



MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL PUBLIC CONCERNS REGISTRATION PROCESS 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

OVERVIEW

In 1998, the Minnesota Forest Resources Council (MFRC) established the Public Concerns Registration Process (PCRP) to “accept comments from the public on timber harvesting or forest management practices” (MN Statutes 89A.07, Subd. 5). The MFRC worked closely with its 17 Council members and their associated organizations to develop this comprehensive oversight process, allowing citizens to register concerns about timber harvesting or forest management practices that they have observed.

The PCRP is intended to be educational in nature and not punitive. The names of the parties involved are handled in a confidential manner. The focus of the PCRP is to inform and provide education to the involved parties and work to improve forest management in Minnesota, thus protecting our forest and other natural resources.

FOREST MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES (FMGs)

The voluntary site-level forest management guidelines (FMGs) are a set of recommended practices to mitigate impacts to forest resources during forest management activities such as timber harvest. These practices were first adopted in 1999 and have since been revised three times based on stakeholder feedback and best available science, most recently in 2012. The practices are widely used by practitioners and landowners across the state.

Monitoring of guideline implementation by the DNR reports fairly high levels of implementation for forest management guidelines including those related to riparian management zones, leave tree retention, filter strip disturbance, and rutting occurrence. These trends were reported in the most recent monitoring report, which provides the results of monitoring that occurred in 2018. The report also highlighted areas for improvement, including avoidance of wetland crossings, use of erosion control when needed, retention of fine woody debris during harvesting, and awareness of visual quality sensitivity ratings.

The MFRC has recently initiated a process to evaluate the necessity for additional revisions to the FMGs. This process includes a stakeholder survey (which was conducted in the summer of 2020), a thorough review of the guideline monitoring results, and a review of scientific-based literature relating to forest management and best management practices. Following this process, any proposed revisions to the FMGs will be made available for public and stakeholder review and comment, prior to publication.



PROCESS AND INVESTIGATION PROTOCOL

The PCRP is initiated when a citizen reports a concern via the PCRP hotline (1-888-234-3702) or by using the web form on the MFRC website at <http://mn.gov/frc/public-concerns-registration.html>. Following receipt of a report, MFRC staff determines whether the registered concern falls within the scope of the PCRP. If the concern is determined to be valid, it is forwarded to an independent consulting forester for further investigation.

Reported concerns are investigated under a protocol that is regularly reviewed and revised in coordination with Minnesota's voluntary site-level forest management guidelines (FMGs). These guidelines can be reviewed on the MFRC website at <http://mn.gov/frc/forest-management-guidelines.html>.

EDUCATION

As determined by the PCRP investigation and consulting forester, educational materials about forest management in Minnesota are provided to all parties to the registered concern. Guiding documents include, but are not limited to, the following:

- [*Protecting Water Quality and Wetlands in Forest Management \(BMPs\)*](#) (1995), DNR;
- [*Visual Quality Best Management Practices for Forest Management in Minnesota*](#) (1994);
- [*Forest Cover Type Guidelines*](#) (for individual species, e.g. aspen, birch), DNR;
- [*NPC Silviculture Strategies for Forest Stand Prescriptions*](#), DNR;
- [*Minnesota Forest Resources Management Directory – Online search tool*](#), MLEP and the Minnesota Forestry Association;
- [*Sustaining Minnesota Forest Resources: Voluntary Site-Level Forest Management Guidelines for Landowners, Loggers and Resource Managers*](#) (2012), MFRC;
- [*Biomass Harvesting Guidelines for Forestlands, Brushlands, and Open Lands*](#) (2007), MFRC;
- [*Wetland Conservation Act Requirements and the Silvicultural Exemption – Guidance for Loggers*](#) (2010), MLEP;
- [*Temporary Stream, Wetland & Soft Soil Crossings*](#) (2009), Minnesota Erosion Control Association;
- [*MN DNR State Land Rutting Guidelines and Decision Tree*](#), DNR.



ACTIVITIES DURING THE 2021 FISCAL YEAR

The MFRC contracted with Dick Rossman to provide independent consultation on concerns registered via PCRCP during the 2021 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021). During this fiscal year, the PCRCP received three (3) formal inquiries or concerns through either the PCRCP hotline or the web submission form. Two (2) concerns were deemed to be out-of-scope of the PCRCP, while one (1) concern was found to be within scope of the program.

Following is an activity summary for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021, based on the consultant's report(s) to the MFRC:

July 1 – September 30, 2020

No concerns in-scope concerns were registered during this first reporting period.

October 1 – December 31, 2020

Concern #040 was reported to PCRCP on October 3, 2020. MFRC staff reviewed the concern and determined it was out-of-scope of the PCRCP, as the concern was regarding potential future harvest activities. However, MFRC Executive Director, Eric Schenck, did provide follow-up with the concerned citizen on October 29, 2020, to provide the registrant with educational information, including an overview of MFRC mandates, programs, and voluntary site-level forest management guidelines.

January 1 – March 31, 2021

Concern #041 was reported to PCRCP on February 9, 2021, relating to wildfire risk associated with balsam fir. MFRC Executive Director, Eric Schenck, reached out to the registrant to obtain more information to determine whether this concern was within the scope of the PCRCP to address; however, the registrant did not respond to the attempts made to contact him/her.

April 1 – June 30, 2021

Concern #042 was registered on April 7, 2021, but was not addressed by the MFRC office until April 19, 2021, due to a technical error that prevented the notification of staff that a concern had been reported. The concern was regarding erosion on a harvested slope and the depositing of woody debris into active ravines, as well as whether control for exotic/invasive plants was being implemented, and if any post-sale actions would be taken to ensure regeneration of forest cover.

The concern was forwarded to MFRC's independent consultant for further investigation. The following section briefly describes the outcome of this investigation.



DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION OF REGISTERED CONCERNS

Trout Valley PCRP Report – Winona County

A concern was registered regarding an ongoing (nearly completed) timber harvest site in SE Minnesota on DNR managed state lands. At the time of the registration of the concern, the site was still an active harvest site and not yet closed. The registrant identified the following points of concern:

- 1) Erosion concerns
- 2) Concern for management outcomes and actions taken to create forest for the future
- 3) Control of exotic species
- 4) Woody debris in “active ravines” – “There are very active ravines and there was a lot of woody debris pushed into them which violates site level best management practices”

The concern was investigated by the consultant, and several of the identified concerns were found to have already been addressed or were “in the works” prior to the posting of the citizen concern.

Erosion Control

The consultant found that between the time that the concern was registered and the end of May, the harvest was completed, closed out, and erosion control measures had been installed where needed. The planned and implemented erosion control measures comply with the FMGs.

Regeneration/Forests of the Future

The consultant also found that the site had been underplanted with a mixture of central hardwoods approximately 3 years prior to the timber harvest, and regeneration checks have occurred to ensure the establishment of seedlings since the harvest.

Management of Invasive Species

The land manager (MN DNR) does implement steps to prevent or limit the introduction, establishment and spread of species during contracts and timber harvest activities, including requirements that all equipment entering the site be cleaned prior to entering to avoid transport of invasive species seed source. In addition, this site has a post-harvest treatment plan that includes the control of invasive species that have already been established. A contract is already in place to treat invasive species as part of the post-harvest treatment plan including buckthorn, honeysuckle, multiflora rose, barberry, and grape vines.

Disposal of Woody Debris

The sale administrator acknowledged that some slash and/or debris had been left in ravines at this harvest site, and stated that the forester is currently working with the permittee and fuel wood cutters to establish a strategy to remove slash and/or debris from ravines while creating minimal impact to the site. The consultant noted that it is unclear from LiDAR and GIS imagery whether the ravines at this site



are dry washes, contain intermittent streams, or are ravines with no hydrologic feature. The site-level forest management guidelines related to dry wash do not specifically address avoidance of piling or concentrating slash in dry washes. If the ravines contain intermittent or perennial streams, the guidelines do address avoidance of placing slash or debris in these features. Specifically the guidelines recommend:

Keep logging residue out of all streams, lakes and open water wetlands, except in cases where residue placement is specifically prescribed for fish or wildlife habitat. Make reasonable effort to keep logging residue out of all seasonal ponds and non-open water wetlands.

Additional future actions at this site included a site visit with the land manager and the concerned citizen. Verbal education was provided to the registrant during the site visit. No physical educational materials were provided. At the time of the site visit, erosion control structures (water bars and seeding) appeared well installed and functional. It was verified that the ravine is a dry wash and the slash had been removed by the logger.

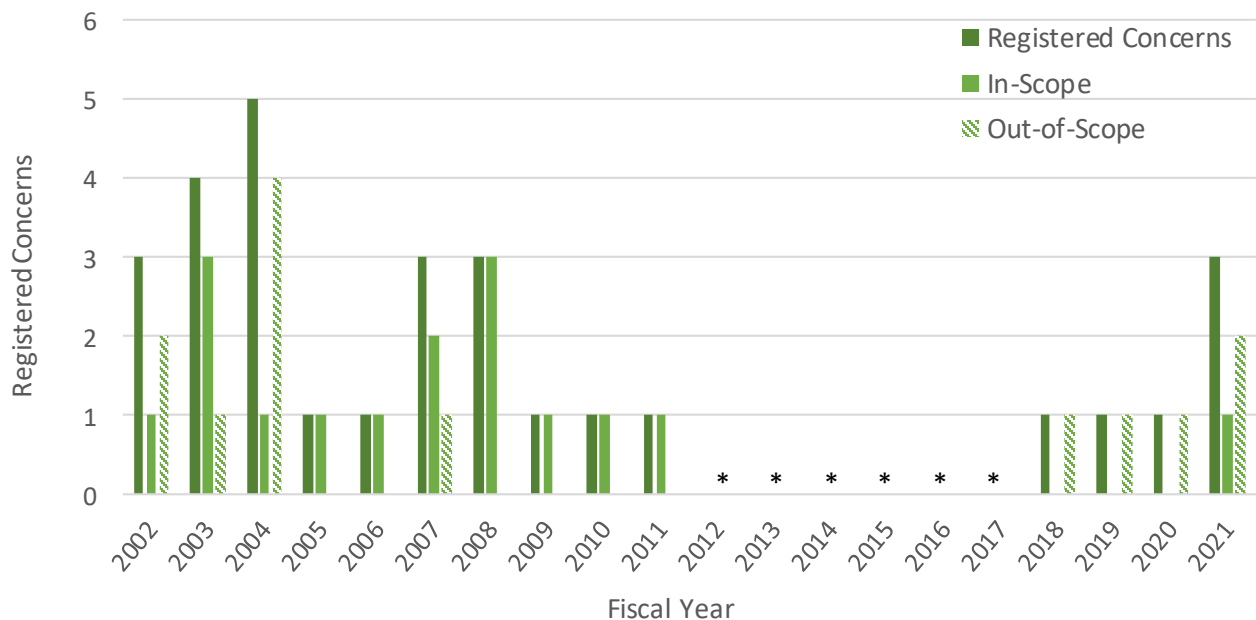
APPENDIX A

PUBLIC CONCERNS REGISTRATION PROCESS LOG

Date	Description of Concern	Location	Type of Educational Communications and Materials Sent
Apr - June 2021	Concern # 042. Slope erosion, deposition of woody debris in ravines, and management of invasive species and for future forestland on DNR managed land in SE Minnesota.	MFRC Southeast Landscape Region, Olmsted Co.	None needed. The forester, land manager, and permittee were familiar with the FMGs and had already addressed or made plans to address the areas of concern expressed by the registrant. A site visit provided additional education to the registrant regarding forest management practices.

APPENDIX B

YEAR-TO-YEAR TRENDS IN PCRFP REPORTS



* No data, no PCRFP report published during these years