



MFRC Landscape Advisory Committee Notes

April 12, 2023, 10am-noon
Zoom

Attendance

Members present: Jim Manolis (chair), Janet Erdman, Kim Berns-Melhus
Members absent: Keith Karnes, Craig Engwall, Deb Theisen, Rick Horton, Doug Tillma
Alternates present: Ashlee Lehner
Staff present: Jaimé Thibodeaux, David Wilson & Eric Schenck
Guests: Sawyer Scherer, Zach Gutknecht & Kylee Berger

MFRC and Regional Landscape Program Updates

Eric noted the hiring process for the Policy Advisor position and that we are in the last quarter of the biennium. He is working with staff on priorities and the associated budget for the next three months. Jaimé reviewed a high-level overview of regional activities. See staff report for more details on the activities of the regional landscape program.

Review of Meeting with Regional Landscape Chairs

An in-person meeting of regional chairs was held March 15th. Two main topics of focus were communication and administration. Below is a summary of feedback from the chairs.

Regional Chair Feedback on Communication

From Council to Chairs

- Keep invitations to chairs at LAC and FFL committee meetings.
- Would like clearer description of relationship between LAC and Regions.
- Use Jaimé as a conduit

From Regions to Council

- Explore ways to get information from committees to the council
- Explore ways to gather chair feedback on topics council is discussing. (Request for input emails).
- Use Jaimé to provide chair insights and needs.
- Need a structured process to get information to MFRC newsletters.

Council to Committee Members

- Use Jaimé to provide updates.
- Council member attendance at regional committee meetings appreciated.
- Collaboration on tours.

Council members present discussed feedback on communication between the council and the regional committees. They supported welcoming regional chairs when available to all LAC and Family Forest Landowner (FFL) Committee meetings. If subjects need strictly council discussion, Jaimé will facilitate the discussion in that manor. Outside of Council committee meetings all will continue to use Jaimé as a conduit for communication between the council and the committee chairs.

Members present also noted needed strategy to communicate and connect the newly created FFL committee to regional chairs and other outside entities. The regional landscape plans and work of the regional landscape committee members are on private lands. Janet noted that all wanting to participate are welcome and would like the FFL to bring private forest management to the foreground to the council. Jim noted that the goal is to be “value added” and help support private land management. All are welcome to FFL meetings. All agreed to try and develop communication strategies, linkages between the Council, Regional Committees, LAC, and the FFL so everyone feels informed. All are welcome at meetings.

Janet encouraged sending her any feedback on the FFL (or the LAC). The group discussed exploring ways to gather chair feedback such as formal emails that are “request for input” to gather input from the chairs for specific topics.

Update on staff-proposed and chair recommended budget

A pre-meeting survey of chairs also showed that chairs are most needing an administrative budget for regional committee meeting logistics (meeting rooms, lunches, etc.), field days, outreach supplies and events, and reimbursement of travel costs. An increase in the Landscape program must come as a request to the legislature to increase MFRC's annual allocation.



Adjustments to the proposed budget based on chair feedback was to increase the amount of funding from \$25,000 to \$35,000 for technical service contracts for facilitation and writing of minor plan updates and workplans. The chairs also recommended MFRC do additional research into the potential costs of a “monitoring” program (a regular report on forest trends and conditions organized by region) for the regional landscape committees. Jim noted that the budget below would likely be a minimum for what is needed for basic operation. The committee supported the proposal and next steps.

Jaimé also noted that she is working with Eric on small grants with remaining FY23 funds to support regional committee meeting and field day costs.

Item	Purpose	Amount
Administrative	Meeting logistics, field days, supplies, travel costs	\$60,000
Project funds	Contributing funds for committee projects	\$40,000
Technical Service Contracts	Rotating update and review of landscape plans	\$35,000 (^ of \$10k)
Progress monitoring	Funds to compile existing data to monitor landscape progress	\$45,000 (place-holder)
Total		\$180,000

Next steps: Jaimé and Eric need a revised budget ready for review by the council for the May 16th meeting. The requested budget increase is due to the DNR budget coordinator by the beginning of June. By August complete budget change pages must be submitted to the DNR legislative and budget coordinator. Members present questioned how the landscape program was funded historically. Previously there were at least two full time staff and reasonable funding for plan development. However, over time the landscape budget has dwindled.

Forest Metrics in the Landscape Budget

The purpose of the discussion was to discuss needs of the regional committees on forest trends and conditions. Continually updated and easily accessed reports can inform the committees on what's needed in the landscape for sustainable forest management. MFRC needs to estimate the cost for this analysis to include in the landscape program budget requests.

The group looked at landscape committee goals and objectives and highlighted what they have in common and potential data sources that could be used to inform those goals. Often the analyses are done for plan updates in individual regions. The vision for this budget item is to provide a statewide monitoring report for all committees on a more frequent occurrence. Several agencies provide statewide reports on forest and forest products trends but do not separate analysis by regional landscape area. Members presented noted some items may not be feasible for MFRC to track or are tracked by other entities, but we can be instrumental in providing guidance and recommendations due to the nature of our inter-agency work.

Jim notes that a detailed plan is not feasible with our timeline, but proposed quantity of \$45,000 for monitoring is a good start. He recommended prioritizing critical items for regional landscape committees. All agreed a separate meeting was needed to discuss needs of the program in more detail.

Next steps: A follow-up meeting with David, Ashlee, Sawyer, Jim, and Eric to discuss this further was scheduled. Jaimé will work with David to look at the proposed amount to determine if \$45,000 is sufficient for continual update of trends and conditions for the regional committees.