

Minnesota Forest Resources Council
Minutes
Cloquet Forestry Center – Cloquet, MN
15 September 2010

Members: Al Sullivan, Wayne Brandt, Bruce Cox, Alan Ek, Dave Epperly, Dale Erickson, Shaun Hamilton, Joel Koemptgen, Bob Lintelmann, Gene Merriam, Dave Parent, Kathleen Preece, John Rajala, Mary Richards, Mike Trutwin, Don Rees (alternate for Jim Sanders)

Members absent: Shawn Perich, Jim Sanders

Guests: Jana Albers (DNR), Tom Castonguay (Red Lake Bureau of Indian Affairs), Grace Chan (University of Minnesota), Dave Chura (Minnesota Logger Education Program), Sarah Crow (University of Minnesota), Amber Ellering (DNR), David Kittelson (University of Minnesota), Bob Krepps (St. Louis County), Nick Schmal (USDA Forest Service), Winthrop Watts (University of Minnesota)

Staff: Dave Zumeta, Lindberg Ekola, Calder Hibbard, Leslie McInenly, Rob Slesak, Clarence Turner

Chair's Remarks

Al Sullivan welcomed attendees and initiated a round of introductions. He reported that Governor Pawlenty appointed Jim Sanders, Superior National Forest Supervisor, to complete Rob Harper's unexpired term as USDA Forest Service representative on the MFRC (term ends January 2012). Al noted that Jim previously represented the USDA Forest Service and was a very constructive Council member.

Several MFRC members have terms that will expire in January 2011. All eight members whose terms will end have informed the Executive Director that they will, or are likely to, apply for reappointment to the MFRC. Staff will contact relevant MFRC members with application information when the vacancy announcement is released by the Secretary of State's office, most likely about November 1.

Al distributed the letter he sent to members on September 13, 2010. He decided not to apply for reappointment to the Council and stated that he feels it is time for new energy and new leadership.

Al suggested consideration of the MFRC 2011 meeting schedule. The pattern has been to meet on the third Wednesday of alternate months. While this schedule has worked well in the past, Al received a request to consider meeting on the fourth Wednesday of each month. Council members were in support of shifting the meeting weeks. The 2011 meeting dates were scheduled as follows (potential locations in parentheses): January 26 (Cloquet), March 23 (Arden Hills), May 25 (Arden Hills), July 27 (northern Minnesota), September 28-29 (Cloquet - 2-day meeting) and November 30 (Cloquet).

Public Input/Communication to the MFRC

None.

*** Approval of the 21 July 2010 Meeting Minutes**

Mike Trutwin moved, and Kathleen Preece seconded, approval of the 21 July 2010 MFRC meeting minutes. *The minutes were approved.*

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*** Approval of the 15 September 2010 Meeting Agenda**

Gene Merriam moved, and Shaun Hamilton seconded, approval of the 15 September 2010 meeting agenda. *The agenda was approved.*

Executive Director Remarks

Dave Zumeta stated that the proposed 2-day meeting in 2011 will be focused on MFRC strategic direction and policy initiatives, last established in 2008. The meeting will be timely as another eight Council members will have terms expiring in 2012.

In light of the MFRC's budget constraints this fiscal year, staff is suggesting changes to the annual report that would eliminate the need to contract design and printing services. The 2010 document would be a simplified accomplishment report produced entirely in-house. Changes would include reduction in the background information, more succinct reporting of accomplishments, a 30-50% reduction in length, and a shift away from the glossy booklet format. In-house production may require some additional staff time, but we feel this will result in significant overall savings (\$4,000-\$6,000).

Dave Parent commented that the new MFRC brochure could be used to provide background information. Leslie McInenly added that, in the past, the report served two purposes: to report on our annual activities and to inform stakeholders. She noted that staff has suggested the Council consider alternating years between the previous booklet format and a more succinct accomplishment report.

Dave Zumeta noted that the Public Concerns Registration Program Report was available from Calder and is also available online. There was one registered concern during the fiscal year.

Committee Reports

Personnel and Finance

Al Sullivan reported that the Personnel and Finance committee plans to meet after the election.

Site-level

Dave Parent reported that the Site-level committee did not meet. The committee is working to set dates for the rest of the year. Rob Slesak mentioned that there were two recent guideline training events.

Landscape Planning/Coordination

Shaun Hamilton reported that the Landscape committee met August 25th by conference call. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the Northern Landscape Plan, which is on today's agenda.

Forest Resources Information Management

Kathleen Preece reported that the meeting of the Information Management committee was cancelled due to calendar conflicts. They plan to meet on October 18th.

Written Communications

Dave Zumeta reported there were three written communications. The first was a request by Henry VanOffelen (Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy) that the MFRC be a signatory on an editorial letter regarding the Governor's response to the recently updated Shoreland Rules. Dave responded that the full Council would need to consider the request and couldn't do so by the requested

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date. As background, Dave Parent served on the Shoreland Rule committee and Dave Zumeta was his alternate. Al Sullivan commented that Dave's response was appropriate.

The second correspondence was a letter written by Dave Zumeta regarding a University of Minnesota (UMN) proposal to merge libraries at the College of Food, Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences (CFANS). Dave's letter suggested that the University reconsider closure of the Forestry library in light of the value it provides to the public. Alan Ek noted that the UMN library is one of top two or three forestry libraries in the world with respect to the breadth of the collection. The libraries need to reduce their space and cost; they have experienced nearly an 80% reduction in walk-ins over the past decade due to electronic access. Forestry faculty met and requested the University further assess usage of the library.

The final communication was an email from Kathy Kromroy (MN Dept. Agriculture) regarding Thousand Cankers Disease. The disease has not appeared in Minnesota yet, but there is a lot of concern regarding the potential impact on walnut, a particular concern for Minnesota's southeastern forests. Dave distributed a USDA Forest Service Pest Alert on the disease. Kathy also asked whether the Council would support quarantining walnut coming into the state. Dave raised concern regarding the role of the Council with respect to the many invasive species and pest issues that may arise. Al responded that, while he did not have a mature opinion on the issue, a decision to take a position would need to be determined by the whole Council. Dave Parent suggested that the Council consider developing a policy regarding future decisions to protect native vegetation (e.g., responsible parties, actions).

***Committee of the Whole: Draft resolution to approve amendment to Northern Landscape Plan**

Shaun Hamilton introduced discussion regarding the amendment to the Northern Landscape Plan.

Lindberg Ekola introduced Tom Castonguay (Red Lake Bureau of Indian Affairs), Chair of the Northern Landscape committee. Al noted his appreciation for the work of the regional landscape committee members and the value they provide to MFRC programs. Lindberg reviewed the history of the landscape plan and the generation of the amendment. The amendment is the result of a three-year plus effort by the landscape committee. No additional funds were available to develop this amendment. When the plan was approved in 2004, there was quite a bit of discussion and concern regarding the limited ecological component. Subsequently, the Council funded a project through the Natural Resources Research Institute to develop an ecological classification assessment and identify potential native plant communities (NPCs). The committee spent considerable time digesting and understanding the information, as well as offering education events for partners in the region. The ecological classification system was used to develop goals and strategies acceptable to the community in the northern region and based on good science. This is the Council's first amendment of a landscape plan several years down the road. The amendment went out for public review, with little response. Lindberg felt the process used by the committee addressed many of the issues prior to the public review. He noted that both the Northern Landscape and MFRC Landscape committees have recommended approval of the amendment.

Lindberg distributed a handout of the amended material and reviewed the changes. The Northern Landscape committee took a broad view and based the plan's goals at the NPC *system* level. The NPCs are mapped and acreages of each are broken down by ownership. Erin Baumgart, a former MFRC

student worker, provided silvicultural interpretations for all six systems. Lindberg noted that table 5.3 in the plan describes how, collectively, the partners around the table valued the different NPC systems. This was an effort to incorporate anecdotal information.

Tom Castonguay reiterated the effort put in by the committee members and discussed the various ecological classification systems used by different land managers. The different systems had to be cross-walked, but all are based on using vegetation to determine best management. The committee worked very hard to make the ECS descriptions accessible for all foresters and landowners. The committee held an NPC workshop, and is interested in holding additional NPC workshops for landowners and the public.

Dave Zumeta inquired about the composition of the committee and whether the amendment was unanimously supported. Lindberg responded that the committee was comprised of roughly 11 active members over time, including representatives from counties, the DNR, and forest industry and two private landowners. Tom added that the amendment has almost unanimous support from the committee (one county representative abstained due to the concerns of his county board).

Dave Parent raised a concern regarding the scale of the goals (at NPC system level) and their resulting value to landowners with smaller parcels. He asked that the committee develop a mechanism to communicate the strategies to smaller acreage landowners. Lindberg responded that the committee will address this concern; they do have the information to delve below the six NPC systems. Discussion regarding incorporating the information into stewardship plans ensued.

Bruce Cox stated that he felt the Northern Landscape committee responded well to the MFRC request for additional ecological information. He noted that the challenge will be in making sure the plan is implemented and stressed that monitoring is necessary in the landscape program. Bruce was in full support of the amendment and suggested that the Council needs to have a robust discussion about monitoring. Lindberg responded that monitoring is on the Landscape Committee's next agenda.

Kathleen Preece moved, and Dave Parent seconded, to approve the Northern Landscape Plan amendment. Mike Trutwin voiced support for the scientific foundation of the amendment. *The motion was called and the amendment was unanimously approved.*

*** Draft resolution to approve MFRC brochure**

Al introduced discussion on a draft MFRC brochure, which was developed to help newer legislators understand the role and programs of the Council. Dave Zumeta said that generation of the brochure was initiated by a suggestion of the Personnel and Finance Committee during discussions this spring about MFRC's strategic funding direction. The Council was in support of the outreach effort and has reviewed a previous draft of the brochure.

Leslie McInenly reviewed revisions made since the last Council meeting, including content and format changes. Staff intends to print the brochure in-house on certified paper purchased from a Minnesota paper mill. Council members provided suggested revisions, including clarification on quotations and dates. Kathleen asked how many copies would be produced. Leslie responded that the production

number is still to be determined and will depend on the printing process used. John Rajala suggested that taking this to a good printer may be more cost-effective over a period of time.

Al commented on the value of reaching out to newer legislators. He noted that many legislators have come to support the work of the Council over the past 15 years, but many are being replaced by folks who are not familiar with all of the work that gets done and that is leveraged through our partners. Greater recognition that we are not just a committee is necessary.

Wayne Brandt moved to approve the brochure with suggested edits. Dave Parent seconded the motion. *The amended brochure was unanimously approved.*

Discussion regarding production ensued. John Rajala suggested that each Council member carry copies of the brochure. Dale Erickson added that the brochure should be made available in every DNR office.

***Draft resolution to approve a joint MFRP/MFRC letter to major gubernatorial candidates**

Al introduced discussion on a draft letter that the Minnesota Forest Resources Partnership (MFRP or Partnership) has proposed be sent jointly by the MFRP and MFRC to the three major gubernatorial candidates. The letter includes a one-page brief on the value of forest resources in Minnesota.

Bruce Cox (MFRP Chair) commented that the idea for the letter was generated during a Partnership retreat in which the oncoming change in political leadership was discussed. The Partnership felt that it will be important to share forestry issues with the gubernatorial candidates. The request to the Council was made in recognition of the good working relationship between the MFRC and the MFRP and the potential benefit of a coordinated message.

Shaun Hamilton suggested that the brochure could provide an adequate overview regarding who we are without the need for a formal letter or fact sheet. Dave Zumeta suggested that MFRP and MFRC brochures could be included as attachments to the letter. Wayne felt that the content of the letter was fine, but questioned the appropriateness of a state governmental body writing to candidates. He suggested the letter be sent to the Governor-elect after the election. Council members voiced agreement.

Bruce responded that the Partnership may move forward with a letter, but stressed that the Council's decision will not upset the Partnership or the relationship that has developed between the MFRP and MFRC. They were offering, not seeking, an opportunity to partner on the letter. The Partnership is appreciative of the relationship they have with the Council and Council staff. Kathleen concurred.

Wayne Brandt moved to table the discussion until the December 1st meeting. Joel Koemptgen seconded. *The motion to table consideration of a letter to the gubernatorial candidates was unanimously approved.*

Update on Minnesota Logger Education Program, Minnesota Master Logger Certification, and forest management guideline training

Dave Chura distributed the Minnesota Logger Education Program (MLEP) annual report, newsletter, and training brochure. He provided background on MLEP and the Master Logger Certification program. The MLEP, a 501c3 organization, was established in 1995 as a result of the Sustainable Forest Resources Act.

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Dave described the standards and requirements for MLEP membership. Training on the MFRC forest management guidelines is a fundamental requirement as is safety training. Members must also complete continuing education to maintain membership. Dave reviewed the content of the guideline training workshops and described the online training program they are developing. Over the past five years, more than 700 loggers and natural resource managers have participated in guideline training. In 2010, MLEP had over 1,700 participants in their various workshops.

MLEP tracks all training and can provide a transcript to members. MLEP also provide a quarterly training report to landowners and managers. Dave reviewed the Minnesota Master Logger Certification, which is a voluntary add-on component to MLEP. The certification was developed to address the challenge of certifying timber from family forestlands. To date, 50 logging businesses have been certified.

Dave Epperly asked whether there is reciprocity among states regarding Master Logger certification. Dave Chura responded that states do recognize certification within the region and will also review training offered in different states for applicability to education requirements. Tom Castonguay asked whether any tribal loggers are certified. Dave responded that there are MLEP members from the various tribes, but that he could not provide a specific number (that information is available at www.mlep.org).

Dale Erickson asked Dave to comment on concerns regarding safety training. Dave responded that MLEP is concerned about a decision made by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (MN-DLI). This year, MN-DLI put out an RFP for the logger safety training, but MLEP decided to not submit a proposal because it could not deliver quality training for the amount of funding available. MLEP has provided logger safety training for the past two years, as recommended by the Continuing Education of Forestry Professionals Task Force.

Dale stated that MLEP delivers timely, needed training for loggers and noted that Dave Chura has done an excellent job. He has significant concerns about the impact of MLEP not providing the safety training. Wayne added that MN-DLI does not have the necessary experience pertaining to logger operations. Industry members are concerned about the quality and relevance of training that MN-DLI will provide. The LogSafe program training through MN-DLI is not relevant to current operations. Wayne noted that the industry is assessed for the training and feels that it is inappropriate for MN-DLI to retain the funding to augment budgets while not providing relevant, high quality training. John Rajala asked if there were similar state programs with this issue. Dave responded that no other industry is assessed for its training.

Al stated that, while the Chair never commits the Council to anything, this issue does not seem out of bounds for Council consideration.

Potential opportunities for Dimethyl Ether (DME) production at Minnesota pulp mills

Dave Zumeta introduced Dr. Dave Kittelson and Dr. Winthrop Watts (University of Minnesota Department of Mechanical Engineering), who were referred to Dave Zumeta by the LCCMR for input on a proposal they had developed regarding DME. While the initial proposal was not funded, they are currently working on a project funded by the University's Institute on the Environment (IoE).

Dave Kittelson thanked the Council for the opportunity to discuss his research. The IoE-funded project involves conducting a business/economic analysis to determine the viability of DME, a second generation biofuel, as a transportation fuel in areas with substantial biomass resources. Dave is looking to establish links with companies that have gasification technology.

DME is currently used in the U.S. as a cosmetic propellant and is composed of the same atoms as ethanol, but has a different structure. The physical properties are similar to propane. Like diesel fuel, DME is a high efficiency fuel. It does not produce soot; however, fuel system modification is required. Dave reviewed DME's environmental benefits, which include the highest well-to-wheel energy efficiency and lowest greenhouse gas emissions of any renewable fuel. DME is virtually non-toxic. There are safety issues, but these are no greater than those related to propane. DME can also be blended with LP gas. Globally, most DME is made from natural gas or coal. It is widely used in China and other locations that do not have a good way to distribute natural gas. The first bio-DME plant was built in northern Sweden.

Dave compared DME to various fuels and contrasted the efficiencies and greenhouse gas emissions. He reviewed production and distribution potential for DME; rough calculations indicate Minnesota could produce 1.2 times its current diesel demand, or nearly five times its propane demand, based on estimates of existing biomass resources in Minnesota. The infrastructure need is the same as for LP gas.

DME and methanol are new high value products that can be processed in existing mills. If pulp mills would use other sources for energy, the black liquor generated could be gasified to DME with overall production efficiency greater than 65%. The biggest barrier is that DME is almost unknown in the U.S. Dave wants to raise the awareness in Minnesota and use the results of his work as the basis for applying for further funding from the Departments of Energy and Transportation as well as from industry. Other barriers include: no active lobbying groups, no preferred tax status, and the capital costs associated with a gasification plant. In addition, current engine makers want a "drop-in replacement fuel".

Council members discussed opportunities to convert large transportation equipment (e.g., barges), the volume storage requirements, and potential partners for Dave's project. Dave commented that getting DME into the state fuels standard, as is being considered in Canada, would put it on the radar screen. Dr. Watts commented that Schwans company trucks are fueled by propane and suggested the value of working with a fleet. DME is better than biodiesel because it does not gel in the winter. Dave added that DME is also a very good gas turbine fuel.

Wayne stated that the black liquor generated in pulp mills is currently being used; 100% of the reactive chemicals are recaptured for use and the remaining materials are burned for energy. The mill in Cloquet is 95% energy self-sufficient. Other issues are supply reliability and access to capital. Wood availability and cost are significant factors. Dave responded that Chemrec (in Sweden) also recaptures the chemicals; however, the gasification process is more efficient.

Emerald ash borer and private forestlands

Dave Zumeta introduced Jana Albers (DNR Forest Health Specialist), one of the organizers of the recent black ash symposium. She was asked to discuss ash management recommendations for private forest landowners in light of the emerald ash borer (EAB) expanding its range. Jana distributed the ash

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management guidelines developed by the DNR as well as a summary of an upcoming effort by University of Minnesota Extension to develop an ash management guide for family forest owners. She reviewed the guidelines and potential silvicultural treatments.

Wayne asked where infected ash material can go. Jana responded that kiln-dried ash can be used anywhere in the state. Much of the ash will be used for fuel. Wayne asked if the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) or DNR is considering some sort of budget initiative to support silvicultural treatments, which are very expensive and for which there are no commercial markets. Dave Epperly said that the response will need to be targeted. Wayne replied that neither the industry nor loggers are in a financial position to have the state place ash management requirements on timber sales.

Don Rees said that an additional complication is that black ash stands cross ownership boundaries. Action on a portion of a stand will impact other ownerships. He has asked Kathleen to consider a contract to build on momentum from the symposium and further develop the discussion regarding targeting funding to identify where the best investments can be made. Dave Zumeta suggested priority be placed on those areas that we know will be affected (e.g., Houston county) versus up on the Canadian border where the risk may be lower. Jana noted that compared to Dutch elm disease, which swept through Minnesota quickly, EAB will have a greater impact, but it will take decades to spread.

Jana reported that MDA is releasing EAB parasites in Houston County. The *Agilus* parasites are finding the EAB and woodpeckers also seem to be doing a good job. She commented on the ash management guidelines that Julie Miedtke (Extension) and Kathleen will develop for private landowners.

Nick Schmal suggested the Council may want to consider elevating the discussion about EAB in the letter to the Governor-elect. John Rajala asked about planting Manchurian ash. Jana responded that the Chippewa National Forest will experiment with Manchurian ash with guidance from the University of Minnesota. Getting the species over the border as well as getting enough planting stock will be difficult.

Dale asked about the larch beetle killing the tamarack in his area. Jana responded that the state lost 10% of its larch last year due to the larch beetle. Most losses are in Roseau and Lake of the Woods counties. We have no handle on or control of the outbreak. There was a similar outbreak in the 1920s and 1930's. Dave Zumeta suggested that the Forestry Division, Utilization and Marketing program, would likely be very interested in working collaboratively on EAB responses. Jana agreed, noting that it is time for all the ash products to go to market – from firewood to veneer.

Public Communications to the MFRC

None.

MFRC Member Communications

None.

Dave Parent moved, and Mike Trutwin seconded, adjournment. *The meeting was adjourned at 3:22 pm.*