

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL
Policy and Information Committee
10:00 am – 12:00 pm, Thursday, August 26, 2021
Microsoft Teams

Attending: Pete Aube, Mike Birkeland, Jim Manolis, Bob Owens, Jim Fryc, Katie Fernholz

Alternates: Stephanie Pinkalla

Staff: Eric Schenck, Ashlee Lehner

Introductory Remarks, Roll-call, and Introduction of Guests

Meeting called to order by Council chair, Pete Aube at 10:04 am. He gave opening remarks and informed the committee that he will be leading this meeting in the committee chair's absence. The following agenda additions were added: Lippert Bioincentives amendment and discuss Governor Walz's trip to UK and Finland.

MFRC Update

The executive director gave an update on recent staffing changes at the Council. Clare Boerigter's last day was August 20 as communications intern and Hannah Friesen is leaving her position as Interim Research Coordinator on September 3 and moving to The Nature Conservancy. MFRC is working with Matt Russell to get those positions filled. Matt Russell has also briefed the Communications Committee about the start of the Forest Carbon Strategic Plan. September council meeting is expected to take place in Bemidji on September 20-21. There will be a State Nursery tour on the Tuesday afternoon after the meeting. A Council member inquired about the duration of the WOOOC for Ashlee, her contract ends in January.

Summary of Policy Priorities Survey

Staff presented on the results of the policy priorities survey results sent to Council members after the July 20 MFRC meeting. The committee discussed the strengths and weaknesses of presenting information like this. The committee also discussed the need to have all council members fill out this survey (only 9 responses out of 17). The committee plans to present the updated survey results during the PIC update at the September 21 meeting. He'll stress the use of this policy priorities survey to develop a policy platform for the Council.

Sustainable Forest Resources Act Review

Ashlee presented on the history of the SFRA changes, which was sent to committee members prior to the meeting for their review. There has been major historical changes to sections 3, 6, and 9, with minor changes in other sections such as extending the repeal date. These sections with historical major

changes happen to be the sections that Council members have identified as sections that may need to be revised in the coming legislative session.

The committee discussed the proposed edits that were drafted by staff. Some committee members expressed support for making updates and changes to the Sustainable Forest Resources Act, a committee member also expressed a desire not to make any changes since the legislation language is currently working. The committee discussed the possible revisions needed in the language and the best way to move forward with wordsmithing. Sections 6 (Landscape planning) and Section 9 (IIC) were proposed for revision, at the time of the meeting no language edits were proposed.

The committee discussed the appropriate number of revisions the council could handle in the given timeframe. The group discussed paring down the number of edits to just focus on climate change, there is precedent for climate change-influenced language changes based on the Council's recent work on the Climate Change Report and the climate change-focused Strategic Plan. Overall, the committee determined that moving forward with all proposed changes is appropriate, if we cannot get consensus by the legislative deadline then the Council can postpone to a future legislative session.

Forest Caucus Update

MFRC Staff met with Senator Justin Eichorn on August 11. Staff presented the idea of a Forest Caucus in the State House and Senate and asked for Sen. Eichorn's advice on his interest and moving forward with gaining members. Sen. Eichorn was interested in creating this caucus and proposed approaching Senator Ruud to ask her to be a co-chair due to her experience with caucus creation. Eichorn also advised that an event in St. Paul at the end of January would be best since all members are likely to be in St. Paul for the start of the session. The committee discussed possibly having an event in the basement of the Capitol building. During the event, the Council can introduce the Forest Carbon Strategic Plan, MFRC Climate Report, and provide an opportunity for Council members to be present and interact with the legislators. Overall the goal for the caucus is to provide information on the sustainable management of forests. The committee discussed what legislators they believe should be approached for inclusion in the caucus, staff will continue working to get interested people to the table.

Additional agenda items:

Bioincentive Program Language Update, presented to MFRC from Sierra Club

Staff shared the previous Bioincentives Program policy brief written by staff in February. A committee member gave input on how the committee and council should move forward when presented specific legislation such as this. Overall, creation of the policy platform will give the committee an opportunity to determine if it matches up with the Council's stated goals and provide "neutral", "positive", or "negative" responses, rather than trying to make ad-hoc decisions. The committee is working toward the policy platform creation. The committee determined that more information is needed with this specific language change, for instance what would the impact on the industry be if woody residuals were defined? Would this change de-incentivize industry from investing in Minnesota? Information such as that would be crucial to know. Current Bioincentive Program language may be sufficient as well.

Staff will reach out to Sierra Club to request the updated language. Then update the policy issue form with that language.

Governor Walz's trip to United Kingdom and Finland

A committee member brought forward the news that Governor Walz is embarking on a trade mission to the United Kingdom and Finland, mostly focused on agriculture. Forestry isn't currently on the agenda, but it could be. Maine, Michigan, Arkansas have entered trade agreement with Finland in mass timber and other issues.

"Governor Walz will be leading a trade mission to the U.K. and Finland from November 13 – 19. Companies of all sizes are encouraged to apply for a spot in the delegation. The mission will focus on agriculture and food, environmental technologies, MedTech and health, and higher education. Delegation members will engage in a range of industry briefings, site visits and networking events with targeted companies and leaders in each country.

The deadline is August 27. You can learn more [here](#) and [apply at this link](#). Questions can be directed to MN DEED at steve.riedel@state.mn.us."

<https://mn.gov/deed/business/exporting/events/?trumbaEmbed=view%3Devent%26eventid%3D155018234>

The committee discussed developments with the Governor's Biofuel Commission. Chair asked if there was work Council could do in regardsto the low carbon fuel standard. The committee discussed what the needs are to be informed about this topic. Staff will pull together experts to inform the council on merits and drawbacks of the low carbon fuel standard.

A committee member attached an article from the Hardwood Review.

12:06 pm the meeting adjourned.