

**MFRC Site-level Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
Interagency Fire Center, Grand Rapids  
April 11, 2006**

**In attendance:** Dave Parent, Shawn Perich, Bob Lintelmann, Dick Walsh, Kathy Manteuffel, Bob Oswald, and Mike Phillips

**Guests:** Dick Rossman (DNR/Forestry), Jenna Fletcher (by phone), Steve Merchant (DNR/Wildlife), Dalia Abbas (University of Minnesota)

Dave Parent called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. The following materials were provided:

1. Meeting agenda
2. Minnesota Statutes 2005, 216B.2424
3. Draft scoping document titled "Biomass Harvesting Guideline Development for Forestland and Brushland in Minnesota"
4. Guideline implementation monitoring: status of site selection, 2006
5. Summary of biomass removal guidelines
6. Pie charts showing numbers of LTAs within 75 miles of Hibbing that have or do not have STG Leks and/or open landscape dependent species
7. Executive Summary-DNR Open Landscapes

**Guideline Implementation Monitoring Program Review for 2006**

Mike Phillips provided a summary of the distribution of sites confirmed for the 2006 field season. He indicated that 23 of the sites from the pool of 110 possible NIPF sites had been deleted for a variety of reasons and we are still waiting on responses from 59 of the 110 NIPF landowners. Fourteen of the 23 sites were deleted because the landowner declined permission for their harvest to be evaluated and three could not be located. Dave Parent recommended that we should find ways of encouraging better participation by NIPF landowners. He requested that the NIPF guideline brochure be provided as part of the background information that is sent to the NIPF landowner with the request to monitor their harvest.

**Minnesota Statutes 216B.2424**

The Committee discussed several parts of the statute, in particular Subd. 1(f). This section states that no wood is to be harvested from lands identified by the MN County Biological Survey (MCBS) as having statewide significance as native plant communities, large populations or concentrations of rare species, or critical habitat. The discussion centered on how to implement this section of the statute. Dick Rossman reviewed the interpretation by DNR/Ecological Services that this language would be applied to sites or land having outstanding or high biodiversity significance ranking by MCBS. Steve Merchant said that some of the open land is currently being managed and contains critical habitat. Dick and Steve indicated that this harvest restriction was initially included in the draft scoping document for guideline development, but it

was decided that inclusion within the scoping document was not appropriate as it is not a scoping issue but a management planning issue.

Steve was asked if the procurement area for the Laurentian Energy Authority (LEA) had been mapped by MCBS. He said that MCBS has mapped a portion of all public and private lands within this area, but was not complete.

Dave Parent asked if the statute language for Subd. 1(f) applies across all ownerships or only to LEA. Dick and Steve stated their view that it applies only to the LEA.

Dave also asked if the guidelines that are developed would apply only to LEA harvests or more broadly. Dick stated that the guidelines would apply to all lands statewide, not just LEA harvests and all agreed to that interpretation.

Shawn Perich stated that there are a number of initiatives in the new federal Farm Bill that parallel the process Minnesota has initiated related to biomass energy.

Dalia Abbas suggested that biomass should be considered as a secondary or tertiary product that can be utilized in the management for a primary product or purpose.

### **Update on Biomass Harvest Guideline Development**

Dick Rossman reviewed plans for the first BHGDT Committee meeting to be held on April 20 at the Cloquet Forestry Center. Review of the draft scoping document will be a focus for discussions. Other discussion topics are the timeline for guideline development, team protocols, review of existing guidelines applicable for biomass guidelines, and the Initiative for Renewable Energy and the Environment research review.

### **Biomass Harvest Guideline Development Scoping Document**

Mike reviewed the structure for the scoping document that includes the background, legislative intent, lays out the process for guideline development, identifies technical committee membership and committee objectives, geographic and land use scope of the guidelines, important definitions, scope of the topics to be addressed. Mike said that a key to developing a scoping document is to define both what will be and will not be addressed in guideline development.

The Committee discussed the scoping document and agreed to the following:

- The guidelines will apply to all forested regions of Minnesota.
- The guidelines will be developed or modified to protect habitat and not specific communities or species.
- Approved definitions for brushland and wildland woody biomass and added a definition for openland.
- Added a recommendation that the guidelines recognize the sustainability of habitat for both game and nongame species.

The draft scoping document was approved for review at the BHGDT Committee meeting on April 20. Modifications will be made to the scoping document based on the BHGDT Committee comments and the revised draft submitted electronically to the Site-level Committee for final review and approval to be sent to the full Council in the May 3, 2006 mailing.

### **Research Review of Biomass Harvesting for Economic Analysis and Guideline Development**

Dalia Abbas reviewed the work at the University of Minnesota to report on the international guidelines for the harvest of biomass from forestland and brushland. She also provided a brief overview of the study she is undertaking to evaluate the economics of biomass harvest. Dalia said that all existing international guidelines are geared to short rotation intensive culture. The question is whether any existing guidelines are available for wildland biomass harvest. The consensus opinion is that they are not available. Mike asked whether the existing international guidelines are new guidelines or are incorporated and adopted from existing timber harvesting best management practices. Dalia was not sure.

### **RSTC Update**

Mike and Jenna Fletcher reviewed the status of the RSTC process. They indicated that RSTC had completed the majority of their work, had addressed all of the QTIs (Questions, Topics, Issues) agreed to by the MFRC, and that all that remained was for the RSTC to develop a synthesis document that would graphically display the relationships for the response indicators agreed to by the RSTC. Mike said that the final RSTC meeting would be held at the end of July to approve the synthesis report. Jenna emphasized that the specifics of the indicators would be presented in a manner that clearly distinguishes between the science and professional judgment. Dave stated that his expectation is that this distinction must be very apparent.

Mike was asked to ensure that the final report is written and presented in a format that will be understandable by the MFRC. Mike indicated that the information reviewed by the RSTC is often complex and the analysis robust, and that every effort will be made to ensure that the review is summarized in an understandable manner.

### **ESTC Update**

Jenna reviewed the status of economic analysis of the output of the RSTC. Since Jenna is leaving the MFRC, she intends that her replacement will have the information needed to undertake the economic review.

The Site-level Committee expressed its thanks to Jenna for all of her excellent work over the past few years and wished her well in her new position with the Trust for Public Lands. Jenna thanked the Committee.

### **Time-in-Motion Study**

Mike reviewed an ongoing study to evaluate the costs of applying timber harvesting and forest management guidelines. This is the third in a series of studies conducted by Mike Kilgore and Charlie Blinn to assess these costs. The study will employ GPS and other equipment on feller-bunchers and skidders on the operations for 10 loggers over one year. The time it takes to harvest the sites relative to the application of the guidelines based on the movements of the equipment will be assessed. Mike considers this to be an excellent study and will provide a needed assessment of the costs of applying the guidelines. He said he will keep the Committee informed as to the progress of the study.

### **Other**

Dave asked Mike to check on the criticisms about the application of the timber harvesting guidelines contained in an article published in the January-February edition of Roots. The article referred to inconsistencies in the application of guidelines related to leave trees and preventing soil disturbance. Mike said that these were related to CARs (corrective action requests) that were part of the improvements needed for the FSC certification. Mike indicated that he would discuss this with Andy Arrends and report back to the Site-level Committee.

### **Adjourn**

No date was set for the next Site-level Committee meeting and Dave Parent adjourned the GIMC meeting at 3:00 p.m.