

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Draft Minutes
Minnesota State Horticultural Society
May 18, 2005

Council Members Present: Al Sullivan (Chair), Wayne Brandt, Mike Carroll, Jan Green, Shaun Hamilton, Bob Oswald, Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Kathleen Preece, Bob Stine, Paige Winebarger, Bob Lintelmann, Kathy Manteuffel, Bruce Cox, Dick Walsh, Jim Sanders

Absent: John Stauber

Guests: Tom Duffus – Conservation Fund, John Bathke - MFA, Rick Horton – Ruffed Grouse Society (alternate for Shawn Perich), Bruce ZumBahlen - MFA, Terry Weber – Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership, Geir Friisoe - MN Department of Agriculture, Al Jones – DNR Division of Forestry, Steve Katovich – USDA Forest Service, Kevin Connors - Animal Plant Health Information Service, Joe O'Brien, Michelle Hanson

Staff: Dave Zumeta, Dave Miller, Mike Phillips, Lindberg Ekola, Clarence Turner, Diane Desotelle (contractor)

Chair's Remarks

University of Minnesota Recommendations

On May 6, 2005, University of Minnesota President Bruininks issued a report and recommendations resulting from a University-wide strategic positioning process. Through this process, the University set a goal to become one of the top three public research universities in the world within a decade. The University's Board of Regents will vote on the recommendations contained in the report on June 10, 2005. Al Sullivan handed out copies of the report, described the strategic context within which it was developed and summarized its major findings and recommendations. (for more information, see http://www1.umn.edu/systemwide/strategic_positioning/recommendations.html)

MFRC members asked questions and made comments regarding media coverage, measures of success, the process used to develop the recommendations and potential impacts on students, citizens, natural resource professionals, the forest products industry and the MFRC. Concern was expressed about waning public and political support for the University of Minnesota. Al responded to these various concerns.

Public Input/Communications to the Minnesota Forest Resources Council

There was no public input.

Approval of March 16, 2005 Meeting Minutes*

Jan Green moved to approve the March 16, 2005 meeting minutes. Bob Oswald seconded. The motion to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Approval of May 18, 2005 Meeting Agenda*

Jim Sanders moved to approve the May 18, 2005 meeting agenda, Shaun Hamilton seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Executive Director Report

Legislative Action on MFRC Budget

Work has proceeded in both the House and Senate on the overall state budget. Both legislative bodies have now passed omnibus environment and natural resources finance bills. The House bill calls for an annual reduction in MFRC operational funding of 29%, whereas the Senate bill and the Governor's recommendation calls for no change (\$730,000 per year). There may be a slight reduction proposed by the Senate depending on whether or not the MFRC is asked to absorb a small portion of a \$14 million reduction that is to be spread across all environment and natural resource agencies.

Wayne Brandt said he spoke with the Governor, who is aware of what the MFRC is and what it does, and supportive of MFRC's work.

Landscape Planning Manager Position

Dave Miller is retiring in July. Dave Zumeta has conducted a nationwide search for a Landscape Planning Manager and received about 50 resumes. Six potential candidates will be interviewed in June at the Cloquet Forestry Station. The interview date may be moved back pending resolution of MFRC's fiscal year 2006 funding. The Landscape Planning Manager position will be located at a University of Minnesota or Minnesota State Colleges and Universities facility in Cloquet, Grand Rapids or St. Cloud.

MFRC Committee Reports

Personnel and Finance

Al Sullivan said there had been no Personnel and Finance Committee meeting in the past two months.

Site Level

Dave Parent (Chair) distributed a Site-Level Committee update dated May 2005.

Landscape Planning/Coordination

Bob Stine (Chair) passed out a Landscape Program Update dated May 2005.

Forest Resources Information Management

Jan Green (Chair) reported that the Information Management Committee met on April 25. The meeting summary is being developed and sent out later.

Written Communications to the MFRC

Dave Zumeta distributed copies of a March 9, 2005 letter from Jim Mohler, a forester from Staples, Minnesota. Mr. Mohler's letter expressed concern that there is lack of awareness about the landscape planning activities within the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and suggested that the MFRC might play a more significant role in projects (e.g. Polymet mining proposal). Dave Zumeta distributed his May 13, 2005, response to Mr. Mohler that said he would convey Mr. Mohler's concerns to Mike Carroll, Director, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Division of Forestry and Bill Brice, Director, DNR, Division of Lands and Minerals.

Committee of the Whole: MFRC Role in Developing Site-Level Guidelines for Removal of Residual Material for Use as Wood Energy

Dave Zumeta reported that there are bills in both the House and Senate mandating the MFRC and the DNR to develop guidelines for sustainably harvested woody biomass on forest and brush lands. Both bills encourage the University of Minnesota's Institute for Renewable Energy and the Environment (IREE) to provide funds for a research project that would compile scientific information needed to develop the guidelines. Both bills also state that the Laurentian Energy Authority will provide \$150,000 to the MFRC and DNR to develop the guidelines based on the scientific information compiled by the IREE-funded research project. Both the House and Senate have appointed Environment and Natural Resources conference committee members who will confer within the next few days and attempt to agree on a budget proposal to forward to the Governor.

To clarify potential conflicts of interest, Al Sullivan shared that he is a member of the five-person IREE Executive Committee and Dave Zumeta serves on the IREE External Advisory Committee.

Dave Zumeta is hopeful that the \$285,000 proposal submitted by the Department of Forest Resources – University of Minnesota and the Center for Integrated Natural Resources and Agricultural Management (CINRAM) will be funded. The proposal includes about \$175,000 to be used to generate information directly relevant to the Laurentian Energy Authority. The project would assess both the physical and economic availability of biomass from forests, brush lands, and open lands. A worldwide literature review would be performed on potential impacts of biomass removal on soils, wildlife habitat and biodiversity. If funded, the project would commence July 2005, and the literature review completed by March 2006. On April 1, 2006, the Laurentian Energy Authority has agreed to provide funds for developing the guidelines.

Council members commented on the Laurentian Energy Authority Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). Dave Zumeta said the MFRC will likely comment on the EAW. He will send draft MFRC comments and a link to the EAW to MFRC members for review and comment.

Mike Phillips said plans should be made to integrate the woody biomass guidelines into the existing site-level guidelines. The woody biomass guidelines must be completed by June 2007. For the MFRC to publish them in May 2007, they would need to be in draft form by late 2006. Public review of the draft guidelines would occur January - May 2007. Dave Parent mentioned that the woody biomass guidelines would need to follow the formal adoption process for MFRC guidelines. Dave asked if the brush land guidelines would be integrated with the forest guidelines. Dave Zumeta responded that it is unclear; there is significant overlap between brush lands and forestlands; brush lands occur in areas classified as non-forest, non-commercial forest, and commercial forest. Some potential impacts, however, may be similar across all of these types of land (e.g. impacts on organic soils).

Jan Green expressed concern that wildlife groups may have a whole new set of issues for these biomass guidelines. Dave Zumeta commented that there would be strong integration between MFRC, DNR - Division of Fish and Wildlife, DNR-Division of Forestry and DNR-Division of Ecological Services. Mike Carroll added that DNR Division of Waters should also be invited to participate.

Dick Walsh commented that he is still pondering the issue since loggers are already harvesting biomass for fuel. The market is already there and his group is getting in on the ground floor.

Shaun Hamilton asked if these guidelines would also be voluntary. Dave Zumeta and Jan Green both responded that they would anticipate that these guidelines would be required rather than voluntary, at least on public lands.

Industrial Forestland Conservation Initiative

Mike Carroll reported growing concern about private forestland parcelization (the breaking up of larger parcels into smaller parcels) and the impacts that result from it. This issue was prioritized as the top policy issue by the MFRC in March 2005. Mike Carroll noted that parcelization is occurring nationally, and Minnesota has not been as active on this as some other states. Wisconsin is gearing up and Michigan is already very actively using state dollars to match federal dollars for conservation easements. Dave Zumeta then handed out a draft PowerPoint presentation intended for the Governor that summarizes the private forestland parcelization issues. MFRC members made a number of comments on the presentation.

Rick Horton (alternate for Shawn Perich, who left early) said that conservation easements are only one of many tools for forestland conservation. There are problems with All Terrain Vehicles (ATVs) and illegal dumping, and enforcement to prevent damage is difficult. In the conservation easement, landowners should guarantee protection of the land from damage due to off-highway vehicle use and illegal dumping, but noted that enforcement to prevent damage is difficult. Rick added that there are a lot of opportunities for using conservation easements, but suggests focusing on large landowners first. Adequate funds are not currently available. Dave Zumeta responded that there is a current focus on the industrial forestland owners.

Kathy Manteuffel commented there are less than 1,000 resorts left in the Minnesota resort industry today, a 50% reduction in the last 20 years. Market values for the land are so high that resort owners cannot afford to stay in business. A key question is how to retain resorts in Minnesota. Dave Zumeta responded by saying that resort patrons use the large tracts of land outside the resort property for recreation, so conservation of these lands is important to resort owners. Multiple approaches need to be pursued, but we are trying to focus on a single message right now, so it may sound oversimplified.

Mike Carroll said the strategy is to get Governor Pawlenty's attention to the issue, after which the Governor may request additional analysis. Mike Carroll added that we need to move beyond the idea of keeping all forestland together in large parcels to understanding that different types of landowners will manage for, and produce, different forest services.

Overview of Forest Landscape Health Issues and Programs

A presentation on forest landscape health issues was provided by the following presenters:

- ❖ Al Jones, MDNR Division of Forestry
- ❖ Kevin Connors, USDA Animal Plant Health Information Service (APHIS)
- ❖ Steve Katovich, USDA Forest Service – State and Private Forestry
- ❖ Geer Friisoe, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Discussion of Potential MFRC Role in Addressing Forest Landscape Health Issues

Serving as discussion facilitator, Mike Carroll asked the speakers what the MFRC can do to assist in their

programs. Kevin Connors responded that education is very important, as it expedites immediate response time to a forest health issue, which is crucial. Geer Friisoe said that it is important to have political support when an invasive species is found. Also, Geer noted a significant gap when it comes to terrestrial plant species. For example, federal funding was cut for the noxious weed program. States have to match the federal funding they receive with state dollars. With program cuts, this draws resources away from efforts elsewhere. It was suggested that the MFRC could potentially provide political guidance to move initiatives through the legislature.

Steve Katovich agreed that political support is very important. If politicians get an indication of the level of importance of forest health issues, more funding may follow. Any help the State of Minnesota can provide for funding cost-share programs would be useful.

Al Jones responded that MFRC could get to know who the players are, and communicate with them and keep them engaged in order to create a united front to shape politically viable and successful forest programs.

Dave Zumeta asked Mike Carroll to give a one-minute summary of the additional groups not here today who are working on forest health issue. Mike Carroll listed several groups including: Minnesota Shade Tree Advisory Committee, Tree Trust, DNR divisions, county land departments, parks, University of Minnesota- Extension, Greater Minnesota campuses, the Minnesota Arborists' Association, Urban Forestry Program Annual Inspections, Minnesota Nursery Landscape Association, etc.

Al Jones said it is obvious that the University of Minnesota and Extension play a key role, and are often missing when interagency groups get together to pursue rapid response and to develop joint forest health strategies. Bob Stine responded that the new combined College of Natural Resources and College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Sciences may help since the combined colleges could provide more integrated perspective.

Dave Parent asked how quickly the state can respond when some pest invades – would it require one or two years of hearings and planning that prevent a timely response? Jim Sanders responded that when the Forest Service located gypsy moth in Tower Minnesota last summer, they were able to respond by the next spring. Mike Carroll added that there is a good response system. A gypsy moth strategic plan is in place, and will the plan will serve as a template for other invasive species.

Mike Carroll noted that there could be improved planning with tribes, so that tribal forest managers can react more quickly on the reservations. Bob Lintelman said that Michigan has worked up a good plan on emerald ash borer and has drafted a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the tribal communities. The tribes are working on this issue and understand the potential impact. This does not necessarily include cooperation with other agencies, however. Mike Carroll indicated he will be attending a national meeting with the tribes, and that one of the key issues is invasive species response. Kevin Connors said he is responsible to contact and work with tribes. USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry has drafted a joint resolution and is trying to work more closely with tribes.

Dave Zumeta noted that DNR Ecological Services has some money for buckthorn and garlic mustard management, but nothing for other terrestrial invasive plants affecting Minnesota forests. It appears that the DNR does not inventory most of these plants, mainly because there is no program or funding. Jim Sanders responded that the Forest Service has surveyed the Superior National Forest. Steve Katovich said that the weed money they have is mostly for range management. Other than buckthorn and garlic mustard, very little work has been done on weeds in forested areas. Geer Friisoe said the Forest Service has only \$50,000 for eradication, and therefore, they have to partner with other agencies. Also, currently there are not good survey methods or eradication methods. Kevin Connors said APHIS will try to leverage funding with cooperators if a concern is recognized through surveys and canvassing results. APHIS pest detection money is for hot spots where products come and go. Other agencies need to cover the regional survey needs.

Jan Green suggested that we need to prioritize our response and provide a species-by-species template, as how we react depends on what invasive species we are dealing with. Jan noted that she has observed where rivers and other natural barriers have helped the advance of invasive plants. Jan also asked whether the Canadians are aware of the impacts their management has on Minnesota and whether we are working together with them.

Bruce Cox said there is a mechanism in place at the county level, but there needs to be an opportunity to tie into the larger state-wide effort. He suggests addressing the forest health issue in a comprehensive way and using a structure to disseminate the information. In Clearwater County, they look for and spray spotted knapweed, and use bio-control on leafy spurge, but staff do so only when it is encountered, instead of as part of a planned effort.

Jan Green noted that non-native earthworms are a big problem adjacent to recreational lakes, and therefore we need a mechanism for education so earthworms are not introduced to more areas. Mike Carroll said this issue has been raised over the past five years but it is difficult to know how to control earthworms at this point. Dealing with the bait dealers is politically unacceptable.

Paige Winebarger asked Mike Carroll and Jim Sanders: "If you could give me a report card, how would you rate our forests for health?" Mike Carroll would give Minnesota an "A" for forest health, but a "C" for its ability to respond to potential health problems. Jim Sanders agreed with Mike's assessment.

Shaun Hamilton asked if there is an opportunity to leverage funds to match the federal funds. Mike Carroll said that state legislators are interested in forest health issues, and suggests state bonding funds need to be available in order to have rapid response to invasive species. Jim Sanders said that federal budget issues are extreme, and so will need to mobilize the resources available today through core programs, and cooperate to maximize the impact.

Bob Stine said the MFRC's role is not to go out the physically control pests. We have a good set of agencies that know how to do this. The MFRC can, however, write letters to the Dean of the new college emphasizing present and emerging issues. There is a need for infrastructure; we need to act on forest health issues like we do on fire issues. It sounds like a lot of the infestations are at distribution centers that are Metro-area oriented. MFRC needs to tell the Governor and the legislature what is coming and why.

Jim Sanders suggested that by working together, groups can not only save money, but also expedite the action needed to respond to forest health threats. He summarized what MFRC's role could be in addressing forest health issues:

1. Maintain and emphasize support for existing entities and their core programs; take advantage of each other's strengths.
2. Help the MFRC understand the threats and prioritize the species that require action.
3. Develop a comprehensive approach to funding and an action plan that engages citizens.
4. The programs need to be action-based, as response time is critical.

Jim argued that Minnesota has the opportunity to stay ahead of invasive species. To do so, citizens need to be engaged and to care about the community. In summary, we need to know what the risk/response action framework is, where all the groups fit into an action, and what tasks each group are and should be doing.

Public Communications to the MFRC

No comments.

Meeting Evaluation

Al Sullivan asked MFRC members for feedback on this and previous meetings, i.e. is MFRC using the meeting time well. Kathleen Preece responded that this was a great forum today. With the knowledge she gained, she feels like she can be more effective when interacting with people working on the ground. Dave Parent said that the meeting was efficient. Kathleen Preece added that the by rotating meeting locations, it introduces members to many geographic areas of Minnesota and the multitude of groups working in the state.

MFRC Member Comments

Jim Sanders handed out a Roadless Area Management rule synopsis and a table showing inventoried roadless areas in the Superior National Forest. Mike Carroll said the DNR continues to review the pros and cons of the Governor's future decision on whether or not to petition the Secretary of Agriculture.

Bob Oswald will be attending the AFL-CIO meeting in Chicago in July. The labor issues discussion will be very interesting this year.

Next MFRC meeting and potential topics/issues

Dave Zumeta summarize potential issues for the July 27 MFRC meeting at Itasca State Park. On July 28, Dick Walsh and Associates will host a logging field tour in northern Hubbard County.

Paige Winebarger moved to adjourn the meeting, Jim Sanders seconded. The motion passed unanimously.