MFRC Guideline Implementation Monitoring Committee
Meeting Minutes
November 17, 2000

In attendance: Dave Parent, Roger Scherer, Bob Oswald, and Mike Phillips (staff).

Absent: Shawn Perich, Rich Holm, Greg Damlo, and Dick Rossman (staff).

Guests: Bonnie DeLare, Bill Befort, and Terry Weber.

Dave Parent convened the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Implementation monitoring report

Mike Phillips reviewed the status of the implementation monitoring report due to the MFRC in January. He highlighted the problems that had occurred with finalizing the data entry program. He noted that all of the site data, except for infrastructure and leave tree area, had been entered into the data base. Dick Rossman is finalizing the data calculations for infrastructure and leave tree areas. Mike also reported that he had worked with Dr. Chen with the DNR, Division of Forestry, in developing the relationships and correlations that would be evaluated with the data. In particular, he noted that he will evaluate the monitoring data against the guideline implementation goals established by the MFRC in November 1998.

Mike explained that the Management Information Systems bureau was willing to redesign the entire Access computer program and no cost to the DOF or the MFRC. Mike indicated that the work on redesigning the program would begin in December and would likely be completed in April prior to the field monitoring season. This development will be done independent of the existing program so that there will be no problems with interference with the current data and analysis.

Mike also asked for the support of the GIMC for the purchase of one additional field computer for next year. He indicated that the cost of the two field computers already purchased was approximately $6500 each.

Bonnie DeLare discussed the status of the aerial photography for the 2001 monitoring program. Bonnie said all of the primary sampling units had been flown and the photos taken. The photos have been developed and are in the process of being cut. Bonnie said she would have the first big batch of sites to me by the first of the year. Bonnie expressed her concern that we are not much further ahead of where we were last year at this time. She also stated that she has been assigned to another project that will take up a significant amount of her time. Mike said he would have to discuss Bonnie's work priorities with Bruce ZumBahlen and Dave Heinzen.

Visual quality monitoring

Mike reviewed the outcome of the discussions by the GIMTC related to visual quality monitoring. The recommendations of the GIMTC that were discussed by the GIMC were:

1. Visual quality county maps are inclusive for rivers, streams, lakes and recreational trails as well as roads and should be part of the visual quality assessment. *GIMC agreed that visual quality assessments should be expanded for the second round of monitoring to include streams, lakes and recreational trails, if specified on the applicable county maps. When the choice is discretionary on the map, the visual quality rating will be made.*

2. Visual quality sensitivity should be determined by the Resource Assessment unit when reviewing the aerial photographs rather asking the landowner/resource manager. The photo interpreter will indicate on the aerial photo where the contractor will collect the data on visual quality. *The GIMC supports this recommendation as stated.*

3. The GIMTC agreed that the place where the evaluation of lakes, streams, and recreational trails will take place is the closest place that is accessible to the public. *GIMC agrees but does not feel it is necessary for the contractor to canoe on the water bodies to make the evaluations. However, they want the contractors to evaluate visual quality from roads by driving by the site at the average travelers speed to determine visual quality ratings.*

4. For sensitive resources not mapped on the county visual quality sensitivity maps, the opinion of the forester or land manager will first be sought, then second, the opinion of the landowner will be sought for their assessment of visual quality. *For recreational trails, GIMC supports only evaluating trails that are designated specifically on the visual quality sensitivity maps. GIMC also wants the issue of visual resources for non-mapped areas to be reviewed and discussed by the guideline team that will reevaluate the guidelines.*

Leave tree monitoring

Mike reviewed how leave trees/acre for both, 1) random individual trees and 2) islands, strips, and clumps were evaluated in the first round of monitoring. Mike indicated that, for random individual leave trees/acre, the categories monitored were: 0-5, 6-12, and >12. As currently defined the analysis will indicate only if the minimum recommendations were not met (0-5 leave trees/acre), the minimum recommendations were met (6-12 leave trees/acre), or if the recommendations were exceeded (>12 leave trees/acre). These minimums assume trees with a diameter of 6 inches or more. Mike also stated that these minimums must also be reviewed in the context of whether leave tree clumps, islands, or strips were or were not left as well as the individual leave trees. The guideline recommendations state that the habitat requirements can be met by leaving either the individual leave trees or clumps, strips or islands. For a number of sites, Mike indicated that both were left.

Mike expressed his concern that the 0-5 category does not provide an indication of whether any leave trees were left. For example, were 0 trees/acre left or as many as 5 trees/acre. The GIMTC felt that the forestry community should at least collect the information if some/acre were left and recommended that, for the second round of monitoring, we expand the categories for random individual leave trees/acre to: <1, 1-5, 6-12, and >12. *The GIMC agreed with this recommendation.*

The most difficult monitoring issue for the first round of monitoring was how to define what constitutes a leave tree clump, strip, or island. Mike emphasized that part of the reason for this difficulty in his view is that the wildlife technical team did not provide enough specific guidance on what constitutes a leave tree clump, strip, or island. The guideline (GG page 72) states "Specific recommendations for numbers and distribution of leave trees (such as retaining on clearcuts a minimum of 5% of the harvest area in clumps and/or 6-12 scattered leave trees/acre) ... The background section of the wildlife guidelines (Rationale for Guidelines, Wildlife Habitat, page 7) states that the purpose of the leave tree and snag guidelines is "to provide for wildlife requiring perches, tree cavities and bark-foraging sites through retention of suitable leave tree and snags on a 'site' (Mike's emphasis) during forest harvesting and timber stand improvement". For purposes of monitoring, "site" was defined by GIMTC as the area where harvest activities were conducted and adjacent areas that were taken into consideration when determining the actual harvest unit. Mike outlined several of the issues raised during monitoring that need to be addressed and provided copies of aerial photos to illustrate some of the following issues.

1. Are there specific criteria that need to be identified for specifying adjacent and penninsular leave tree clumps? Examples would be whether there is a change in vegetation type, or how to consider clumps that are commercially viable harvesting operations or not.

2. Are the adjacent areas that could be defined as leave tree clumps documented in the plan or on a site map? If not should they be counted? For example, leave tree clumps on a state sale may be "painted out" of the sale area so that there is no documentation of intent.

3. How long should a leave tree clump be left on site to be counted as a leave tree clump? We are measuring a point in time with monitoring so the contractor evaluating the site will not know if or when the clump may be harvested. If the clump is of a commercially viable size, do we need to first determine the intent of the landowner? The GIMTC recommended that for clumps >5 acres, we should contact the landowner to determine when and if the clump will be harvested.

Due to the uncertainties of how to evaluate these clumps, the GIMTC agreed to collect the leave tree clump data as follows:

1. as clumps that are totally internal to the cut boundaries (interior).

2. as clumps shaped as strips or peninsulas that intrude into the cut boundaries (intrusions).

3. as leave tree clumps left adjacent to RMZs.

4. as leave tree clumps left for visual quality, cultural and other buffers.

The GIMTC also recommended that the acreage of these leave tree clumps be added to the harvest site acreage total for purposes of computing percent of harvest unit in leave tree clumps and infrastructure.

The GIMC made the following decisions based on these discussions:

1. *The guideline revision team, when convened, needs to provide more direction on what constitutes leave tree clumps.*

2. *For the upcoming field season, continue to collect the leave tree data by the categories identified above.*

3. *Add the leave tree acreage to the total site acreage.*

RMZ monitoring

Mike reviewed the recommendations of the GIMTC on RMZs.

1. In evaluating RMZs, we will review any water body adjacent to the harvest site that is located within the theoretical recommended RMZ width for that particular type of water body. *The GIMC agreed to this recommendation.*

2. In evaluating RMZs, we will look at sale documentation for evidence of how the landowner/manager intended to manage this adjacent resource. If the documentation identified a RMZ for a water body, regardless of distance from the cut boundary, we will accept that documentation. *The GIMC agreed to this recommendation.*

3. If there is no documentation, the GIMTC recommends evaluating any water body within 1.5 to 2 times their theoretical recommended RMZ width. This should be followed by a landowner/resource manager contact to verify their intentions relative to that water body. *The GIMC agreed to evaluate these water bodies within 1.5 times their theoretical recommended RMZ width.*

4. The "credit" for the RMZ only applies for land that falls within the landowner's property. *The GIMC agreed to this recommendation.*

Monitoring jurisdictional ditches

Mike raised the issue of monitoring jurisdictional ditches for RMZs. He indicated that during guideline development, the teams had agreed that the guidelines would not apply to beaver ponds or ditches. However, some jurisdictional ditches were one-time streams that were straightened out. The GIMTC recommended that these be evaluated for RMZs and that man-made ditches be excluded from this evaluation. *The GIMC agreed with this recommendation.*

Monitoring snags

For the first round of monitoring, the contractors were asked to determine if snags were present on the harvest site. Mike indicated that answering this question does not provide much useful information and that his preference would be to drop this question if we could not expand it to collect more meaningful data. The GIMTC agreed to modify the question to provide the following four categories of snags/acre: 0, <1, 1-2, and >2. *The GIMC agreed with this recommendation and also the recommendation to have the guideline revision team provide more specific advice on the numbers of snags that should be left on the harvest site*.

Monitoring bark-on down logs

Mike indicated that the majority of sites had bark-on down log numbers that were below the recommended numbers. All of these sites had been harvested at least a year prior to monitoring and it was probable that much of the bark had sloughed off in the time since the harvesting was done. Thus the lower numbers in categorizing bark-on down logs. If this is the case, Mike questioned whether this is, in fact, a measurable guideline. *The GIMC concluded that we should collect the information on the number of down logs, 6" X 6', whether bark-on or bark-off.*

Monitoring training

Mike indicated that we need to expand the monitoring contractor training on the delineation and identification of open water and non-open water wetlands. We will hold a full day workshop on this topic for the contractors as part of the calibration workshop.

Update on riparian assessment

Bill Befort reviewed the work to date on the riparian assessment. He presented a draft GIS map of statewide riparian lands that shows the location, surface cover, and ownership category for all riparian lands in the state within 200 feet of water features. In addition, two panels will be produced which illustrate the application of the riparian data layer at the county and township level. Bill asked that this map be reviewed by St. Paul staff and Mike Kilgore with comments submitted to Bill as soon as possible.

MFA letter to NIPF landowners on monitoring

Mike reviewed his recollections as to what had been discussed by the GIMC at it's July meeting concerning the preparation of a letter to NIPF landowners about volunteering sites for monitoring. He handed out a draft letter to NIPF landowners with a proposed budget to make the contacts. Mike then asked Terry to review the proposal. *Following this discussion, the GIMC asked Mike to discuss with Alan Ek his specific concerns about the proposal. The GIMC also suggested that MFA and/or extension could do outreach in the PSUs by notifying NIPF landowners about the purpose of the monitoring program. These landowners would not be asked directly to provide sites for monitoring. But by informing them ahead of time about the program, when and if their land were identified on the aerial photos, they would be up to speed about the program if contacted.* Mike said he would discuss this proposal with Mike Kilgore and Alan Ek.

Dave Parent adjourned the meeting at 2:15 p.m.