

Fall Workshops for Guideline Training – Louise Yount – University of Minnesota
College of Natural Resources – Center for Continuing Education

Louise described a series of 11 workshops being held this fall that serve as follow-up to the initial Guideline training in 1999-2002. The content for the workshops was determined by areas of need as identified from monitoring results in 2000 and 2001, as well as from a survey of natural resource professionals. Attendance has been good: each workshop is averaging ~80 attendees (~60 loggers and ~20 natural resource professionals). The workshop content emphasizes field demonstration sites, which illustrate waterbody approaches, waterbody crossings, water diversion techniques and spill cleanup.

Proposed Revised Timeline for Guideline Review and Revision Process* - Mike Phillips

Mike presented key dates for Guideline Review and Revision, which were also on the timeline mailed in advance. *Norm moved to approve the timeline as proposed. Dave Parent seconded.* Discussion ensued. Shawn commented that he was not aware that the MFRC has formally decided to revise the Guidebook, based on only baseline monitoring results. Dave Parent and others pointed out that, at a minimum, the format needs to be reconfigured. *The motion to accept the proposed timeline for guideline review and revision carried unanimously.*

MFRC Staff Retreat Outcomes and Recommendations – Jenna Fletcher

The key points from the “Summary of the August 21 Staff Retreat” document (sent in the mailing) were presented. Based on discussion by Council members, the Personnel and Finance committee will review the need for a Guideline Review and Revision Committee.

Schedule Dates for 2003 Council Meetings – Gene Merriam

MFRC meetings will be held on January 28, March 25, May 20, July 22, September 23 and November 18, 2003.

Public Communication to the MFRC

Matt Norton expressed his personal view about the landscape planning processes. He feels that the application of RNV in the landscape planning process was approved by the Northeast and North Central Regional Committees through a compromise approach. He finds it discouraging that the Partnership put forth further suggestions for compromise on the use of RNV in the planning process.

Council Member Comments

- Betsy Daub announced that she is leaving the Audubon Society, but will stay on the Council for the foreseeable future.
- Bob Stine shared that Susan Stafford, the new Dean of the College of Natural Resources, will attend the next Council meeting.

- Shawn Perich shared that there is a new video that provides proof of lynx reproduction in Minnesota.
- Jan Green noted that Council agendas could benefit from designating agenda items as information only, policy discussion, and action items.

Gene Merriam asked Council members for input on whether to send a letter of support regarding the Trout Unlimited proposal. Due to the diversity of opinions, it was clear that the Council could not provide a formal letter of support for the proposal.

Future MFRC Agenda Items

The next Council meeting will be November 19 at the Cloquet Forestry Center. Dave Zumeta handed out a list of potential agenda items for that meeting. Wayne Brandt expressed concerns about the future prospects of the softwood sawmill industry, and Brad Moore suggested we may want to discuss this at a future Council meeting. Ron Nargang commented that opportunities under the new Farm Bill program for afforestation and reforestation on marginal farmland in Minnesota might be a good agenda item.

Jim Sanders moved to adjourn, Betsy Daub seconded.