

MINNESOTA FOREST RESOURCES COUNCIL

Personnel and Finance Committee

1:00 – 3:00 pm, Tuesday, Dec. 6, 2022

<https://umn.zoom.us/j/91970739901> | (651) 372-8299 Meeting ID: 919 7073 9901

Members Present: Pete Aube – Chair, Mike Kilgore, Jim Manolis, Patty Thielen, Rick Horton

Members Absent: Kim Berns-Melhus

Staff Present: Eric Schenck, Sadie Mathison

Introductory Remarks and Roll Call—Pete Aube, Chair

Pete opened the meeting by stating that he wants to work with this committee to be more strategic about funding and budgets. He wants to look at where the Council would like to move the dial and where to get funding to do so. He plans to talk to this committee and then the Council before approaching the Governor to be sure that everyone is on the same page regarding funding goals.

Manager's Financial Report—Eric Schenck

Eric reviewed the budget status for FY23 with the group and stated that there will likely be additional salary savings as there are still position vacancies. He then showed the total dollar amount for the combined pending grants and showed the remaining unobligated within the budget once the dollars for those grants are encumbered. There are six months left in the fiscal year and Eric would like to talk about what the goals are for the next six months.

Alternate/grant funding for Landscape & Other MFRC programs—Pete Aube

Pete mentioned some possible future expenditures and asked the committee if funding should be pursued and if so, where are the funding opportunities. Consideration was given to the fact that more funding requires more staff capacity. Eric mentioned an operational budget for the landscape program and revisited the idea of MFRC being a catalyst for advancing Regional Committee plans. He stated that it is necessary to look through the lens of the funding source goals and limitations. It might be difficult to match a grant to the desired MFRC work. Most public sources fund on-the-ground work, not planning or staff time.

As an example of creative ways to think about funding opportunities, Eric mentioned that he and Jaimé met with Andy David from the Minnesota Tree Improvement Cooperative (MTIC) to learn how their tree orchard program might fit with MFRC's Nursery Capacity resolution to seek Lassard-Sams funds for purchasing and developing new orchards to increase seed supply and nursery capacity.

MFRC Budget Proposal for Securing Informational Needs (Update)—Eric Schenck

Eric reviewed the Council's desire to have continued funding for priority information needs. Eric stated that a coalition of Council members could express these views individually or collectively as voices for their stakeholders. Pete and Eric have been advised to continue to bring this type of information to the Governor and Legislature and they continue to communicate with CFANS Dean Brian Buhr about information funding. Dean Buhr has brought forward a super-computer platform as a way to post data that has privacy concerns ([GEMS, Genetics | Environment | Management | Socio-Economics](#)). This may be applicable to forestry data on private lands.

MFRC Budget Proposal for Regional Landscape Program (Update)—Eric Schenck

Eric reported that the Landscape Advisory Committee is looking at the next budget cycle and will determine the program needs.

MFRC Resolution/Budget for Carbon Market Study (Update)—Rick Horton

Rick reported that he received a little feedback from Council members; mostly positive. He stated that it is not necessary to build funding for a study into the MFRC budget instead the resolution will be used to craft language for the legislature to provide funding. A majority member will be needed to support this as Rep. Igo's (R) party is no longer in the majority. There will be much further discussion on this topic at the upcoming Policy Committee meeting. Pete suggested that others be tapped to help estimate the amount needed to accomplish this task.

Applied Forest Science Coordinator Interview (Update) —Eric Schenck

Eric reported that the final interview for the position was held last week and he has submitted the scores to HR with the recommendation to hire the highest ranked candidate. The status is that he is waiting for HR to give the go-ahead to make an offer to the highest ranked candidate.

Forest Policy Analyst and Coordinator Posting (Update)—Eric Schenck

Eric is ready to move forward with the Policy Analyst and Coordinator posting. It will be a 30-day posting. He mentioned that he would like some assistance from the stakeholders to spread the word.

Site-Level Program Advisor Status/PRO Extension—Eric Schenck

Dick Rossman's contract expires February 22, 2023. Eric recommended an extension option to help Dick work through the end of the fiscal year to assist with the FMG updating process. Pete asked that Eric speak with Kory to see how he feels about this. All others on the P&F support extending Dick's contract.

MFRC Staff Training (Update)—Eric Schenck

Eric drew attention to some of the training that staff have received recently. He was wondering if the P&F has any recommendations for other training. Suggestions included general forest resource and

forest management training, MLEP Spring Logger Education Program, Forest Wildlife Research Review Conference at Cloquet in early January, and MFI's Indigenous Relationships Course for Forestry Industry (course under development) and possibly others.

Discussion of Using Lessard-Sams Outdoor Heritage funds for Increasing Nursery Capacity—Eric Schenck

Eric mentioned this topic earlier in the meeting, but he reiterated that he is not sure there is a fit. He drew attention to the challenges associated with networking between the tree nurseries as well as the challenges with capacity. His takeaway from his meeting with MTIC was that there is a potential opportunity for a systems approach to the nursery capacity issue. He wonders if someone has done an assessment of this supply chain. The point was made that the mission of MTIC is to improve growth and disease resistant seedlings through improved genetics. It is not a supply chain initiative and would likely not have a connection to Lessard-Sams dollar opportunities. The point was made that the nursery capacity is a state issue and therefore, the state should fund the project, especially considering the current budget surplus. There was a mention of a shortage of containerized seedlings and a suggestion was made to consider NRCS money for private-public containerized trees to be planted on private lands.

Senator Utke (R) has taken the initiative to approach large nursery operations near Park Rapids to discuss public-private seedling production opportunities. The response was positive. Other facilities (i.e., PRT) have also expressed interested in growing containerized and bare root seedlings in Minnesota for public-private partnerships. There was a suggestion to have a meeting around this topic in the Park Rapids area with key stakeholders.

This topic discussion ended with the thought that LCCMR might be a better fit for funding than Lessard-Sams as it is more open to non-wildlife projects and more focused on fixing problems or on innovative experiments.

Other Items/Next Agenda—All

Pete circled back to the recommendation he and Eric received that they engage the Governor regarding the IIC resolution. Pete asked the group if any are opposed to them engaging the Governor, to discuss budgetary requests, after the next Council meeting (January 17). None were opposed.

Pete mentioned that he attended the recent North Central Regional Landscape Committee meeting. He reported that it was a 6-hour meeting and there was applause at the end because people were excited about new energy in the Landscape Program. He stated a need for involvement of DNR and USFS representatives.

Adjourn