

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL
Landscape Advisory Committee (LAC) Meeting
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Wednesday, August 11, 2021
Via Microsoft Teams

Member present: Jim Manolis, Janet Erdman, Rick Horton, Keith Karnes, Kim Berns-Melhus

Guests: David Henkel-Johnson, James Aasen, Bob Tomlinson (on phone)

Staff: Kristyn Buetow, Ashlee Lehner, Eric Schenck

Introductory Remarks and Roll-call—Jim Manolis, Chair

Chair called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm. The committee reviewed the recently adopted charter and reviewed the actions and charges that are assigned to this committee. Once the Council hires a full-time Landscape Program Manager, more time can be devoted to prioritize the charter's actions and accomplish them.

Brief MFRC Update – Eric Schenck

Executive Director gave updates on the Council work. The Policy Committee will be reviewing the Sustainable Forest Resources Act for possible modifications in the 2022 legislative session, especially for any changes to the Landscape Planning section. Personnel and Finance will be meeting on August 11 as well to discuss filling vacant positions. The modest increase of base funding for MFRC may be applied to more collaborative work in the landscape program.

Discussion of the future roles of the Landscape Program Manager - Schenck

Prior to the meeting, committee members had the opportunity to review the previous position description for the Landscape Program Manager. Staff presented the qualifications that were listed in the previous PD. The committee discussed the abundance of experience that was needed by the previous position description and discussed options to pare it down. A committee member asked if stewardship plan writing would count towards experience as a plan writer even if it's not the person's full-time job responsibility. There may be some state requirements regarding the number of years' experience needed for a certain salary level. A committee member noticed the word "facilitating" is not currently in the knowledge, skills, and abilities and should be added. There is no mention of the grant writing – the committee felt that experience is necessary for the Landscape Manager position and should be included in the position responsibilities.

The committee needs to discuss how much grant writing this person will undertake and how much will be managing grant writing work done by the regional landscape committees. The committee discussed the level of time needed by Manager if he/she is expected to write grants for all six regional committees.

The committee discussed the opportunities for the Manager to gain outside funding for additional staff support.

A committee member asked if the state human resources will determine the class level will be. Staff explained the process for determining the class and how long it takes. The committee asked how long until the position will be posted and if the state hiring freeze is still in place. The hiring freeze is almost lifted and a big slug of positions are expected to be posted soon. The Council will review the Policy Analyst position at P&F committee meeting on August 11; decided to approve that position first since it seemed to be the most straightforward. There was an idea in the past about combining the Policy and Landscape positions but LAC members agreed that the Landscape Program Manager Position should be a full-time position. Staff will continue writing Landscape Program Manager position description and disseminate to the committee when a draft is complete.

Discussion of possible tour of State Nursery at Badoura - Lehner

The next full Council meeting will be Monday afternoon, September 20 through Tuesday afternoon, September 21 in the Bemidji area. Tentatively planned is a panel discussion on Monday afternoon, Council meeting on Tuesday morning, followed by a field tour Tuesday afternoon. The field tour is tentatively planned to be at the State Nursery in Badoura, which will include a tour of the facilities and discussion about tree planting issues in the future Nursery remodeling and what will be needed into the future to meet demand. This tour is only verbally agreed upon with new Nursery manager, staff need to follow up and make sure DNR leadership approve.

Tree Planting Report, update and presentation - Lehner

Staff presented on the updated Tree Planting Report. Notable updates include more historic information from more organizations, the creation of a trend line, and tree seedling source data. The biggest takeaway was the drop in 2020 seedlings and the rebound to pre-pandemic levels across the state. When you view a breakdown by organization you can see the DNR Forestry has a notable decline in seedlings planted over the last five years. Further, St. Louis County has a marked decrease in plantings for the same time period. The only graphic created for the tree seedling sources was for all county land departments combined – here committee members can see that for the time period 2016 to 2021 the private-public sourcing went from 30/70% to nearly 0/100%. Therefore, nearly all of the seedlings are sourced from private nurseries inside and outside the state.

The committee discussed the drawback for having a trend line for only two seasons. The tree seedling source information was striking to committee members, this would be good information to bring to the Policy Committee to see if there is work we can do to increase the seedling supply from public sources in the state. James Aasen from Koochiching SWCD mentioned that issues that are tied to availability are at work such as disease and mortality. Further, there is better stock available at cheaper prices at private nurseries. Staff will continue to refine data and bring to LAC and PIC.

Future Planning Contracts

EC Outreach and Implementation - Bob Tomlinson

EC would like to pursue a contract to develop outreach materials that will help committee members disseminate the information from the new plan to their constituents. The request comes from the committee to see if a staff person can assist with creating these documents or if the committee can recommend creation of a contract to the P&F. David Henkel-Johnson says that just document creation would take only 40 hours of work. The amount for this request is only a few thousand dollars; the committee agreed that this is within the purview of the staff to just move forward. Staff will discuss with East Central Landscape Committee leadership.

N Plan Update – Lehner, James Aasen

Staff inquired on the next steps for the Northern Committee plan update. James Aasen, Northern committee chair, reiterated that the committee isn't looking for a full rewrite, but rather focus on the sections they know are outdated. Since just a plan update, and not rewrite, has never been done, the committee would like staff to work with Northern committee to plan out all available options and related costs. Ashlee will follow up with James to discuss options, and will bring those back to the committee.

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm.