



MFRC Landscape Advisory Committee Notes

Time: Aug 9, 2023

10:00am-noon

Attendance:

Members Present: Jim Manolis (chair), Kim Berns-Melhus, Janet Erdman, Deb Theisen, and Scott Johnson, Ashlee Lehner (alternate for Rick Horton), Keith Karnes

Members Absent: Doug Tilma (alternate for Patty Thielen), Keith Karnes, and Dale Gentry

Staff Present: Eric Schenck, Jaimé Thibodeaux, and David Wilson

Guests: Hannah Friesen-Holmes (TNC), Natalie McCormack (TNC), Emilee Nelson (The Conservation Fund), Jennifer Corcoran (DNR Resource Assessment), John Bathke (C Northeast), Sawyer Scherer (VC North Central), and James Aasen (C Northern)

Updates from MFRC staff

Jaime went over current events of the regional committees. The highlights were that the north central committee had a successful field day in July, the Northern committee is kicking off planning with the broader stakeholder group for mid-August, and both the West and East Central committees have meetings scheduled and advertised for this month. The WC and EC meetings are a huge win for the landscape program as its their first meeting in several years.

Eric noted he's working with the personnel and finance committee on the MFRC budget at their next meeting on August 15th. The staff have proposed to continue administrative grants to regional committees with the funds we have, as well as explore potential use of additional funds until the policy advisor position is filled. Eric also noted the next council meeting will be held in conjunction with the Minnesota Forest Resource Partnership in Cloquet Sept 18th and 19th. He invited regional chairs to attend.

Spatial Data Sharing -Group Discussion

Jaimé facilitated an exploratory conversation regarding use and sharing of spatial data in the regional landscape program. Attendees discussed possible uses of spatial data in the context of landscape planning and if regional committees could benefit or participate in spatially based planning. The group also discussed the question of geodata spatial sharing for regional committees as means to share spatial data across agencies. Eric and Jim noted that these are some of the items we should create a vision for how we collaborate and share data with the next generation of landscape plans and the revitalization of the regional committees.

Jim notes that originally the landscape program had a full-time GIS person. Some mentioned the amount of data available is overwhelming, and that Minnesota will soon have spatially based data through forest inventory lidar. Emilee from The Conservation Fund noted that for their work partners are using spatial data and comparing their mapped priorities to determine how and where they funnel resources on the landscape. Members agreed that the Interagency Information Collaborative has a role, however they are not functional/funded at this time. Attendees also noted as a short-stop data may be able to be funneled and tagged in MNGeoCommons, or a list of available data and website links could be created for the regional landscape program.

TNC GIS tools for Collaborative Planning

Hannah Friesen-Holmes and Natalie McCormack from The Nature Conservancy presented on TNC-Minnesota's use of spatial data for planning and data collection to facilitate grant reporting. Natalie showed TNC's Resilient and Connected Networks along with the Minnesota Wildlife Action Network as TNC's primary method to prioritize their work.

Hannah demonstrated TNC's Annual Restoration Planning Stands (TARPS) through ArcGIS online. Partners enter areas where they can request site preparation assistance by TNC. Hannah also shared her efforts to engage partners on landscape-level management goals and using spatial data to track progress and find opportunities for co-management. They also use a software called SmartFor to track management activities for grant reporting. Hannah noted that since they are requesting help from TNC partners they have a financial incentive to enter data. She is beginning to initiate collaborative landscapes which would be more like the MFRC regional landscape committees -sharing data to make management decisions beyond parcel boundaries based on landscape position and context.

Jim noted that these are tools are just some examples of an approach we could take with the regional committees. All agreed more discussion is needed on this topic to create a clearer vision of using spatial data for collaborative landscape goals. However, the group concurred that the following would be beneficial for the landscape program:

1. Centralized location of widely available data relevant to the landscape program (example -tagging on MNGeoCommons)
2. Collecting and facilitating informative mapping projects that clearly display where regional committee members' priorities are located and where priorities overlap (facilitated by MFRC).

Other Landscape Program Business

Help with Plot-based Inventory Outreach: DNR Resource Assessment's Jennifer Corcoran noted a need for plot-based-inventory plots on private lands for use to improve the quality of statewide lidar forest inventory. The southeast in particular needs additional plots. Jennifer plans to work with the Southeast regional committee to ensure coordination with landowner outreach. She has funds to support this effort.

Future LAC meetings: Do we want to plan an in-person LAC? How about a mini conference of NGO's and state program managers? Jim will continue to work on next steps on the future vision of the landscape program for this and for possibly data sharing too.

Sept Council Meeting: Eric invited landscape chairs to the next council meeting in Cloquet. The council has spent a considerable amount of time working through a budget for the landscape program and really would like to make sure there's good communication between the landscape chairs and the council during the upcoming council meeting.