



# MFRC Landscape Advisory Committee Notes

*Time: June 28, 2023*

*10:30am-noon*

## Attendance:

- Members Present: Jim Manolis (chair), Kim Berns-Melhus, Janet Erdman, and Scott Johnson
- Members Absent: Doug Tilma (alternate for Patty Thielen), Ashlee Lehner (alternate for Rick Horton), Keith Karnes, Deb Theisen and Dale Gentry
- Alternates Present: Julie Marinucci (alternate for Kory Cease)
- Staff Present: Eric Schenck and Jaimé Thibodeaux
- Guests: John Bathke (C Northeast), Sawyer Scherer (VC North Central), Patrick Pulles (VC West Central), James Aasen (C Northern), and Zach Gutknecht (C North Central)

## End of FY23 funds for regional committees

All committees except for the East Central committee now have funds to help with committee operations. These are FY23 funds that we are investing using grants to local SWCD's to partner with the committees and administer committee operating expenses through June 30 of 2024. Grant agreements will fund committee administration and field days organized by the committee. Eric noted that he will look hard to see if this can be done for FY25 as well, with the caveat that a more robust and predictable budget is needed.

Multiple regional chairs noted these funds provide an opportunity to re-invigorate their committees and are critical for the success of the regional landscape program. Members present noted that as a group we need to communicate the importance of these funds to the rest of the council. James also noted that landscape committees are a great source of local/region specific information, and recommended the council use them as a resource. Each region is a bit different, and committees can provide guidance and recommendations specific to their region of the state.

All agreed that Jaime will present on the landscape program budgetary needs to the council during the July council meeting to provide more orientation to the proposal and the needs of the program.

## Landscape Program Budget Request Proposal

### Recap of last council meeting

The landscape advisory committee noted they are working on consensus and support from the council to pursue a budget reallocation request to the legislature for the landscape program budget. During the meeting members predicted the likelihood of budget amendments being taken up during the next legislative session is low. However, the council did support the LAC working together to refine programmatic needs and bring the proposal to the July council meeting.

### Budget discussion in detail

The landscape advisory committee and regional chairs discussed each item in the proposed staff budget to make sure it reflects the current needs of the program.

#### Committee Activity Support -\$100,000

- *Committees meet regularly and have the funds they need to meet operational costs*
- *Collaborative projects are born out of regional committee meetings and have some MFRC funds to get them started or serve as critical match to project grants.*

After some discussion the budget was revised to combine all budget items that support regional activities for a total of \$100,000 to meet these visionary objectives. Each committee would receive a minimum of \$10,000 for committee support with additional funds that could be available for specific projects approved by the LAC.

#### Rotating landscape plan updates -\$35,000

- *Landscape plans remain relevant and well-utilized.*

All present agreed that this budget item is needed to support the vision of the regional landscape plans and allow frequent plan updates or 5-year implementation plans and is required per the SFRA.

#### Conditions and Trends Updates, and Data Sharing Tools -\$45,000

- *Decisions are made from a shared understanding of the state of Minnesota's forests at the regional level.*

- *Regional committee members collaborate on projects using shared data and knowledge.*

All agreed that it's critical we have funds to keep up with existing data compilation into easy to understand and sharable formats. Tools such as the “dashboards” and the Arrowhead collaborative ArcGIS data sharing require annual funding to keep them updated and adaptively improved.

#### Revised budget in summary

Item	Amount
Committee activity & project support	\$100,000
Rotating plan updates	\$35,000
Landscape Trends & Conditions Updates and Data Sharing	\$45,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$180,000</b>

#### Next steps for landscape budget

Jaimé will present at the next council meeting and draft a motion for council consideration that will address the need for a program budget. Depending on how the vote goes, LAC will keep working on building consensus with the council and DNR.

## Update on the Northern Landscape Plan Revision

Northern Chair James Aasen noted a steering committee has been formed with 11 members, and a group of approximately 60 people they are specifically reaching out to regarding the plan update. They will have an introductory meeting to committee members July 20<sup>th</sup> and start the actual planning in August.

An additional \$10,000 is being added to their grant agreement to provide funds for the increased costs of a plan writer to travel to International Falls and to fund technical services needed for required document accessibility standards. Jim and James discussed the desire for some consistency between landscape plans and data utilized but the constraints with limited availability of accurate landcover and native plant community information for the northern region. James, Jaimé and Jim will have a brief follow-up discussion to work out details.